Grant FAQ's

Click on the section links below to find answers to frequently asked grant-related and organizational questions. If you don't see the answer to your question, please contact staff through our Contact Us page.

Applying For A Grant

The Grant Review Process

After A Grant Has Been Awarded, (Or Not)

Other Questions
Applying for a Grant

I am having problems using the online grant application system. Can you help?

Please first review this document, How to Use Our Online Grant Application System. If you still need help, contact Carla Batts at 727-507-9668 or cbatts@afmfl.org.

Do you have any suggestions for writing a good grant proposal?

Why, yes, we do! Please see our Grant-Writing Tips for some suggestions.

Why do you have character/word limits in the applications?

We are committed to having a streamlined grant application process that only asks for the information we need to make decisions and ensure accountability. We set character limits for each question based on our experience, which has shown us how much information is needed for us to understand your proposed project. The character limits require you to be clear and concise.

How do I decide which grant type would be the best fit?
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Review the descriptions of our grant programs on our web site – there are unique characteristics, priorities and eligibility requirements for each type of grant we offer, although our overall goals and grant-making focus are the same. We encourage you to speak to someone on our team before applying. If we discourage you from applying, please consider this advice: based on our experience, we are trying to save you the effort of submitting a request that is very unlikely to be funded. Ultimately, though, you need to make the decision; our staff cannot decide for you which of your ideas to submit, or which grant program is the best fit.

Some grant programs have a “range” of amounts that will be awarded. How do I decide what amount to ask for?

There is a specific range available for each grant program; within this range, we encourage you to ask for what you need, and to request support for expenses that are realistic and reasonable for the project. Consider the scope and design of the project you are planning, what its total costs are, and what other resources you may have. Do not ask for the “top of the range” simply because that is the amount available; your proposed budget should demonstrate the need for the funds requested. On the other hand, be realistic about your expenses; do not ask for too little to successfully complete the project. For Tau Grants, you may request as little as $1,000. We do not count pennies; round your request off to at least $100. Finally, if you still aren’t sure, speak with the staff person overseeing the grant program to which you are applying.

What is the typical “average” budget size of a grant recipient?

Tau Grants are intended for organizations with total budgets of under $2 million, and a preference is given to organizations with budgets of less than $1 million. We consider many factors such as the applicant's organizational capacity and other available resources, in light of the budget size.

Some grants may be provided for more than one year; does it matter if we ask for just one year or should we request a multi-year grant?

We provide the opportunity for multi-year grants because we believe that most (but not all) projects need some time to achieve significant results, and because funding over time can offer additional sustainability for an organization or project. However, please ask for what you need! If $100,000 in one year will serve your needs better than $50,000 over two years, that is what you should request.

If we ask for a multi-year grant, should we request the same amount for each year?

Not necessarily. You should ask for what you need. In fact, it is uncommon for a project to
cost exactly the same every year. For example, expenses such as personnel and insurance may increase year-to-year, there may be higher start-up costs in the first year, or higher technology costs in the second year. Your anticipated revenue to support the project may change also: in some cases, other funding or earned income may mean you will need less money from Allegany Franciscan Ministries during the latter part of the grant. To provide an example, if your request is for a total of $180,000 over two years, you may divide that amount any way that makes sense for your project: it could be $90,000 a year for two years; or $100,000 the first year and $80,000 the second year; or $50,000 the first year, $130,000 the second year. Anything is possible, as long as it aligns with the overall expected expense and revenue for the project. Grants are typically paid in installments. It is unlikely we would make a single payment for a multi-year grant.

My organization offers direct mental health or therapy services (i.e., drug rehab, etc.); will Allegany Franciscan Ministries fund these programs?

Generally, Allegany Franciscan Ministries does not provide funding for direct services such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment or physical therapy, or for halfway houses and similar residential programs. Despite our recognition that these are valuable services, with our limited funding we have chosen to focus on other strategies for improving the health of our communities. We may address root causes or community indicators related to these issues that have an impact at a systemic level, such as advocacy efforts or a community-wide solution rather than providing for direct services to individuals offered by a specific program. Our ACOR Grants may support these types of services however, ACOR Grants have very limited eligibility. Please review the descriptions of grants awarded in the last year to get a better sense of the types of projects we might consider.

My organization has an afterschool program or mentoring program. Will Allegany Franciscan Ministries provide funding for this program?

