

Introduction to the Dobbs Foundation Grantmaking Process

Dear Grantseeker,

My name is David Weitnauer and it's my privilege to serve as the Foundation's President. The following is intended to help you understand the process the Dobbs Foundation uses to identify candidates, consider funding requests, make decisions, and follow-up after the grant. I will dedicate most of my attention to parts of our process not explained on our [website](#).

a. Focus Areas and Priorities

The Foundation works in three areas (health, education, and the environment) and our board has developed priorities for each. Our website is the best place to begin for understanding our [interests](#) and seeing how they translate into [grantmaking](#). Once you've reviewed our website, we encourage you to contact our office by phone (404-574-2970). If we can't talk when you call, we will schedule a time to learn more about your work, help you better understand our process, and determine if your request is a promising fit.

b. Letter of Inquiry

Once we've confirmed that your request represents a good fit, you'll be encouraged to submit a [Letter of Inquiry](#) via an Applicant Portal on our website. Our board reviews every LOI on file in the context of quarterly program committee and board meetings (typically held in January, April, July, and October). We are looking for proposals that are aligned with programmatic priorities and present a compelling case for impact. Our group has shown itself open to a range of organizations – from start-ups to well established non-profits, both large and small. It's worth noting that our process for handling LOIs is unusual. Please refer to the website for details and feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

c. Application

If your request is selected for a funding review, you will be asked to submit an application using our Applicant Portal. The information provided in the application will serve as the foundation of our review process. I will supplement my understanding by reviewing your website, some social media, and recent tax returns made available by Candid.

d. Site Visit

Your application and my additional homework will help me prepare for what will hopefully be a meeting at your office or service delivery site. If that's not possible, we can arrange a meeting elsewhere or use Zoom. When we meet, my hope is to use what I've learned as a starting place for conversation that will help us develop a working relationship both of us can trust – initially in the service of our grant review process but ultimately in support of an on-going community partnership. Throughout the conversation, your questions are welcome.

e. From Site Visit to Funding Decisions

I use what I learn from the review process to develop a one-page report to our board about your request. We compile these reports within a larger set of board materials which are distributed to trustees electronically about ten days before their quarterly meeting (again, typically held in January, April, July, and October).

During the quarterly meeting, trustees review each request individually. I begin by presenting an overview, board members ask clarifying questions, and discussion follows. While a formal vote is taken for each request, our board tends to work by consensus.

While the profile of a request that receives funding varies, here are some observations about successful requests:

- There is strong alignment between the request and our focus areas and priorities;
- The request reflects and serves an organization's mission and strategy;
- For an organization that doesn't have a strategic plan, the proposed work reflects a functional plan that can be articulated by the organization's leadership;
- There is evidence of effective leadership by staff and board;
- Innovation that aims for greater impact, improved organizational capacity, or systemic change is especially compelling;
- While organizations with smaller footprints get funded, scale or its potential is attractive;
- An awareness of community partners doing similar and related work is important and collaboration is better (if appropriate to the circumstances);
- An organization's financial integrity, stability, and sustainability are all important; the first is a must, the second is desirable, and the third should be a viable possibility.
- That said, financial ups and downs are realities in the non-profit sector so a history of difficulty or the presence of current challenges are not deal-breakers;
- The same is true for other aspects of an organization's work – from operations to staffing to board relations or development, there are no “perfect” or fully actualized organizations; with this in mind, we especially value transparency. If you help us understand what you're up against and what you're trying to do more effectively, perhaps we can help.
- Finally, with the exception of endowment requests, the Foundation provides all types of support – operating, project, program, capacity building, and capital. In addition, we're in the process of adding impact investments to our work.

f. What Happens Next?

I will contact you about the decision immediately following the board meeting. If your request has been declined, I will do my best to provide context for that decision. As you might imagine, however, there are always more worthy requests than the Foundation can afford to fund.

If your grant has been approved, we will confirm the grant via e-mail within 5 business days. The e-mail will include terms of the grant and a request for wire instructions for transferring funds. Funds are typically wired within 7 business days once we receive your information, and we will alert you to when you should expect the wire.

g. Post-Grant Check-Ins and Reporting

If you have received a multi-year grant, you will be asked to submit an interim report on the anniversary of the grant. We will be especially interested in how your work is progressing relative to the objectives and anticipated outcomes outlined in your application. But we'd also like to know how you, the organization, and your work is going generally – highs and lows. If there have been bumps in the road, and there usually are, tell us about them and perhaps we can help.

At the end of the grant term, we would like to receive a final report. We would be glad to receive a report prepared for other audiences provided it speaks to the work funded by the Foundation with some specificity. If not already addressed in such a report, we'll ask you to include an assessment of the extent to which the work funded achieved its objectives and anticipated outcomes. Likewise, we would like to hear about unexpected challenges or circumstances and how you responded. Once we've received your report, we will schedule a 30 minute Zoom conversation to debrief.

h. Eligibility for Future Funding Consideration

If your LOI or grant request is declined, please wait a minimum of six months before contacting the Foundation about a new submission. If you receive funding, please wait a minimum of six months after the end of the grant term before contacting the Foundation about a new submission.

Hopefully, this has been helpful. If you have questions I haven't addressed or if anything above raises new ones, please let me know.

Sincerely,

David D. Weitnauer
President