



**The Council of State Governments**

**21st Century Foundation**

**Proposal Criteria – Application Guidelines / Timelines – Selection Process**

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The 21st Century Foundation supports diverse programs conducted by and through The Council of State Governments to strengthen the performance of member jurisdictions by encouraging multi-jurisdictional ventures, enhancing state leadership and decision-making, establishing international cooperation and promoting innovative models of collaboration among the public, private and nongovernmental sectors.

CSG's 21st Century Foundation will give high priority to granting funds for public policy research and education that address the following areas:

- Increase CSG's policy and programming capacity, as well as on-staff expertise;
- Expand CSG's policy reach into under-developed issue areas;
- Focus on challenges present in CSG's member jurisdictions;
- Foster collaborations/partnerships with external groups, including public, private and NGOs;
- Emphasize multi-jurisdictional problem solving and/or participation;
- Facilitate national/regional policy dialogues on current and pressing issues with an emphasis on member education, information exchange and the creation of innovative policy options for member jurisdictions; and
- Create sustainable programming that lasts beyond the Foundation's initial investment.

While the 21st Century Foundation may determine the issue areas and/or types of proposals sought for each proposal period, the Board of Trustees has established that the following program types are not eligible for funding:

- General staffing support, e.g. supplementing the salary/benefits/personnel costs of existing staff unrelated to a new 21st Century Foundation funded award;
- Supplemental funding to existing CSG programs or offices, e.g. gap funding for core services; and
- Partnerships/contracts in which more than 50 percent of the total award is reserved for external contracts, e.g. consultant services.

**Proposal Criteria**

<b>Significance</b>	Does the proposed project address an important policy problem or a critical policy barrier in member jurisdictions?
<b>Relevance</b>	Does the proposed project fill a knowledge gap and demonstrate clear organizational value to CSG members?
<b>Innovation</b>	Does the proposed project seek to shift current thinking about a policy issue or introduce new concepts that may be adopted into practice by a member jurisdiction?
<b>Affinity &amp; Utility</b>	Does the proposed project contain clear opportunities to build member affinity and/or confirm organizational utility?
<b>Collaboration</b>	Does the proposed project promote opportunities for internal and external partnerships and collaboration?
<b>Feasibility &amp; Sustainability</b>	Does the proposed project contain well-reasoned and appropriate goals and is the scope of work, methods, target audience and timelines for achieving those goals realistic?
<b>Transferability</b>	Does the proposed project lend itself to being easily transferred to other member jurisdictions (if applicable)?

**Project Proposal – Application Template**

Pursuant to the criteria established by the Board of Trustees, the President will administer the application process, including the development of an online application form. The application may include such categories as:

1. Goal Statement
2. Executive Summary
3. Background and Needs Statement
4. Project Description and Detailed Workplan
5. Key Deliverables and Services
6. CSG Member Impact Statement (including jurisdictional and/or individual)
7. Detailed Project and Budget Timeline (including start/end dates and key milestones)
8. Detailed Budget (including opportunities for additional funding)
9. Organizational Impact Statement
10. External / Internal Collaboration Opportunities
11. Project Staffing Model and Expertise
12. Matching Funds (description and percentage, if applicable)
13. Listing of included member jurisdictions (including any exclusions)

## **Application & Review Process**

### ***Funding Cycle***

The 21st Century Foundation may consider project proposals and may make awards during any of its meetings (conditional on solicitation guidelines and available funds). Though the Board of Trustees may meet as often as necessary to complete its work, for administrative purposes the Board has established an annual application/awards cycle.

- The Board of Trustees will issue a call for proposals no later than 120 days in advance of the next meeting at which the Foundation will consider funding applications. The call for proposals will detail the types of proposals being solicited (issue area, subject, wide/narrow), the criteria for evaluation and the available funding level(s).
- Project applications must be submitted to Foundation staff no later than 45 days in advance of the meeting at which the proposal is to be considered.
- Applicants whose proposals are selected by the Proposal Review Subcommittee to be reviewed by the full Board of Trustees will be notified no later than 21 days in advance of the meeting at which the proposal is to be considered.
- No awards will be made unless: 1) the application process has been completed in full; 2) the application has been approved by the Proposal Review Subcommittee; and 3) the applicant has briefed the Board of Trustees about the proposal (either in-person or remotely).
- Successful award winners are required to provide: 1) a detailed written quarterly report on progress; and 2) a detailed written report and oral update on the status and progress of their project at each subsequent Board of Trustees meeting so long as their project remains active and/or expends 21st Century Foundation funds.

