

Activate Fund Collaboration Pilot Program Guidelines

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A. Executive Summary

About the Activate Fund:

Co.act Detroit is shaping a grantmaking strategy for investing in nonprofit organizations and collaborative action in the nonprofit sector. As part of this strategy, Co.act Detroit is launching the **Activate Fund Collaboration Pilot** to enhance nonprofit organizations' capacity to effect transformative impact in their communities. Inspired by recommendations from the report "Building a Network: Recommendations for Redefining Capacity Building in Southeast Michigan," our grantmaking strategy focuses on strengthening nonprofit capacity in two ways:

1. Build Nonprofit Organizations' Internal Capacity to Fulfill Their Missions.

We believe that nonprofit organizations must have their internal needs met before they can effectively meet the needs of the populations they serve. The report identified these 7 capacity areas impact nonprofits' ability to meet mission: Talent, Operations, Funding & Resources, Organizational Culture, Strategy & Planning, Program Development, Leadership & Governance.

2. Build Nonprofit Organizations' Capacity to Work Collaboratively.

We believe that working in collaboration allows nonprofits to multiply strength, resources, and knowledge. This, in turn, allows them to have transformative impact beyond the scope of what a single organization could achieve working on its own.

Like the recommendations in 'Building a Network,' Co.act Detroit's grantmaking strategy is founded on a deep commitment to advancing racial and social equity - both within the nonprofit sector and in local communities. Through the Activate Fund we seek to provide funding for and facilitate access to high quality technical assistance for nonprofit organizations, recognizing systemic barriers which often limit access.

Learn more about Building a Network at www.mi-community.org/buildinganetwork.

Co.act Detroit's Capacity Building Values and Core Beliefs: Our approach to capacity building is founded on these core beliefs:

1. We value investment that reduces the burden on nonprofits and increasing access to resources. We believe that nonprofit organizations and their leaders are innately resourceful and capable of achieving their visions for change. However, they face systemic barriers which limit their success.
2. We value relationship-driven capacity building that is collaborative, not prescriptive. We believe that nonprofit organizations with access to funding, decision makers, and effective, customized technical support, will realize their potential as key drivers of change in their communities.
3. We value investment in organizational development and professional growth. We believe in equipping nonprofit organizations to have transformative impact in their communities by strengthening their capacity to:
 - i. Achieve their individual visions for community change
 - ii. Work collaboratively as part of a broad-based network to address systemic barriers and inequities which limit their success
 - iii. We value capacity building that advances social justice and racial equity. We believe in closing the racial leadership gap to create space for new, more culturally aware perspectives on problem-solving, needs, and priorities in disadvantaged communities to emerge.

Applicants are encouraged to develop grant proposals that align with these core values and beliefs and demonstrate how the proposal will enhance your organization's ability to deliver transformative outcomes for the constituents you serve.

About the Activate Fund Collaboration Pilot: The **Collaboration Pilot** is a program within the Activate Fund to support and encourage nonprofits to explore formal, long-term collaborations to maximize impact.

Under the Activate Fund Collaboration Pilot, a collaborative is defined as a relationship between one nonprofit and **another** nonprofit, corporation, or governmental agency(s) that:

1. Changes participating organizations' approach to doing business for the long-term;
2. Has support, involvement and endorsement from the organization's board
3. Preserves, expands or elevates the effectiveness of service delivery to constituents

Examples of a Collaborative:

1. Non-profit groups meet together regularly to share affordable housing best practices and develop a cohesive affordable housing strategy for their community
2. Group of nonprofits and governmental agency(s) co-develop standards and approach for equitable community development for their city
3. Group of community organizations focused on providing food access for youth plan a conference to learn and share best practices and discuss how to work together more effectively
4. A non-profit focused on educating residents in IT, the city's digital inclusion department and a corporate network service provider organize a cross-sector session to develop solutions to a shared challenge

Why Collaboration? We believe nonprofits are helping to create better communities, but every year the number of nonprofits continues to increase, yet we don't see better health, housing, jobs, or incomes in underserved communities. We believe this is because nonprofits face significant barriers to effectively achieving their mission that are rooted in social injustice and inequity. The barriers faced by nonprofits are too big and too complex for a single organization to tackle alone, therefore collaboration across organizations and across sectors is essential to truly see systemic change in our communities.