Again, Allegany Franciscan Ministries does not generally provide for afterschool, out-of-school and mentoring programs. We do believe these are critical and important services. However, we have found that other strategies for improving the health status of those who are underserved in our communities are usually a better fit for our mission. We might consider an afterschool program with a very well-integrated health and wellness component that addresses the families/community/neighborhood beyond the students in the program and expects to lead to better health outcomes for a vulnerable population. Our ACOR Grants may support afterschool and mentoring programs, however, ACOR Grants have very limited eligibility. Please review the descriptions of recent grants awarded to get a better sense of the types of projects we might consider.

My organization is based in another state but serves one of Allegany Franciscan Ministries′ regions. Are we eligible to apply?
Yes. However, a successful application from a non-local organization will need to demonstrate a very good understanding of, and connection to the local community. Collaboration and partnerships are always important to us, and this is even more important for an organization that is not based in the community it is planning to serve.

I am looking for funding for a project in Lincoln Park, Overtown or Wimauma. Can I apply for a Tau Grant?

While Allegany Franciscan Ministries will consider supporting projects that impact one of these Common Good Communities, if the project is completely or largely limited to that community, we recommend that you first talk to the regional vice president. Our available funds for both the Common Good Initiative and our competitive grant programs are limited, and we want to ensure we impact the larger regions we serve. We also want to ensure that resources within the Common Good Initiative are well-coordinated and prioritized. If your organization is working within any of these communities we encourage you to reach out to the regional vice president serving that area.

How can I apply for funding through the Common Good Initiative?

Common Good Initiative investments in Wimauma, Lincoln Park and Overtown are made through a variety of funding mechanisms and processes. Each community has specific priorities and strategies which guide the investments. Please see the Common Good Initiative pages of this website for more information.

The eligibility guidelines state that “public agencies” are not eligible for funding. What does this mean?

For Allegany Franciscan Ministries, “public agencies” refers to state, county, and local governmental agencies; these entities are not eligible for a grant from us. Public universities and colleges may not apply directly for funding. However, if a state university or college has set up a separate foundation, the foundation may apply for funds. The foundation must meet all our eligibility criteria, including 501(c)(3) designation. In addition, a public agency may be a partner in an initiative with another organization that serves as the lead agency; this project would be eligible.

My organization is a non-profit hospital. May we apply for a grant?

Yes, non-profit hospitals (or their foundations) may apply. However, please be aware that our preference is to support hospitals that are affiliated with Trinity Health. In addition, hospital-led initiatives that compete for grants from Allegany Franciscan Ministries do not focus on inpatient care; they are typically health education and outreach efforts that include significant collaboration or partnerships with community-based organizations.

Can my organization apply for another grant when we have an active grant?
Organizations cannot apply for a Tau or ACOR grant if they have an active grant of the same type. However, grant partners with one type of active grant (e.g., Tau Grant) can apply for a different type of grant (e.g., ACOR Grant) in the same year.

This guiding principle is Allegany Franciscan Ministries' intentional effort to create equitable opportunity and access to our funding for many diverse and exceptional organizations and programs. In addition, ACOR and Tau Grants are not intended to provide ongoing, sustaining funding, thus we do not renew grants annually.

We are a statewide organization that works in all of the geographic areas you serve. For Tau Grants, would we have to apply for one region or could we apply to do our work in all three regions?

Tau Grants are regionally-focused. You will need to apply for funding from each region individually. Additionally, we encourage you to not submit the same application for each region. While you may “copy and paste” basic organizational and project information, your application should address the unique needs of each community.

Is there a certain percentage that should be used for program services, personnel, etc.? Are indirect costs allowable?

We do not require specific levels or percentages for different expenses. We ask that you develop a budget, and request support, for expenses that are realistic and reasonable for the initiative. These will primarily be direct costs attributable to the project. However, we believe that indirect costs are necessary for a project's success, and we will support those expenses within reason (indirect costs are general or administrative expenses that are necessary to effectively deliver a project or program, but that are not readily identified with and attributable to a specific project.) We do not have a specific line item for indirect costs but we do allow organizations to identify costs that may be considered indirect; typically, we will honor that if it is outlined in the budget narrative as well.

How should I describe other actual or pending funds that also support my organization or project?

We are interested in knowing what other support you have for a proposed project, including in-kind, ongoing public or private funding, and grants. In your narrative, describe the funding support for the project. We don't have a required format for indicating this: be sure that however you describe what is confirmed/committed, what is pending, and what is possible, that you are very clear so the reviewers understand.

