The Sunflower Foundation

Grant Technical Assistance Guide

January 2023

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About Sunflower

❋ **Sunflower History**

Sunflower Foundation was established as a statewide health philanthropy in 2000 as part of a $75 million settlement between Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas and the state of Kansas. The settlement agreement resolved disputes between the parties concerning Blue Cross' charitable assets from company operations spanning from 1941 to 1969.

Based in Topeka, Kan., the foundation has long been recognized as a forward-thinking, innovative funder that supports collaboration and the marshaling of resources to areas of greatest need.

Sunflower Approach to Grantmaking

At Sunflower Foundation, our grant work is guided by our mission*: To serve as a catalyst for improving the health of all Kansans*. We believe that a thriving, sustainable nonprofit sector contributes to healthy communities, and we are committed to investing in mission-aligned nonprofits. We pledge to:

❋ Create an understandable grant process;
❋ answer questions at any stage of the process;
❋ listen to your concerns;
❋ be open to new ideas;
❋ respond in a timely manner;
❋ explain our decisions;
❋ respect your expertise;
❋ always treat you fairly.

Priority Areas

Sunflower Foundation's work is focused in three strategic areas:

❋ **Healthy Communities** – We strive to enhance the built environment and expand access to healthy food through systems, structures and surroundings that make healthy living achievable and affordable for all. The built environment refers to human-made structures, systems and surroundings that enable individuals to make healthy choices. Focus areas include:

   ✓ *Sunflower Trails:* Since 2005, the foundation has been partnering with communities, schools and nonprofits across the state to ensure that all Kansans

have access to trails and are able to enjoy the physical, mental and community benefits that come with connecting to nature.

✓ *Food Access/Security:* Access to healthy food is essential to the health and well-being of all Kansans. Through grantmaking and other initiatives, the foundation supports work that addresses specific food and nutrition access and security needs, as well as gaps in local food systems.

✓ *Food is Medicine:* Nutrition plays a critical role in preventing, treating and managing chronic disease. Working with food banks and a cohort of Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs), the foundation is striving to improve health outcomes and curb rising health costs for Kansans suffering from chronic disease by providing such items as medically-tailored groceries, nutritious food and meal ingredients, and cooking educational opportunities – with the purpose of helping them better manager their conditions.

❈ **Health Systems** – The foundation supports systemic change, increasing organizational capacity and investing in innovative strategies to ensure that more Kansans receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Focus areas include:

✓ *Integrated Care,* which unites primary and behavioral health care into one seamless system where medical and mental health professionals work together to provide a smooth, patient-centered continuum of care.

✓ *Behavioral/Mental Health:* The foundation supports innovative efforts to modernize the state's behavioral health care delivery system, bolster and train its workforce, and raise awareness of mental health issues and initiatives with a goal of increasing early intervention for Kansans struggling with mental illness and improving access to the health services they need.

✓ *Public Health:* The foundation supports projects and initiatives that bolster the underlying public health system across Kansas by leveraging existing capacity in local health departments, helping them build expertise through training, and creating a better understanding of public health among county leaders.

✓ *Primary Care Safety Net:* Through capacity building and other health initiatives, the foundation has supported community health clinics, FQHCs, rural health centers and community mental health centers in their efforts to address health care inequities and expand access to health care services.
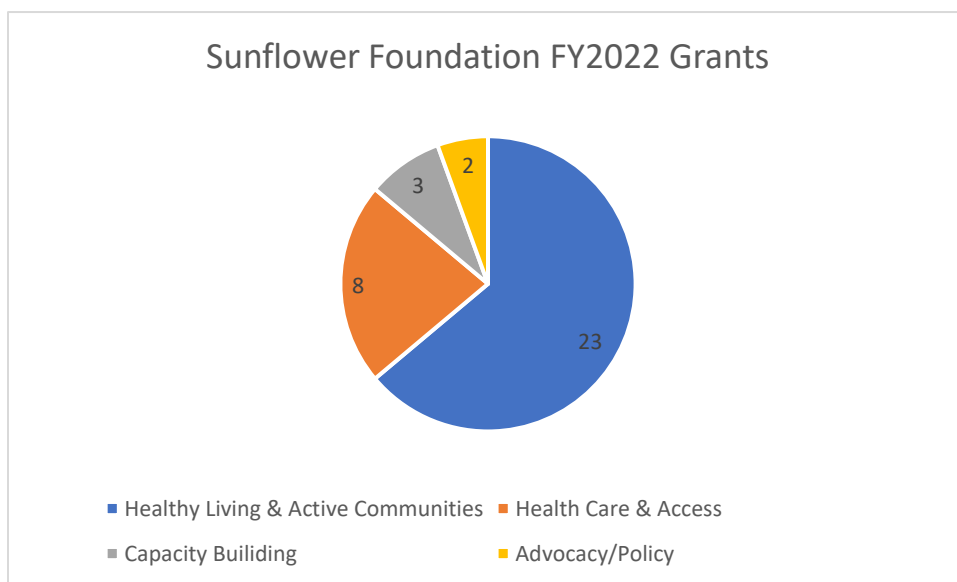
❈ **Sunflower Nonprofit Center** – The foundation's work has long supported capacity building, leadership development and learning opportunities for nonprofits. With the opening of the Sunflower Nonprofit Center in October 2021, the foundation now offers state-of-the-art meeting space and additional resources that support the needs of nonprofits whose work aligns with the foundation's mission.

