



Public Grant Review Rubric

a guide to how competitive applications for PRCF core grantmaking are reviewed

For applicants, prospective applicants, and community partners

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Transparency is an important part of our grantmaking process. This rubric is published to help organizations understand the criteria used to review competitive grant applications and prepare clear, complete, and well-aligned proposals.

How to Use This Rubric

This public rubric explains the principal criteria used by Pottstown Regional Community Foundation reviewers when assessing competitive grant applications. Applicants are encouraged to review it before beginning an application and again before submitting a final proposal.

Important: This rubric guides application review but does not operate as a formula or guarantee funding. Final decisions may also consider available funding, the overall strength and composition of the applicant pool, portfolio balance, geographic distribution, strategic priorities, due diligence, and committee deliberation. Meeting every criterion does not guarantee an award.

Reviewer Assessment Scale

For each criterion, reviewers generally indicate one of the following assessments:

Assessment	General meaning
Agree	The application clearly and convincingly addresses the criterion.
Somewhat Agree / Somewhat Disagree	The application partially addresses the criterion, but important information, clarity, evidence, or readiness may be missing.
Disagree	The application does not adequately address the criterion or presents significant concerns.

The Foundation's Results Framework

Several criteria refer to the PRCF Results Framework. Applicants should review the framework for the selected program area and clearly explain how their own project, population, activities, and intended results advance the Foundation's stated priorities and Desired Impact. [View the PRCF Results Framework](#)

Section 1: Strategy Alignment

These criteria consider whether the proposal fits the organization’s mission, the Foundation’s priorities, the service area, and PRCF’s commitment to equity and community voice.

1. Mission and Results Framework Alignment

Criterion: The proposed project has a clear relationship to the applicant organization’s mission and aligns with a prioritized type of program or project identified in the Pottstown Regional Community Foundation Results Framework for the selected program area.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Competitive applications demonstrate that the organization is mission-driven rather than grant-driven and clearly explain how the proposed work advances both the organization’s purpose and a Foundation priority.

2. Service Area Alignment

Criterion: The proposed project clearly serves residents within the Foundation’s service area, and the applicant explains how and where services will be delivered within that geography.

What a competitive application demonstrates

PRCF serves a 10-mile radius centered on the Borough of Pottstown. Applications should clearly identify the municipalities, ZIP codes, schools, neighborhoods, or populations within the service area that will benefit from the project.

3. Focus on Vulnerable or Historically Underserved Populations

Criterion: The proposed project clearly benefits a vulnerable and/or historically underserved population or community.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Competitive applications describe the demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, or other characteristics of the population served and explain why the proposed project is responsive to that population’s circumstances and needs.

4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Community Voice

Criterion: The organization demonstrates meaningful steps to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Applicants should describe how equity, inclusion, and community voice are embedded in organizational practices, program design, decision-making, leadership, partnerships, or service delivery. The strongest applications provide concrete examples rather than general statements of commitment.

Section 2: Use of Funds

These criteria consider whether the request is financially reasonable, well-supported, and positioned for responsible implementation and sustainability.

5. Reasonableness of the Request

Criterion: The amount requested is reasonable to implement the proposed project and achieve the intended results.

What a competitive application demonstrates

The proposed budget should neither overstate nor understate the resources needed. Reviewers consider whether the request is proportionate to the activities, timeline, number of people served, and expected results.

6. Alignment of Budget, Activities, and Results

Criterion: Personnel, project activities, and budget expenditures are consistent with the project description and intended results.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Competitive applications account for the real costs of implementation and provide enough budget detail to demonstrate a full understanding and justification of likely expenses.

7. Other Funding and Financial Readiness

Criterion: The amount of other funding secured or pending is reasonable for the project type, project scope, and anticipated results.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Reviewers consider the overall funding plan, the amount of secured and pending support, required matching funds where applicable, and whether the organization has demonstrated appropriate financial readiness. A higher proportion of secured funding may indicate stronger readiness and lower financial risk.

8. Sustainability

Criterion: The applicant presents a clear plan for sustaining the project or its impact beyond the grant period.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Sustainability may include diversified revenue, continued fundraising, fee-for-service income, future grant opportunities, integration into the organization's operating budget, maintenance planning for capital projects, or a plan to preserve newly developed organizational capacity.

Section 3: Intended Results and Learning

These criteria consider the strength of the proposed outcomes, the evidence of need, the role of community input, and the applicant's plan to measure and learn from results.

