

The Schenectady Foundation's 2015 GRANT PROGRAM



Mission: *To advance the sustainable well-being of the people of Schenectady County through the investment and engagement of philanthropic resources.*

www.schenectadyfoundation.org

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March 1, 2015

Coming off our Golden Anniversary

During our 50th anniversary in 2013 – 2014, The Schenectady Foundation committed \$2.6 million in grants and scholarships – more than ever before in a single grant cycle. But the importance of those investments was far greater than the amount of funding or the number of grants. An emerging direction was the potential to transform community through collective action, and by investing in programs capable of effectively leveraging partnership. We embraced the simple but vital notion that we are all interdependent -- that no single organization alone is likely to bring about significant change in the community. By acting in concert with aligned, able and committed partners (both private and public) who bring complementary resources to the table, we are capable of far greater outcomes than we are operating in isolation.

The Foundation as Catalyst

The Schenectady Foundation also embraced its role as a catalyst for community change. While the Foundation is unlikely to be able to provide sustaining funding for any particular program or project for more than a few years, we have a distinct role to play in helping promising programs to get off the ground, to expand, or to be brought to scale.

Our \$1 million Transformational Grant to the Schenectady Bridges Partnership is an example of our catalyst role. A modest TSF grant launched the partnership in 2011. By 2013 Bridges had demonstrated its considerable value: there was potential for far reaching influence and big outcomes, and components of the program could be sustained beyond the Foundation's initial investment.

But we also have seen that smaller investments can spark programs, seed new initiatives, and bring partners together. Whether it's \$1 million or \$10,000, we have sought to understand how our funding, and our involvement as a partner at the table, can have a strengthening and catalyzing impact in the community.

As The Schenectady Foundation enters a new phase in its development, we look forward to working with our community partners: non-profit institutions, education, government, neighborhood groups, and private businesses, to bring clarity, focus and energy to our shared imperative to shape and transform our community for the better. We are excited to be on this journey of community change with you, learning together as we go forward!

2015 GRANTS PORTFOLIO

The Schenectady Foundation has committed up to \$1.3 million in grants, scholarships and community programs for calendar year 2015. It is the Foundation's intent to continue to focus its resources in those programs and areas that can substantively demonstrate positive results for the people and communities of Schenectady County, NY.

We anticipate approving 10 – 16 grants of various amounts, covering a spectrum of projects that address our community priorities.

In particular, our grants will be prioritized among applicants whose proposals are aligned with, or support several strategies and initiatives that have previously been seeded by Foundation investments. While new proposals do not necessarily need to be a formal partner with these endeavors, those that are aligned and integrated with one or more current initiatives will receive strong consideration by the Foundation. Regardless of affiliation, all proposals will be assessed by the Foundation on their merits and the likelihood that they can achieve compelling results.

The established initiatives in which the Foundation is invested include:

- Schenectady Bridges Partnership
- Bigelow Corners Partnership
- Bridges to Youths: ***A Call to Action for Schenectady's Youths***
- Strong Families Schenectady
- UMATTER Schenectady (aka Schenectady Coalition for a Healthy Community)

You will find information on each of these initiatives in the appendix of this guide, or by connecting to their websites. You can also see a list of recent Foundation grants on our website.

Given limited resources we are interested in seeing how we can advance existing partnerships and initiatives, or strengthen promising, emerging partnerships. Applicants should consider how their proposals can build upon, be supportive of the outcomes, or be aligned and integrated with one or more of these initiatives in a way that adds value to them, and improves results for the community.

GRANT LIMITATIONS

The Schenectady Foundation was created to benefit the well-being of people who live and work in Schenectady County, NY. By virtue of its founding document and mission, the Foundation is restricted from distributing funds that do not contribute to this goal. While applicant organizations may be located outside of Schenectady County, the services or programs for which they seek funds from this foundation must be focused on the benefit of Schenectady County residents.

NEW INITIATIVES

The Foundation remains open to all qualified applicants and programs with the potential to help us meet our mission: *to advance the sustainable well-being of the people of Schenectady County through the investment and engagement of philanthropic resources.* As noted, while we will prioritize proposals that build the strength of existing partnerships, we remain open to considering new initiatives – large or small -- with the potential to marshal the community's resources to bring about compelling results.

REVITALIZING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

We have seen tremendous resurgence in Schenectady's downtown in recent years, in physical appearance and in the number of new businesses and jobs. We believe that this same transformation can, and must, be achieved in Schenectady's neighborhoods, and that all our community members can benefit from the broader economic come-back.

