

**Please Note:** The questions and answers below have generally been organized by topic, but it is possible that these question and answers might be relevant to other topics areas.

#### **TECHNICAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**

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- 1. If I start an application and have to stop before it's completed will the information I entered be saved?**

Yes, the system is set to remember where a person left off. When the click on the link to resume their application, they need to select "yes" to confirm their identity with the same email address.

- 2. The fields in the 2022 Capacity Building Request for Application lists page limits by section, but the fields available to enter narrative responses don't resize or expand as text is entered, they have to be clicked into and scrolled to see text beyond the original field shapes. How would you recommend determining or estimating response length, to ensure that our answers will be fully reviewed by MHFA staff? Can we estimate by copying question text and responses into a Word document and using that to judge total length?**

Yes, applicants can verify page length that way. Please use text size 12, Calibri Font, and 1-inch margins. The page limit does not include the length of the question itself.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

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- 3. Can you provide any additional guidance or clarity on how Minnesota Housing defines "communities" or "stakeholders" for the purposes of Intermediary Capacity Building activity eligibility?**

The terms "communities" and "stakeholders" are intentionally broad. The application includes questions for the applicant to identify and describe the communities they intend to focus on. For the term "Communities Most Impacted," referenced in the RFP, please see the definition for Communities Most Impact or view the definitions section of the RFP.

**Communities Most Impacted:** As defined in Minnesota Housing's Strategic Plan are the people more likely to be impacted by housing instability including: lowest Income (e.g. <= 30% of area median income), People of Color, Indigenous Individuals, LGBTQ+, People Experiencing Homelessness, People with Disabilities, Immigrants, Large Families, Seniors, Children, people facing barriers and/or limited choices due to: poor credit,

limited savings, criminal history, prior evictions, transitioning out of foster care, prison, other systems.

**4. Do you have a list of previously defined "disinvested communities" or how you are defining that?**

For the purposes of the 2022 Capacity Building RFP. "Disinvested Communities" are defined on page 18 of Minnesota Housing's current [strategic plan](#).

**Strengthen Disinvested Communities:** Some communities in Minnesota struggle to receive the investments they need to prosper, which includes communities with lower incomes, limited job growth, declining populations, market rents that do not support the cost of new construction, a stagnant housing market, and/or a limited capacity to access resources. These communities have housing needs and the market is not addressing them.

**5. Is there a limit to the size of a "community?" Can it be an 18-county Continuum of Care?**

No, there isn't a cap on the size of a community, but you will want to be specific about the people you plan to serve. An 18-county area describes a geography, but an applicant would need to specify whether their proposal focused on all people within the 18-county geography or specific constituencies.

**6. What is the definition of committed sources referenced in the budget template?**

Committed sources are other funding sources for the proposal activities, if any. Please describe the source and list the dollar amount.

## **ELIGIBLE USES**

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**7. What kinds of outcomes are required? Not all of our grant activities will have quantitative outputs.**

Qualitative outcomes are important and welcome as long as the application can describe them and connect them to the grant activities.

**8. Will the emphasis of funding be state-wide?**

We seek to have to have an equitable and geographic distribution of grant funds. However, no individual grantee is expected to expand their coverage area beyond what they have determined is necessary for their proposal.

**9. Could a program intended to support communities by focusing on individuals within communities be eligible?**

Yes, individuals can be the focus of capacity building technical assistance as long as it is not direct service or direct financial assistance. Please also see the definition for Technical Assistance provided in the definitions section of the RFP and provided here:

**Technical Assistance:** Activities which include providing training, education, and/or other supports to build the capacity of one or more individuals, organizations, jurisdictions, and/or Tribal Governments and Tribal Business Entities.

**10. Volunteers and officers from our organization have frequently been asked to testify and tell their stories about their housing experiences in a wide variety of venues, including state and federal government. If the government entity requesting their testimony is considering legislation, would that be lobbying?**

For the purposes of the definition of lobbying for this RFP, if a legislator asks an individual or organization to provide testimony for educational purposes, that is not lobbying. If the purpose of the testimony is to advocate for or against particular legislation, that would be lobbying. Please note, “lobbying” may have different definitions in other contexts. This is not legal or tax advice.

**11. Would the 2022 Capacity Building Program RFP be a tool for a small city to use to provide infrastructure to a new development?**

No. Development and predevelopment costs are not eligible expenses. This would include infrastructure costs.

**12. Can grant funds to pay consultants? What are the caps on hourly fees to consultants?**

Yes, the funds can be used to pay consultants. There are no caps on hourly fees, but grant reviewers will review and provide a score based on reasonableness.

**13. Could a tenant organization apply to pay legal fees in a legal fight with a landlord?**

No. Grant funds cannot be used for legal representation in a court proceeding. Legal expenses would be allowed if related to the capacity building activities.

**14. Can the funds be used for other direct client needs (such as classes)?**

No, the funds cannot be used for direct services.

**15. Can the funds be used for rent or mortgage assistance?**

No, the funds cannot be used for direct financial assistance.

**16. Can the grant funds be used to pay stipends? For example, could the grant funds be used to provide support to Lived Expertise Consultants so they can attend meetings (such as child care, transportation assistance, etc.)?**

Yes. Those expenses are generally considered stipends and stipends are an eligible use of grant funds.

