request for proposals


Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to our region’s most challenging problems. Two of these problems – the continued need for financial education and asset building and support for anti-payday lending activities – are addressed through our economic security strategy. To understand our goals and objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read the community foundation’s research paper on the topic at www.siliconvalleycf.org/economic-security.

The economic security strategy focuses its efforts on:

(1) Provision of financial education and coaching connected to asset-building programs and services to increase the availability of sound financial information and access to savings and credit-building programs for low- and moderate-income families and individuals; and

(2) anti-payday-lending policy advocacy, promoting advocacy, policy and awareness-raising activities that curb predatory payday lending practices and support the development of cost-effective alternatives.

This request for proposals, or RFP, focuses specifically on financial education and asset-building. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of nonprofit service providers, public sector agencies, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.
Grant Application Deadline

The application process will open beginning June 8, 2015. Responses to this RFP must be submitted through our online application system, applySVCF, by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 10, 2015.

Problem Statement

In our two-county region there are wide disparities between those who enjoy financial well-being and those who do not. Alarmingly, one in five San Mateo and Santa Clara county residents is asset poor, meaning they lack the cash reserves or equity in their homes or businesses to meet basic needs for three months in case of unexpected financial hardship. Low-wage workers within communities of color, and first- and second-generation immigrants, are likely to be disproportionately represented in this category.

The economic downturn that began in 2008 continues to impact the region in 2015 and has exacerbated these problems and affected others who previously enjoyed greater economic security. We believe that by combining quality financial education with appropriate asset-building programs and products, we can help mitigate the effects of the recession and lay the foundation for economic resilience across the region.

Program Goal

This sub-strategy seeks to help individuals and families achieve and maintain greater economic security requires increasing access to high-quality financial education and counseling, affordable and appropriate financial products and services, and tangible incentives for repairing credit, saving and building wealth.

We believe that financial education is most effective when it is paired with asset-building programs and services that provide opportunities to put learnings into practice, helping people to adopt new behaviors and begin moving along a path toward greater economic stability.

To advance these goals, SVCF will encourage applications in support of existing financial education, financial counseling or financial coaching and asset-building programs that demonstrate this combined approach and those that can be expanded to impact greater numbers of families and individuals within our region.

Selected programs should be able to demonstrate a successful track record in reaching significant numbers of underserved people. By underserved, we mean populations that face socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and/or other barriers that leave them outside the financial mainstream.

Alarmingly, one in five San Mateo and Santa Clara county residents is asset poor, meaning they lack the cash reserves or equity in their homes or businesses to meet basic needs for three months in case of unexpected financial hardship.
Specific populations may include, but are not limited to, communities of color, immigrants, youth, people with disabilities, single parents, older adults, LGBTQ, ex-offenders, veterans, etc.

SVCF also seeks to expand its support for proven programs and initiatives that make tangible and measurable impacts on the lives of low- and moderate-income (LMI) families. Programs such as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites that help LMI families access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other credits which often go unclaimed; expanding matched savings programs for clients, such as Individual Development Accounts; and collaborations among community-based organizations, public agencies and the private sector that show promise in terms of scaling reach or deepening impact through integration and co-location of services are desirable and will be strongly considered.

The most competitive proposals will be those whose program activities emphasize principles of behavioral economics, including product-based financial education that builds savings, credit and assets for under- and un-banked individuals and others on the financial margins; those that connect behavior change and product usage to key moments in people lives, such as tax time, child birth, preparing to attend college, starting a new job, etc.; those that focus support for activities such as building emergency savings and reducing debt; those that include credit-building as central goals; and those that provide bundled asset-building products and services independently or in collaboration with other community-based organizations and government agencies. Successful applicants may include nonprofit organizations, financial institutions, public sector entities, educational institutions and/or private sector groups.

Under this RFP there is a particular focus on efforts that leverage additional impact through enhanced service delivery, organizational collaboration and effective referral mechanisms. We also seek to support efforts to raise community awareness about asset-building programs, products and services through outreach and public education that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the target populations being served, and those that leverage new technologies (Internet technologies, social media and mobile technologies) and traditional media (radio, video, print media and newspapers and other channels) to effectively disseminate key messages to target communities.