Toward this end, The Schenectady Foundation is in the process of exploring its potential role in neighborhood revitalization. While we have not yet identified a specific project, target location or amount of resources to be invested in this area, we are developing an overall strategy and seeking community partners for future investments in Schenectady's neighborhoods.

We anticipate releasing a call for investment for neighborhood revitalization. There is no specific time frame for this announcement. And while we are not prepared to entertain specific proposals at this time, we are welcoming conversations with interested parties – potential partners – whose resources could be leveraged by the Foundation in a place-based, neighborhood improvement strategy.

MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM

The Schenectady Foundation has established a "Micro-Grants" or small grants program to consider requests of \$10,000 or less. The Micro-Grants program offers an abbreviated process for smaller grants. Organizations might consider applying for a Micro-Grant for planning, research and development of future projects, or to get pilot projects off the ground in anticipation of being able to attract more substantial, longer-term funding.

GRANT PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

A Foundation Focused on Strengthening Families in Schenectady County

TSF's grant program is open to any tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization whose programs and services demonstrate a benefit to people who live or work in Schenectady County, NY. The Foundation has maintained a strategic focus on Strengthening Families. This is a multi-year commitment to support a continuum of community resources that strengthen Schenectady's families. TSF's intent is to concentrate funding in programs that align with and are supportive of the Strengthening Families strategy. You may learn more about Strengthening Families on our website.

Grantee Eligibility

Applicants must be non-profit corporations registered with the NYS Office of Charities Registration, and designated as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization by the IRS. *Generally*, government entities - counties, cities, school districts, towns or villages – and religious institutions are not eligible to receive grants. However, these entities may work with and through a charitable institution in support of particular projects that have a charitable purpose in the community. The Foundation will consider exceptions to its eligibility guidelines on a case by case basis.

Grant Types

The Foundation's funding is relatively flexible as for how it may be used. TSF makes grants for capital improvements, equipment and for program operating expenses, or a combination of funding types. Regardless of the grant type, applicants must establish their ability to complete and sustain projects beyond the Foundation's funding. Organizations are urged to identify other sources of funding that may be appropriate for particular components of its project budget.

Grant Size

There is no specific minimum or maximum size for grant requests. Proposals for small amounts of funding (less than \$10,000) will generally be handled via an abbreviated "Micro-Grants" process. The Foundation will rarely be the primary or sole source of funding for any one project – we look positively on organizations and projects that are working toward a sustainable program model. The grant amount requested from TSF should enable the organization to successfully complete the project. The average grant over the past two years has been \$90,000 – the low was \$2,000 and the high was \$1,000,000.

Multi-year Grants

Organizations may apply for multi-year grants – generally not for longer than three years.

Matching Grants

Matching grants (or "challenge" grants) are sometimes awarded to stimulate the organization's fund development efforts, and to help diversify the project's funding base.

References

The Foundation will seek the perspective of other funders, organization leaders, stakeholders and customers of the applicant organization to add value to its deliberations.

HOW TO APPLY

The Schenectady Foundation has moved to an online grant application process. The process is conducted in two stages, with all applicant information submitted through online proposal forms that are in the “cloud”. Access to the grant website is provided through a link on the Foundation’s website. The applicant will first need to establish an account on the Foundation’s grant site. Once an account is set up, the grant process is as follows:

1. **Applicant submits a Letter of Inquiry (LOI):** The LOI is, in effect, a brief proposal that articulates the high level goals and proposed achievements of the project. If the LOI is accepted by the Foundation, the applicant will be provided with access to the online Grant Proposal form. Acceptance of the LOI does not ensure that the proposal will be funded. It is, however, an indication that the Foundation is seriously interested in learning more and, upon the submission of a solid grant proposal, will give earnest consideration to making an investment.
2. **Applicant submits a Grant Proposal:** The grant proposal is an in-depth presentation of the project seeking funding. The grant proposal will need to articulate specific measurable outcomes, provide a detailed project budget, and substantively address the grant selection criteria. Upon receipt of the requested grant proposal, the Foundation will launch a review process that includes:
 - a. Review of proposal content by staff
 - b. Applicant interview conference with Foundation staff and Distribution Committee
 - c. Reference interviews
 - d. Financial due diligence
 - e. Review of supporting research and documentation

Final determination will be made on the selection of grant recipients by The Schenectady Foundation’s Distribution Committee. Grants may include restrictions as to the use of funds, or place conditions on the grantee for performance expectations. Conditions may include the requirement of leveraging or matching additional funds.

3. **Micro-Grant Proposal:** An LOI is not required for submission of a Micro-Grant proposal. Micro-Grants are limited to requests of \$10,000 or less. Micro-Grants are subject to the same criteria as the main grant proposal process but offer an abbreviated process and decision time-frame. The Micro-Grant form is available on the Foundation’s grant site.

SUBMITTING THE LETTER OF INQUIRY or GRANT PROPOSAL

LOI’s and Grant Proposals may be submitted throughout the year. There is no specific due date, and the date of submission does not affect the likelihood of success in obtaining a grant. However, please note the following “cut-off” dates for submission to each quarterly review meeting in 2015, and the date by which you may anticipate a response from the Foundation:

- March 25th (response by April 20th)
- May 20th (response by June 19th)
- September 23rd (response by Oct 9th)
- November 18th (response by Dec 18th)

Grant Selection Criteria

The Schenectady Foundation applies the following criteria to all proposals in its grant process:

1. **Strategic Focus:** the proposal is aligned with TSF's *Strengthening Families* strategy (see page 10 of this document).
2. **Partnership:** the proposal is connected with and supportive of an existing partnership or initiative – or a promising emerging partnership -- and can substantively contribute to advancing the progress of the initiative.
3. **Outcomes:** the proposal identifies clear, measurable outcomes or results.
4. **Impact:** the projected results are compelling with strong potential to contribute to real community impact.
5. **Evaluation:** the applicant has a methodology for evaluating the program outcomes and impact, and/or has contracted with a credible third party to conduct the evaluation.
6. **Project Plan:** there is a viable and strategic written plan of action to guide successful implementation of the project.
7. **Leadership:** the project has strong leadership, capable staff and engaged, supportive board members required to drive it to success.
8. **Resources:** The project has, or will acquire, the resources (financial or other) sufficient to support achievement of the project goals.
9. **Leveraging:** TSF's support would leverage other important resources (funding, expertise, community partnerships, etc.) to achieve success and sustainability.
10. **Sustainability:** There are realistic, identifiable funding streams for extending or even expanding the project beyond the life of a grant from TSF.
11. **Recognition:** TSF will receive appropriate and meaningful recognition for its support of the project.

GENERAL GUIDANCE REGARDING YOUR GRANT PROPOSAL

Regardless of the amount or purpose of your grant request, we recommend the following:

1. **Share your project idea with us.** It helps us to have had an opportunity to be aware of the project before it is officially submitted. We may be able to provide guidance or technical assistance that will be helpful to the development of the project or proposal, and to connect you with other resources and potential partners. While we encourage a brief pre-submission conversation, we recognize the value of your time and ours. Taking time to develop a project outline (see **Grant Concept Worksheet**) in advance of scheduling a meeting will enable us to make best use of our discussion time.
2. **Don't rush the proposal.** TSF's timeframe is rolling. Submit when you are ready, but not before. We plan to be in business and making grants for some time to come. If you miss this quarter or fiscal year, there is another just around the corner.
3. **Do the research.** Be prepared to back up your project idea with research, examples of successful models or evidence-informed practices. This will be most helpful to you at the outset of the project, and provide the Foundation with a stronger sense of why the project may be important to the community and likely to succeed.
4. **Align your partners.** We appreciate the demanding work required to act cooperatively with other leaders and organizations. We think there is often a bigger payoff to investments in partnerships that bring to the table a diverse and critical set of skills and assets. It is important to strategically look at the potential value of partnership early in development. While the Foundation encourages collaboration as a means to more powerful outcomes and sustainability, we discourage collaboration for the sake of attracting grant funding.
5. **Think of us as potentially more than a funder.** When TSF gets behind a project, we usually would like to do more than simply make a grant payment. Especially when the project is of significant import to our community, and strongly aligned with **Strengthening Families**, we are interested in how we can be supportive in promoting and sustaining it beyond the term of our grant.
6. **Understand our intent and limitations.** The Schenectady Foundation intends to make the very best investments we can in our community with finite resources. We try to be clear about our process and how we can work with applicants and grantees. When we make a grant we consider our role in supporting the project to success. We cannot, however, fund every project and can only rarely make long-term commitments to sustain programs.
7. **Send us a draft.** If received with sufficient time prior to the submission date, we offer to review Letters of Inquiry, Concept Proposals or Grant Proposals and to provide critical feedback toward making your proposal as strong as it can be.

TSF GRANT CONCEPT WORKSHEET

If you have a project in mind for a potential request to The Schenectady Foundation, and would like to consult with TSF staff on the viability of a proposal, please develop a brief outline – up to two pages – addressing some of the core components of the project:

- Name of Project
- Approximate project budget
- Approximate grant request to The Schenectady Foundation
- What are we trying to accomplish with this project?
- What are our stated goals or project outcomes?
- What are the key indicators of project success?
- Why is this project important or necessary at this time?
- Who are our customers/clients for this project?
- Who are our (potential) partners?
- Are proposed resources sufficient to achieve our goals?
- What resources can we leverage through this project?
- Is this a sustainable activity?
- What is the time-frame for implementation of the project?
- Is our approach to this project supported by successful models, a body of research or evidence-based practices?
- How will we evaluate the project?
- What other funding sources may be available to us?

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

In 2008, after a year of study and community input, TSF committed to a long-term strategic focus called Strengthening Families. Our vision is that:

Families will have the capacity to support the success of their children in their family, school and community.

The Foundation, along with its grantees and community partners, is developing a continuum of integrated community resources that strengthen families. We are helping families achieve positive outcomes for their children by building self-reliance, improving academic, social and life skills and promoting wellness.

Community resources and services are bridged by a common strategy to engage and support the entire family.

To-date The Schenectady Foundation has granted more than \$4 million to projects that are aligned with the vision and strategies of its Strengthening Families focus.

KEY STRATEGIES

Some of the strategies that have been identified with the potential to further the Strengthening Families vision include:

- Building parent effectiveness, support and engagement
- Developing a family-focused community service culture
- Strengthening prenatal care and healthy birth outcomes
- Expanding home visiting and newborn/infant health, wellness and development
- Providing consistent, high-quality, enriched child care that is family-centered
- Providing supports vital to improved family functioning

HIGHLIGHTED STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROGRAMS AND GRANTS

- Schenectady Bridges Out of Poverty partnership
- Bigelow Corners Partnership Seed Grant
- Ellis Medicine's Bellevue Woman's Center
- Samaritan Counseling's Strong Families Schenectady
- Schenectady Neighborhood Health Assessment (UMATTER)
- Hometown Health/Parsons Better Health/Better Neighborhoods mental health initiative
- Capital District Child Care Council's Family-Centered Child Care Project
- Healthy Schenectady Families

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES OUTCOMES

TSF is firm in its commitment to invest in programs that achieve results, not just for individuals, but for families. We are supportive of programs that lead to outcomes in some of the following areas (but not limited to these areas):

Maternal and Child Health

- Women receive early and consistent prenatal care throughout pregnancy
- Children will be born healthy
- Women make healthy choices during pregnancy

Healthy Start

- Families form effective long-term relationships with a patient-centered medical home
- Newborns and infants receive regular well-care check-ups, and avoid serious health problems
- Newborns and infants receive proper nutrition
- Parents establish and sustain a strong early bond with their newborn

Child Development

- Children achieve appropriate developmental milestones
- Children enter kindergarten capable of performing at grade level or above
- Families have sufficient options for quality pre-school and family-centered childcare opportunities
- Parents/guardians are active in their child's pre-school program and capable of engaging in effective early learning strategies

Education

- Children will achieve a level of literacy that enables them to be successful students
- Families and schools are engaged in the social and academic development of their children

Youth Success

- Parents/guardians are engaged in their children's education, and embrace educational achievement as a core value
- Youth maintain at least one positive mentoring relationship with an adult
- Youth obtain a high school degree and are prepared to enter into post-secondary education, training or work

Healthy Neighborhoods

- Families are able to raise their children in safe, stable home and community environments
- Families and their children will be supported by, and engaged in supporting, their neighborhood and community

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- What are the key indicators of project success?
- Why is this project important or necessary for the community at this time?
- Who are our customers?
- Who are our (potential) partners?
- Are proposed resources sufficient to achieve our goals?
- What resources can we leverage through this project?
- Is this a sustainable activity?
- What is the time-frame for implementation of the project?
- Is our approach to this project supported by successful models, a body of research or evidence-based practices?

About The Schenectady Foundation

The Schenectady Foundation was established in 1963 by community and business leaders as a charitable trust to benefit the health and well-being of people who live and work in Schenectady County, NY.

In July 1963 - The Schenectady Foundation made its first grant -- \$250 to the Schenectady YMCA. Since then TSF has distributed close to \$19 million for charitable grants and scholarships. Over the years, more than 100 charitable organizations throughout Schenectady County have benefited from its support.

Nearly all gifts have come to the Foundation via trusts, wills or estate plans – many from very significant estates – others from community members of modest means. TSF's growth and impact over its first 50 years has been considerable. In 2015 we are engaging our community in launching the next 50!

To learn more about The Schenectady Foundation, visit our website or call us at (518) 393-9500.

www.schenectadyfoundation.org