



# Strengthening Organizations Grant Guidelines

## Goal

The Alaska Community Foundation (ACF) offers the Strengthening Organizations grant program with the goal of funding projects that will help Alaska nonprofits better meet their missions. This program seeks applications for projects that will directly enhance the work of the applicant organization, making it stronger with well-organized systems in place and skilled employees who have the training and resources to successfully provide services.

## Overview

- Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. To best position your application for success, applicants are highly encouraged to speak with ACF staff ahead of time to discuss their project and to submit a draft proposal for review by ACF staff. **Drafts reviews are available up to two weeks prior to the posted grant application deadline. The deadlines for application submissions are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.** Please contact ACF staff Sarah Zerkel via email: [szerkel@alaskacf.org](mailto:szerkel@alaskacf.org) or by phone: 907-334-6700 for a draft review.
- Grant requests may be for up to \$10,000; typically awards are funded in the \$3,000 to \$5,000 range.
- All awarded projects are required to be completed within one calendar year from the date grant funds are received. Prior Strengthening Organizations grant award recipients may apply for additional capacity building support once all grant reporting requirements have been completed on the previous grant award.
- All applications must be submitted online. Contact ACF with any questions regarding the online application system via email: [szerkel@alaskacf.org](mailto:szerkel@alaskacf.org) or by phone: 907-334-6700. More information and links to the online application system are available at [www.alaskacf.org](http://www.alaskacf.org).

## Eligibility Criteria & Priorities

**Eligible applicants** include 501(c)(3) nonprofit or equivalent organizations located in the state of Alaska. Equivalent organizations may include tribes, schools, churches, local government agencies and programs.

**Eligible projects:** Applicants may select **only one capacity building activity to be accomplished at a time** with Strengthening Organizations grant funding. A more in-depth list with examples of eligible activities can be found starting on page four of these guidelines:

- **Leadership Development.** Examples: create board policies, create an executive succession plan, provide management/leadership training to staff, and attend conferences and/or trainings.
- **Organizational Development.** Examples: create a staff performance review process, create a strategic plan, create and implement financial management procedures, create a revenue development plan.
- **Collaboration and Community Development.** Examples: establish partnership agreements, create action plan for coordinating/collaborating, and create a map/inventory of community assets.
- **Evaluation of Effectiveness.** Examples: collect information related to service recipient outcomes, develop programmatic success measures, and implement systems to keep information related to client needs, referral sources and services provided.

Due to limited funds for each grant cycle, preference will be given to small, rural organizations or projects that result in stronger outreach or programming to rural communities; demonstrate accountability, cultural sensitivity, and unify communities; are politically neutral and environmentally sound; empower the disadvantaged or underserved; are collaborative and show community support; demonstrate 100% board financial giving to the organization; and have identified other financial support for the project.

Applications that include research into the real and estimated costs of the proposed project will be more competitive. Applicants are highly encouraged to include in their grant proposal estimates and bids for contracted services and/or significant purchases for the project.

**Ineligible applicants** include individuals; for profit, 501(c)(4) or (c)(6) organizations; non-Alaska based organizations; and state or federal government agencies.

**Ineligible projects** include religious indoctrination or other religious activities; endowment building; deficit financing; fundraising; lobbying; electioneering and activities of political nature; proposals for ads; sponsorships for special events; direct fundraising, including hiring a grant writer; reimbursement of pre-award costs; construction; purchase of real property; pass-through funding or other financial assistance to nonprofits; activities that have the potential to support terrorism; core government or organizational services; any proposals that discriminate as to race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, creed or ethnicity; direct program costs; and personnel costs.\* **Examples of ineligible expenses** include, but are not limited to: operating expenses (staff time), technology (laptops), and memberships and fees.

**Exceptions:** In selected cases, projects undertaken by organizations that normally fall outside the above guidelines may be able to receive funding. Examples include: religious organizations whose proposal impacts the broader community; or units of government whose proposal extends beyond the traditional governmental functions and impacts the broader community.

