



## 2024 10-Year Committee Guide

Thank you for volunteering to serve on the **10-Year Committee**. We are so grateful for the important contributions you will make in this critical step of the grant cycle. This guide includes a great deal of information about the process. In addition, we are readily available to assist you if you have questions.

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### About the Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program

The Foundation and more than 85 generous, insightful community volunteers identified 150 nonprofit organizations to receive three-year grants that will range from \$30,000 to \$300,000 each.

Among the winners were first-time recipients as well as nonprofits that had previously received grants from Cummings Foundation. Twenty-five of this latter group of repeat recipients will be elevated to 10-year awards, ranging mostly from \$300,000 to \$1 million each and totaling approximately \$10 million.

The majority of the 10-year awards will be determined by volunteers on this committee during Presentation Days.



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## *Our Approach to Nonprofits*

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They are the heroes: the nonprofit executive directors who also serve as HR managers, development officers, and marketing managers; the program staff who work diligently and passionately, often for low pay and even less recognition; the volunteers who devote precious free time in service to others. They are the heroes—not us.

We are privileged to be in a position to support their life-changing, equity-promoting, barrier-breaking, purpose-igniting work. We are not seeking to judge, eliminate, or vote out. Rather we endeavor to learn and discover synergies so Cummings Foundation can invest in organizations and efforts that match its values and priorities and that have the most meaningful, positive, and sustainable impact on local communities.

Foundation staff and volunteers possess valuable expertise gained through varied professional and personal experiences; however, we recognize and respect the intimate knowledge that nonprofit representatives have of the causes and the people to which they have dedicated their careers. The grant candidates are the true boots-on-the-ground experts, and they deserve not just a seat at the table, but the seat at the head.

We respect the beliefs of diverse populations and the uniqueness of individuals, and we believe that all people deserve to live with dignity and to have the opportunity to improve their circumstances. We recognize that we all have biases, but we strive to be aware of them, set them aside, and eliminate them from our thinking, questions, and comments. We welcome candid reminders from others when we demonstrate an unconscious bias.

***We are most grateful for the participation of our volunteers  
and for the respect and kindness they show to all grant candidates.***

## *Our Guiding Principles*

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Having embarked on our collective journey of philanthropy, we pledge to work to help ensure that no one is ever left behind.

Recognizing that the dignity of every human person is fundamental, Cummings Foundation's primary goal is to help meet the most basic needs of all people in all segments of our society.

We seek to promote and empower the social and economic inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or other status.

We will work to improve the lives of those within our priority funding regions by directly supporting the work of other effective charitable organizations.

And we will endeavor through our local outreach to aid the furthest behind first.

—Joyce and Bill Cummings



*The "color wheel" is a photo of the actual pin presented to Bill Cummings when he spoke at the United Nations in June 2019. Many of the words and sentiments were inspired by portions of the United Nations' document, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Cummings Foundation, Inc. supports the [SDGs](#).*

## Presentation Days

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During Presentation Days, a rotating panel of five community volunteers will meet each day with representatives from seven nonprofits that have already been identified as 2024 Cummings Foundation grant winners. These organizations are assured of receiving, at a minimum, three-year grants of \$30,000 – \$300,000 each. At the end of each day, the panel will decide which of the seven organizations will be elevated to 10-year grants.

Presentation Days will take place at two Cummings organization conference spaces:

- **Monday, April 29, Tuesday, April 30, Wednesday, May 1, and Friday, May 3:** 200 West Cummings Park, Woburn. *NOTE: This space requires climbing a set of 22 stairs.*
- **Thursday, May 2:** 400 TradeCenter Drive, Woburn. Cummings Executive Suites, Suite 5900. This space is being provided for nonprofits that requested accessibility accommodations. Located on the fifth floor, it is accessible via an elevator. **NOTE:** This is a large campus with many entrances. For the easiest access to your destination, enter via the **400 building** door (under the large archway) as indicated on [this campus map](#). (As a helpful reference point, Theresa’s Ristorante is located on the ground floor of the 400 building at TradeCenter 128).