B. Grant Award Details

Up to **five** collaborative groups will be selected during the initial pilot to receive a **Collaboration Package**.

What We Provide:

1. Encouragement for nonprofit leaders to explore a range of formal collaborations with other nonprofits or key strategic partners rooted in maximum impact with minimal overlap, including but not limited to:
 - i. strategic alliances
 - ii. long-term programmatic joint ventures
 - iii. collaborative problem solving
 - iv. exploring, designing and/or implementing a formal collaboration

2. Collaborative Convening Package:
 - i. Convening planning session(s) to support agenda building, group goal-setting, or other planning needs
 - ii. Administration support scheduling the convening(s)
 - iii. Space to convene
 - iv. General meeting support such as materials and refreshments
 - v. Facilitation and note-taking support during convening(s)
 - vi. Content capture and graphics including a convening session end product(s)
 - vii. Other meeting services as needed such as photography and video
 - viii. Testimonial feedback from the collaborative on the value of the Collaboration Pilot
 - ix. Language translation services

Co.act Detroit anticipates some collaborations will face unexpected and unintended expenses that are outside the framework of these types of support and withholds the right to deploy additional capital at Co.act Detroit's discretion. Additional support for the collaborative work will be reviewed and approved by Co.act staff on a case by case basis as the group's needs may evolve.

Co.act Detroit will retain, share and look to grow an active list of facilitators and consultants with demonstrated experience supporting collaborative activity. Grantees are required to use a service provider from Co.act Detroit's approved list. Applicants may also share the public RFP with their preferred service providers during the open call for submissions.

The Collaboration pilot is designed to meet organizations where they are. It is anticipated that after conducting exploratory work some collaborative projects will not proceed. Grantee deliverables at the end of the grant term are expected to be custom for each group.

Please note that while each of the services offered through the Collaboration Package has a value, there is no money exchanged between Co.act Detroit and the grantees. Co.act Detroit will pay service providers directly on behalf of the collaborative participants.

C. Eligibility Criteria

The Activate Fund manages a competitive application process, and **not all requests for funding will be awarded.**

Applicants must meet the following Eligibility Criteria to be considered for an award:

1. Meets the definition of formal collaboration and has potential to meaningfully preserve, expand or improve effectiveness of services to constituents and/or improve financial health of the nonprofit(s) involved
 - i. Demonstrated commitment to the success of the collaborative venture among the partners at ED/ Board Chair level
 - ii. Is seeking this award package to start or further the mission of the collaborative
2. Individually, at least one partnering organization must:
 - i. Be a registered nonprofit with 501c3 status
 - ii. Meet financial criteria including: a complete annual independent audit, an annual tax return (990/990 EZ), an active board of directors and an IRS determination letter verifying non-profit status
 - iii. New initiatives or non-profits must present equivalent financial documentation such as audited financial statements or a board-approved budget
3. Collectively, the work of the collaborative must:
 - i. Serve a community in Wayne county
 - o Individually or collectively the group may serve additional counties,
 - o Collectively the group may serve one population or zip code within Wayne county
 - ii. Be working together to achieve systemic change or a similar shared outcome that each organization would not be able to accomplish individually
 - iii. Demonstrate alignment of purpose among the partners

Examples of eligible collaboratives:

1. Existing collaboratives that have some funding but require additional support
2. Existing collaboratives facing challenges with advancing their work and/or are considering a change in their course of action
3. New collaboratives are eligible but must be able to demonstrate realistic actionable outcomes within the grant period

Examples of eligible activities:

Collaboratives applying for the award are working towards some type of formal collaborative activity, including but not limited to:

1. Short-term activity (e.g., organizing a conference in partnership, co-branding a one-time advocacy campaign)
2. Program-focused collaborations (e.g., organizations that provide after school programming explore opportunities for shared transportation)

What is not supported:

1. Any transaction involving only one organization (e.g., internal reorganization/repositioning)
2. Programmatic activity that is already part of the organization's core activities or mission and does not involve fundamental shift in the organizations' partnerships (e.g., a nonprofit providing afterschool programming is not eligible for a grant because it "works" with a school)

A single organization may submit multiple applications so long as each collaboration involves a unique partner. If two organizations have multiple collaborative ideas, Co.act Detroit asks that the strongest idea be submitted for review.

