

“Special Funding Requests” = Off-Cycle Grantmaking

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 increases 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).

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:

Applicants are encouraged to contact MHCRC staff for an initial inquiry through grants@mhcrc.org.

To apply, applicants must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI), maximum length of two pages (budget table is not included in page limit), 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
- Why your project is time sensitive and cannot wait until the next Community Technology grant cycle (i.e. the immediate need)

- 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. This should describe your requested amount of grant funds. See detailed information on page 3 on eligible capital costs.

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, which is responsible for monitoring the MHCRC Community Grants program.
- With Committee input, staff will determine if the LOI meets the criteria necessary to move forward in the grantmaking process.
 - If so, applicants may be asked to submit additional information or, potentially, complete a full application using an online portal.
- The final contract and scope of work will be presented to the full MHCRC at a monthly meeting for consideration and potential approval. The MHCRC holds public meetings approximately 10 times/year.
- 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:

Each grant request will be reviewed independently. At the time of review, the amount of available grant funds to support the request will be taken into consideration in determining the grant award.

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

Contract and Reporting:

The MHCRC will use standard contract language and reporting requirements for off-cycle grant recipients.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING THE BUDGET

The project budget must include resources to support all elements of the proposed project. It must be clear, cost-effective and consistent with the project described in the Project Narrative. The capital costs must be appropriate to the tasks and sufficiently detailed so that it is easy to understand the relationship of items in the budget to the Project Narrative. The capital costs should be clearly connected to the production of video content to share on the community media centers that supports identified project goals and outcomes.

The following is intended to serve as a guide for preparing the budget for your application. It includes information on identifying and clarifying overall project costs, including costs funded by the grant funds vs. matching resources and instructions for preparing the required budget documentation.

Eligible Costs for Grant Funding

Project capital costs which may be funded by grant funds include services, products, equipment or other resources whose useful life can be expected to exceed one year. For example, this could include video or data equipment; computer software or hardware; consultants, contractual services or personnel costs to design, install or test the capital project; consultants, tuition fees or personnel time to provide initial training on use of a new technology; indirect costs that directly support the capital project; building renovation; and internal network wiring in facilities are all eligible capital costs.

Matching Resources

Grant funds will provide up to 50 percent of the total project cost and can be used for capital costs only. Therefore, applicant matching resources must provide a minimum of 50 percent of the total project cost. When the grant award is made, you are committed to the match share of the total project cost proposed in the application. Therefore, be sure that all matching resources proposed in an application are real and available to the project.

Almost all project costs are allowable as matching resources. For example, project management and other personnel (including fringe benefits), indirect costs that support the project, travel, professional services (consultants, volunteers, etc.), project evaluation costs, training costs, equipment maintenance or insurance qualify as matching resources.

Matching resources may be provided by the applicant organization or by in-kind contributions from Project Partners. In-kind contributions are defined as non-cash donations to a project from organizations other than the applicant that may count toward satisfying the match requirement of a project's total budget. For example, in-kind contributions might be donated equipment or supplies or contributions of services from individuals or organizations such as professional consultants, engineers, attorneys, programmers, software engineers, systems professionals, trainers, etc. In general, an item or service may be considered as an in-kind contribution only if it 1) appears as a project cost in the budget, 2) is being donated to the project, and 3) is being used to meet the project objectives. The value of an in-kind contribution must be documentable and defensible.

Line-Item Categories & Descriptions

Personnel: This includes salary or wage expenses for applicant staff positions directly related to the proposed project. Do not include costs of consultants or staff of other organizations here; these

should be included in a "Contractual" line. It is important to distinguish between personnel costs: (1) associated with the capital costs of the project (and therefore, costs that can be grant funded), such as network engineering, design, installation and software development; and (2) associated with other functions, such as overall project management or evaluation, that are needed to implement your project, which are considered matching resources.

Clarifying note about training expenses related to Personnel: Costs to provide initial training on a new technology, system or piece of equipment related to the proposed grant project can be included as a grant-funded cost. The time or resources for staff or volunteers to receive the training can only be used as a matching cost. For example: if a school deployed a new technology, grant funds could cover cost of a staff person's time to provide initial training to teachers to use the technology. However, the teachers' time to receive the training would be a matching cost.