9. Alignment with the Foundation's Desired Impact

Criterion: The proposed project clearly contributes to the Desired Impact identified in the PRCF Results Framework for the selected program area.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Competitive applications clearly describe the target population and connect project goals, activities, and intended results to the Foundation's Desired Impact. Strong proposals explain the connection in the applicant's own words rather than simply repeating framework language.

10. Community-Informed Project Design

Criterion: The proposed project is informed and shaped by the people it is intended to serve.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Applicants should identify how community members contributed to project development through methods such as meetings, interviews, surveys, advisory groups, resident leadership, or partnerships with existing networks—and explain how that input influenced the project.

11. Demonstrated Need and Service Gaps

Criterion: The applicant presents credible data that justify the need for the proposed project, including barriers that limit access to or effectiveness of existing services.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Data should be relevant to the service area and may be placed within county, state, or national context when useful. Competitive applications support assertions with evidence and demonstrate awareness of existing services, gaps, duplication risks, and barriers.

12. Evaluation and Use of Data

Criterion: The applicant provides a clear plan for collecting and using data to determine the degree to which outcomes are achieved.

What a competitive application demonstrates

The evaluation plan should identify the types of quantitative and/or qualitative data that will be collected, when collection will occur, the tools or methods that will be used, who will be responsible, and how findings will inform improvement or future decisions.

13. Clear and Measurable Results

Criterion: The proposed project results are clearly presented and align with the specific results the Foundation seeks to advance.

What a competitive application demonstrates

The strongest results are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. They help reviewers understand the expected positive change—not only the activities that will occur.

Section 4: Organizational Capacity and Project Readiness

These criteria consider whether the applicant has the capacity, implementation plan, evidence base, and partnerships necessary to carry out the proposed work successfully.

14. Organizational and Leadership Capacity

Criterion: The organization and project leaders have the qualifications and capacity necessary to implement the proposed project successfully.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Applicants should demonstrate the ability to manage grant funds, carry out the project as designed, meet the proposed timeline, and complete reporting requirements. Relevant evidence may include leadership experience, staffing, management structure, available resources, accomplishments, and funding history.

15. Implementation Plan

Criterion: The application presents a detailed and realistic outline of the key elements needed to implement the proposed project.

What a competitive application demonstrates

The implementation plan should clearly describe major activities, staffing, people served, partnerships, milestones, and timeframes. Competitive applications show that the proposed approach is workable and responsive to the need identified.

16. Evidence-Informed Approach

Criterion: The project approach is informed by an existing model, theory, evidence-based practice, research, prior success, or lessons learned.

What a competitive application demonstrates

Applicants should explain why the selected approach is likely to work and identify whether it is already in place, newly adopted, or being adapted based on evidence or experience.

17. Partnerships and Collaboration

Criterion: The applicant demonstrates how community partners will be leveraged to implement the proposed project.

What a competitive application demonstrates

The strongest applications identify the right partners, clearly describe each partner's role and responsibilities, and provide appropriate documentation—such as letters of commitment or memoranda of understanding—when partnership participation is central to implementation.

Application Readiness Checklist

Before submitting, applicants may use the following checklist as a final review. It is a summary tool and does not replace the full criteria above.

- ☐ The project is clearly connected to the organization's mission and a PRCF Results Framework priority.
- ☐ The application clearly identifies who will benefit and how the project serves PRCF's geographic service area.
- ☐ The proposal explains how equity, inclusion, and community voice shaped the work.
- ☐ The need is supported by credible, locally relevant evidence and an understanding of existing services and gaps.
- ☐ Activities, staffing, timeline, budget, and expected results are logically connected.
- ☐ The funding plan demonstrates appropriate leverage, readiness, and sustainability.
- ☐ The intended results are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- ☐ The evaluation plan explains what data will be collected, by whom, when, and how it will be used.
- ☐ The organization demonstrates adequate leadership, staffing, financial management, and implementation capacity.
- ☐ Partners' roles are clear and documented when collaboration is essential to the project.

Questions and Additional Guidance

Applicants should consult the Foundation's current grant policies, program guidance, eligibility requirements, application instructions, and deadlines before applying. When requirements in those materials differ from this general rubric, the current grant policies and application instructions govern.

For more information, [Visit PRCF Core Grant Policies & Guidance](#)