Activate Fund
Nonprofit Fundamentals FAQ

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A. The Basics

What is the Activate Fund? The Activate Fund is a $1.5 million grant fund to support capacity building and collaboration of nonprofits in Southeast Michigan.

Why is the Activate Fund needed? Many of the capacity building programs that exist are available through foundations that may also provide other operating and programmatic support crucial to the mission of community organizations.

The Activate Fund provides funding for capacity and collaborative activity through a neutral intermediary.

Who runs the Activate Fund? Co.act Detroit administers the Activate Fund.

Co.act Detroit works with other intermediary partners and cross-sector community leaders from around the region who serve as strategic partners, advisors and external jurors to the fund.

Who funds the Activate Fund? The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation (RCWJRF) is the inaugural funder of the Activate Fund.

What is the objective of the Activate Fund? The Activate Fund is a grantmaking strategy to support nonprofit impact in our community that invests in two core areas:

1. Building Nonprofit Capacity to Meet Mission
2. Building Network Capacity for Social Change

B. Eligibility

Who can apply?

1. Non-profit organizations who:
    a. Are a registered 501c3 in good standing with the IRS
    b. Serve at least one of four counties:
        i. Macomb
        ii. Oakland
        iii. Washtenaw
        iv. Wayne
2. Are seeking capacity building services for at least one of four eligible capacity areas that does not exceed $50,000 grant maximum
    a. Funding and resources
    b. Operations
    c. Organizational Culture
    d. Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation

Who is ineligible to apply?

1. Individuals.
2. Organizations that require a fiscal sponsor.
3. Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, sexual orientation or veteran status.
4. Faith-based - Organizations that require membership in certain religions or advance a particular religious faith. (Faith-based organizations may be eligible if they welcome and serve all members of the community regardless of religious belief.)
5. For-profit organizations or organizations operated to benefit for-profit organizations.
6. Academic Institutions - Community college, college and university programs that concentrate primarily on degree-granting activities.

Can I apply with a fiscal sponsor? If your organization is not a registered 501c3 in good standing, you are not eligible to apply.

Are churches eligible? Organizations that require membership in certain religions or advance a particular religious faith are ineligible. However, faith-based organizations may be eligible if they welcome and serve all members of the community regardless of religious belief through specific programming.

Can I apply for more than one capacity area? Organizations may apply for more than one capacity building service as long as the combined service costs do not exceed $50,000 and can reasonably be completed within the grant period.

Only one application is permitted per organization. If support is needed for multiple capacity areas, Co.act Detroit asks that the most pressing need which meets all other application criteria be submitted for review. Additional support is available for organizations to determine or prioritize capacity needs through Activate Fund Application Office Hours at Co.act and Co.act's Co.Lab Connect program. Visit www.coactdetroit.org for additional details.

Can I request to cover a portion of a larger capacity project? Co.act Detroit will review gap funding requests on a case by case basis. Key considerations include:

1. Is the remaining project funding already secured?
2. Can the services this grant will fund realistically be accomplished within the grant period?

C. Application Details

How do I apply? Applications must be submitted online at www.coactdetroit.org. Applications must be submitted in full with all required financial attachments. Incomplete applications will not be considered and deemed ineligible.

When are applications due? 11:59pm EST March 31st, 2020

Why should I apply? Co.act Detroit will grant up to $50,000 to nonprofit organizations for direct capacity building services in qualifying areas.

Do I have to create a profile as part of the application process? Yes. Starting a profile gives you access to the application and allows us to follow up with additional information, questions and opportunities. The profile will allow you to simply update your application throughout the application window and receive confirmation of your submission. An email address is required to create a profile.

Can I submit multiple applications? No. Organizations may submit one application. Organizations that submit multiple requests will automatically be deemed ineligible.

If I have questions or need help filling out my application, what should I do? Interested applicants can attend information sessions or one-on-one office hours for in-person and virtual assistance. Visit http://www.coactdetroit.org for schedule more details.

Interested applicants may also contact Co.act Detroit directly:

Co.act Detroit 6568 Woodward, Detroit MI 48202
activatefundinfo@coactdetroit.org
313-789-1386

What if I don't know what to apply for? Many resources exist to help applicants craft a clear application that will be most beneficial to the organization's unique needs including:

1. One-on-one application office hours. Visit www.coactdetroit.org for schedule more details.
2. Start the Principles & Practices Assessment early through Co.Lab Connect for a customized organizational health assessment
3. A clear capacity building request that aligns with the fund criteria must be articulated in the application to be deemed eligible.

