

# Operating Grants

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PINELLAS  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
*Your Partner in Philanthropy*

## Overview Webinar Q&A Summary

**On the grants page it says 8/8 as the due date for the LOI but in the FAQ and other areas it says 8/11. Please clarify the correct date. Thank you.**

The correct date is August 11th :)

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By Noon on 8/11

**Will this presentation be available on the web? Thanks! Simone/SPMOP**

Yes, it sure will. We are recording and we will have it available following the webinar today. We will also have a detailed list of all questions and answers from today's webinar.

**My non-profit is an equine assisted mobile therapy program (mini horses). Would hay, grain, veterinary costs, halters, buckets. etc be considered operating expenses?**

Yes, those are eligible operating expenses under this program.

**To understand correctly, are salary for team member that performs community services, training and professional development for team members, office or co-working rent/membership, marketing and membership fees to relevant associations included?**

Yes, these types of things, if they are apart of the regular operations of your organization and help you provide services in the community, then they can be included.

### **What is meant by "Access to Justice"**

Programs that typically fit under the Access to Justice category include legal aid organizations or nonprofits that help people address issues coming out of the criminal justice system. If your organization provides support in navigating legal systems or overcoming barriers related to criminal justice involvement, you could consider yourself under this category.

*"Programs that typically fit under the access to justice category are legal aid organizations typically or if your organization is helping people address issues that are coming out of the criminal justice system, you could consider yourself under the access to justice category."*

### **Under Advancing Education, would you please clarify what "types" of scholarships would be considered?**

Generally, that is scholarships to attend college according to the definitions here. Organizations that have a primary function of providing scholarships for students attending college, receiving a technical education, anything after the graduation from high school, would be the organizations considered under providing scholarships.

**It's Sharon again.... re: presence in Pinellas County. My non-profit (where the minis are homed) is a farm in Webster but services are in Pinellas County.**

If you are providing services at a physical location regularly, in Pinellas Co., you would be eligible to apply.

### **What if you fit in most of those categories? Do you select one or do you show how you fit in all of the applicable categories?**

No, you do not have to select only one category. You are not required to choose or limit yourself to a single funding priority. If your organization's work fits into multiple categories, you should show how your services align with each relevant area. The board has set these as overall priorities for funding, and you just need to demonstrate alignment with at least one.

*"We're not asking you necessarily to put yourself into one of these categories or only one of these categories. You just need to be in one of these categories or have services and benefits to the community in one of these categories to apply. And if you're in multiple, that's great. If you're in one, that's fine, too."*

**Under Advancing Education, can scholarships be for providing additional mental health training for existing mental health professionals?**

Yes, if your nonprofit provides mental health services, and part of your operating costs includes covering continuing education or training for staff (such as mental health professionals), then that is an eligible operating expense under the Advancing Education priority.

*“If you’re an organization, a nonprofit that is providing mental health services and that was an operating cost of your organization to pay for people’s continuing education so that they can continue to provide great services through your organization, then that would certainly be an eligible operating expense.”*

### **Are we able to talk out our programming with anyone from PCF staff to assess what is the best fit under the priorities?**

Yes. If you have specific questions about where your work fits, the PCF team encourages you to reach out and discuss your individual eligibility and alignment with funding priorities. You do not need to fit squarely under only one category, and you’re welcome to have a conversation with staff to better assess your fit.

*“If you have specific questions about that, we’d be happy to talk to you about how you fit... You’re certainly welcome to talk to our staff individually if you have questions about whether or not you fit for your own individual eligibility.”*

### **Are non-profit organizations that fund and support small businesses eligible?**

Yes. Nonprofits that support small businesses are eligible, as this type of work is considered a form of community education and access to resources, both of which align with PCF’s funding priorities.

*“That fits broadly in several categories. That is one type of community education that is provided. When you offer programming like that, that’s also access to resources. It fits into several categories. So that type of organization is eligible.”*

### **Access to healthcare... is there anything specific that PCF is focused on in this category?**

No, PCF does not have a specific focus within the Access to Healthcare category for operating grants. The category is meant to be interpreted broadly, and no one type of healthcare service is prioritized over another in this process.

*“There aren’t specific focuses under these categories or things that we think are more deserving of an operating grant than others... If you are doing work that fits up under the access to healthcare focus, then there’s not one thing that’s more of a priority for us than another, at least not through the operating grants process.”*

### **Does the PCF offer capital grants at any time?**

Not currently. PCF used to offer a specific capital grants process, but it was highly competitive and has since been discontinued. The funding that was previously allocated for capital grants is now redirected into the operating grants program, which allows PCF to support more organizations through operating funding — something that is often less available in the funding landscape.