### ***Staff Review***

Applications for funding submitted within the appropriate cycle will first be reviewed by 21st Century Foundation staff to ensure that the proposal meets the mission and goals established by the Board of Trustees; addresses the issue(s) defined by the Board of Trustees; and contains sufficient programmatic and budget information. All applications meeting these requirements will be forwarded to the Proposal Review Subcommittee for vetting and possible advancement to the full Board of Trustees.

### ***Proposal Review Subcommittee***

The 21st Century Foundation's Chair, in consultation with the Vice-Chair, will annually appoint a 5-member subcommittee to review and score the project proposals referred to it by staff. The subcommittee members will review all grant applications forwarded by staff and will score the applications based on the required criteria in a weighted review process using a 9-point scale. Based on the group's scoring of the applications as well as direction from the Board of Trustees as to the number of applications they wish to receive, the subcommittee will recommend applications to be reviewed by the full Board during its next meeting.

The Proposal Review Subcommittee will issue its report and recommendations no less than 21 days in advance of the next 21st Century Foundation meeting at which applications are to be considered. The Subcommittee (through Foundation staff) will provide to the full membership of the Board of Trustees a packet containing: 1) the full applications of all recommended proposals; 2) a comprehensive score sheet for each recommended proposal containing the scores from each Subcommittee reviewer; and 3) a summary of all applications that were not recommended for consideration to the Board of Trustees. Applicants whose proposals were not forwarded to the full Board of Trustees will receive a summary of the Proposal Review Subcommittee's score sheets.

### **Board of Trustees Review**

The 21st Century Foundation Board of Trustees will receive recommended proposal packets 21 days in advance of the meeting at which the applications will be considered for funding. During the meeting, applicants are expected to be present and, at the direction of the Chair, provide an overview/presentation of their proposal and respond to any questions from the Board of Trustees. Following these presentations and Q&A with all recommended applicants, the Board of Trustees may elect to enter executive session for the purpose of privately discussing the merits of each application.

During its deliberations, the Board of Trustees may call on members of the Proposal Review Subcommittee to share their perspectives and explain their scoring of the applications. Awards will be determined solely by the Board of Trustees and the Board is not bound by the scoring of the Proposal Review Subcommittee.

The Board of Trustees will make awards based on the funds available and the total amount of applications reviewed. The Board may alter the funding request of any application (+/-), but should not award an amount lower than requested without first reviewing this adjustment with the applicant. The Board may choose to fund all, some or none of the reviewed applications and the Board is not under any obligation to fund proposals at each of its meetings.

All applicants – both those selected for funding and those not selected – will be notified by Foundation staff at the earliest possible time (typically immediately following the 21st Century Foundation session) and will also be notified in writing via e-mail. Such correspondence will include:

- **Awards**
  - Statement of award, including funding level
  - Timelines for award, including reporting requirements (and termination date)
  - Special conditions of award (if relevant)
- **Denials**
  - Statement of denial
  - Summary score sheets/comments from the Proposal Review Committee
  - Relevant information from the Board of Trustees as to the application, such as: areas of concern/areas for improvement

The 21st Century Foundation Board of Trustees reserves the right to terminate award funding. Such funding termination must be for good cause and the Board must provide the recipient a 60-day notice of funding termination in writing.

### **Staff Training**

The 21st Century Foundation Board of Trustees may direct that a comprehensive training program be developed for CSG staff interested in applying for 21st Century Foundation support. Conducted at least once annually as part of the Foundation's annual proposal solicitation, the training will review the general purpose and goals of the 21st Century Foundation, the Board of Trustees approved criteria, the online application process, submission, review and approval timelines and process, and any special program considerations for that funding cycle. Such training will be available to all CSG staff regardless of location and will offer the secondary benefit of policy staff networking and collaboration.

**Proposal Scoring**

Proposals will be scored in each of the seven weighted categories listed below using a 9-point scale.

Category	Description	Percentage
Significance	Does the proposed project address an important policy problem or a critical policy barrier in member jurisdictions?	15%
Relevance	Does the proposed project fill a knowledge gap and demonstrate clear organizational value to CSG members?	10%
Innovation	Does the proposed project seek to shift current thinking about a policy issue or introduce new concepts that may be adopted into practice by a member jurisdiction?	20%
Affinity & Utility	Does the proposed project contain clear opportunities to build member affinity and/or confirm organizational utility?	25%
Collaboration	Does the proposed project promote opportunities for internal and external partnerships and collaboration?	15%
Feasibility & Sustainability	Does the proposed project contain well-reasoned and appropriate goals and is the scope of work, methods, target audience and timelines for achieving those goals realistic?	10%
Transferability	Does the proposed project lend itself to being easily transferred to other member jurisdictions (if applicable)?	5%

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidelines on Strengths of Weaknesses
High	9	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	8	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	7	Excellent	Very strong with only minor weaknesses
Medium	6	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	4	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	3	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	2	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	1	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses