

Program Operations Third-Year Contract Extensions Questions & Answers

This communication is to share that we will not be operating an RFI/RFP cycle for Program Operations grants this year. We will be providing our current Program Operations grantees with a third year of funding as an extension to the current 2-year grant awards.

Our grantees have communicated that our process is overly complicated and cumbersome in relation to the outcomes we seek to achieve.

As funders, we desire a process that does not unduly burden applicants, and delivers funding to high quality programs operated by both large and small organizations serving our priority populations.

We desire a process that provides an on-ramp for emerging organizations who may also be current/former capacity building grant recipients to access a source of larger multi-year support.

Given the above, we know that the process as currently conceived does not deliver on those desires.

As such, we will provide our current Program Operations grantees with a third year of funding, which is an extension to the current 2-year grant awards. This will allow us to undertake a shift in the existing process to right-size it to our desired outcomes and reduce burdens where possible on grant applicants.

We acknowledge that this may be disappointing news for some and welcome news for others. Below you will find answers to questions we have anticipated; we hope they will provide clarity.

Q: What about the programs that weren't funded this cycle? Does this mean they won't get the opportunity to apply again for at least another year?

A: Yes. At this time, the Coordinated Funders will not open an RFP process for additional Program Operations funding.

Q: There are several agencies that were receiving Capacity Building grants from COFU who may have intended to apply for Program Operations grants in the future. Will these organizations have an opportunity to apply for funding, or will they also have to wait until the next RFP cycle?

A: All organizations interested in applying for Program Operations grants will have to wait until the next cycle opens.

Q: What is the status of COFU Capacity Building funding?

We are not operating a competitive Capacity Building grants program in this fiscal year (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020). "Competitive" meaning an open application process within a defined grant program open to all eligible nonprofits serving Washtenaw County. Below we share our non-competitive grants made in this fiscal year. "Non-competitive" meaning grants awarded through a staff-directed process that was not open to all eligible nonprofits in Washtenaw County.

We are in the process of redeveloping a grant program for these funds. The funders remain committed to investing in nonprofit capacity building. As more information is available, we will communicate the details.

Our current investments to build nonprofit capacity continue to include following:

- [Leadership DELI](#) (existing/ongoing funding commitment)
- [Champions for Change](#): Leaders of Color and Allies Academy (new funding commitment)
- Buenos Vecinos (existing/ongoing funding commitment)

Q: Why are there a large number of programs that are continuously funded through COFU?

A: These investments are the result of a rigorous nonprofit- and key stakeholder-driven process addressing community needs through programs that have a proven track record of achieving desired outcomes.

Over the years, the Funders have worked with community agencies to identify and adapt the program strategies, outcomes, and priority populations in service of achieving our community outcomes. However, we've observed little variance (across cycles) of agencies applying and then, not surprisingly, receiving funds.

Anecdotally, we have heard from some agencies that they opt not to return or participate in the Program Operations funding process due to the length and complexity of the process and requirements. Another potential reason for the lack of variance could be due to the focused nature of these identified strategies and outcomes. The lack of variance could also be an outcome of the grants process as it is currently constructed. The lack of variance might also be a result of the lack of diversity of those (staff, committee, and governance levels) who are reviewing grant proposals and making decisions.

In the most recent funding cycle, 94% of investments were made to high-performing, previously funded programs.

Q: When will the next Program Operations funding cycle open?

A: At this time, there is no specific timeline set for the next funding cycle process to open. We will send communications and update our website and social media with dates and information when it is available.

Q. What will the COFU staff spend their time on during this holding period?

A: COFU staff and leadership are engaging a consultant to facilitate the process of figuring out how COFU can work better in service of community. This process will begin in July and is expected to continue into 2020. We expect stakeholder meetings and opportunities to engage with community as the process unfolds.

Staff will also work on developing Capacity Building and Systems Change grant programs.

Q: Will opportunities to apply for COFU Program Operations funds go away entirely?

A: We do not plan to eliminate the opportunity to provide program grant operations funding through COFU funding. We do plan to develop a grant making opportunity that fits the needs of the community and the populations we aim to serve. For FAQ's and more information about the most recent round of Program Operations investments, [visit our website](#).

For information about other grant funding opportunities, learn more online here:

[United Way of Washtenaw County grants](#)
[Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation grants](#)