

Building
Excellence
Sustainability
Trust



A Capacity Building Project Serving Genesee County Nonprofits

FAQ: Nonprofits

What does BEST mean by capacity building?

Capacity building is much more than offering technical assistance to organizations in crisis or struggling with particular areas of management; it also requires rethinking systems and programs in a new, more comprehensive and integrated fashion. Those delivering services and those supporting technical assistance need to join forces in identifying ways to make organizations capable of dynamic sustainability regardless of changing external or internal forces. To be successful, capacity building must be “place-based”: it must be customized to local realities, including the economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics that affect every aspect of daily life. BEST holds that funders, agencies, and providers must work together to make this success possible.

How is BEST capacity building with nonprofits carried out?

The Flint Funders Collaborative developed plans for a two-phased process for nonprofit capacity building.

Phase I funds a team of consultants to conduct a thorough organizational assessment for each nonprofit admitted to BEST; and deliver findings in a confidential report to the nonprofit that *is not* be shared with the FFC or BEST staff. This latter requirement was deemed necessary to allow nonprofits to interact candidly with the consultants without fear that the information they provided would in some way hurt their standing in the community and, specifically, jeopardize future potential funding.

Phase II provides funding directly to nonprofits to hire BEST consultants to help them tackle specific areas identified by the Phase I Assessment. Nonprofits would acquire this funding by submitting a proposal to the FFC, including with the proposal a copy of the Executive Summary *only* from the Phase I report, which outlines the consultants’ final recommendations.

Who is eligible to participate in BEST?

Nonprofit agencies must be classified as 501(c)(3) organizations, have a minimum budget of \$150,000 and 1.5 FTE staff members; maximum budget size is approximately \$5 million. BEST also requires unanimous Board support for the assessment, which is received through a signed letter of support indicating when the board agreed to this requirement and signed by the board chair.

What is expected of an organization that receives a grant in the Assessment Phase?

Board and Staff must agree to invest substantial time needed to participate in specific components of the Assessment, including: the CNM internal survey; review of bylaws, policies, plans, financial reports and other documents; interviews and focus groups; workshops and presentations; TCC internal and external surveys; and project evaluation. Time required is approximately 2 days per month.

How are nonprofit organizations selected?

Applications to BEST for the initial assessment phase are reviewed by members of the Flint Funders Collaborative, the lead consultant, and the Director of Programs. Selection is based on compliance with the application process and organizational readiness. Once approved, the nonprofit is sent a letter of approval and offered assistance in selecting consultants from a vetted roster of experts in nonprofit management. Grant allocations are determined by proposal quality, case for support, project scope, degree of institutional commitment to capacity building, and potential for community impact. To ensure balance and maximize learning from the project, a mix of organizations are selected representing the community's Arts and Culture, Health and Human Services, and may include a collaboration from a single sub-sector (such as housing, child-focused agencies, etc.).

Does participation in the BEST pilot project affect eligibility for other program grants from members of the Flint Funders' Collaborative?

Organizations may apply for new or continuing funds from each of the funders to support programs and services that are not connected with their BEST Assessment or Capacity Building grants.

What is expected of an organization that receives a grant in the Capacity Building Phase?

Each organization is expected to: meet the objectives set forth in its own proposal on time and within budget; participate in peer learning opportunities; and, complete required internal and external assessments. The TCC external performance assessment measures the perceptions of participating agencies; it is implemented before and after the capacity building initiative to determine what changes have occurred, if any. The original internal assessment tool is also re-administered to determine change. During the capacity building phase, agencies manage contracts with support, if needed, from BEST staff.