

## 2014 Letter of Inquiry Process

Please feel free to make copies and pass along or post this document.

**Three Rivers Community Foundation (TRCF)** is a public foundation that promotes *Change, not charity™*, by funding and encouraging activism among community-based organizations in underserved areas of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Since 1989, the Foundation has awarded more than 400 grants totaling over \$1,000,000 to groups challenging attitudes, policies or institutions as they work to promote social, economic or racial justice (i.e., social change) throughout the region.

TRCF offers **Annual Grants** for projects or operating support and usually range from **\$500 to \$4,000**.

Please read the enclosed 2014 **Letter of Inquiry Criteria and Timetable** carefully and familiarize yourself with TRCF's requirements. If after reading and reviewing the funding criteria you would like to apply for a grant, submit your Letter of Inquiry and the attached statements of non-discrimination and accessibility, and, if applicable, non-501(c)(3) status, all found on page 4, by the deadline listed below. Submit letters of inquiry **via the email above**, or mail to the address above if email is not an option.

If successful in the Letter of Inquiry stage, you will be invited to a grantmaking question and answer informational session. Someone from your organization must attend one of the posted sessions. At the grantmaking informational session, you will be asked to submit a full proposal by the stated deadline.

If you are seeking sponsorship of an event, please contact the TRCF office at 412-243-9250 or trcf@trcfwpa.org.

We look forward to reviewing your letter of inquiry.

Sincerely,

The Three Rivers Community Foundation Grantmaking Committee

*Three Rivers Community Foundation does not discriminate in its hiring and promotion, Board and Committee recruitment, and grant award process on the basis of race, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, religion, disability, sex, ancestry, or national origin.*

### **FUNDING TIMETABLE:**

**Letter of Inquiry Deadline: Friday, January 24, 2014**

Informational Sessions: March 2014

Full Grant Proposal Deadline (If Invited to Submit): Friday, March 28, 2014

Funding Decision: Mid June 2014

Grants Awarded: Late June 2014

## **2014 GRANT APPLICATION FUNDING CRITERIA AND TIMETABLE**

Applicants must have tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service **OR** must establish that their activities are consistent with those of a 501(c)(3) organization. IRS regulations allow a limited percentage of our grants to be allocated to 501(c)(4) organizations, or those involved with lobbying.

### **TRCF strongly considers:**

- Grassroots organizations with budgets under \$200,000;
- New organizations or projects that have not been previously funded by TRCF;
- Projects that take place or have a strong focus on creating change in Southwestern PA (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties);
- Projects addressing persistent divisions in society based on race, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, religion, disability, sex, ancestry, or national origin;
- Projects developing new, grassroots leadership, with strong components of community organizing, community education, problem identification and solving, and community building;
- Youth-led projects and those promoting youth activism;
- Projects addressing emerging or cutting-edge issues and using new approaches to problem solving;
- Organizations or projects which take affirmative steps to assure that their workplaces, programs, and services are accessible to people with disabilities; and
- Collaborations and coalitions that emphasize joint strategies and projects.

### **TRCF does not consider:**

- Social service projects;
- Individuals;
- Funding of capital building expenses that are not tied to a specific project (i.e., general building maintenance or upgrades). However building improvements may be funded if demonstrated to be essential to planned project activities or goals;
- Funds being used for underwriting fundraisers or matching grants;
- Organizations whose primary events, work, or programs are held in locations either completely or partially inaccessible to people with disabilities;
- Direct purchase of office equipment (computers, fax machines, copiers, phones, etc.) solely for office administrative activities. However, the purchase of equipment may be funded if demonstrated to be essential to planned project activities or goals;
- Projects which proselytize for any specific religion (i.e., passing out religious literature to participants in the program for which funding is being requested);
- Arts programs that do not include a means for the audience to discuss the social change related issue(s) the work presents, or some other form of action beyond just the exhibit/performance; or
- Activities that benefit private interest, business, or profit-making groups.