*"We used to offer a specific capital grants process that was highly competitive and we have put that money instead into the operating grants process to be able to award more operating grants. We find that money from operating grants is not as widely available in the community or from grantors as a whole either here or around the country."*

### **If we are doing some of the services from or at a House of Worship are we eligible**

Yes — the location does not disqualify you. If your nonprofit provides services at a house of worship (like a church or synagogue), you are still eligible as long as your organization is not the house of worship itself. If the house of worship is your fiscal sponsor or you're using their space to serve the community, that's fine. Additionally, if a separate 501(c)(3) exists that runs the programming, that entity can apply.

*"We're agnostic as to location... If you offer services from or at a house of worship, that is totally fine. The organization itself just needs to not necessarily be that house of worship... Some congregations invite nonprofits to offer their services through that location — that's fine. And if you have a separate 501(c)(3), you'd be able to apply as well."*

### **So if ONE project is solely in Pinellas County, but the nonprofit as a whole serves a nationwide audience, are we eligible? We were going to apply for a Direct Services grant for a Pinellas-focused literacy/education project. So the staff costs associated and building/maintenance costs associated with that project would be part of the grant.**

Yes. You are eligible as long as the services provided with the grant funds directly benefit Pinellas County residents. Even if your organization operates nationally, you may apply for operating support specifically tied to the Pinellas-based project. Staff salaries and building or maintenance expenses that support the local project are considered eligible operating expenses.

*"Yes, they would be [eligible]... When we get into the full application, one of the questions we'll ask is what percent of that type of project actually benefits people in Pinellas County. If that program wholly supports Pinellas County or residents make up a significant portion, that's how we then break down and consider the operating expenses."*

### **I've had a hard time finding an affordable auditor for our non profit. If anyone can direct us, please share.**

Yes, PCF staff can share the names of firms that offer audits for nonprofits. They are aware that audit costs have increased and are happy to help direct you to known providers. However, having an audit is not required to apply for an operating grant. If your organization does have an audit, PCF will ask to see the most recent results, but only during the full application stage — not during the LOI phase.

*"We can certainly share different firms that we know are offering audit opportunities for nonprofits... An audit is not required in order to apply for an operating grant. However, if you do have one, we ask that you share the most recent audit results with PCF — but that does not come into play until the full application."*

**Is there an opportunity to meet with someone to help determine which category we best fit in if we are both a direct service and arts/culture organization?**

Yes. PCF strongly encourages organizations that are unsure which track they fall under to ask for guidance before completing the application. While staff can move your application between tracks if needed, it's much easier for everyone if you're in the correct track from the start.

*"If you really do have a question whether you're arts and culture or direct community services, ask before you complete much of the application... We can move things from one application to the other, but if you check first so that you can get a definitive answer from us, you'll be in the right type of application from the very beginning."*

**Can we ask for less than 30K total over 2 years? Or does everyone get 30K if successful applicant.**

Yes, you can absolutely apply for less.

**Is the 50-60 applicants you mentioned the number of grants you expect to award or the number of LOI submittals you will invite to submit the full application?**

The number of total grants that will be awarded.

**Hello! Can a nonprofit that is not yet a 501(c)3 apply through a fiscal agency arrangement?**

Yes, a nonprofit can apply through a fiscal agent that is a registered 501(c)(3). However, only one application per 501(c)(3) is allowed. So, if a fiscal agent represents multiple groups, they must decide which one will submit under their EIN.

*"A nonprofit that is not yet a 501(c)(3) can apply through a fiscal agency arrangement... That is the only entity that could apply for that 501(c)(3). If you have one 501(c)(3), we can accept one application... So you need to check with that organization to determine how they're putting their application together."*

**If an applicant was a recipient of another grant such as Senior Citizens Services, they aren't precluded from applying/receiving this General Operating grant correct? Thank you!**

Yes, you are not precluded from applying for or receiving an operating grant. Past or current funding from other PCF programs, such as Senior Citizens Services, has no bearing on your eligibility for the General Operating Grant.

*"If you are an applicant or a recipient to another grant process at PCF, like our Senior Citizens Services grants, you are not precluded from applying or receiving this grant... That has no bearing on your ability to apply or receive an operating grant."*

### **Who reviews the LOIs? Is it this team on zoom or outside reviewers?**

The LOIs are reviewed internally by the PCF grants team and other PCF staff — not external reviewers. If your LOI is approved, the full application will then be reviewed by four separate committees composed of board members, community leaders, and supporters who do not have conflicts of interest in the nonprofit ecosystem. Neither review process is open to the public, but PCF does offer feedback upon request.

*"There is an internal team — grants team plus other staff here at PCF — that reviews the LOIs... The full applications are reviewed by four committees of board members, supporters, and community leaders who do not have conflicts in the nonprofit ecosystem. Neither the LOI review nor the application review is open to the public, but we do provide feedback if you are seeking it."*

### **Is there a preference with organizations in certain areas of the county or any geographical restrictions other than being in Pinellas County?**

No — PCF does not give preference to organizations based on where they are located within Pinellas County. The only requirement is that your organization has a physical presence in Pinellas County, and the services funded by the grant must benefit Pinellas County residents.

*"We do not make that distinction in this grant application process. There's no extra points awarded for being located in one area over another. The physical limitation is Pinellas County."*

### **Will the webinar on 7/31 be recorded as well?**

Yes, all of our webinars are going to be recorded and will be posted to our website as soon as it is processed. You can also review the full "PCF Webinar Overview & LOI Walkthrough - Operating Grant Cycle 2026-2027" webinar on YouTube if you click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=au4McZD0aVg>

### **Which email do we connect with to update the email the portal send updates to? (grants or admin)?**

grants@pinellascf.org

### **Does having received a grant in the past affect the approval for a grant?**

No, past grant status — whether approved or denied — does not affect your eligibility or chances of being selected for a General Operating Grant. Each application cycle is reviewed independently, and receiving or being denied a different PCF grant has no bearing on the outcome of your current operating grant application.

*"If you've gotten grants from other funds at PCF or didn't get grants from other funds at PCF, that has no bearing on your ability to apply or receive an operating grant."*

**When can we register for the July 31st webinar? Is that already available on the website?**

Yes, you can register for all posted webinars at this time

**Are awards funded mainly at the requested amount, or does PCF ever give a partial award if the evaluators feel an application is only partially fundable?**

Yes, partial awards are possible. PCF aims to fund organizations at the level they request, but when needed, they may offer partial awards to support more applicants and expand their overall impact. Receiving a partial award does not reflect poorly on your application — it's often a funding capacity decision.

Additionally, organizations are welcome to request less than the maximum allowable amount, and doing so will not negatively impact your application or scoring during review.

*"We do try and get organizations, if we can, what they have asked for. But there is the possibility that there could be a partial award available... If you ask for less money, it doesn't mean you get bumped up or bumped above others. Ask for what you need. You're not ineligible if you need less money than you're allowed to request."*

**Will all the questions and answers be posted somewhere?**

Yes, all questions and answers will be posted for future review

**Are previous recipients of the operating grant able to apply again?**

Yes, absolutely.

**Can requests for funding go to compensation for new positions or program expenses if a nonprofit is aiming to expand what the offer?**

Yes. PCF encourages organizations to use operating grant funds to support expansion efforts, including hiring new staff or growing existing programming. You can explain this in the "intent for funds" section of the application.

*"Yes, absolutely. They can go for expansion. And you can help explain that in the section where we ask, 'How are you going to use this funding?' You could very much explain right there that it's for an expansion of programming and that's what you're asking for."*

**Can organization ask for the partial funding of the project? For example annual cost is \$40k, can we ask for \$20K and get another \$20K from different source?**

Yes. You can apply for a portion of your total project costs, and PCF encourages you to seek additional support from other funders. Just be sure the portion requested from PCF covers eligible operating expenses and is clearly explained in your application.

*"Yes, absolutely. Just keep in mind what these eligible expenses are and make sure that's what the funds are used for."*

### **2000 characters with OR without spaces?**

Character count would typically count the spaces as characters.

### **Could 2 different people (different email addresses) work simultaneously on the same application?**

Yes. The grants portal supports collaboration between multiple users. There is a collaboration tool built into the system that allows you to invite other users (with different email addresses) to work on the same application. If you have any trouble using it, PCF staff can help activate the feature for you.

*"There is a collaboration tool that you should be able to use in the grant portal. If you have any trouble with that, please reach out to our team and we can activate that for you."*

### **Would a Private School with a nonprofit entity be eligible for the operating grant?**

It depends. Eligibility would be determined based on the structure and purpose of the nonprofit entity associated with the school. PCF recommends contacting their team directly to discuss your specific case. If the nonprofit entity has a clearly public purpose or programming separate from standard school operations, it may be eligible — but more context is needed.