*\* Personnel Costs are not eligible. Please contact ACF with questions.*

## Reporting Requirements

A final report is due 30 days following completion of the project and no later than one year plus 30 days after the grant award date. All reports are completed in ACF's online grant system using the same profile login and password used to apply for the grant. Failure to complete final reports on time may impact an organization's ability to receive future funding from ACF.

## Preparing Your Proposal

**Step 1:** To apply, create a new account in ACF's [online grants system](#). Applicants using the web-based system for the first time will need to create a profile. The profile should be completed by the person writing the grant application and responsible for any grant reports. Please remember your username and password as it will be used for all current and future applications and any reporting on awarded grant projects. Visit the ["Helpful Hints"](#) section for more in-depth information about using the online application system.

**Step 2:** After logging into the system, you will be routed to the Application Status Page. To start a new application click "Apply" below your contact information. Select the Strengthening Organizations grant program from the list and you will be taken to the application. The online system times-out after 40 minutes of no activity; **remember to save your application often.**

**Step 3:** When logging back on to the system after establishing a Profile, you will be directed to the Application Status Page where you can check your status, find report deadlines and manage your contacts. Contact [ACF](#) if you experience difficulty with the online grants system.

## Policies and Procedures

If changes need to be made to an awarded project's grant budget and/or program plans, the grantee shall make a written request to their assigned ACF Program Officer before any changes occur. **Any variance in project purpose requires prior ACF approval.** Grant funds may not be used for projects other than what has been approved. ACF reserves the right to require the return of funds if it deems that the grantee has not complied with the terms of the grant agreement for use of funds, or to comply with any law or regulation affecting the grantee, grant, or ACF.

**Copyright policy:** Grantee retains copyright; ACF reserves a royalty-free nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for organizational/educational purposes, and to authorize others to do so.

## About The Alaska Community Foundation

Established in 1995, The Alaska Community Foundation is a statewide platform for philanthropy that connects people who care with causes that matter. Holding over \$80 million in more than 315 funds for the benefit of Alaskans, ACF grants \$5-6 million each year to charitable projects and nonprofit organizations across Alaska. Our mission is to cultivate, celebrate and sustain all forms of philanthropy to strengthen Alaska's communities forever. For more information, visit [www.alaskacf.org](http://www.alaskacf.org) or call 907-334-6700.

### **ACF Staff Primary Contact:**

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ACF Strengthening Organizations Grant Program  
Allowable Capacity Building Activities

This list provides examples of activities under specific categories of capacity building that have been approved for funding through this program. Please contact ACF Staff with your ideas.

- **Strengthen Board Leadership**  
Examples include board trainings or consultation with experts in the field of board engagement.
- **Human Resources Development**  
Activities related to creating policies for your organization, planning for staffing or volunteers or leadership training.
- **Financial Management**  
An example of financial management might include purchase and installation of accounting software to improve the financial record keeping of your organization.
- **Program Strategies and Outcomes**  
Any activity relating to the programs and outcomes of your organization. For example, working with a consultant to evaluate the success of your programs.
- **Strategic or Business Planning**  
Organizations could engage in strategic planning with a professional consultant to develop a strategic, communication or business plan.
- **Strengthen Organizational Operational Capacity**  
This could include any activity that would increase an organization's ability to carry out its mission.
- **Community Relationships**  
Examples include attending an event where professional networks can be developed to encourage collaboration with other nonprofits, or assessing needs in a community which your organization can serve.
- **Technology**  
An activity that assists in strengthening an organization's ability to function related to technology. For example, one-time costs for installation of a new accounting system would be eligible.
- **Executive Director Leadership**  
Hiring an executive coach to train for stronger organizational leadership is an example of an eligible project.
- **Fund Development**  
Eligible expenses include creating and implementing a fundraising or donor development plan.