**17. Can these funds be used for scholarships? For example, can these funds be used to provide scholarships to students to participate in a course offered by a college?**

Scholarships and tuition assistance are not an eligible use of the funds. While technical assistance activities may include education and training, the intent is that Intermediary Capacity Building grantee directly provides such technical assistance, in the grantee's area of experience and expertise, to communities and organizations.

**18. Although shelter expenses and planning are not eligible uses, what if an emergency shelter program that wants to expand their housing in the community and work with more landlords?**

Yes, that would be an eligible use.

**19. Can this be used for housing surveys on a county level?**

Yes.

**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

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**20. Could local government entities partner with a non-profit to submit an application that increases capacity for the non-profit?**

Yes

**21. Can an organization apply if they are a past or current recipient of the Capacity Building Initiative grant or the Intermediary Capacity Building grant?**

Yes.

**22. If our agency acts as the fiscal agent for another entity and both we and the other entity would like to work on different projects, would that be organizational capacity or intermediary? Would that be allowable to use one application for more than one activity?**

Yes, an organization may submit an application for its own grant activities and submit a separate application as a fiscal agent for another entity. This assumes the fiscal agent will not have a role in the grant activities other than a minor administrative role. Please select the use (Organizational Capacity Building or Intermediary Capacity Building) that describes the activities the other entity would perform. The application should be clear about the roles and responsibilities of the fiscal agent and the other entity. The other entity should be named as a subgrantee in the online application. If the application submitted by the fiscal agent is selected for funding, the fiscal agent and the other entity are required to have a contract in place prior to the fiscal agent entering into a contract with Minnesota Housing.

**23. The grant requirements say that we must be a non-profit to apply. Is this true?**

Eligible applicants must either be a nonprofit organization, a Tribal Nation, or a Tribal Business Entity. However, subgrants may be provided to entities other than eligible applicants, such as business entities, municipalities, or others as long as the subgrants are for eligible expenses.

## **GRANT TERM AND GRANT AMOUNTS**

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**24. Can requested project budgets under the Intermediary Capacity Building program be shorter than the 2-year grant period for the program? I.E., is it acceptable to propose activities that would conclude in 12 or 18 months rather than 24, and if a shorter budget period is proposed, would that impact the maximum amount that can be requested, or awarded?**

A shorter grant period is allowable, but funds need to be proportionate to the activities described.

**25. Will there be a 2023 grant?**

No. This is a 2-year grant term. Funding through this RFP will not be available until around 2024.

**26. Are the maximum award amounts an annual amount or is that for the entire two-year grant term?**

The maximum award is for the two-year grant period.

**FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**27. The Financial Documents asks for “IRS Form 990 and Aging Schedule” do we need to provide both?**

If your organization’s Total Gross Revenue is \$50,000-\$750,000, an IRS Form 990 is sufficient.

**28. 2021 saw our revenue exceed \$750,000 for the first time. We are working with our accounting firm to complete an audit, but know it will not be done before the application deadline.**

Provide the 990 by the application deadline and send the audit once it is available.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING OR INTERMEDIARY USES**

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**29. Are organizations eligible to apply to both Organizational Capacity Building and Intermediary Capacity Building grants at the same time?**

No. Applicants must select only one use.

**30. Can an applicant select the Intermediary Capacity Building use if the majority of the proposed activities fit the definition of that category, but the applicant also plans to include activities that would likely fall within the Organizational Capacity Building use?**

Applicants can only request funds for activities that fit within one of the two eligible uses – either Intermediary Capacity Building or Organizational Capacity Building.

**SUB-GRANT AND/OR CONTRACTING REQUIREMENTS**

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- 31. Does the provision of financial assistance awards that do not exceed the \$5,000 threshold listed in policy 08-03 would require a competitive, public, and objectively scored application process in order to meet other listed requirements?**

If the aggregate amount of funds that the intermediary applicant will pass through to sub-grantees is at least \$5,000, then they are subject to 08-02 and 08-03, even if the amount of any particular sub-grant is less than \$5,000. However, please note that stipends provided to reimburse recipients of technical assistance for their time and expenses related to participation are not considered grants.

- 32. Do state competitive grantmaking requirements apply to other funds provided to the applicant?**

State competitive grantmaking requirements apply to any activities that the 2022 Capacity Building Grant will fund. State competitive grantmaking requirements do not apply to activities that are not funded by Minnesota Housing grants.

- 33. Do competitive processes apply for Technical Assistance (TA) if no grants are provided?**

No, competitive processes do not apply, but applicants requesting intermediary funds will need to explain why they chose the (TA) recipients they chose.

- 34. Please provide more details about the competitive process requirements for services such as a consultants:**

- Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.  
Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- The Grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
- State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List
- Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program: MCUB: Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program

- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Directory](#)
- The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- The Grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.
- Notwithstanding (a) - (d) above, the State may waive bidding process requirements when:
  - Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant.
  - It is determined there is only one legitimate or practical source for such materials or services and that the Grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
  - For projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per [Minn. Stat. §§177.41 through 177.44](#). These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole.
- The Grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: <http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp>