Off-Cycle Grantmaking = "Special Funding Requests"

Why offer off-cycle grants?

→ The MHCRC acknowledges that opportunities can rise unexpectedly, particularly in the current economic climate, and that community organizations, governments and educational institutions need to act fast to secure funding for projects that meet ever-changing communication needs.

→ The competitive grant process (Community Technology Grants Program) does not allow for consideration of special needs projects that fall outside of the annual cycle.

→ Incorporating intentional **responsive grantmaking** would further increase the MHCRC's equity-centered practices by allowing applicants to request funds at the time of their greatest need (rather than on a funder's timeline).

→ Further, it is one way that the MHCRC can help to build power in the short-term within our communities.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. The proposed grant request meets the existing Community Technology Grants Program funding eligibility requirements.
2. The proposed grant request and/or related availability of other funding is time sensitive and therefore cannot be considered within the annual cycle of the MHCRC Community Technology Grants program.
3. An organization can only receive one grant from the MHCRC per year (this includes both the Community Technology Grants Program and the off-cycle grantmaking program).

Application and Selection Process:

Complete information about how to apply, instructional documents describing eligible capital costs, and the programmatic eligibility requirements are published on the MHCRC website. Interested applicants will be directed to review the instructions prior to submission.

Applicants must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI), maximum length of two pages, including:

- An identification of which of the four public benefit areas the project falls under: Reducing Disparities, Improving Community Involvement, Cost Reduction and Improving Service Delivery

- A description of the overall project, including how technology will be used and describing the video content that will be created and shared with the Community Media Centers
- A budget which includes estimates of line-item categories (*Personnel, Education & Training, Travel, Contractual, Equipment, Infrastructure/Facilities Construction, Overhead*) and total expenditures for both grant-funds and matching resources.

Program staff will complete an initial review of the materials and contact applicants to discuss the project and/or clarify any uncertainties.

→ Program staff will then share the LOI with members of the MHCRC Equity Committee.
  - Committee members will be emailed individually.
  - Committee members are not to discuss the LOI with each other during this process.
  - The Committee members will have one week to review the LOI and respond with additional questions.
→ Once questions are answered, the Committee members will provide a "yes/no" email response to program staff, indicating their support for presenting the grant request to the full MHCRC.
  - Program staff will seek responses from a majority of committee members before proceeding (at least three).
→ If the majority of Committee members say "yes", staff will determine, with Committee input, which type of application is necessary for presenting the off-cycle request to the full MHCRC:
  - If the applicant is a (recent) past grantee in good standing, program staff will draft standard contract language and reporting requirements for applicant review. The LOI will serve as the scope of work for the contract.
    - Committee members may request that past grantees submit additional information and/or answer additional questions based on a case-by-case assessment of each LOI.
  - If the applicant is a new applicant, program staff will request that applicant complete a full application using the Grants Management System (GMS). The application will include the same questions asked of applicants in the Community Technology Grants program. At the same time, staff will draft standard contract language and reporting requirements for applicant review. The full application will serve as the scope of work for the contract.
→ The final contract and scope of work will be presented to the full MHCRC at a monthly meeting for consideration and potential approval.
  - Staff will indicate that they "received input from the committee members and felt it appropriate to present the application to the full MHCRC based on that input."

→ If the submitted project does not seem time sensitive or otherwise fit the necessary eligibility criteria, the applicant will be encouraged to submit the application at the next Community Technology Grants cycle deadline.

Funding Availability:

The MHCRC will use the Community Grants Contingency funds as available for the off-cycle grantmaking program. Typically, the MHCRC budget includes $800,000 as Community Grants Contingency funds.

Each grant request will be reviewed independently. At the time of review, program staff will include information about the amount of contingency funds available to support the request.

Applicants will be encouraged to apply for the amount of grant funds that they need to successfully complete the project and will be advised that limited funds are available for such requests.

Contract and Reporting:
The MHCRC will use standard contract language and reporting requirements for the grant recipients.