Can I request support for tuition or scholarships to my program?

Not directly. If your need is to provide “slots” in your program for additional participants, we
understand that you may think of this expense as scholarships. Although we may be willing to support the service you provide to these individuals, we are interested in knowing about your actual costs. So rather than applying for “scholarships” you will need to request support of a portion of program expenses, such as staff, facility, supplies and transportation.

My organization doesn’t have an annual audit. Can we still apply for a grant?

We have a responsibility to ensure that an organization we fund has the financial strength, management capacity and safeguards in place to successfully handle the grant we provide. An annual, audited financial statement is expected for certain grants from organizations with a budget of $1 million or higher. It provides some assurances to us regarding financial management and internal controls, as well as a snapshot of your organization’s financial position. We understand that some organizations have valid reasons for not having an audit, but in the interest of good stewardship of our grants, we require that an audit be done for every year during which a grant is active.

Appropriate audit expenses within reason may be included in project budgets. If you do not have an audit, you may consider working with another organization to serve as fiscal agent for the grant (see the question below in these FAQs for more information about fiscal agents). If you do not have an audit, please be sure to speak with the Allegany Franciscan Ministries’ vice president for your region before submitting a funding request to discuss your organization’s specific situation.

We have not completed an audit yet, but plan to do so. What should we use in place of this?

Please see the answer above. An annual, audited financial statement is expected for certain grants from organizations with a budget of $1 million or higher. If you do not have an audit, contact your regional vice president as soon as possible about whether approved alternative materials can be accepted. An audit is not expected for organizations applying for a Tau or ACOR Grant.

Does Allegany Franciscan Ministries require that the audit be conducted solely on an accrual basis, or will you accept one on an OCBOA (modified cash) basis?

Audits in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) require the use of accrual basis accounting rather than cash basis accounting. As a result, we would expect that the independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) completing your audit would follow this approach. However, if extenuating circumstances exist that necessitate the completion of your audit on a cash or modified cash basis we will accept that approach provided that
we receive and approve in advance a written request to use a methodology other than accrual basis. The request must explain the circumstances that lead to the need for using a cash or modified cash basis.

What is a fiscal agent, and when should I use one?

A fiscal agent is not the same thing as a registered agent or a treasurer. It is always an organization, not an individual.

In some cases, an organization desiring to apply for a grant from Allegany Franciscan Ministries does not meet all the eligibility criteria (for example, does not yet have its 501 (c) (3) designation or does not have an audit). In other cases, the organization may be eligible, but does not have the capacity to complete all the requirements for a successful grant. We encourage these organizations to seek out a community partner that does have capacity and meets all eligibility requirements, to serve as a fiscal agent for the grant. The fiscal agent will then be the official applicant. It is imperative that you have a conversation with the appropriate Allegany Franciscan Ministries staff person regarding this arrangement prior to completing an application.

If a grant is awarded, Allegany Franciscan Ministries will enter into an agreement with the fiscal agent, and will hold the fiscal agent legally responsible for the grant, including financial management, all reporting, and all other requirements. Allegany Franciscan Ministries recommends that the fiscal agent enter into a subcontract with the organization. The fiscal agent may or may not have any additional involvement with the grant other than managing the funds and ensuring that conditions of the grant agreement are met. The fiscal agent may charge a reasonable administrative fee for their services; this fee is an acceptable cost to include within the grant budget.

What is the difference between a “lead agency” and a “fiscal agent”?

Please see above for description of fiscal agent. A lead agency may be identified for a particular grant when there are multiple organizations collaborating on the grant. The partners will choose one organization to serve as the lead. Much like a fiscal agent, this organization will be the official applicant, and will be responsible to Allegany Franciscan Ministries for all aspects of the grant. Typically, as a lead agency, it will have additional programmatic responsibilities as well.

What is Allegany Franciscan Ministries’ philosophy about sustainability?

Allegany Franciscan Ministries recognizes that it is very challenging for community-supported organizations to predict the future, or to know what funding sources may be available. At the same time, we are unlikely to continue to support a program through multiple funding cycles. Our hope is that effective projects meeting a community need will
be able to continue, even after our funding ends. We do not ask a question in our grant applications specifically about sustainability. We encourage you to consider the future of the program and what you might do to ensure that it continues, and we may engage in a dialogue about this with you at some point during the application process.

