



THE DENVER  
FOUNDATION  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE  
GUIDELINES

Effective December 2009



THE DENVER FOUNDATION

# Introduction

All nonprofit organizations need help from time to time in order to function more effectively and efficiently. This is especially true of new or emerging nonprofit organizations or those with smaller budgets. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. In fact, recognizing that the organization is facing a challenge, or needs to improve in some area, and then identifying what kind of help the organization needs, is a sign that the organization is self-aware and proactive – positive traits to be proud of!

That's why The Denver Foundation has set aside funds specifically to provide grants for nonprofit organizations to get this kind of help, usually called "Technical Assistance." Technical Assistance (TA) can be many things, but what is most important is that TA helps the staff and/or board members of the organization learn something new and increase their capacity to lead, manage, and direct the organization.

Examples of TA could include: attending a workshop or training session on a specific topic, such as marketing, volunteer management, financial management, or fundraising; hiring a facilitator for a board retreat; or working with a consultant to develop a fundraising plan or a strategic plan for the organization. All of these forms of TA share the outcome that the staff and/or board members of the organization will be actively involved in the TA process and will learn new skills or information that will help the organization change and improve.

## All organizations need help from time to time.

We would not, for example, provide a TA grant for the printing of a new brochure designed to increase awareness of the organization. But we would consider a TA grant for the staff and/or board members to work with a consultant to develop a marketing plan for the organization. The first is passive – you pay someone to do something *for* you. The second is active – you pay someone to do something *with you* – and in the process you acquire new skills and information.

Contained in this brochure is a "Technical Assistance Evaluative Rubric." It follows closely the Colorado Common Grant Application and was informed by Social Venture Partners Denver in addition to focus groups conducted by The Denver Foundation. Although the five subject areas on the left-hand side of the page represent the vast majority of requests to the TA program, feel free to build an application that meets your specific priorities. **The rubric is designed as a tool to help you determine your technical assistance priorities and how they relate to each other.** It may also be helpful to you as you interview potential consultants for either assessment or provision of services.

# The Denver Foundation: Technical Assistance Evaluative Rubric

## Eight Dimensions of a Healthy NPO

	Governance	Staffing	Planning	Program	Finances	Fundraising	Inclusiveness	Evaluation
<b>Board Retreats and Strategic Planning</b>	Clear roles and responsibilities are in place that allow for efficient and transparent decision making between the ED and board	Board is a strategic resource to staff and is proactive in linking strategic plan to staff projections in programming and fundraising	Strategic planning is carried out regularly, and the analyses of previous plans build upon each other and are integrated year to year	Comprehensive internal and external benchmarking is in place and synergies are captured across programs and fund development.	Exceptional financial judgment and a keen sense of financial implications are communicated for all decisions	Board has fundraising knowledge and utilizes its skills to assist the organization in fund development	Board expertise is drawn from constituents and decisions are informed by the community. Policies are developed to codify inclusiveness practices	Formal process of board evaluation is in place & results are used to make improvements individually and as a whole
<b>Fund Development</b>	Board embraces fundraising as a core responsibility and formally gives/gets donations	Adequate, strategic staff time is devoted to fundraising and support is available to contract and expand during "peaks and valleys"	Multi-pronged, multi-year development strategy is in place which is nimble to changes in the funding environment	Organization has segmented marketing materials specific and consistent for each program and linked to strategic plan	Well designed, clear, and accepted chart of accounts and ethical policies are widely used for restricted grants and donor wishes	Long-term, sustainable, diversified revenue base is in place and strategies are designed to keep and elevate a diverse funding base	Organization is widely known and respected in communities of color (and other minority groups) who assist and take ownership in fund development	Revenue goals are outlined and managed monthly, including cost/benefit ratios and cash low projections
<b>Governance and Operational Systems</b>	Legal and other relevant expertise is in place on the board and additional external expertise is accessible when needed	Board is attentive to CEO development, monitors performance targets and holds CEO accountable	Concrete, realistic plans are in place that present a clear, broadly held reason for program and organizational existence	Internal positions and peripheral (board and volunteers) within the organization are fully staffed to achieve desired program results	Consistent, multiple fiscal years data are easily reviewed and conservative projections are monitored monthly	Revenue generating activities support, don't distract from desired social impact	Leveraged, mutually beneficial relationships within marginalized communities are apparent on the board	Programs and agency goals are measured frequently and attached to meaningful indicators that are communicated both internally and externally
<b>Technology and Information Management</b>	Written internal e-controls are in place, frequently monitored, and regularly backed up	Software applications allow staff to effectively communicate, are secure, and reviewed formally; ongoing training is available	A system or plan to replace outdated equipment exists and is inline with industry standards	Formal, relevant systems for data collection are in place across all programs and ongoing training is available for optimal functioning	All internal and external systems are fully integrated with budgeting processes and technology	Donor management system is in place; ability to accept on-line donations	Website includes links to partners; bi-lingual options are available if appropriate; demographic data of constituents is tracked and analyzed	Evaluation measures are consistently collected and analyzed for use with a clear focus, use, and presentation
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	Board reflects or connects with the community served and considers diverse perspectives in decision-making; organization provides opportunities for board development	Professional development for staff is made available and encouraged	Strategic plan includes inclusiveness goals	Organization regularly seeks external input to develop and inform programming	Finances reflect a commitment to inclusiveness and transparency, e.g. budget allocations for professional development and capacity building	Various board and staff members share relationships with donors to maintain institutional connection to diverse donors	Organization has a formalized process to identify opportunities to advance its mission by becoming more inclusive e.g. inclusiveness committee	Inclusiveness goals are tied to staff performance reviews and celebrated as organizational successes

*The rubric is designed as a tool to help you determine your TA priorities and to help you as you interview consultants for potential assessments and interventions. Please note that final reports will follow the general themes contained in this rubric.*

# General Guidelines

## Basics:

- No deadline dates – grant requests are considered on an ongoing basis
- Grants range from \$100 to a maximum total of \$4,000
  - Up to \$1,000 is available for organizational assessments.
  - Up to \$3,000 is available for the proposed activity or activities.