Applicant organizations are strongly encouraged to consider partnering on proposals given the limited amount of funding available. If a collaborative activity/project is proposed, applicants should indicate the purpose of the collaborative, how it is expected to enhance services for clients and how the collaborative would operate, be governed and share resources. One lead agency should be identified in the proposal and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be signed by each of the collaborating agencies.

Applicants will be evaluated on their recent track record in providing financial education, the type and variety of asset-building services offered, results to date, and opportunities for scaling activities to achieve greater impact. For organizations funded by the community foundation in 2014, the proposal evaluation process will pay particular attention to whether grantees are on track to achieve their stated outcomes from the previous year by the grant end date.

Key Dates

June 8, 2015
Application process opens

June 16, 2015
Applicant information session (register through our online calendar)

July 10, 2015 - 5 p.m.
Proposal submission deadline

September 30, 2015
Announcement of grant awards

October 1, 2015
Grant start date
All grantees selected under this RFP must report the number of individuals who received services. They must also measure one or more of the following indicators: number of individuals who increased their financial knowledge; changes in credit score, consumer debt, and individual or family savings; changes in the pattern/frequency of savings; and amount of income (from Earned Income Tax Credit, etc.) families and individuals were able to keep.

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

- Only organizations serving San Mateo and/or Santa Clara counties will be considered. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to these areas, or must be partnered with another organization based within the core counties.
- Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
- Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law. If an organization only serves a specific population, e.g., women or specific ethnic populations, SVCF will consider the proposal on a case-by-case basis.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

Priority will be given to organizations that demonstrate a clear understanding of how the proposed activities advance SVCF’s programmatic goals, those that show a cohesive overall community strategy and those that best describe how their efforts will be coordinated and implemented, including key anticipated milestones and the timeframe for completion. We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful project proposals that:

- Include both well-tested models that can be scaled up or expanded regionally while maintaining local relevance, and new pilots that, if successful, can be grown and replicated.
- Benefit from collaborative work and bring public and private partners together with nonprofit organizations.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the sector and its trends.
- Identify the target population and provide justification for that focus.
- Provide clear benchmarks for measuring progress.
Application Process

1) **Review reference materials.** These may be found at www.siliconvalleycf.org/economic-security
   - Research paper on our economic security strategy
   - This RFP – Financial Education and Asset-Building

2) **Participate in the information session.** This is mandatory for any new applicants interested in responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications must be submitted online, this session provides an overview of SVCF’s online application system, applySVCF. Additionally, information sessions provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP’s content and ask questions. To register for this session, please visit the calendar on our home page.

   More specific questions about program concepts, content, eligibility and evaluation can be addressed through phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits.

3) **Submit grant application**, including required attachments, through our online application system, applySVCF, beginning June 8, 2015. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday, July 10, 2015.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found at applySVCF. Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

- Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.
- Clarity of project description and project activities, including steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing and leadership, operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record in specific program content area or potential to achieve needed content expertise.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources leading to greater impact.
- Ability to track short-term and long-term outcomes related to project deliverables.
- Ability to contribute content-area knowledge to the field.

Total Awards

Successful applicants will receive a grant for a maximum one-year period. Approximately $750,000 is available for grants under this application. Budget requests will be closely analyzed, and applicants should include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project’s specific line items.

Please note that selected project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees, future applicants and the community at large.
Review and Selection Process
An advisory committee with area expertise for this strategy will help staff review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF’s board of directors. In addition, applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the proposal review process.

Applicants will be informed of grant decisions on September 30, 2015.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities
• Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF’s requirements for a final financial and narrative report, as well as a presentation to SVCF staff and donors if requested.
• In an effort to further the overall program goals of this RFP, inform future RFPs related to this topic and contribute to larger field-building objectives, grantees will be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices as well as participate in research-based evaluations.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.
About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation makes all forms of philanthropy more powerful. We serve as a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region’s most challenging problems, and through our donors we award more money to charities than any other community foundation in the United States. SVCF has $6.5 billion in assets under management. As Silicon Valley’s center of philanthropy, we provide thousands of individuals, families and corporations with simple and effective ways to give locally and around the world.

Find out more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.450.5557

To get all the latest grantmaking information, follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our community e-newsletter at www.siliconvalleycf.org/enewletters.

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