*"There would be eligibility if that entity that's connected has a publicly accessible or very public purpose... We need to know more details about that before giving an answer here." According to PCF's guidelines, the following types of organizations are not eligible to apply for operating grants:*

- *Hospitals*
- *Schools and school-affiliated groups*
- *Vocal and musical ensembles*
- *Animal welfare organizations*
- *Houses of worship*
- *Governments*
- *Continuing care retirement communities*
- *Private and grant-making foundations*

Why? Most of these groups typically have access to alternative funding sources that smaller direct-service nonprofits may not. PCF's goal is to ensure their limited funds create the greatest possible impact across the nonprofit sector in Pinellas County.

*"It's not that these organizations do not provide benefit. It's that we only have so many resources... so we are trying to be very focused in the impact we make in the community."*

### **Should we enter the total requested for 1 year or the cumulative total for both years?**



Enter the amount you are requesting per year — not the two-year total. If awarded, PCF will grant the same amount in each year of the two-year grant cycle, totaling twice the amount you enter.

*“What you’re putting in there is the one-year answer — the 15, 20, or 25 thousand dollars. The final award will be the same amount in both years... We don’t allow organizations to say, ‘I need 25,000 in year one and less in year two.’”*

So for example: Entering \$15,000 would result in a \$30,000 total award over two years.

**Is it better to have a diversity of intent for funds? for example, if it was all intended for salary, would that be a red flag?**

No, it is not a red flag. You are welcome to request funding for one single use (like salaries) or a mix of expenses. The “intent for funds” question is for internal PCF understanding only — it is not shared with the review committee and does not affect your scoring.

*“It does not matter to us if you are applying part of it to your telephone, part of it to salaries, part of it to copy paper... or you’re applying it all to salaries. This is an informational piece for PCF... This answer is not shared with the full application review committee.”*

Remember, there is no need for line-item detail or exact dollar breakdowns — just give a general sense of how you intend to use the funding.

**If we are a new organization, located in Pinellas, assisting the Pinellas community and we are living only by small donations, how can we mention our budget, if this is minimal, covering only our lease at this time?**

That’s completely fine — having a small budget is not a problem. In fact, lease costs are a great example of an eligible operating expense, and you should simply share your actual current operating situation. PCF wants to support small and growing organizations, and you’ll have an opportunity in the full application phase to provide more context through a budget breakdown.

*“That’s a great use for an operating grant — leases. You’ll have an opportunity, if invited to complete the full application, to put together a more detailed budget that allows us to know your total revenue and expense as an organization. But if you’re small, that’s OK — we’d be happy to help if you have a strong application.”*

**Thank you for asking about reductions in funding. Understanding the impact of these changes is so important!**

Yes, the question is required, but your response can be as brief or detailed as you’re comfortable with. PCF is asking this to better understand the real financial challenges local nonprofits are facing — whether from declines in government contracts, private giving, or other revenue sources. This information will not be shared with the review committee and is used only internally to inform PCF’s understanding and potential response.

*“This information... will help PCF have an understanding of what, if any, the impact on Pinellas County has been with some of the changes we’ve been hearing about. It will not be shared with the full application review committee.”*

PCF also welcomes you to include anticipated losses or pending funding delays (e.g., federal grants that may not come through).

**We've gotten word of a delay in funding that could mean we won't get the funds. Should that go in the reduced funding section? We could also get the funds, but it's looking unlikely. So it's not exactly a "no" yet, but it's a "likely no", I would say.**

Yes. PCF wants to hear about potential or anticipated losses, even if the funding hasn't been definitively cut. You should explain the situation honestly and clearly — share that the funding has been delayed, is at risk, and what the potential impact on your organization would be if it doesn't come through.

*"Yes... That's information that's helpful to us and you could explain it just like that — that this is the type of funding it is, we've gotten word it's been delayed, we think it's highly unlikely, but we could always receive it. Let us know what the impact to that is."*

PCF emphasizes that the purpose is to understand the financial pressure points in the community, not to evaluate your financial health or penalize you in scoring.

**What would you recommend - if I have a special needs ballroom dance program would this be Arts and Culture or Direct Services? Since we serve the special needs community and change lives through that, but we are an art form, since we teach dancing.....**

You should apply under Arts & Culture, because the primary focus of your organization is teaching dance, which aligns with the arts funding track. While your program clearly delivers meaningful social impact, the application track is based on the core nature of your programming — not just the audience you serve.

*"Since it appears that the organization's primary focus is providing dance instruction, then that would probably go in the Arts & Culture application... If that's the primary function of the organization — teaching dance — that would be where that application would go."*

If you're still unsure, PCF encourages you to reach out directly before submitting so they can help assess and guide you into the right track — especially since it's hard to shift applications mid-process.

