



## Minnesota Legislator Guide:

# Questions to ask Nonprofits Seeking State Funding

The state government regularly funds nonprofits to carry out services for the people of Minnesota. Because nonprofits can ask for taxpayer money to provide services the state cannot, we encourage legislators to ask these thoughtful questions of nonprofits seeking state funding in order to make the biggest impact on the wellbeing of the people in our state.

## Mission, Evaluation & Impact

### Outcomes and Evaluations Long Term Impact

- What is your organization's mission?
- How does that mission align with public interests and legislative priorities in Minnesota?
- Who defines and how do you measure success in your organization? How is your work or outcomes measuring up to your stated goals?
- What mechanisms do you have in place for measuring and evaluating the outcomes of your programs and services? How do you use this data to inform future initiatives?
- Is there external data or research that explains why your work is needed?

## Detailed Financial Projections

### Financial Health Accountability & Transparency

- Describe your organization's governance structure. How do you ensure your board of directors or trustees understand and demonstrate their role as fiduciary agents, and hold the organization accountable?
- How does your organization ensure transparency and accountability to donors, stakeholders, and the communities you serve?
- Walk me through Section 1 of your most recent IRS Form 990, or external financial audit findings if required for your organization.
- How does your organization ensure financial health? Please share relevant internal control documents or policies, or provide details on your financial management practices.



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## Efficiency Comparisons

Collaborations & Partnerships  
Programs & Services

- How are the people most impacted by the issues your organization addresses involved in setting strategic direction, methods and design of programs, and represented in leadership positions?
- How is your organization uniquely serving your communities?
- How does your organization define, identify, and address the needs of underserved or marginalized communities in Minnesota?
- Tell us about your organization's expertise. How much do others rely on your organization for the work you do?

## Sustainability

Future Sustainability  
Funding Request & Utilization

- If applicable, please share your organization's most recent strategic plan.
- What would be the impact on the community if your organization no longer existed?
- In an ideal world, what are the circumstances that need to exist so that communities are no longer in need of your services?
- If the grant is one-time, is it important to and/or will you be able to continue services beyond the grant period?
- What are your organization's long-term goals?
- Please provide either an organizational or program specific budget used to meet the grant's goals. Will the grant cover the cost of expected expenditures?
- How does this funding request complement your existing budget and funding sources? Are there matching funds or other sources of revenue that will support this initiative?

## Why does this matter?

Nonprofits are often tasked with doing too much with too little. By providing this resource, we aim to foster greater respect for nonprofits' time and capacity while seeking state funding. This helps legislators, as stewards of taxpayer dollars, better understand the complexities of funding and operating nonprofits in Minnesota and ensure tax dollars are used well.

*This document was crowd-sourced from the Public Policy Cabinet, a group of ~100 nonprofit advocates from all corners of Minnesota working at nonprofits of all sizes, convened by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. Responses were edited, organized, and built upon by MCN staff.*



Use the QR Code or link to view:  
[Legislator Guide: Understanding Nonprofit Operating Realities](#)