



# Sunflower Foundation

## Request for Proposals (RFP)

### Strengthening Our Sector: Stronger Nonprofits for a Healthier Kansas

#### Key Information

**RFP Release: September 12, 2023**

**Informational Webinars:**

September 19, 2023, 10:00 AM CT

September 22, 2023, 10:00 AM CT

*(Webinars will be recorded and posted on the Sunflower Foundation website)*

**Submission Date:** October 19, 2023 @ 5:00 PM CT *(Technical assistance for electronic submissions will be available up to 4:00 PM CT on this date)*

**Funding Announcements:** On or Before December 22, 2023

**Eligible Applicants:** Nonprofit organizations with a primary focus to improve individual/community health and/or the social, structural and economic drivers that contribute to health outcomes. *(See page 4 for more details)*

**Available Funding:** Up to \$25,000 based on applicant's proposed plan to deploy funds to increase internal strength and capacity of the organization.

**Eligible Expenses:** Core Operating support to fund defined strategies to increase organizational strength and capacity. *(see page 6 for more details)*

**Grant Timeline:** 12 months. Awarded projects should anticipate a start date of February 01, 2024.

**Sunflower Support:** Please read the entire RFP before you begin the electronic submission process. To ensure timely and appropriate responses to inquiries, please email questions to the Sunflower program team:

Elizabeth Burger ([eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org))

Gabrielle Talavera ([gtalavera@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:gtalavera@sunflowerfoundation.org))

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## BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Aspen Institute hosted a series of national conversations related to organizational capacity. Findings from this process contributed to the ongoing development of Aspen’s tools and resources for supporting and measuring community capacity. One resource states:

*People live in communities, but the real importance of ‘living in a community’ is that people—and groups of people—develop the ways and means to care for each other, nurture the talents and leadership that enhance the quality of community life, and tackle the problems that threaten the community as well as the opportunities that can help it.*

For most communities, nonprofit organizations are the primary vehicle for tackling community problems and improving quality of life. And while the mission of these organizations is vital to community health, most nonprofits have no direct line(s) of reimbursement to support their work long term and even fewer have been successful in convincing county or city governments to include their organization in the annual budget.

Since its inception, Sunflower Foundation has recognized the importance of helping health-related nonprofits build their organizational capacity and thus their capacity to serve Kansans. In 2002, Sunflower launched its first capacity building grant program. More than 20 years later, this work remains a hallmark of Sunflower funding. With over two decades of work in this space, Sunflower has been proud to partner with more than 330 capacity building grantees to provide nearly \$12 million in direct funds.

Sunflower Foundation believes: Capacity is the infrastructure that allows an organization to fulfill its mission and strengthen its impact. Hence, we are committed to ongoing efforts to provide nonprofits access to funds to support critical organizational needs. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, much data has emerged from the fields of nonprofits and philanthropy, pointing to the high need for flexible operating funds and the “barrier to entry” that many nonprofits face when they seek this type of grant funding. With this funding opportunity, we hope to increase our reach across Kansas, expanding beyond the organizations that typically receive funds through our foundation’s core program areas. ([Click here](#) to learn more about Sunflower’s core program areas.)

## WHO SHOULD APPLY?

***To determine whether this RFP is a fit for your organization please review the following information:***

This RFP is designed to support nonprofit organizations focused on improving individual and/or community health which are also vigorously engaged in efforts to enhance the effectiveness and/or reach of their work. There are different types of capacities an organization can assess and target for structural improvement. Capacity-building activities contribute to sustainability, and may include strategies to improve governance, support collaboration, and strengthen internal infrastructure. The ultimate outcome of these activities is that they allow nonprofits to grow and thrive.

For this RFP, applicants will identify capacity related activities the organization would like to address and describe why the selected actions are important to the organization’s ability to grow, thrive and routinely accomplish the goals they set for themselves. **While grantees will be given flexibility as to how they choose to invest grant dollars, grant deliverables will be linked to proposed structural improvements within the organization.**

These improvements could include, but are not limited to:

- ✿ Enhancing business functions (accounting, bookkeeping, data management, etc.),
- ✿ Amplifying communications at all levels (website design, social media, brochures, etc.),
- ✿ Diversifying revenue streams (developing targeted plans for fundraising and donor development, etc.),
- ✿ Increasing capacity for grant writing/grant management,
- ✿ Strengthening leadership and team culture; enhancing staff/volunteer recruitment and retention,

- ✿ Supporting board and staff development,
- ✿ Strengthening advocacy/public policy skills,
- ✿ Building and sustaining day-to-day operations.

**Priority will be given to applicants that:**

- ✿ Effectively demonstrate they are meeting a need that is critical to individual and/or community health in a place or space where few or no other organizations are addressing this need.
- ✿ Have been historically overlooked by other grant opportunities due to lack of capacity and/or reduced access to resources or connections.
- ✿ Consistently face limited options for long-term revenue streams because the services they deliver, while critical, do not fit into a service-fee model or similar method for routine reimbursement.
- ✿ Do not currently have significant resources, endowments, or other assets.
- ✿ Agree to participate in a Sunflower-supported learning collaborative(s) focused on capacity building.
- ✿ Clearly identify their own deliverables based on the organization's unique needs; and describe how flexible funding via core operating support will help meet those deliverables.

## **WHAT KIND OF FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?**

Grants awarded under this RFP will offer flexible funding for capacity building in the form of core operating support. For this RFP, Sunflower defines core operating support as the “working capital” that nonprofits and community-based organizations need to build/sustain day-to-day operations, mobilize partners, enhance systems, build skills, secure resources, and increase their visibility to better serve their clients and community.

## **WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT?**

Successful applicants will be able to address and commit to the following:

- ✿ Clearly describe the organization's vision, mission, board makeup, and staffing structure.
- ✿ Describe the organization's operational capacity to address community needs around critical health and/or social issues.
- ✿ Demonstrate a clear understanding of how the work of the organization can/does impact the health of the broader community.
- ✿ Highlight the critical structural improvements that the organization hopes to address and describe why the improvements are vital to the organization's long-term success.
- ✿ Align with all RFP criteria and Sunflower Foundation's mission, to serve as a catalyst to improve the health and well-being of all Kansans.
- ✿ Participate in a Sunflower-supported learning collaborative(s) to enhance the individual learning undertaken by each capacity building grantee (*see below*).

### ***Sunflower Learning Collaboratives***

Peer learning collaboratives have been a hallmark of Sunflower's core program area grants for many years. Now, as part of this RFP, learning collaboratives will be offered in conjunction with grant funds. Grantees and nonprofit partners from across the state will gather to learn from state and national content experts with expertise in the field of capacity building and engage with other nonprofit leaders to discuss their work, accomplishments, and challenges. Learning collaborative topics will be selected by you, the grantee, to augment the work you pursue within your own organizations.

## DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

### 1. Proposal Deadline

Proposals must be submitted online by 5:00pm CT on October 19, 2023.

### 2. Submission Process

All applicants are encouraged to participate in one of two informational webinars. The webinars will offer identical content. **To accommodate as many participants as possible, applicants are asked to limit webinar participation to one connection per organization.**

The first webinar is scheduled for **September 19, 2023, at 10:00 AM CT**. Please [click here](#) to register for the first webinar. The second webinar is scheduled for **September 22, 2023, at 10:00 AM CT**. Please [click here](#) to register for the second webinar.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. **Webinar capacity is limited so please register early if you plan to participate. A recording of the informational webinar will be available** on Sunflower Foundation's website at [www.sunflowerfoundation.org](http://www.sunflowerfoundation.org).

While not a requirement, **participation is encouraged** as an opportunity to hear foundation staff discuss the RFP and address questions from potential applicants. However, if you are unable to join, Sunflower welcomes individual questions about the criteria, guidelines, or application process for this RFP. Please note that this is a competitive grant process and Sunflower's ability to provide direct guidance is limited. **Please email all inquiries in writing to the Sunflower program team:**

Elizabeth Burger ([eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org)), Gabi Talavera ([gtalavera@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:gtalavera@sunflowerfoundation.org)), and/or Brandon Skidmore ([bskidmore@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:bskidmore@sunflowerfoundation.org)).

Applicants are encouraged to read the entire application before beginning the submission process. All proposals must be submitted online through the Sunflower grants management program, Fluxx. Information on registration and submission is included later in this document, and technical assistance will be available until 4:00pm CT on Thursday, October 19, 2023. We encourage interested applicants to register as soon as possible to avoid problems. Please reach out to Sunflower grants manager Kelli Mark with any questions, [kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org).

### 3. Funding Announcements

For applications received by the October 19 deadline and therefore reviewed, funding announcements are expected on or before December 22, 2023.

Grants may begin once the Letter of Agreement (grant contract) has been executed between Sunflower and the awarded organization, which would be anticipated by **February 1, 2024**.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

### 1. Summary

The goal of this funding initiative is to augment the capacity of nonprofit organizations, allowing them to routinely meet the goals they have set for themselves, build, and sustain day-to-day operations, mobilize partners, enhance systems, secure resources, grow influence and increase their visibility to better serve their clients and their community.

## 2. Eligible Organizations

Sunflower's capacity building grants are intended for organizations that are working in collaboration with cross-sector partners to serve critical health and/or social issues and address community challenges to enhance local systems of care. Below is a list of example organizations that could apply:

- \* State and community-based organizations whose primary focus is to improve individual and/or community health and the social, structural, and economic drivers that contribute to health outcomes.
- \* Safety net organizations (Federally Qualified Health Center, Community Health Center, Primary Care Clinic, Rural Health Clinic, Free Clinic, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic/Community Mental Health Center, Safety Net Dental Clinic, Critical Access Hospital); and
- \* Local/public health departments.

### ***Organizations must meet the following criteria:***

- \* A tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3)\* of the Internal Revenue Service Code; or
- \* An instrumentality of state or local government, provided Sunflower Foundation support will not supplant work that would be considered core responsibilities of a government agency/organization; and
- \* Embrace diversity and inclusion across multiple dimensions, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, and socioeconomic status.

\*If your organization is doing work aligned with Sunflower's mission and this RFP, but is not an established 501(c)(3), you may still apply. Please contact the program team for guidance on locating a fiscal agent.

Sunflower Foundation grants can only support services provided in Kansas or for Kansans. If an organization is based in or provides services in another state, prorated support of the proposed work will be considered only if documentation is provided to verify the percentage of services provided in Kansas or for Kansans.

## 3. Grant Awards

Grants will not exceed a **maximum amount of \$25,000**. Awards will be based, in part, on the proposed work, the organization's operating capacity, and the ability of the organization to reach identified population(s) in need. This will be a competitive grant program, which means not all qualifying and meritorious proposals will be funded.

## 4. Use of Grant Funds

Applicants will be asked to submit an estimated annual operating budget and explain how grant dollars will be used to increase internal capacity.

## 5. Grant Term

Grants are expected to be accomplished within **approximately one year from the date of the grant award**.

## 6. Reporting Requirements

All grantees will be asked to submit a progress report and a final report. All reporting requirements and deadlines will be clearly stated in the Letter of Agreement between the grantee and Sunflower. Grantees will be asked to download and file reports electronically via Sunflower's online grants management system, Fluxx. Virtual check-ins with program staff may also be an option.

## 7. Funding Exclusions

- \* Construction/renovation costs
- \* Medical equipment and/or healthcare equipment or supplies
- \* Implementation of fundraising campaigns, events, or materials
- \* Routine continuing education (e.g., for licensure, accreditation, organization requirements, etc.)
- \* Individual health care or support

Other items may be excluded from funding at Sunflower's discretion.

