



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (RDA)

Resource: Community Grant Application Criteria and Tips

Grant Criteria:

- **Qualified Applicants:** 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) non-profits; public school districts; and units of local government (e.g., public libraries, fire departments, etc.) Public school districts and governmental units must be located in Scott County, Iowa. Non-profits can be located in the Quad Cities region, as defined by Scott County, IA and Rock Island County, IL. Grant proposals must benefit Scott County directly or through creating a stronger Quad Cities region.
- **Amount of Request:** The amount requested is a key factor in determining the likelihood of funding. Remember that RDA typically receives 2-3 times more in funding requests than we have in fund to give. The Board aims to help as many people as possible with available resources, so please ask only for what is needed. The Board compares the values of each request to support the greatest impact (see instructions for Grant Amount Guidance and Application Frequency).
- **Multi-cycle grants** can be awarded for larger needs, but are extremely competitive. It's a good idea to speak with an RDA staff person before applying for a multi-cycle award. These larger awards are reserved for situations that justify larger commitments, such as leveraging of other funds (e.g., local match requirements), creating long-term benefit (e.g., capital projects), bridging to new organizational capacities (e.g., new positions), or gap funding for unexpected challenges.
- Requests for operational or personnel expenses are considered, with preference given to capacity building, transitional, or collaborative needs. These awards are typically reserved for time limited situations, not ongoing operational needs.
- **Requests from individual food pantries for the purchase of food will typically not be funded.** RDA directs its hunger-related support through River Bend Food Bank, which serves as a regional hub to coordinate resources and maximize impact. Food pantries are encouraged to work with River Bend Food Bank for support.
- **For educational institutions:** Grant applications from public schools should be sent to through the Superintendent's office, with an indication that the request is prioritized among all District needs for each grant cycle.
- **Authorizations or certifications:** If an applicant is applying for funds for any program/project that involves property that is not owned/operated by the applicant, authorization from the owner/operator of the facility (such as the school administration or the city), must accompany the application. This would include city properties or properties or facilities owned/operated by other agencies.
- Capital grant requests for renovations of existing buildings should include a report on the building's major systems to assure that the building is not in serious disrepair.
- No grants awarded for religious purposes. Religious-based entities can apply for projects that serve vulnerable populations or secular community purposes as long as religious activity is not a required part of the program.
- No support of individuals, including scholarships or fellowships.
- The organization must have available for review upon request: 1) the organization's budget for the current year for which the grant is sought; 2) a copy of its most recent IRS Form 990, and 3) a financial statement for the previous fiscal year prepared by an independent accountant.
- No distribution to any organization that has an employee, officer or director who is a member or affiliate of the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission.
- Once awarded, funds must be used for the specific purpose outlined in the grant application. Any variance from this original purpose must be approved by RDA or the grant funds must be returned to the RDA.



Tips for Successful Grant Applications:

- **Review the Entire Process First:** Before starting your application, thoroughly review the entire process and all the questions. This will help you plan an application that effectively tells your story and addresses key scoring criteria.
- **Focus on One Project:** Avoid including multiple projects or purposes in a single application. This can make it challenging to prioritize your proposal among others in the grant cycle. For example, applications that combine requests for both equipment and operating costs often score lower.
- **Be Concise:** The online application system limits the length of your answers, but you don't need to fill the entire space. Concise responses help Board volunteers (who review multiple applications) grasp the big picture more easily.
- **Emphasize Specific Community Impact:** Clearly describe the difference your proposal will make in the community. Applications that outline a clear and measurable impact tend to score higher. Focus more on explaining the solution rather than just the problem.
- **Quantify the Impact:** Where possible provide specific numbers, especially the percentage of Scott County residents who will benefit from your proposal. This helps assess the proposal's reach and effectiveness.
- **Submit Up-to-Date Financial Documents:** Applicants must provide recent Balance Sheets and Income Statements. Current financial documents indicate a strong and accountable organization. Outdated or missing financial information may disqualify your proposal.
- **Submit Project Budget Document:** The project budget should include the total cost of the project and how RDA funds fit in. Your budget document should focus on how the grant dollars will be spent. You can include how other funding sources fit in to show how RDA funds help to leverage other dollars.
- **Non-profit Verification:** We verify your non-profit status through an online system. If there are any questions about your status, we will reach out to you.
- If a partnership is a crucial element of the project, it's a good idea to include a letter of support from that partner as part of the supportive documents.

Common Reasons for Low Scores on Grant Proposals:

- **Unclear or Incomplete Applications:** Missing or unclear information can negatively impact your score.
- **Insufficient Description of Need:** Clearly and adequately describe the need your proposal addresses.
- **Vague or Unrealistic Budget:** Ensure your budget is clear, detailed, and realistic.
- **Lack of Funding Details:** Provide details about other funding sources and how they will be leveraged.
- **Misalignment with Mission:** Proposals that do not align with the agency's mission, vision, and values, or suggest mission creep, may receive lower scores.

For questions, email ceo@rdauthority.org or pc@rdauthority.org, or call (563) 323-5177