May I contact a member of the Allegany Franciscan Ministries board of directors or grants committee directly to discuss my grant application?

No, please contact the appropriate staff person at Allegany Franciscan Ministries. Our directors and committee members will refer all calls regarding applications back to the staff. Your relationship with a director or committee member will not impact our decision regarding your application.

Will it help to submit letters of support, video links or other supplemental information with the application?

Do NOT submit letters of support with your application. We also strongly advise against submitting or attaching video links or other supplemental information with the application.

What does “Tau” mean?

St. Francis of Assisi adopted the Tau symbol (the 19th letter of the Greek alphabet) as his signature on letters. For St. Francis, the Tau was a loving symbol of God's intense relationship of love, summarizing the mystery of faith. St. Francis had the symbol carved on the walls of his cell as the sign of genuine hope and faith in God's faithfulness, and often painted it on the walls of places he stayed.

The Tau is used as a symbol of the Franciscan Order; our Franciscan Sisters of Allegany have incorporated the Tau into their logo. Allegany Franciscan Ministries uses this symbol as part of our logo and as the name for our Tau Grant program, to connect us to St. Francis and the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, remind us of our commitment to the economically poor and marginalized and to wish God's blessings on all.

May I see a copy of a successful application?

We do not share copies of past successful applications. This is not because we wish to keep the application secret in any way; rather, we believe that the written application is just one component of a successful request. Trying to mimic another organization's request would be a disservice to telling the story of your project. We suggest you refer to our Grant Writing Tips for help with constructing a good written request, and the lists of grants awarded to get a better sense of the types of projects we might consider. Be aware that just because we have funded a specific project in the past does not mean that a similar project would be funded in the future.
THE GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

What is the review process like? Are applications rated on a scale?

Ours is a collaborative, consensus-based review process. Members of our staff team initially screen requests for basic eligibility and fit with our focus and priorities. Our board of directors or CEO make the final decision to award each grant based on recommendations from staff and/or grants committee.

For ACOR Grants, applications for eligible projects are shared with the grants committee, which then meets and reviews each request, developing recommendations through open dialogue.

If a grant is awarded, will it be for the full amount and grant period (length of time) requested?

Usually but not always. We consider a number of factors to determine what amount we will offer. We also may suggest that the budget be revised in terms of what expenses are covered, without changing the total amount. We will communicate with you if we intend to provide less funding than was requested, and we recognize that your anticipated outcomes may change as a result. In some cases, we may decrease the time period of a grant (for example, we will fund only one year when two years were requested).

Why does it take so long to make a decision and award grants?

We recognize that it can be difficult to wait a long time to get a response about grant proposals that have been submitted and have streamlined parts of our review process to shorten the time period. We are committed to having a transparent process, and always let grant seekers know the timeline and expected announcement dates. Our ACOR and Tau Grant review processes can take 2 or 4 months from submission to decision. In some cases, another few months are required to confirm the budget and outcomes for an approved project.

AFTER A GRANT HAS BEEN AWARDED, (OR NOT)

My grant application was turned down. Can I find out why?

Yes, we will share feedback about your application and we encourage you to contact the appropriate staff person. Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to fund every
request, competition is very strong, and often we must choose one perfectly good project over another perfectly good project. We will make every effort to give you specific feedback. This feedback may help you to submit more successful proposals to other funders in the future, so we hope that you will engage in the discussion from a place of learning. We can also tell you whether we think a future application to Allegany Franciscan Ministries for the same or a different project might be more successful.

Is there an appeal process?

We do not have an appeal process. If we have declined your grant request, we encourage you to call or make an appointment to meet with the appropriate staff member, who will be able to give you feedback and help you understand why the grant was not approved. Often projects that are eligible and a good “fit” are still not funded, simply because we have limited funds and had to make difficult choices, and we felt that other requests were better positioned to help us achieve our mission.

My request was turned down. How soon may I apply again?

There are no limits on how often or how frequently you may apply. If a grant request is declined, you are welcome to apply at the next available opportunity. We do recommend that you speak to the appropriate staff person so that you understand why your request was not approved. It is not a good idea to re-submit the same request.

How do I access my grant agreement and how does the electronic signature work? Can I print a copy for my records?

