

Funding Guidelines

2012 Community Investment Process



The needs in our community are great and the challenges are many. The good news is clear: as a result of the many gifts to our United Way, we are able to partner with local non-profit agencies that are addressing the many challenges we face as a community. Our donors and volunteers are assisting thousands of individuals who need help.

As part of our Citizens Review Process, we are faced with making difficult decisions every year. The following "Funding Guidelines" are met to provide consistent guidance across each of our three Funding Councils as individual volunteers review grant request and develop funding recommendations.

1. Utilize the concept of **zero-based budgeting**, each request must be justified for the new budget period. No request is presumed to be acceptable simply because it was funded in the previous year or is reflective of the status quo.
2. Based on the overall assessment of the committee determine if the grant (allocation) should be equal to last year, decreased or increased...identify minimum and maximum grant levels, prioritize recommendations in case adjustments are needed. Justify your recommendation. Remember we are limited to the pool of dollars set aside for allocations. Our recommendations can not go over the amount set aside by our Board of Directors for funding.
3. Please take the time read "Grant Applications" carefully in advance of the meeting. Note questions, concerns and praises in the margin to follow up on with agency leadership.
4. Victoria County United Way funds programs, not administrative costs, so pay particular attention to those items that are *program* oriented (such as # of clients served, services provided, service delivery, cost of services vs. outcome, etc). We are asking agencies to provide us with more detail on the anticipated impact of their programs and how they will measure that.
5. In your deliberation process, ask questions and carefully consider the response from the agency.
 - a. Do program goals and objectives align with the budget?
 - b. Were performance levels met? If not why?
 - c. Is the agency supporting the program financially with resources available to it?
 - d. Does the audit give an indication to good financial management of agency resources? Are concerns identified? Have corrective steps been taken to address concerns?
 - e. **Community Need**
 - Does the program address a recognized health and human service need in our community?
 - Is the need consistent with VCUW mission?
 - How serious is the problem?
 - f. **Impact**
 - Does the program address the need identified above?
 - Will the program have a significant impact on the need?
 - Will the proposed outcomes have a positive impact on the community?
 - Will United Way funding make a difference?
 - g. **Ability & Evaluation**
 - Does the agency have a history of reliability?
 - Are there adequate staff and resources to conduct this program?
 - Does the program plan seem sound?
 - Is there a viable evaluation plan and method to measure program effectiveness and community impact?

h. Financial Management

- Is the financial information presented clearly & accurately?
- Does the agency have a balanced budget?
- Does the agency have adequate reserves?
- Is there diversified funding?
- Are other funding sources available?
- Will funds requested from VCUW support direct client services?
- Are overhead expenses a reasonable % of total?

i. Track Record (For Prior Year Partner Agencies)

- Is there year round commitment to work in partnership with the United Way?
- Did the agency accomplish its goals and objectives last year?
- Did the agency make a difference with last year's United Way funds?

6. To assist you in your assessment, grade each Grant Proposal or use the "Score Sheet" (attached) to grade each criterion using the following scale: Fails to Meet Expectation, Lacking in Expectation, Meets Expectation, Exceeds Expectation, Greatly Exceeds Expectation
7. At your Agency Site Visits, please take notes and write down your observations, concerns, praises and questions for follow-up. We will pass questions on the agencies for their repose prior to the "Grant Presentation Meetings". We will give the volunteers who made site visits a chance to report on these at the "Grant Presentation Meetings".
8. At our "**Grant Presentation Meeting**" agency representatives will first give a brief overview of their agency and its program. Please write any questions down so that you will be prepared to ask them at the end of their presentation. A period of 60 minutes is scheduled for each agency:
 - Opening Comments (2 minutes) Council Chair
 - Introductions (3 minutes)
 - Agency Presentation (40 minutes)
 - The agency must review all of the programs for which it is requesting financial support from United Way within this time limit.
 - Questions (15 minutes)
 - Adjourn
9. The Chair and Vice Chair from each of the three Councils will meet to:
 - Review grant recommendations from each of the Councils
 - Finalize grant recommendations for presentation to the Board of Directors
 - Ensure that grants are within dollars approved by the Board