Each staff position should be listed by position title. Each listing should contain: (1) the position's expected amount of time (e.g., 75%, or 30 hours per week); (2) the duration of the position's involvement (e.g., 18 months); (3) the position's salary or wage rate (e.g., \$35,000 per year, \$12 per hour); and (4) a description of the activities to be performed by the person and a percentage or amount of time for grant and match costs categories.

A position's salary or wage rate may include direct fringe benefits, such as health insurance, social security, workers compensation, and retirement benefits. Applicants should identify whether or not the salary or wage rate includes fringe benefits. No general overhead or incremental costs are allowed to be "attached" to personnel costs.

Education/Training: Costs for outside expenses related to staff education or training needs. These might include workshop or seminar registration fees, class tuition, etc. Education and training expenses for staff must be itemized in detail and justified to show that the proposed training is necessary to the eventual success of the project. Outside expenses to gain initial training on a new technology, system or piece of equipment related to the proposed grant project can be included as a grant-funded cost. Resources to provide ongoing training for staff or volunteers can only be used as a matching cost. For example: if a staff person needed to take a class in order to operate a new technology, grant funds could cover the class fee. However, if the project had ongoing training for staff or volunteers to use the technology, those outside training expenses would be a matching cost.

Travel: Only travel costs directly related to the project can be included. Do not include consultant travel costs here, describe these costs in the "Contractual" section. Travel expenses must be itemized, and calculations shown in detail. For example, automobile travel should include a standard mileage rate and estimated mileage. You should provide strong justification to show that the proposed travel is necessary to the eventual success of the project.

Contractual: All contractual services, including services provided by individual consultants, firms or Project Partners, should be described in this section. It is important to distinguish between contractual costs: (1) associated with the capital costs of the project (and therefore, costs that can be grant funded), such as network engineering, design, installation, software development, initial training, etc.; and (2) associated with other services, such as overall project management, evaluation or ongoing training, that are needed to implement your project, which would be matching costs. Each service should be described in detail and justified.

Clarifying note about training expenses related to Contractual costs: Consultant or Partner costs to provide initial training on a new technology, system or piece of equipment related to the proposed grant project can be included as a grant-funded cost. The time or resources for staff or volunteers to receive the training can only be used as a matching cost. For example: if an organization deployed a new technology, grant funds could cover costs of the consultant to provide initial training to staff to use the technology. However, the staff person's time to receive the training would be a matching cost under the "Personnel" line item.

Equipment: Includes equipment whose useful life can be expected to exceed one year (e.g., video equipment, computers, modems, video teleconferencing systems, office equipment, computer software, etc.), except equipment related to "Infrastructure Construction." Detailed information, such as the manufacturer and

model number or configuration details, should be included if available. Each equipment item (or set of items) should be described and justified. Price quotes from vendors are helpful to justify a cost. You may also wish to include a summary itemized list of equipment to be purchased.

Infrastructure Construction/Facilities Construction: Costs of materials and equipment for construction of new or updated network infrastructure, such as fiber or electrical internal wiring, should be itemized and justified. You may also wish to include a summary itemized list of equipment and materials to be purchased. Facilities Construction includes costs for materials to construct or upgrade a building or site that are directly related to the proposed project.

Miscellaneous: Project costs which do not fit under the other cost categories that are directly related to the project. All costs must be detailed – no ‘miscellaneous,’ ‘other’ or ‘contingency’ costs are acceptable. Each item must be justified and its relationship to the project explained.

Overhead Costs: "Overhead costs" are intended to include expenses incurred by the organization for indirect costs that are identifiable and directly benefit the capital project. Overhead costs should be limited to costs associated with financial and business operations systems that directly support the capital project. Overhead costs must be justifiable and itemized. Administrative personnel costs should not be included in overhead costs; these should be included in the "Personnel" line item under the match portion of your budget.

The Grant Program allows project budgets to include overhead costs from grant funds in a total amount of up to 10 percent of the grant-funded part of the project budget (i.e. if grant funded project costs total \$96,000 then grant funded overhead costs cannot exceed \$9,600). The overall project budget may include overhead costs of up to 10 percent of the total project budget, but the remaining amount must be provided through the project matching resources (i.e. if the overall project budget is \$252,000 (\$96,000 grant funded and \$156,000 match) then the total (grant and match) for this line item cannot exceed \$25,200).

If you include overhead costs in your proposed project budget, please describe the costs included, and the methodology used to determine costs allocated to the project budget. Please ensure that overhead costs do not duplicate other line-item project costs included in your proposed budget.