

# Building Communities Fund (BCF) application guide: 2027-2029

The BCF application includes 14 essay questions about your project, such as community need, project goals, and fundraising. Your answers play a major role in whether we recommend your project for funding.

To improve your chances, make sure your responses are complete, clear, and focused on the right information. This guide explains what reviewers look for, common mistakes to avoid, and how to clearly describe your project. It also includes tips and examples to help you stay focused and provide the right level of detail.

Use this guide as you write and review your answers to help you submit a strong, competitive application.

## How to access the application questions

The application questions are part of the [BCF application in ZoomGrants](#).

To access them, you must first complete and submit the eligibility test. If we approve your eligibility test, you can begin answering the application questions.

## Section 1: Project information

### Question 1: Describe the need for the proposed facility.

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** We want to understand the problem in your community and how your project is trying to address it. For this question, just focus on the big picture: community goals and the public benefits of your project.

**Do:**

- Describe the issues or limitations affecting community or social services
- If relevant, share needs or concerns from the people you serve
- Explain how your facility will address these needs

**Do not:**

- Discuss building specifications or construction plans (you will do this in your answer to question 2)

**Example:**

Imagine you are renovating a community center. You could share residents' concerns about the current space being crowded, uncomfortable and hard to navigate. Additionally, you could describe some of the improvements your project would offer, such as:

- Larger rooms and hallways
- Accessibility beyond ADA standards
- A more welcoming, comfortable meeting space

## Question 2: Scope of work: describe what will be acquired, constructed/renovated, or purchased.

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** We want to know what specifically you will buy or build to meet the community needs you identified in question 1.

**Do:**

- Be specific about construction plans and building specifications
- Clearly state whether you are building, buying and/or renovating a facility
- If you are only buying a building, provide a detailed description of it

**Do not:**

- Describe your organization's goals or community support for your project (you will do this in your answer to question 1)

**Example:**

Imagine you are renovating a clubhouse with multiple spaces within it. You could mention details such as:

- Square footage of the facility and spaces within it
- Changes to specific rooms, such as safety improvements and remodeling
- Additions, such as new or expanded clinic space

## Question 3: Using budgetary and fundraising data, describe why state funding is necessary to complete your project.

**Maximum length:** 1,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** BCF funding is only available for projects that need state funding to complete. If your project is complete or fully funded, it is not eligible for a grant.

**Do:**

- Mention the major donors you have contacted
- Describe the amount of funding you expect to receive
- Explain the amount of funding you still need and have not been able to raise

**Do not:**

- Describe how you have raised all the funds you need (this means your project is not eligible)

**Example:**

Imagine your project will improve accessibility and security at a senior center. You could describe your organization's limited budget, or how donors have been less interested in contributing to these kinds of renovations.

## Question 4: How do you plan to raise funds for the non-state share of your project? Provide a realistic fundraising strategy.

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** BCF only reimburses 25% of project costs. We want to know how specifically you plan to raise the rest of your project funding.

**Do:**

- List sources you would potentially receive funding from
- Describe your organization's fundraising strategies

**Do not:**

- Be unclear about your fundraising strategies
- Only list the funding you have raised so far and how much you still need

**Example:**

You could talk about how your organization is:

- Forming outreach groups within your organization
- Getting help from volunteers
- Hosting events
- Using feasibility studies and training workshops to identify fundraising methods

## Question 5: Have you applied for a direct appropriation or another competitive grant program for this project? If so, which program(s)?

**Maximum length:** 255 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** Funds you receive from other state grants can affect the amount of BCF funding you are eligible for.

A direct appropriation is state, local or federal funding that does not come from a state grant that the Department of Commerce administers (for example, funding that your legislator has included as part of a state budget bill).

**Do:**

- List grant funding you have applied for, but not yet received
- List any direct appropriations you have asked for

**Do not:**

- List grant funding you have already received

**Example:**

If you have applied for a state grant and are awaiting a decision, you would provide details about the grant program.

**Question 6: List any state funds previously committed to the project: provide names/sources, amount committed, and total state funds committed.**

**Maximum length:** 10 characters per funding source, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** Funds you receive from other state grants can affect the amount of BCF funding you are eligible for.