Eligible Organizations

* **Eligible organizations** include:
    - ✓ Organizations that are classified as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code;
    - ✓ Organizations that are recognized as an instrumentality of state or local government, provided Sunflower Foundation support does not supplant governmental funding.

Types of Grants Awarded

In fiscal year 2022, Sunflower Foundation awarded 39 grants for a total of $1,335,932 in new funding.

FY2022 grant types included:

* Sunflower CORE funds (4 grants)
* COVID-19 Crisis Response (7 grants)
* Food is Medicine (8 grants)
* Responsive and Discretionary (14 grants)
* Trail Builder (6 grants)

Funding Parameters

Sunflower Foundation provides opportunities for funding through multiple strategies, including periodic Requests for Proposal, strategic grantmaking at the system and organizational levels, and special initiatives. To discuss a potential project, please reach out to foundation staff (contact information on pages 11-12).

When developing a grant application, take time to consider your approach. Quality applications should:

- ✓ Be a great idea;
- ✓ show knowledge of the underlying problem or issue to be addressed;
- ✓ incorporate best, promising and emerging practices based on available science of what is effective or what has the potential to be effective;
- ✓ illustrate the applicant has the capacity and ability to carry out the project;
- ✓ identify potential outcome measures and highlight desired impacts;
- ✓ align with the foundation's strategic areas.

The foundation funds statewide and serves all 105 counties in Kansas. All grants must benefit the health of Kansans. In some areas of the state, the official office or location of the grantee may be outside of Kansas. In these cases, the grant funds are restricted to the services that benefit Kansans.

Sunflower Foundation does NOT fund:

- ✓ Endowments;
- ✓ fundraising events;
- ✓ individual medical care;
- ✓ medical equipment;
- ✓ direct support of individuals;
- ✓ political campaigns;
- ✓ organizations that practice discrimination.

Assessing impact is a challenging task that varies from grant to grant. Careful planning is the most important step in achieving optimum outcome results.

Not every grant is designed to create long-term social change. Some grants provide information or awareness of issues, some increase the capacity of systems and organizations, and still others help find solutions (in practice or policy) for health issues that Kansans face.

Applying for Grants

A potential grantee may respond to an open Request for Proposal (RFP) or may be invited to apply.

Open RFPs will be posted on the foundation's website.

When responding to an open RFP or an invitation to apply, potential grantees must register in the Sunflower Foundation Grants Management System, Fluxx. Instructions for registering and using Fluxx can be found in the Fluxx Technical Assistance Guide on the How We Work page.

Required Grant/Proposal Documents

Grant proposals are required to have supporting documents, including:

- ❖ Complete grant narrative with all sections addressed (questions in the application form).
- ❖ Complete budget form covering the total (estimated) cost of the project (upload with application).
- ❖ Complete budget narrative explaining specific funding needs (upload with application).
  - ▪ The grant budget form and narrative form templates are available for download from the application form. However, applicants are welcome to use their own budget forms. The only requirement is costs are clearly laid out and funding requests are clearly differentiated between Sunflower requests and other funding.
- ❖ Organizational documents
  - ▪ IRS Form 990 or equivalent documentation of nonprofit status (if applicable).
  - ▪ Most recent audit or working link to online audit (if applicable).
  - ▪ Current financial statements, including income statement and balance sheet, YTD.

Considerations for Funding

When completing the proposal, applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to the type of grant for which they are applying. Questions may include:

- ❖ Applicant/Community description;
- ❖ project history and vision;
- ❖ community desire, need, impact, goals;
- ❖ demonstrating principals of diversity and inclusion;
- ❖ partners, stakeholders, users;
- ❖ project specifics – where, what, when, who and how;
- ❖ long-term maintenance/sustainability.