**Do we include time spent in webinars when calculating time spent on LOI?**

Yes, absolutely. PCF wants a realistic view of how much time the LOI process takes, and webinar participation counts toward that total. If you watch the recording more than once, you can include each viewing.

*"Yes, please count this time spent in webinars. If you go back and watch this webinar six more times, count each of those times... That will help us understand the true impact of this application on your time."*

**Regarding the reduction in funding. Will you be sharing this info to DAF holders? We need their help more than ever now, but we're not seeing much increase in distribution from that area.**

Yes. PCF provides regular content to DAF holders and other donors, and they plan to include aggregated, anonymized insights from the reduction-in-funding question to help inform and engage those funders. This can help draw attention to nonprofits' current challenges and inspire more giving.

*"That information can certainly be shared with donor advised fund holders... We provide regular content for those people who have donor advised funds... We'd be able to share that not just with donor advised fund holders, but donors to the foundation in general."*

Please Note: The info will be aggregated and anonymized — individual organizations won't be named unless you authorize it separately.

**Should we calculate our Annual Expenditures in Pinellas County based on this current operating year? Our funding for Pinellas will be greatly reduced at the end of the summer, and that will not be reflective of what we have historically expensed in Pinellas County.**

Yes — PCF wants to see the reality going forward, not just past spending. If you know your expenses in Pinellas will be significantly lower due to an upcoming funding reduction, you should reflect that anticipated change in your reported expenditures. To provide context, you can explain the shift in the "Reduction in Funding" section.

*"If there is going to be a major reduction [in expenses in Pinellas], we'd like to know what the reality is going forward... But that's also something you can explain in the reductions in funding section — that historically expenses were greater, and here's why that's changing."*

So: Use forward-looking data that reflects what your budget will realistically be during the 2026–2027 grant period and explain the drop in the reductions question to give PCF context.

**How does PCF explain/define "improve cultural awareness"?**

Improving cultural awareness means helping individuals and the broader community to better understand, celebrate, and engage with cultural identity, traditions, lived experiences, and community history. PCF is particularly interested in programming that fosters dialogue, connection, and learning across cultural lines.

Examples of qualifying activities include:

- Hosting public programs or community events centered on cultural traditions or storytelling.
- Offering workshops or trainings focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Producing artistic work that uplifts underrepresented voices or encourages cross-cultural understanding.
- Creating programming that allows the public to explore, celebrate, or reflect on cultural heritage.

*"That would cover organizations that help individuals in our community really understand or deepen our understanding of cultural identity, community history, lived experience... especially those who might be offering community events, public programs, or trainings on the importance of sharing our differences."*

**If we are looking to expand the evaluation we currently do. Could a request support 3rd party evaluation**

Yes. PCF welcomes and encourages the use of operating funds for evaluation, including hiring a third-party evaluator to improve how you measure impact and outcomes. This aligns well with the goal of capacity-building, which is a central purpose of the operating grant.

*"Yes, absolutely. We love our evaluators here at PCF. That is certainly something we would encourage you to use operating funds for."*

### **Will you go over what type of reporting will be needed, IF you receive funding**

Reporting is straightforward and focused on how the funds were used and what impact they had. You'll be asked to complete a report at the end of each funding year, which includes:

- An update on progress toward your stated outcomes
- Whether or not you expended all the funds
- Reflections on any lessons learned or unexpected changes
- Optional but encouraged: a success story showing how the grant supported your mission

If you submitted a full application with detailed goals, the reporting will reflect what you shared there.

*"It is reporting based on answers that you put into the full application... It's not a difficult format. We like to know about your outcomes, how the money was used, success stories, and what was learned... It's due at the end of each payment year."*

You can also reach out to PCF if anything changes mid-grant, and they'll work with you.

### **I don't see the outcomes info on your website. Can you say where to find it?**

All the information you need is available on PCF's Operating Grants webpage, accessible through the main "Grants" link found here: <https://pinellascf.org/receive/grants/operating-grants-cloned/>



Here's What You'll Find:

- Registration links and archived recordings for the "Outcomes + What Reviewers Look For" webinar (held July 31, 2025).
- Guidance on what outcomes reviewers expect in both the LOI and full application process.



Quick Navigation Tips

1. Go to the Grants section of the PCF website

2. Click on Operating Grants.

3. Scroll to the bottom or near key milestones—you'll see:

- A link to download the full Operating Grants PDF (which includes outcomes webinar details)
- [us.fundsforngos.org](https://us.fundsforngos.org).
- A listing for the July 31 "Outcomes" webinar, with registration or playback options.