The candidates’ applications and, if applicable, prior site visit and impact reports, will provide robust background information for committee members. Through talking with up to five of each organization’s chosen representatives (e.g., executive director, program staff, board members, volunteers, and if appropriate, a client), the committee members will seek to learn more about the candidate’s work, the opportunities and challenges it faces, and how the organization is well positioned to maximize a decade of funding. We anticipate that the combination of written material, presentations, and time for Q&A will allow for thoughtful and informed discussion among committee members and confident decision-making.

### Schedule

#### Monday, April 29

8:30 AM	Nonprofit 1
9:30 AM	Nonprofit 2
10:30 AM	Nonprofit 3
11:30 AM	Nonprofit 4
1:00 PM	Nonprofit 5
2:00 PM	Nonprofit 6
3:00 PM	Nonprofit 7

#### Tuesday, April 30

8:30 AM	Nonprofit 1
9:30 AM	Nonprofit 2
10:30 AM	Nonprofit 3
11:30 AM	Nonprofit 4
1:00 PM	Nonprofit 5
2:00 PM	Nonprofit 6
3:00 PM	Nonprofit 7

#### Wednesday, May 1

8:30 AM	Nonprofit 1
9:30 AM	Nonprofit 2
10:30 AM	Nonprofit 3

#### Wednesday, May 1, continued

11:30 AM	Nonprofit 4
1:00 PM	Nonprofit 5
2:00 PM	Nonprofit 6
3:00 PM	Nonprofit 7

#### Thursday, May 2

8:30 AM	Nonprofit 1
9:30 AM	Nonprofit 2
10:30 AM	Nonprofit 3
11:30 AM	Nonprofit 4
1:00 PM	Nonprofit 5
2:00 PM	Nonprofit 6
3:00 PM	Nonprofit 7

#### Friday, May 3

8:30 AM	Nonprofit 1
9:30 AM	Nonprofit 2
10:30 AM	Nonprofit 3
11:30 AM	Nonprofit 4
1:00 PM	Nonprofit 5
2:00 PM	Nonprofit 6
3:00 PM	Nonprofit 7

## *Before Presentation Days*

**Review background materials:** The Foundation has provided copies of the grant applications and, if applicable, the most recent impact report and any site visit reports for each assigned nonprofit. You may also wish to peruse the nonprofits' websites and read news articles online.

At the end of this Committee Guide, we have also included an email that was shared with all 10-year grant candidates (page 9) with some suggested steps and FAQs about Presentations Days, providing them with a sense of what to expect.

**Contact us with questions:** We are readily available to answer your questions. Please reach out to Foundation staff if we can be of assistance.

## *During the Presentations*

**Be aware of the schedule:** Committee members should arrive by 8:00 AM to allow time for volunteer introductions and a briefing before the first nonprofit arrives. Seven nonprofits are scheduled per day (on the half-hour from 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM and the hour from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM) for 45-minute sessions. After the final presentation, you will decide which nonprofits will have their grants elevated to 10-year awards.

Each organization was asked to prepare approximately 30 minutes of material, knowing that volunteers will likely ask questions throughout the 45-minute session. In our experience, these "presentations" often turn into engaging and enjoyable discussions.

Following their session, the nonprofit representatives will leave the room, allowing committee members 15 minutes to discuss and write notes (or use the restroom, check email, have a snack, etc.) before the next presentation. Deputy Director Andrew Bishop will attend each session to help with time keeping, logistics, and transitions.

**Enjoy lunch:** Cummings Foundation will provide lunch, as well as beverages and light snacks throughout the days. The 45-minute lunch (12:15 – 1:00 PM) will provide an opportunity to begin discussing the four morning candidates. There will certainly be time, however, for those who would like a break to check email, return phone calls, take a walk, etc.

**Be inquisitive:** Cummings Foundation has built a reputation for being friendly and supportive of nonprofits, so the tone of the discussion should match. That being said, this is an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the organization and to give its representatives the chance to address any concerns that committee members might have.

**Take notes:** Taking notes during each presentation and Q&A session will aid you in making your decisions at the end of the day. We will provide pens and pads of paper, but feel free to bring a laptop or tablet if you prefer. The conference rooms will be WiFi enabled.