**Letters of Inquiry hand delivered or emailed after 6:00 PM or postmarked after Friday, January 24, 2014 will not be reviewed!**

*The TRCF office will **NOT** disclose whether a Letter of Inquiry has or has not been accepted by phone; applicants must wait for letter.*

## **Letter of Inquiry Requirements**

Not unlike a grant proposal, the letter of inquiry should include: an introduction, a description of your organization, a statement of need, your project description and proposed timeline, your statement of impact on social change, a brief discussion of other funding sources, and a final summary. Your letter of inquiry should be a maximum of two pages, single-spaced, in no less than 12-point font, not including attachments.

### **Introduction**

The introduction serves as the executive summary for the letter of inquiry and includes the name of your organization, contact information for the person submitting the letter and the organization itself, and the amount needed or requested. A brief description of the project and its sustainability are also included here. This should not exceed one paragraph.

### **Description of Your Organization**

The organization description should be concise and focus on the ability of your organization to meet the stated need. Provide a very brief history and description of your current programs and personnel. State the social change focus of your organization (Disability Rights; Economic Justice Issues; Environmental Justice Issues; Food Justice; LGBTQ Rights; Media Justice; Peace and Human Rights; Racial Justice; Voter Empowerment; Women, Youth and Families Issues; or specify Other). You will write this section out in greater detail if you are invited to submit a full proposal.

### **Statement of Need**

The statement of need is an essential element of the letter of inquiry and must convince the reader that there is an important need for social change that can be met by your project. The statement of need includes a description of the target population and geographical area.

### **Project Description and Timeline**

The project description should describe the project or work for which your organization is requesting funding, including project goals and objectives. Describe the project briefly, including major activities, names of key project staff, and your desired objectives. This description should be appropriate to your statement of need and present a clear, logical and achievable solution to the stated need. This section should also include a brief timeline, with clear planning steps. As with the organization description, this will be presented in far greater detail in a full proposal.

### **Impact on the Community - Social Change (Not Social Service)**

Here is where you describe what impact your project or work will have on the community. List what outcomes you expect to achieve and how you plan to sustain social change in your targeted audience and beyond.

### **Budget**

This is where you outline how much your total project will cost (or the size of your organization budget, if applying for operational support). Include how much TRCF funding you are seeking (up to \$4,000), and what budget line items TRCF funds might cover.

### **Summary**

The final summary succinctly restates the project, the intent of the social change goal and how that change impacts the targeted community.

*Successful applicants will be asked to sign and return a grant agreement, and will be asked for either proof of a bank account in the name of the organization (i.e., a copy of a recent bank statement with the account number blacked out, or a copy of a voided check), or for the name and full contact information for their fiscal agent.*

**STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Please have a Board officer or responsible individual sign the following statement.

**Photocopied signatures are NOT acceptable**

In the process of carrying out the activities of the proposed project for which funding is requested from the Three Rivers Community Foundation, we will not discriminate against and will take affirmative steps, including provision of reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities, to include individuals and groups which currently and historically are excluded from full participation in society on the basis of race, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, religion, disability, sex, ancestry, or national origin.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name and title

**STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY**

**Photocopied signatures are NOT acceptable**

We certify that any and all activities related to the project under consideration will be held in locations that are fully accessible to people with disabilities. If the funds being used are for operating support, we certify that our office is fully accessible to people with disabilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name and title

**STATEMENT FOR NON-501(c)(3) ORGANIZATIONS**

**Photocopied signatures are NOT acceptable**

If you are not a 501(c)(3) organization, your activities must be consistent with IRS non-profit purposes. Please have a Board officer or responsible individual sign the following statement:

We certify that our activities are consistent with IRS non-profit 501(c)(3) purposes (e.g. charitable, religious, educational, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name and title

## **Social Change and Community-Based Philanthropy**

### **What is progressive social change?**

While traditional charities generally respond to the symptoms of entrenched social problems, Three Rivers Community Foundation supports those who identify underlying causes and work to change these conditions. This is a core value of progressive social change as reflected in the phrase, *Change, not charity*. Social change organizing has a number of components including:

- Building community-based responses.
- Changing attitudes, behaviors, laws, policies, and institutions to better reflect the values of inclusion, fairness, diversity, and opportunity.
- Insisting on accountability and responsiveness among institutions, including the government, large corporations, universities, and other entities whose policies and actions profoundly affect the living conditions of individuals and communities.

