

Request for Letters of Interest
From University of Tennessee Learning Through Giving Initiative

OVERVIEW

What: Proposals for capacity building in support of health, education, and financial security are solicited for grants to be awarded by University of Tennessee students studying nonprofits and philanthropy Fall Semester, 2024. Students are expected to award 2-5 grants with a combined total of \$20,000.

Why: The primary purpose of these grants is to provide students with hands-on experience in evaluating and funding nonprofits. Given the limited funds available, we prefer to avoid funding ongoing operations or program delivery. Instead, we prefer to leverage our limited funds by supporting capacity building as broadly defined here:

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/what-capacity-building>

Please Note: Proposals for support of ongoing operations and/or program delivery are less likely to be funded than proposals seeking to improve organizational capacity.

Starting in 2024, we are moving away from two previous Learning Through Giving grant applicant requirements. We are no longer requiring organizations to be members of the Alliance for Better Nonprofits to participate and any ***single*** organization, rather than a team of two or more organizations, can submit a letter of interest and apply for the grant. However, teams of two or more nonprofit organizations who want to submit a letter of interest together will not be excluded.

Who: Any nonprofit organization or a team of nonprofit organizations may apply.

When: Letters of interest (limited to one page) are due **May 24, 2024**. The letter should describe the capacity development students are being asked to fund, and how this funding would build the organization's capacity for addressing education, health, or financial security. Mid-June, 2024, approximately 12 proposals will be solicited for more detailed proposals (limited to five pages plus supporting documents) and those proposals will be due **August 14, 2024 by 5:00 PM EST**. As part of the competitive process, students will conduct site visits and interviews during Fall term 2024. Grant awards will be announced in November 2024. Winners will be invited to attend an award celebration in late November, 2024.

Contact Information: Email any questions or submissions to Kitty Pat Cornett, Program Manager, kpcornett@utk.edu

FURTHER DETAILS

The Funds: We anticipate \$20,000 will be distributed in 2-5 grants. (Over the past eight years, approximately 40 grants have been made, ranging in size from less than \$1,500 to almost \$9,000.

Use of Grants: This year's focus for our grant making covers **health, education, and financial security**, all broadly defined. Given the small amounts of money involved, we prefer to fund indirect expenses related to capacity building rather than normal operations or direct expenses for delivery of programs. Examples of capacity building include training, improved infrastructure, planning, research, or any other activities meant to enable better program delivery without directly funding program delivery. See further discussion here:

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/what-capacity-building>

Eligibility:

- Any nonprofit organization can participate. For any team proposals, organizations may not participate in more than one proposal team per year.
- The only restriction on the problems or opportunities targeted for the organization's or team's work is that they address some element of health, education, or financial security, all broadly defined.
- All proposal submissions will require a statement signed by senior leaders from each applicant acknowledging they will host students for a brief research visit as well as be available to answer student questions as they evaluate applications for grants.
- Beyond the suggestions to focus on capacity building, the only restrictions on the use of the funds requested is that they comply with all laws normally guiding nonprofits with documented 501(c)(3) status.
- All nonprofits accepting funds must agree to participate in reasonable press releases and other publicity associated with the grants and the work they support.
- Past recipients of the Learning Through Giving grants are still eligible to compete again this year.

Letters of Interest: Letters of interest (limited to one page) are due **May 24, 2024**. They should briefly describe the proposed use of the funds, explain the anticipated impact, and be signed by, and cc'd to, the senior-most executive at participating nonprofits. Email the letter as a PDF file attached to an email with "Letter of Interest" in its subject line. Send to: Kitty Pat Cornett, Program Manager, Consortium for Social Enterprise Effectiveness Program, Haslam College of Business, University of Tennessee, at kpcornett@utk.edu

Second Round Proposal Solicitations: After reviewing the letters of interest, up to 12 more detailed proposals will be solicited mid-June, 2024.

Proposals: Solicited full proposals are due **August 14, 2024 by 5:00 PM EST.** These relatively simple proposals should be no more than five pages long (not including tables, exhibits, and supporting documents). Further details on the proposal will be included in the second-round proposal solicitation sent after mid-June, 2024.

Competitive Process:

- Students in UT's Learning Through Giving nonprofit management course, working under faculty supervision, will carry out the competitive review process, and make the final selection of grant recipients.
- As part of student learning and the selection process, students will make site visits and interview applicants during September and October, 2024.
- If the students opt to fund a given organization's work at a scale different from what was proposed, dialogue and negotiations with the team will take place in November 2024.
- Final decisions and awards will be announced in November 2024. Funds will be made available January-February, 2025. Work funded by the grant should normally be completed by July 1, 2025. A brief report on the work accomplished through use of the funds will be due 30 days after the deadline for completing the work as specified in the proposal.