D. Award Details

What do I get if I win? Grantees receive:

1. Nonprofit Capacity Building grants up to $50,000
2. One-on-one personalized coaching support with Michigan Community Resources
3. Free Principles & Practices organizational assessment
4. Five hours of technical assistance with Michigan Nonprofit Association
5. Access to a network of vetted experienced professional service providers
6. Opportunity to co-create and participate in a peer learning community

What is the maximum grant award? The maximum grant award is $50,000 per organization.

Co.act reserves the right to adjust grant amounts post-award. Grantees may submit a request to change their grant amount or scope based on their organization's assessment and personalize action plan established through the technical assistance and one-on-one coaching process.

Do grantees receive funding up front? Yes. Upon completion of specific milestones as outlined below, grantees will submit a written request to Co.act staff. If approved, funds will be disbursed directly to grantees.

Key Milestones:

1. Completion of the Principles & Practices assessment
2. Exhausting five hours of technical assistance with Michigan Nonprofit Association including a custom action plan
3. Development of a scope of work
4. Selection of a service provider

Support navigating this process is available through coaching from Michigan Community Resources.

Grantees will be responsible for direct payment of services to providers. It is recommended grantees pay service providers in installments, withholding final payment until all services have been completed.

Requests for Co.act Detroit to pay service providers directly on a grantees' behalf will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Do I have to take the Principles & Practices assessment again if I have already completed it? Organizations that have completed the assessment within the last 12 months can opt out of this step unless any substantial changes have occurred such as:

1. Leadership changes
2. Significant changes to mission or scope

Can I take the Principles & Practices assessment if I am not awarded? Yes. Michigan Nonprofit Association is available weekly through Co.act's Co.Lab Connect program to start the assessment process with interested organizations. Applicants can start the process at any time, whether or not they receive a grant.

Michigan Nonprofit Association will provide up to 500 assessments with five hours of technical assistance at no cost to nonprofits.

If I'm awarded a grant, can I select who I will work with for consulting services? Co.act Detroit will issue a public Request for Proposals (RFP) and retain an active list of technical service providers with demonstrated experience supporting nonprofit capacity building. Grantees are required to use a service provider from Co.act Detroit's approved list.

Applicants will have the opportunity to recommend preferred service providers during application and share the public RFP with their network during the open call for submissions.

What if I don't use all of the grant funds I am awarded? Any changes to repurpose the use of remaining grant funds must be approved in writing by Co.act or promptly returned to Co.act.

What is the award period? Awardees must submit their selected service provider and scope of work by July 31, 2020.

Capacity building services must be completed before the end of the grant period, March 2021.

E. Selection Process

What is the process for selecting Nonprofit Fundamentals grantees? Grant awards are issued on a competitive basis due to limited resources.

A diverse committee of community leaders and Co.act staff will review proposals and produce a recommendation for grant awards.

Step One: Eligibility Review by Co.act Staff - applicants that do meet all eligibility criteria will be deemed ineligible and notified they will not be considered.

Step Two: Scoring Review by Review Committee - eligible applicants will receive at least two scores from the review committee

Step Three: Finalist Review and Recommendation by Jury - The jury will take into account aggregate scores as well as applicant's organization and leadership demographic data to ensure a diverse and representative grantee cohort that fosters a culture of peer learning is selected

Grantee Award Notification by Co.act Detroit - all applicants will receive a notification whether or not they are selected

How are applications scored? Applicants are scored on four criteria:

1. Demonstrable and Catalytic Impact to the applicant
2. Feasibility to complete grant request within the grant period and proposed budget
3. Alignment with Co.act Values and Approach to Capacity Building
4. Commitment to Peer Learning

How long does the selection process take? Our aim is to select grantees by May 2020.

F. Additional Information

What is expected of Activate Fund grantees? All grantees are expected to complete services and expend grant funds by March 2021. Grantees may be required to sign an agreement that outlines terms and conditions for receiving the award. Grantees are expected to attend events designed to connect them with other grantees and resources. They may also be asked to share their story via media opportunities.

How is applicant information used? Applicant information is shared with Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources and Michigan Nonprofit Association to provide direct follow-up on all applications. If Co.act Detroit cannot directly help a nonprofit, we will seek to connect nonprofits with other resources.

Applicant data is used only for the award selection process and providing nonprofit support. Applicant data is not sold.