

## **Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation Incentive Grant Program - Guidelines and Procedures**

**Effective January 1, 2012**

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) is a catalyst for economic growth in 20 Minnesota counties. We work to build a prosperous region with vibrant communities and innovative businesses. To accomplish this, we invest in early childhood and entrepreneur development initiatives.

SMIF's Incentive Grant Program is designed to support new asset-based collaborative approaches that demonstrate measureable results related to SMIF's early childhood and entrepreneur development goals.

### **Focus Areas**

#### **Early Childhood Development**

SMIF is seeking to support early childhood efforts so children are ready to learn and succeed. These projects should strengthen children's social and emotional health and school readiness. Project examples include early literacy, kindergarten transition, skill training for child care providers, and regional partnerships or initiatives. Early childhood Incentive Grants are not intended to support expansion of existing early childhood education programs, home visiting programs, or workplace parent education programs.

#### **Entrepreneur Development**

SMIF is seeking to support entrepreneurial projects that strengthen and grow the local business community. These projects should increase the capacity of community and organizational efforts to support entrepreneurs or advance bioscience initiatives. Project examples include skill development, mentorships, and regional partnerships or initiatives.

### **Impact Measures**

Applicants will need to identify and report on the following measures related to early childhood or entrepreneur development projects:

#### **Early Childhood Development**

Mandatory Impact Measures: (all applicants must measure and report)

- Identify how many children have been impacted by your project
- Identify the increased connections and communications with parents and the number of parents

Additional Impact Measures: (applicants choose at least one to measure and report)

- Demonstrate that at least 50% of at-risk families served access additional early childhood learning opportunities

- Increase effective, coordinated early care and education through training and/or alignment
- At least 75% of children served demonstrate an increase in literacy skills according to the developmental milestones checklist (MDE)
- At least 75% of children served demonstrate an increase in social/emotional school readiness proficiencies according to the developmental milestones checklist (MDE)

### **Entrepreneur Development**

Mandatory Impact Measures: (all applicants must measure and report)

- Identify how many businesses have been impacted by your project
- Identify collaborations and how they have impacted leveraged resources

Additional Impact Measures: (applicants choose at least one to measure and report)

- Identify number of jobs created and/or retained
- Identify new enterprise created
- Identify new product(s) developed
- Increase funding sources or leveraged funding
- Increase business knowledge by entrepreneur(s)

### **Eligible Organizations**

Only tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and units or agencies of local, state, or federal government that are located in or serve SMIF's 20-county service area are eligible to apply for SMIF grants.

### **Requirements**

- Grants up to \$20,000 are available
- All grants require a dollar-for-dollar match. At least 25% of the match must be cash in hand at the time of the award. No more than 75% can be in-kind support. (In-kind support is defined as goods or services (rather than cash) that are used to directly benefit the project.)

### **Exclusions**

- Individuals, businesses, or other for-profit organizations
- Strategic planning
- General operating expenses
- Capital campaigns or endowments
- Existing deficits
- Projects/programs already in progress or completed
- Replacement of discontinued government funding
- Funds for re-granting or to establish loan pools
- Organizations that have not satisfied a past grant obligation

### **Funding Priorities and Review Criteria**

SMIF will give priority consideration to applications which best demonstrate:

- Measurable results—projects that can show quantitative results in SMIF focus areas

- Asset-based approaches—projects that maximize the strengths, talents, and resources of the local community
- Collaboration and partnership—projects that work with other organizations in unique and effective ways
- Sustainability of local or other funding streams—projects that have solid plans for continuation outside of SMIF funding
- Leveraged funding—projects that access all available resources and maximize SMIF's investment

## Proposal Components

- Completed application ([www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org), click on “Applications”)
- Project budget worksheet (balanced; available on website)
- Audited financials or filed tax forms (if unaudited)
- IRS determination letter (if 501(c) organization)
- Letters of support from partner organization(s) noting their relationship to your organization and the role they will play in your proposed project

## Application Deadline

SMIF accepts grant applications twice a year. Deadlines are **February 15** and **August 30**. Applications may be submitted by email or mailed (postmarked by the deadline date).

## Grant Review and Award Process

SMIF awards grants on a competitive basis. Applications that evidence the five funding priorities noted above will be given a full review, including a site visit, by SMIF's Internal Grant Review Committee. **Note:** Site visits are intended to gain additional information about the organization and the proposal. The most successful site visits include all collaborative partners.

The External Grant Review Committee, comprised of Board of Trustee members and community members, makes the final grant award decisions.

Grant recipients will be required to attend a Grant Partnership meeting (TBA) to review contracts, reporting, and SMIF expectations.

Grant award payment(s) will be made once all grant contract requirements are completed. SMIF requires all grantees to submit interim and final grant reports as outlined in the grant contract. Delinquent or incomplete reports will jeopardize future grant funding from SMIF.

## Contact Us

Staff is committed to providing assistance to ensure quality applications. Please contact the Grants Associate if you have questions.

Jennifer Heien, Grants Associate  
 507-455-3215 x133  
[jenniferh@smifoundation.org](mailto:jenniferh@smifoundation.org)

Submit application and attachments via mail, fax, or email to:  
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation  
Attn: Grants Associate  
PO Box 695  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
Fax: 507-455-2098  
[jenniferh@smifoundation.org](mailto:jenniferh@smifoundation.org)

Incomplete grant applications or applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered. For those submitted electronically or via fax, a hard copy of the signature page must be received within 7 days of the grant deadline.

All applicants will be contacted via email or telephone to confirm receipt of their application.

For more information, call 507-455-3215 or visit our website at [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org).