Allegany Franciscan Ministries uses an electronic grant agreement for the Tau, Major, All Region Fund, St. Clare and ACOR Grant programs. Grant agreements serve as the legal document that defines and communicates expectations and responsibilities between Allegany Franciscan Ministries and its grant partners.

Grant agreements are located in our online grants management system, the same system used to complete your application. The agreement itself is a “FollowUp” form located within the system. Grant agreements are assigned to the chief executive officer for the organization. If the chief executive officer does not have their own account, they will need to create one in order to access the grant agreement. The chief executive officer is responsible for reviewing the grant agreement, agreeing to the terms and conditions of the grant entering their name, title and date on the form before submitting the agreement. This constitutes the electronic signature and completes the agreement FollowUp. The 2000 Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act recognizes that electronic signatures are equivalent to paper signatures and subject to the same legal scrutiny of authenticity as paper documents.

Completed grant agreements can be printed by clicking on the “FollowUp Packet” link at the
How does Allegany Franciscan Ministries’ evaluate funded programs?

Allegany Franciscan Ministries has three primary roles for evaluation: funding stewardship; grant partner learning and capacity building; and communication about results and impact. Different evaluation approaches have been developed for different types of grants, commensurate with the size of the grant, and the scope and complexity of the funded project. Please see this link for more information.

Where can I find information about what will be expected in my progress reports?

All reports are made online through the same system as the grant applications. Once your organization has been awarded a grant, you can find progress report requirements and information on your Dashboard page.

Look at the “FollowUp Forms” section for the specific grant and you should see a “FollowUp” notation; then look to the right and click on the “Edit” link to go to the actual report. From there, you will be able to print the questions, view documents associated with report and complete the report.

What do I need to do if my organization or project experiences significant budget changes during the grant term?

The Organization must inform in writing of any significant changes, additions or deletions to any part of the program goals, objectives, activities, outcomes, timetable or budget submitted by the Organization. Approval, if given, will be indicated in writing by Allegany Franciscan Ministries. The Organization will notify Allegany Franciscan Ministries in writing if there is a change in key personnel essential to the ongoing administration of the Organization or programs funded by the grant. If there is any question as to the significance of a particular change, additional or deletion, the Organization will contact Allegany Franciscan Ministries.

OTHER QUESTIONS

How much money does Allegany Franciscan Ministries have?

As of 6/30/19, the total unrestricted net assets of Allegany Franciscan Ministries were $110 M. All investment assets are held in the Trinity Health Consolidated Investment Program and are professionally managed (through socially responsible funds) under the
How much does Allegany Franciscan Ministries grant out each year, and how is this amount set?

Allegany Franciscan Ministries’ board of directors annually reviews its policy regarding our grant distributions. Trinity Health has the authority to approve the annual amount as part of our annual budgeting process. Our current policy is to set an annual grant budget of 5% of total net assets. The total annual grants have ranged between $5.5 M and $5.9 M for the last few years. Since our inception, Allegany Franciscan Ministries has awarded over $100 M.

How can my organization get a St. Clare or All Region Fund Grant?

These two types of grants are not awarded through a competitive process, and unsolicited requests are not accepted. They are not intended to allow for programs to “skip” the competitive review process. Typically, these grants grow out of work our staff does with community partners or from priorities identified by our board or grant committees. Very few are awarded in any given year. More information about them is available on our grant program overview page and our grants awarded list.

Where can I get a copy of Allegany Franciscan Ministries’ logo?

Please contact Kathie Hardy at khardy@afmfl.org with information about how you would like to use the logo, and if appropriate, she will send it to you in the correct format. Don’t try to copy our logo from our web site or cut and paste it from another document.

How can I make a comment or give feedback to Allegany Franciscan Ministries?

Usually, we send an annual survey out to all applicants and this is always a good place to make a comment. We welcome feedback at any time; if you do not receive a survey or would prefer to comment directly, please address your feedback to the appropriate staff member as listed on the Contact Us page of our web site. Although we do not at this time have an anonymous comment/suggestion box, you may always direct your comment to our CEO (Eileen Coogan) at ecoogan@afmfl.org.

Additionally, we encourage applicants to visit www.GrantAdvisor.org and complete an anonymous review of Allegany Franciscan Ministries. We use this information to improve our grant-making processes and communication.

I have another question that is not answered here, How can I get help?
We are always willing and delighted to talk with you. If you are not able to find the answer to your question on our web site or application materials, feel free to call or email us: please see the Contact Us page of our web site.

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