Example 1: You know your organization could benefit from growth in several areas, and you are not sure where to start. In this instance you may apply for an assessment grant for up to \$1,000. Assessments help to define the top priority areas for organizational strengthening, and the TA activities likely to be most helpful. Assessments can also create a sense of buy-in from the staff, board, and volunteers through interviews, document reviews and analysis of previous strategies.

Example 2: You may know your organization's priority area and an assessment is not needed to better define and/or direct your activities. In this instance you may apply for the \$3,000 technical assistance grant without an assessment.

Example 3: You have a general sense that your organization needs help in a specific area and you would like an assessment of \$1,000 to fully understand the issue and an award of \$3,000 to implement the proposed activities.

In each of the above examples, a successful request will have demonstrated a set focus, a set scope of work, and set fit for the organization and potential consultant. It answers the question, "What can we really accomplish?"

- Quick turn-around – a decision will be made on your request approximately six weeks from the date that the request letter is received at the Foundation.
- TA grants will not be made for activities that have already occurred at the time the grant would be awarded, so plan ahead!

## Eligibility to apply:

- Limited to organizations with annual operating revenues of up to \$500,000 (based on most recently completed fiscal year), with one exception:
  - If this is a grant for Inclusiveness work, the \$500,000 limit is waived.
- Organizations applying for TA must be a current or former grant recipient of the Community Grants Program of The Denver Foundation. Under certain conditions (see below) an organization that has been declined by the Community Grants Program may also apply.
- An organization that has been declined by the Community Grants Program (or had an incomplete application) may apply for a TA Grant, providing it meets the basic eligibility guidelines of the Community Grants Program. This means the organization is a 501(c)(3), serves people in the seven-county Metro Denver area, and provides services in one or more of our funding areas (Arts & Culture, Civic & Education, Health, Human Services). If you have any questions about your eligibility to apply for a TA grant, please contact the Director of Program Information Management at [jsharp@denverfoundation.org](mailto:jsharp@denverfoundation.org) or 720-974-2608.
- An organization may apply for a TA grant even if they have separately received another grant from The Denver Foundation within the same year
- An organization that has previously received a TA grant may apply for additional grants in subsequent years. However, successful recurring requests show that the organization has built upon previous strategies. The Foundation will not provide ongoing funding for the same activity.

## TA Providers

You may use an individual consultant, nonprofit, or for-profit organization as your TA provider. If necessary, we can offer information on nonprofit organizations that provide technical assistance, your organization must decide which specific provider to use.

The Denver Foundation has a database of consultants as a resource for you on its website. Please note that the consultants listed in the database are not vetted or endorsed by The Denver Foundation. Where possible, The Denver Foundation strongly encourages potential applicants to talk to previous recipients of the TA Program to see who they used, who they interviewed, and if they had to do it over again, what would they have done differently? A list of previous TA grantees is found on the TA Blog of The Denver Foundation accessible at [denverfoundation.org](http://denverfoundation.org).

In all instances applicants should interview several consultants to find the best fit and understanding of the problem or opportunity for which you will be applying.

Please note that a TA grant may not be used to pay a board member or any party whose direct affiliation with your organization could be construed as a conflict of interest. While you may have highly competent professional resources on your board, The Denver Foundation would expect these resources to be provided as an in-kind donation.

## Requesting a TA Grant

To request a TA grant, the organization must submit a 1 to 2 page letter stating:

- (1) what you seek the TA for (the specific problem or challenge you want to address),
- (2) what kind of TA you will get (i.e. going to a workshop, hiring a consultant, type of assessment/diagnostic tools, etc.) ,
- (3) who specifically will provide the help (i.e. the organization offering the workshop, the name of the consultant, etc.),
- (4) the timeline for the TA (i.e. date of the workshop, dates for consultant's assistance, etc.),
- (5) a breakdown of how the specific amount you are requesting from The Denver Foundation will be used (i.e. If requesting \$2,500 to pay for a consultant, tell us exactly what the consultant will be doing and how the \$2,500 fee will be billed), and
- (6) unless you are applying for an inclusiveness TA grant, the organization must include an audit (if available) or fiscal year- end documents that verify that the revenue received in the most recently completed fiscal year is no more than \$500,000.
- (7) Reporting: If you receive funding, you will be required to submit a final report that describes the outcome or result of the TA you received and describes how this assistance benefited your organization. All details about reporting will be described in your grant contract, and all reporting forms will be available online or sent to you via e-mail. In addition to your final report submitted to The Denver Foundation, we seek to create a sense of shared learning among all TA grantees and will expect that you will share your experience with other organizations.

You may email your proposal, send it to the address below, or drop off a hard copy, but you must submit all of your documents in either one email or in one proposal packet – we will not accept proposals in which some of the required attachments are sent via email and hard-copies are sent of others. We cannot receive additional materials once your proposal has been submitted. If you choose to email your proposal please send it to:

[TA@denverfoundation.org](mailto:TA@denverfoundation.org)



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