## 8. Review Process

A review panel of Sunflower staff and external reviewers will evaluate each proposal, using a general set of criteria as well as specific considerations. While we welcome emails and scheduled phone calls to discuss your proposals prior to submission, only the information included in the application and supporting documents can be considered during the review process. Recommendations by the panel are presented to the Sunflower Board of Trustees for final consideration and funding decisions.

## ONLINE APPLICATION SUBMISSION



### Getting Started

**All** applicants will need to have a current online account in Sunflower Foundation's online grants management system, Fluxx, in order to complete the required application ([Register in Fluxx HERE](#)). **All** applications must be completed and submitted using the online application. A guide to the online application system can be found here [Sunflower online account and application guide](#). Assistance is available; please reach out to Sunflower grants manager Kelli Mark, [kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org](mailto:kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org)

### APPLICATION TIPS:

- ✿ Always write the draft of your application offline and save in a Word document, then copy and paste into the online application when you are ready to submit. This reduces the chance of losing any work if your online submission process gets interrupted.
- ✿ **Please save your work regularly while working in Fluxx. Your completed work will not autosave.**
- ✿ Once your application is complete, but before you submit it, we suggest someone not involved in the writing process review it for completeness, clarity, and consistency.

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

*Sunflower Foundation is subject to the Kansas Open Meeting Act (K.S.A. 75-4317 et seq.) and the Kansas Open Records Act (K.S.A. 45-215 through 45-223). Consequently, all materials received in this application process may be subject to public release pursuant to these statutes.*

## ONLINE APPLICATION TEXT

To assist your planning, the questions from the online application are provided below. **Please note that the questions below are only provided to assist in offline planning. All applicants who wish to apply must do so through the online system.**

### A. INTRODUCTION TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. Provide a brief description of your organization, including an overview of the organization's history, key programs/services, current board composition and staffing structure, and what motivates your organization to do its work.
2. Describe the population(s) your serve and the critical health and/or social issues for which your organization focuses its time and resources. Describe the impact on this population if your organization did not exist.
3. Describe your organization's specific and unique strengths.

4. Describe your organization's current and specific pain points that require more internal capacity and/or external resources to be addressed.
5. Discuss how your organization develops and nurtures partnerships that help your organization accomplish its mission.
6. Tell us who would lead this capacity building work inside your organization and their current role.

**B. STRENGTHENING YOUR ORGANIZATION**

1. If your organization was in a stronger position to carry out its mission, how would this contribute to the improved health of the population you serve and the community/region/state overall? Please focus your response on your organization as a whole, not just one specific program or service.

**C. EXISTING & NEEDED RESOURCES BY YOUR ORGANIZATION**

1. Briefly discuss the primary funding streams which currently support the work of your organization.
2. Describe any additional funding streams you have considered but have not yet pursued. Discuss what barriers keep you from pursuing those streams.
3. From the pain points identified in Section A, what would be the estimated costs in both time and dollars to overcome those issues?
4. Identify and describe 3 to 5 specific skill sets/technical assistance that would be helpful to address in the Learning Collaboratives associated with this funding.

**D. EVALUATING YOUR SUCCESS**

1. What does your organization expect to be different in a year as a result of the funding? In three years? For instance, what internal systems will be changed, and how will this benefit the population you serve? Be specific.
2. What is your organization's plan for stability and/or growth in the next 3-5 years?

**E. ORGANIZATION OPERATING BUDGET**

1. What is your organization's estimated annual operating budget?
2. How do you anticipate using grant dollars to increase internal capacity?
3. Amount requested from Sunflower Foundation (not to exceed \$25,000)?

**F. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. Is there anything this application has not asked that you think is important to share with us? Please limit your response to 2 brief paragraphs.