Recommended Supporting Documents

Supporting documents and materials enhance the application. Every project is special and distinctive, just like the communities they benefit. We encourage applicants to be creative in sharing details that provide a rich picture and tell the story of the project. Such documents could include:

- ❖ Aerial view from Google Earth with a trail route highlighted, including details on nearby neighborhoods, streets, connections, etc.;
- ❖ original (not template) letters of support from current and potential stakeholders and community members of all ages, backgrounds, incomes and abilities;
- ❖ demonstration of community support such as community surveys, local data, minutes from public meetings, photos, webpages, interviews, screenshots of social media activity, local media coverage, or community strategic plan or planning documents;
- ❖ relevant photos that will illustrate the trail location, potential users, current community status of walking conditions and green space;
- ❖ if necessary for the project, any existing engineer or architectural plans, renderings or drawings, but only if the applicant already has them; applicants should not seek such plans or spend money solely for their proposal;
- ❖ smartphone video (<5 min) to capture what written words can't always express or explain.

✳ **Please clearly label all uploaded materials with applicant name and description of the item**

Grant Letter of Agreement

Once a grant proposal has been accepted and approved, the foundation will draft a formal Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the final approved budget as part of that document. The LOA will include the approved Scope of Work (SOW) for the project, grant timeline and reporting requirements. The LOA will be sent electronically to the grantee primary contact for review by all parties. After review, the LOA must be signed by the grantee organization's authorized signatory, as well as the project coordinator (if contacts are different). The LOA should be returned to the foundation electronically, with the grantee keeping a copy. Upon receipt of the signed LOA, the grant formally begins, and work is expected to start within 30 days.

Grant Term

Grant terms can vary based on the type of grant the organization has received. The grant term starts upon signature and return of the LOA. The approved scope of work must be completed within the grant term.

*The foundation understands the complexities and barriers that are sometimes faced when completing projects. Applicants should contact foundation staff to discuss and work through any emerging challenges or barriers. (See contact information on Pages 11-12)

Reporting Requirements

Grantees will typically be required to submit progress reports (both program narratives and financial reports) and a final report as outlined in the signed LOA. All reports should typically be submitted electronically via Fluxx (see Fluxx technical assistance guide on the How We Work page). If applicants have questions, challenges or barriers when submitting reports, reach out to Sunflower Foundation Grants Manager Kelli Mark (kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org).

The Sunflower Review Process

A panel of Sunflower staff and external reviewers typically evaluates each proposal, using a general set of criteria, as well as specific considerations.

ALL proposal components – including the application narrative, budget, budget narrative and all supporting documents – are reviewed, discussed and considered.

Recommendations by the panel of reviewers are presented to the Sunflower Foundation Board of Trustees for final consideration and funding decisions.

Funding Decisions and Awards

Final funding decisions are made by the Board of Trustees. The board meets on the second Thursday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October and December).

Sunflower Foundation is committed to responding to all applicants and notifying them about any decisions affecting a grant proposal. All applicants will be notified in writing of the approval status of their application within 60-90 days of the receipt of the application.

If an organization's application is not approved, we encourage the applicant to reach out to program staff before reapplying.

Tips

* Please read through any open RFPs or applications in their entirety before beginning.
* We encourage applicants to write the grant narrative answers offline in a Word document and save frequently, then copy and past into the online submission form located in Fluxx. **NOTE: Fluxx does <u>NOT</u> auto-save. Applicants must save their work before exiting the system. We recommend saving often when working in Fluxx.**

Please contact us anytime with any questions or technical assistance requests. We are happy to schedule a phone call or virtual session if a conversation is needed. Please see the Contacts section for information on who to contact.

FAQs

Q. How often does Sunflower Foundation issue RFPs?

A. Sunflower Foundation's RFPs may be issued throughout the year. All RFPs are posted on the [Grant Opportunities](#) page.

Q. Does the foundation fund start-up projects?

A. Yes. The foundation will consider supporting start-up projects and start-up organizations based on RFP guidelines or other grant guidelines. If the applicant does not have a 501(c)(3) designation, a fiscal sponsor with this designation is necessary to apply for the grant.

Q. I currently have a grant from Sunflower Foundation. How long do I have to wait before I can submit another application?

A. This depends on the type of grant. Please check with Sunflower staff to clarify.

Q. How are payments set up once an organization receives a grant?

A. Payment schedules are established depending upon the grant. In all cases, the payment schedule will be part of the Letter of Agreement (grant contract) that is signed with each grant award. If you have further questions, please contact Sunflower staff.

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