

## Small Grants: Tips for Success for Grantors

### Why have a small grants program?

- ❖ A small grants program can be a helpful tool for organizations...
  - Wanting to further their mission through partners suited to carry out particular work.
  - Distributing sub-grants under a larger award, like The TOPS Program.
  - Seeking to build their own capacity by awarding grants within their organization.
- ❖ Because of their size, small grants programs provide unique opportunities compared to other sources of funding. Such benefits include:
  - Encouraging **innovation and creativity** by testing an idea or practice in an underexplored area.
  - Building on a previous or existing project, for example, by disseminating findings and lessons learned.
  - A streamlined application and review process, which can allow funds to get out the door more quickly.
  - The opportunity to offer your grant recipients greater flexibility while implementing.

### How does my organization start up a small grants program?

- ❖ Establish a clear focus – what do you want to achieve through your program?
- ❖ Create criteria and set targets about the types of projects or organizations you seek to fund.
- ❖ Solicit applications by putting together a **clear and straightforward** request for applications (RFA). Include...
  - Due dates
  - Objective of the grant program
  - Grant ceiling
  - Eligibility requirements
  - Duration of implementation
  - Unallowable costs
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Relevant templates
- ❖ Share the RFA by posting publicly or through more targeted means, such as relevant listservs or networks.
- ❖ Anticipate what human resources will be required to evaluate proposals and to support the grant program.
- ❖ Assemble a panel of reviewers with the required expertise and allot your time appropriately to review. Use an evaluation sheet with a point-based rubric and sections for notes.
- ❖ Be transparent with applicants by providing an anticipated timeline for review. If follow-ups are required, make sure conversations are practical, informative, and noncommittal.

### How does my organization manage a small grants program?

- ❖ Once you have made your grant selections, update all applicants, including those who have been rejected. If possible, provide feedback about why a proposal was rejected.
- ❖ For organizations to whom you will be awarding grants, provide an ‘award package’ with important information about what deliverables are expected when and what payment terms apply. If narrative or financial reports are required, provide templates.
- ❖ Stay organized with well-maintained files and spreadsheets that track deliverables and payments.
- ❖ Reflect on possible improvements, seeking input from grant recipients, and strive to improve your small grants program. Document and share accomplishments and shortcomings.
- ❖ If the program is part of a larger award, be aware of your donor’s requirements, like branding guidelines.
- ❖ **Remain flexible!** Balance due diligence with limiting the burden for the implementing partners.