D. How We Make Grants

Overview of Process:

There are four steps to the Activate Fund Collaboration Pilot application process:

1. Attend an information session
2. Submit a 1-page LOI
3. Receive invite-only application and submit materials
4. Committee review and selection

STEP ONE: INFORMATION SESSIONS (REQUIRED)

1. Co.act Detroit will host two public information sessions during March. During the session organizations will have the opportunity to share information about their collaborative and its mission with Co.act staff.
2. It is required that at least one collaborative partner attend at least one of the information sessions. Visit www.coactdetroit.org for full schedule and details.
3. Based on the information session, organizations can decide whether to proceed with submitting a formal Letter of Intent (LOI). An LOI template is available on Co.act's website [here](#).

STEP TWO: LOI DUE

1. A LOI is required to be considered for a full grant application.
2. LOIs must be signed by Executive Director(s) and Board Chair(s) of at least two of the entities in the proposed collaboration, briefly describing what you hope to accomplish with the grant.
3. The letter should briefly address what your organizations can accomplish together that you cannot do separately and what key issues you might address through the collaboration package.
4. LOIs should be emailed to activatefundinfo@coactdetroit.org by **11:59pm EST March 31, 2020**.
5. Co.act staff will review and determine whether your collaboration is eligible to move to Step 3, and you will be notified either way.

STEP THREE: INVITATION TO APPLY AND SUBMIT APPLICATION MATERIALS

If the Collaborative is invited to apply, the lead applicant will receive an email confirmation with a direct link to the application. Applications must be submitted online through **Submittable** at www.submittable.coactdetroit.com by **11:59pm EST April 30, 2020**.

Application Checklist:

Applications must answer all required questions and attach:

1. Cover letter signed by executive or board leadership
2. Most recent certified financial audit or financial review (within the last fiscal year)*

3. Total project budget* (required template here)
4. List of Board of Directors or Trustees
5. Operating budget for current fiscal year
6. IRS 501(c)(3) federal tax-exemption letter
7. Organization's diversity/equity/inclusion philosophy (visit the [Application Appendix](#) for examples)

**Applicants must provide a complete annual independent audit, an annual tax return (990/990 EZ), an active board of directors and an IRS determination letter verifying non-profit status.*

New initiatives or non-profits must present equivalent financial documentation such as audited financial statements or a board-approved budget.

Incomplete/partial applications will not be considered and deemed ineligible.

To complete an application in person, visit the offices of:

Co.act Detroit
6568 Woodward
Detroit, MI 48202

[Transportation Information](#)

Applicants who have a specific need to utilize an on-site computer should contact Co.act Detroit in advance to make an appointment to access a computer and wifi to submit their materials online. To avoid multiple visits, bring printed or electronic copies of all required attachments and please strive to schedule an appointment during Application Office Hours. The schedule of events will be posted at www.coactdetroit.org.

An invitation for a full application is not a guarantee of award.

Application Confirmation:

Applicants will receive an automatic confirmation email after submission. It may take several days to process applications. Please note that an email address is required to receive confirmation that an application has been received.

Lead Applicant:

For administrative purposes, one contact person must be designated to steward the grant application process.

The lead applicant is not required to be a registered 501c3 as no monetary exchange of funds will occur between Co.act Detroit and the collaborative participants.

STEP FOUR: COMMITTEE REVIEW AND SELECTION

We expect to receive a highly competitive pool of proposals from across Wayne County. Grant awards are provided on a competitive basis due to limited resources.

Scoring Criteria:

Competitive applicants individually and/or collectively:

1. Demonstrate alignment and commitment to Co.act's values and approach to capacity building

2. Demonstrate how support for this collaboration could be **catalytic** for the organization(s) involved and/or demonstrable change in the communities served
3. The degree to which this award can play a catalytic role in the collaborative process
4. Demonstrate how groups can realistically achieve demonstrable change within grant period. This is not necessarily the final end product of the collaborative process, it may be a part of the process that has clearly defined deliverables, outcomes and mutually agreed upon definition of success by a set timeframe
5. Thoughtful pre-planning among partners as demonstrated in well-conceived responses, with clearly articulated costs, goals, timeline and benchmarks as appropriate