**Do:**

- List the state grants you have already received funding from
- List the amount of funding you have received from each of these state grant programs

**Do not:**

- List state funding you have applied for, but not yet received
- List state funding you have received for anything outside the scope of work you described in your answer to question 2

**Example:**

Imagine you are applying for BCF funding to buy a facility. If you have also received \$100,000 from another state grant to help pay for the facility, you would enter the program name and award amount. You would also need to subtract this amount from your proposed project budget.

**Question 7: Are there any other factors that could significantly change your project timeline schedule? If so, how?**

**Maximum length:** 255 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** We want to know if you will be able to use BCF funding during the 2027–2029 biennium. If your project is facing major changes or delays, you may want to wait until the next funding period (2029–2031).

**Do:**

- Be clear and honest about potential delays
- Be specific about the challenges with your project timeline

**Do not:**

- Say your project timeline is certain, if you are unsure
- Be vague about potential delays or changes

**Example:**

Here are some issues that could delay your project. If these apply to your project, make sure to describe them in detail.

- Permitting delays
- Design changes
- Uncertainty around receiving federal funding
- Increasing construction costs
- A fundraising timeline that's too ambitious
- Local opposition to the project

## Section 2: Project outcomes

**Question 9: List at least three distinct and specific services you will provide.**

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** Your facility can focus on one community goal, but it must provide at least three different services. Facilities that provide only one or two services are not eligible for BCF funding.

**Do:**

- List at least three services
- Explain how each of these services relate to the community needs you described in your answer to question 1

**Do not:**

- Try to characterize one specific service as three different ones

**Example:**

Imagine you are planning to build a food bank. It could provide:

- Food for those in need
- Food outreach
- Nutritional education

**Question 10: How many unduplicated people do you serve now? How many unduplicated people do you expect to serve after project completion?**

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters

**Why we ask this:** We want to know how many unique individuals or households you currently serve and how many more you will serve once your project is complete. If the same person has received your services multiple times, do not count them more than once.

**Do:**

- Count the number of unique individuals who have received your services
- Tell us how much you expect this number to increase

**Do not:**

- Add together the number of times the same individual has received your services on separate occasions

**Example:**

If an individual received your services 10 times, you would count them as one unduplicated person.

## Question 11: How have the area's residents, business, and partners/Tribes been engaged in the planning process and what have the challenges been?

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** Your project must have support from the local community. We want to understand what you have done to communicate with community members and gather their opinions on your project.

**Do:**

- List the people and community organizations you have engaged
- Describe your outreach efforts
- Share residents' opinions on and concerns with your project

**Do not:**

- Simply state that your project has community support
- Avoid discussing concerns from the community

**Example:**

You could discuss your outreach efforts, such as town halls, email campaigns, and direct contact with community members. If you have heard any concerns (for example, about increased traffic in the area), be sure to mention those.

## Question 12: Will your project require increased staffing levels and if so, how will they be funded?

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** BCF funding cannot reimburse ongoing operating costs, which includes funding for staff. We want to know how you will cover these expenses.

**Do:**

- Be specific about your funding sources for staffing

**Do not:**

- Tell us you will need BCF funding to staff your facility (this is not an eligible cost)

**Example:**

You could tell us about a foundation that will donate funds to help pay for more staffing.

## Question 13: Will you be providing all the proposed services in your project? If not, please detail partnerships and agreements. Upload any partnership agreements in the Documents tab.

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** We want to know whether a partner organization will help provide services at your planned facility.

**Do:**

- Explain your partnership as it relates to your services
- Upload an executed partnership agreement related to providing services

**Do not:**

- Tell us you have a partnership related to control of the project site (this will disqualify you)
- Upload a joint operating agreement, memorandum of understanding or similar document related to ownership of the facility (we cannot accept this)

**Example:**

If a partner organization will provide food at the facility, please describe the details of that partnership. Upload your agreement in the Documents tab.

## Question 14: How does your organization incorporate the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in operations?

**Maximum length:** 2,500 characters, including spaces

**Why we ask this:** Your organization should reflect and value the diversity of the people you serve.

**Do:**

- Specifically describe the diversity among your governing board members
- Explain how your organization is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion

**Do not:**

- Simply state that your governing board represents the makeup of the community

**Example:**

You could provide statistics about your board members describing how its makeup reflects the local community. Additionally, you could share a mission statement that outlines your commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.