Progressive social change expands the meaning and practice of "democracy" by involving those closest to social problems in determining their solutions. At its best, people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, abilities and ages join together in developing and implementing solutions to problems.

Because progressive social change involves making significant changes on a systemic level, conflict with those who hold power is often inevitable. The value that social change organizations bring to the table is their ability to organize, to educate and to mobilize.

Money alone does not bring about change; nor do individuals. But when people band together and form organizations to focus their collective vision, social change can happen. When a large number of organizations work together toward a common goal, that's a movement. And movements create change.

On the surface, social change movements appear to be spontaneous bursts of energy, a sweep of people, outraged and energized, rising forth to demand some form of change. But in truth, social change movements flow from careful organizing, massive public education, sustained agitation, and, at times, inspired collaboration across the divides of race, gender and class. These movements are driven by human energy, intelligence, courage -- as well as money.

### **What is community-based philanthropy?**

Over 20 years ago, Three Rivers Community Foundation was founded to support the progressive movement in Southwestern Pennsylvania. TRCF, a member of the national network the Funding Exchange, pioneered the idea of community-based philanthropy based on two primary characteristics: the work we support and the people involved.

*The work we support.* TRCF supports progressive community-based organizations that address the root causes of social problems. We reach beyond direct services (valuable as they are) to directly address the underlying conditions that foster inequity, lack of opportunity, discrimination, and economic exploitation.

*The people who are involved.* In keeping a vision based on democratic values, our decision-making bodies are representative of the communities served by our programs. Community activists participate in governance and grantmaking, along with donors, many of whom are themselves activists.

*Statements in this section draw upon Change, not Charity, Chapter 2 of Robin Hood Was Right\*, and studies by the National Network of Grantmakers and the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. Original text from the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation.*

*\*Collins, C., Rogers, P., and Garner, J.P. (2000). Robin Hood Was Right: A guide to giving your money for social change. W.W. Norton and Company: New York, NY and London, England.*

## **Examples of Change vs. Charity**

### *More Change*

Youth creating and managing a project to meet their needs.

Educate the public about an issue, and engaging those interested in ways they can help.

Establish a coalition to ensure affordable housing for all.

Host a film festival with opportunities for the audience to discuss and act on the social change issues seen in the films.

Work with a group organizing to clean up toxins in our environment and pressure policy-makers to stop polluters.

Help students organize to ensure that higher education is affordable for everyone.

Partner with a group of people with disabilities pushing for elected officials to make public buildings accessible.

Organize for a livable wage so parents can afford food and toys for their children.

Mobilize artists to protest state-level arts funding cuts.

Work to create change at the institutional and policy level.

### *More Charity*

Adults creating a project to meet the perceived needs of youth, with little to no youth input.

Pass out leaflets about an issue, with no follow-up.

Build a shelter for homeless families.

Host a film festival with opportunities for the audience to learn about filmmaking.

Donate to cancer research.

Create a scholarship program for students.

Assist one child to get a needed wheelchair.

Collect food or toys for charity drives.

Patronize a fine arts museum.

Focus on meeting individual needs.

Charity is not a bad thing. But social change can ultimately eradicate the need for most charity.

*Inspired by: Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money for Social Change, by Chuck Collins, Pam Rogers, and Joan Garner (2000, W W Norton), pps. 35-37.*