

NCUF GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Introduction

Since 1982, the [National Credit Union Foundation](#) (NCUF) has provided tens of millions of dollars in grants to not-for-profit credit unions and related organizations to support its mission to improve consumers' financial independence through credit unions.

In 2007, in order to reach even more credit unions with mission-critical support, the Foundation adopted [REAL Solutions](#)® as its signature program. REAL Solutions empowers credit unions to provide affordable products and services that have proven effective in reaching working families with "low wealth" and modest means.

Through REAL Solutions, credit unions are serving underserved markets and attracting new members. In partnership with state credit union leagues, REAL Solutions by the end of 2011 is projected to help more than 1,500 credit unions in 40 states offer new services to attract more than 250,000 low-wealth members.

Participation in REAL Solutions is not a prerequisite to apply for NCUF grants. However, NCUF grants are offered exclusively to credit union organizations.

The goals of NCUF's Financial capability Grants continue to be aligned with REAL Solutions

In striving to improve the financial capability of American families, including low wealth individuals and families and young adults and children, REAL Solutions will focus on financial education and literacy programs that are designed to increase family financial capability through access to relevant information, training opportunities and wealth coaching. Research has shown that the low-wealth market includes not only lower-income consumers, but also consumers with moderate and middle incomes who have been unable to build significant savings or assets.

REAL Solutions aims to help these consumers become credit union members, grow savings and accumulate assets that will generate wealth for their families.

The Foundation is seeking to fund financial education and capability building projects that will help low-wealth members reach life-changing goals and achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Grant Project Area

Financial Education

Ongoing NCUF grant commitments support credit union participation in national financial education programs including [Biz Kids](#) and the [National Endowment for Financial Education](#) (NEFE). New Financial Education Grants can assist credit union organizations participating in these programs, or other initiatives consistent with the financial education components of [REAL Solutions](#):

- Providing financial counseling
- Building employee and member financial capacity through savings challenges and other wealth coaching programs
- Experiential learning programs such as reality fairs and poverty simulations, after school financial education programs, product awareness, and staff training.

Funding Source

Funding for the Foundation's grants comes from the [Community Investment Fund](#). Credit unions interested in this innovative social investing vehicle can make deposits in a designated fund at their corporate credit union, National Cooperative Bank (NCB) or MEMBERS Trust Company. At least half of the dividends are paid directly to the investing credit unions, while up to 1/4 is returned to NCUF to support national initiatives including annual Financial Education Grants. Another 1/4 is granted by NCUF to the league or foundation in each investing credit

union's home state.

With interest rates at record lows this year, NCUF will need to receive funds from more supporters and CIF investors in order to grant at least \$300,000.

For more information on investment opportunities with the Community Investment Fund, click [CIF](#).

Funding Strategies

By awarding Financial Education Grants, the National Credit Union Foundation makes strategic investments in credit union financial education programs to increase the capacity of underserved low-wealth markets. NCUF encourages applications for projects that provide a path to financial services and economic self-sufficiency through innovative financial education programs.

Proposals should also have all of the following features:

- Partnerships with other organizations
- Leveraged funding from partners and/or other sources
- Ideas to build membership from the low-wealth market, including plans for marketing and outreach to the targeted population
- Plans to sustain the project without additional NCUF funding
- Potential to be replicated by other credit union organizations

What Financial Education Grants Do Not Fund

Financial Education Grants will not fund:

- Projects that do not involve credit unions
- Positions for non-credit union organizations
- Requests for equipment or technological upgrades
- Requests for scholarships or tuition to attend workshops, meetings or conferences
- Prizes for literacy contests
- Requests for secondary capital
- Current staffing costs

Generally speaking, NCUF does not grant its own funds to be deposited into accounts of individual credit union members – such as matching funds for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).

Organizations that have a current grant from NCUF should generally not apply for another Grant in consecutive cycles unless they demonstrate that they are meeting their success measures.

What Financial Education Grants NCUF May Fund

Examples of Financial Education Grants may fund:

- Experiential learning Programs such as Reality Fairs
- Financial counseling and wealth coaching programs
- Savings contests and debt reduction programs
- After school programs and student branches
- High school and college intern programs

Planning Your Project

The Foundation's grants program is competitive. When planning your project, use the following suggestions to guide you. Projects that are well-conceived and proposals that include substantive information have a higher likelihood of receiving funding.

- Read these guidelines and [application form](#) carefully.
- Seek information on the specific need or problem that your project would address. Be certain to describe the community or target population you intend to serve. Use the information to make the case for funding in Section 2: Statement of Need.
- Plan your project in collaboration with your partners. Develop project activities and quantifiable success measures. Use this information to complete Sections 3 and 4: Description of Proposed Activities and Measures of Success.
- Gather descriptive information on your project partners. Use it to complete Section 5: Partner Organizations.
- Collect information to develop a complete project budget, including projected expenses and potential income from all sources.
- Notify your state credit union [foundation](#) and/or [league](#) that you are planning to apply for grant from the National Credit Union Foundation.
- Contact NCUF staff if you have any questions: Lois Kitsch (lkitsch@ncuf.coop) or 407-616-2409.