Applicants will be scored based on **four** criteria:

1. **Collaboration** - Is this collaborative working towards a mission that can only be achieved collectively and could not be achieved by any one party individually?
 - i. Yes, organizations are working towards system change
 - ii. Organizations are working toward a collective vision but it does not substantially disrupt the status quo
 - iii. No, organizations are already working towards this mission separately and their work is not accelerated by working together
2. **Demonstrable and Catalytic Impact** - Will this award help the collaborative fulfill their organization's mission and take their work to the next level?
 - i. Very Impactful
 - ii. Somewhat Impactful
 - iii. Not Impactful
3. **Feasibility** - Can this request reasonably be completed within the award period (4-6 months)?
 - i. Barring unforeseen circumstances, yes
 - ii. Likely to be completed
 - iii. Possible but not likely
 - iv. This cannot be completed in the award period
4. **Alignment with Co.act Values** - Does the applicant demonstrate alignment with Co.act's Values?
 - i. Very aligned
 - ii. Somewhat aligned
 - iii. Not aligned

Selection Process

The Review Committee, comprised of program partners and Co.act staff, will review proposals for eligibility and score all eligible applications. From this review, the committee will provide 'finalist' applications and scores along with a recommendation for a slate of grant awards to Co.act, which retains final decision-making authority over final grant awards.

The Review Committee may request additional information and/or ask clarifying questions prior to reaching a funding decision.

Eligibility

1. To advance, applicants must meet all eligibility criteria
2. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be considered but will be notified they are ineligible for the program.

Scoring

1. Every application will receive at least two scores from the selection committee and Scores will be tallied automatically based on aggregated Review Committee responses and then confirmed by Co.act staff

Final Selection

1. The Review Committee will convene for a discussion and make recommendations for final selection

Notification

1. All applicants will be notified whether they are selected in writing
2. Where possible, applicants will also be connected to additional resources at Co.act or through Co.act's network of capacity building partners

Grantee Timeline

Attend Information Session	March 2020
Submit LOI	March 31, 2020 11:59pm EST
Notification of Invitation to Apply	April 13, 2020
Grant Applications Due	April 30th, 2020 11:59pm EST
Jury Review and Selection	May 2020
Grant Awards	May 2020
Awardee Convening	May-June 2020
Grant Period	May 2020 - March 2021

E. How the Collaboration Package Works

1. Awardee convening - following notification of an award, all grantees will be required to attend an initial convening to sign grant paperwork and meet the Co.act staff. All collaborative partners are invited to attend though only one partner is required. It is recommended that the lead applicant attend on behalf of the collaborative.
2. Select facilitator - awardees will be provided with an approved list of service providers for the collaboration package. They will submit their preferred provider in writing to Co.act staff with an invoice and fully executed service agreement. Awardees may contact multiple approved facilitators to get to know their expertise prior to selecting a facilitator to work with. Co.act will provide written approval of the documents and grantees selection.
3. Initial planning meeting - once Co.act staff has approved the invoice, awardees may schedule their initial planning consultation with the facilitator directly.

4. Convening Checklist - after the initial planning meeting, the lead applicant must complete the convening checklist and submit all convening needs in writing to Co.act staff.
5. Schedule convening - once Co.act staff approves the request, the lead applicant will coordinate the convening with support from Co.act staff as needed.
6. Final report - the lead applicant must submit a final report to Co.act staff within 90 days of the convening including a copy of the session end product.

If multiple convenings are awarded under the Collaboration Package, steps 2 - 6 must be completed for each session.

Expectation of Grantees

Grantees will be expected to participate in all aspects of the program, including such activities as sharing their story through media / promotion of the Activate Fund. These types of opportunities will be determined after grantees are announced. All grantees are expected to sign a grant agreement, which contains the detailed terms and conditions of the Collaboration Pilot program.

Confidentiality

Applicant proprietary and confidential data will not be shared beyond the purposes of review during the award selection process and providing business support. Applicant data will not be sold.

Disclaimer

The information contained herein is subject to the actual grant award documents and the written terms and conditions of the Activate Fund program, as the same may be amended from time to time. Co.act Detroit reserves the right to make the final determination of any person's or organization's eligibility and/or qualifications for program benefits, and to make allocation of program benefits as it may, in sole discretion deem appropriate.