

NEA Center for Organizing Partnership Grants

Application Instructions & Best Practices

NEA has migrated to an enterprise-wide, online application system for all affiliate grant programs. Below is a description of the new template for Organizing Partnership Grants with the Center for Organizing. Also attached is a “Best Practices” Guide to assist in developing strong proposals.

The New C4O Online Grant Application is similar to the previous paper Memorandum of Understanding that was used. It now has five primary sections:

1. **Affiliate Information** – where you enter your contact information
2. **Request Information** – where you enter (*among other things*)
 - a. Project title
 - b. Type of grant being requested
 - c. Theory of success
 - d. Selection of C4O’s “Five Foci” addressed in the project
 - e. Membership categories impacted
 - f. Selection of up to five keywords describing the project content and focus
3. **Project Budget** – including total budget, affiliate contributions, and line item expenses
4. **Anticipated Results** – similar to the “Goals and Benchmarks” section of the prior MOU, in this section you:
 - a. Briefly describe the **Statement of Need, Strategy, Evaluation Plan, & Sustainability Plan** (*this last question is new, to address how the work/progress funded by the project will be sustainable after completion of the project*)
 - b. **Quantitative Metrics**
 - c. **Specific Goals, and Outcomes & Key Activities** for each Goal. As in the prior MOU, you can enter from one to five goals with associated Outcomes (*previously “Benchmarks”*)
5. **Communications Plan**

The online application includes the standard Grant Terms and a place where you can upload additional materials (*your detailed organizing plan, W-9 forms if needed, etc.*).

The online application can be started, and then saved for completion later.

We recommend that interested affiliates speak with their NEA C4O Zone Director before initiating a grant application. Our experience has been that grant applications are stronger and more complete if they follow a strategic and collaborative discussion about how best to accomplish the goals.

C4O accepts Organizing Partnership Grant proposals on a rolling basis.

Best Practices for NEA Center for Organizing Partnership Grant Proposals

The purpose of the Center for Organizing's Partnership Grant programs is to support affiliates in membership recruitment and engagement through campaigns and projects aligned with NEA's Strategic Priorities and the Center's five Organizing Foci. This checklist is designed to assist affiliate and C4O staff in developing high quality project proposals.

- THEORY OF SUCCESS** – Your hypothesis: if we do X, Y will happen.
- ORGANIZING FOCI & GOALS** – Strong proposals don't just check all the boxes, but are thoughtful about how to focus the project on specific priorities. Proposals aren't viewed more favorably based on how many boxes are checked. What matters is whether the goals, outcomes and key activities are aligned with the checked foci. Don't check off one of the foci unless it is reflected in the goals, outcomes and key activities.
- FUNDING** – Strong proposals include cost sharing by the state and/or local affiliate. The ability of the affiliate to share in project costs is an important indicator of buy-in and support from the affiliate for the project. In this new online grant application, the support from the affiliate (or others) is called "Revenue". If this is work which is important, the affiliate should be willing to prioritize the investment – even if it means shifting resources from other areas. In-kind support is not a substitute for the commitment of affiliate financial support. "In-kind contributions" of staff time are not considered cost sharing. Organizing and member engagement needs to be part of every field staffer's regular responsibilities.
- EXPENSES** – Proposals will not be approved without adequate budget detail. Proposals that devote significant funding to food purchases - or t-shirts and trinkets – are not encouraged. Also, strong proposals should supplement, not supplant, expenses an affiliate should normally be responsible for. Affiliates are expected to track actual expenses and return any unused funds. Affiliates need to be prepared to provide documentation of actual expenses.
- STATEMENT OF NEED** – Why is this an important project, and why now?
- GRANT STRATEGY** – A description of how the desired change is expected to happen. It maps the connection between what a project does (*its activities or interventions – the X in your Theory of Success*) and the desired outcomes (*Y*). How will the activities lead to desired goals being achieved? If this is a state affiliate project, this is a good place to identify a list of targeted locals for participation/engagement.
- EVALUATION PLAN** – Good organizing involves a continuous cycle of debriefing, learning what is working well and what isn't, and figuring out how to continuously improve the plan. Reflect on how - both during and after the project – involved staff and leaders will be evaluating the work.

- SUSTAINABILITY** – Strong proposals help build the capacity of the affiliate. We have a shared interest in the sustainability of organizing skills and practice. Be explicit about how a project builds capacity that will be of value beyond the term of the grant.
- QUANTITATIVE METRICS** – Not all of these metrics will apply to every project. Though for Center for Organizing Partnership Grants, every project is expected to engage members. Just leave -0- for any fields that are not applicable.
- GOALS & OUTCOMES** –These are perhaps the most important criteria in evaluation of proposals. Proposals can include one to five goals. More is not necessarily better. Outcomes should be concrete and measurable. For example, a goal might be “*increase membership*”, but the outcome would be specific, such as “*recruit 150 new members to achieve net growth of at least 100*”. Or a goal may be “*recruit more building reps*”, while the outcome could be “*create multi-person association rep teams at 75% of worksites*”. Outcomes should be stretch targets. Leaders and staff engaged in the project should know exactly what they are shooting for. We don’t expect affiliates to reach every goal. We do expect them to be ambitious – and specific - in what they are trying to accomplish.
- KEY ACTIVITIES & ENGAGEMENT ROLES** - Strong proposals are well thought out organizing plans: who is responsible for what, and by when?
- COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** – This section is also new to the C4O Partnership Grant application. The purpose is to ensure that campaign planners think about any needed communications planning in advance – both internal and external. This also helps identify opportunities where NEA Communications may be able to be of assistance. Not all detail questions will apply to every project. Put N/A for any required fields that do not apply.

NEA Strategic Priorities

- Increase Educator Voice, Influence, and Professional Authority
- Recruit and Engage New and Early Career Educators
- Advance Racial Justice in Education

C4O Organizing Foci

- Organizing Skills Development (*staff & leaders*)
- Expanded, Representative Worksite Leadership
- Net Membership Growth
- Smart, Routine Use of Data and Digital Engagement
- New Educator Engagement and Measurable Pipeline to Leadership