Grant-writing Tips

To prepare a strong proposal, make sure your project:

- Meets the goals of the Foundation's Financial Education Grants
- Has been thoroughly planned with all partners
- Is clearly described in writing

Remember:

- Answer all questions in the amount of space provided.
- Use a readable font or typeface (no smaller than 10 point).
- Check your project budget carefully to ensure calculations are accurate.
- If possible, submit your application as a single electronic file: either a Microsoft Word document (.doc) or an Adobe portable document file (.pdf).

Your grant reviewers will thank you!

Application Deadline

Annual deadline for Financial Education Grant applications: **June 30, 2011**

To be eligible, applications must be sent via e-mail by close of business on Thursday, June 30, 2011. Late, incomplete, or faxed applications will not be considered.

Review Criteria

Applicants must use the National Credit Union Foundation's [application form](#) and submit their proposals electronically by the June 30 deadline.

Your application's Executive Summary should answer the following 8 questions from Financial Education Grant reviewers:

1. How does your grant meet the many National Credit Union Foundation grant objectives?
2. What is the extent to which your project will impact the state, community, and/or targeted population?
3. Do you have the capacity (both human and financial resources) to successfully implement your project?
4. What are the roles of credit unions, state credit union leagues, foundations, and/or other credit union support organizations in your project?
5. Are you engaging other partners (such as community groups, schools, government agencies, or other funders) to help plan, support, and/or implement your project? Can your project be replicated by other credit union organizations or community groups?
6. Do you plan to leverage additional funds, or have you already received other funding commitments for your project?
7. How do you plan to continue your project after the National Credit Union Foundation's one-year grant has ended?
8. How do you plan to evaluate your project after it has been completed?

Application Evaluation Process

Applications will first be reviewed for completeness by Foundation staff. In July and August, panels of Foundation staff and experts from the credit union field will evaluate the applications using the review criteria above. Each application will be scored by multiple panelists. Panel scores will then be averaged so the pool of applications can be ranked by total average score. Applications, average scores, and panel comments will be sent to the National Credit Union Foundation's Grants Committee, which has responsibility for reviewing the applications and making funding decisions.

Grant Funding Notification

The National Credit Union Foundation's Grants Committee will meet in September to evaluate proposals and make funding decisions. Applicants will be notified about funding decisions via e-mail or by phone no later than October 15, 2011.

Grant Period

The grant period will run from January 1, 2012, through December 31, 2012.

Grant Agreements

National Credit Union Foundation staff will work with each successful applicant to prepare a Grant Agreement setting forth mutually agreed-to success measures based on the approved grant proposal. Each applicant must return two copies of the signed Grant Agreement to NCUF to activate their grant. A Foundation representative will sign both copies and return one to the grantee for their files.

Grant Payment Process

The National Credit Union Foundation disburses each grant in three payments, as stipulated in the Grant Agreement. A typical schedule of payments might be:

- NCUF will disburse the first grant payment (50%) to the grantee upon receipt of the signed Grant Agreement. This initial payment will likely take place in the first week of January in the year after the grant was approved.
- A second installment (25%) will be disbursed after receipt of a satisfactory Mid-Year Progress Report documenting progress toward the success measures outlined in the application and Grant Agreement.
- The third and final grant payment (25%) will be disbursed at the conclusion of the grant period and upon receipt of the Final Achievements Report.

Report Requirements

All grantees are required to submit a Progress Report mid-way through the grant period and a Final Achievements Report just prior to the conclusion of the grant period. Each report must specifically address the Measures of Success outlined in the application and codified in the Grant Agreement. Grant payments will be based on satisfactory progress on the project as described in the reports.

Along with the reports, NCUF encourages grant recipients to provide copies of marketing materials, photographs, articles, and other information related to promotion and execution of their project. NCUF regularly features Financial Education Grant highlights in its annual report, websites, educational presentations, fundraising materials, and other NCUF-funded programs.

Funding Credit

Successful applicants must mention the National Credit Union Foundation's grant in all press releases, newsletter articles, and website references related to the grant project. A suggested credit line is the following: "This project has received national recognition through a Financial Education Grant from the National Credit Union Foundation." If the project is referenced on the grantee's website, a link to the NCUF website (www.ncuf.coop) should be included.

Please understand that unless substantially more credit unions invest in the [Community Investment Fund](#), NCUF does not have the resources to fully fund every grant proposal. By submitting a grant application, you will agree not to lobby NCUF volunteers or otherwise circumvent the grant evaluation process. In the event your proposal is not funded or only partially funded, you will be expected to abide by NCUF's final funding decision.

Thank you for your interest in applying for a grant from NCUF. We hope to be able to support your initiative.