**Think about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** The words diversity and inclusion are often stated together, but having diversity within a group of people does not necessarily mean that the group is inclusive. Inclusiveness promotes and sustains a sense of belonging, and it values and respects people's varying backgrounds and beliefs. Please read the Inclusive Language Guide (page 7) and watch [this eight-minute video about recognizing implicit bias](#). If you have seen these materials before, we hope you will look at them again as an important refresher.

## *After the Presentations*

**Share your thoughts:** At the close of each Presentation Day, the committee chair will lead an open, respectful discussion of that day's candidates. Given that one of the benefits of our volunteer model is the diverse perspectives brought by each participant, we strongly encourage every volunteer to participate actively in this conversation.

**Decide the winners:** Before departing for the day, volunteers will collectively decide which four of the seven organizations will have their grants elevated to 10-year awards *and* will designate an alternate. At the end of the week, the Foundation will identify two of the five alternates from the week to also be elevated to the larger awards.

**Make grant installment recommendations:** Although the grant application asks for applicants' preferred annual installments (\$10,000 – \$100,000), the actual disbursement schedules will be determined by the Foundation. The Foundation welcomes your input if you feel that a different disbursement (lower or higher) than the one requested would be more appropriate.

## *Selection Criteria*

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Each applicant has already undergone three prior evaluations (LOI, application and financial health, and final grant selection) by nine different volunteers. Given the great diversity among grant recipients, we do not have a standard scoring rubric to aid in decision making. Instead, we ask committee members to rely on the key principles below, plus their own valuable experience and good judgment, to determine which grant winners should be elevated to 10-year awards.

### **Impact**

Transformative. Game-changer. These are words grant winners often use to describe their Cummings grants. *Please look for opportunities where grant funding would have the greatest impact*, bearing in mind that impact can take many forms. One nonprofit may serve a large number of people, whereas another organization might serve a much smaller number, but in a long-term or in-depth manner. Both could provide enormous value.

Preferring that grant funds not be “drops in a bucket,” this program primarily supports small and medium-sized nonprofits that do not enjoy the robust donor bases and endowments that generously support many larger institutions. The Foundation *is*, however, open to awarding grants to larger organizations when they have presented compelling cases as to why they need *this* funding.

### **Population Served**

Cummings Foundation gives priority to nonprofits that serve people who have been disadvantaged or marginalized in some way. We greatly appreciate effective programs that work to prevent or counteract discrimination due to race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status, age, physical disability, etc.

### **Readiness**

The Foundation is open to providing long-term funding to well-established nonprofits with long histories of success as well as younger organizations that have true potential and appear ready to rise. An organization should have strong leadership and a clear idea of how the funds will be beneficial in the first few years of the grant.

A good way to evaluate readiness is to ask, “*If a 10-year grant were given, what would the nonprofit’s impact report look like three years from now?*” How will it leverage this long-term award for maximum benefit?

### **10-Year Plan**

The Cummings organization does *not* have a 10-year plan, so we do not expect grantees to have one either. The Foundation certainly has a sense of the direction it’s headed, but we understand that even the best-laid plans can change. The 10-year candidates were not asked to create a 10-year plan and should not be expected to provide one. Having a fully formulated 10-year plan is unrealistic, as any thoughtful organization or program model would need to evolve based on a multitude of factors (with many unknowns that lie ahead over 10 years).

### **Substance Over Form**

Recognizing that applicants have varying levels of experience and expertise with grant writing, the English language, and public speaking, reviewers should focus on the substance of the proposal materials and oral presentation (e.g., the merit of the mission, the need for the services, the effectiveness of the programs), rather than on more superficial aspects (e.g., grammar, writing structure, verbal fillers such as “um”).

### **Other Factors to Consider**

Will the grant “move the needle” for the organization or its cause? Does it have collaborative relationships with other entities? Does the leadership appear prepared to leverage the grant to maximize its impact?

## *Inclusive Language Guide*

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*Adapted from multiple sources, including The Lenny Zakim Fund*

Cummings Foundation is committed to creating an inclusive, supportive environment for all people, regardless of differences. We strive to embody this spirit of inclusion during every interaction we have with nonprofit organizations. To that end, volunteers should avoid using language that is insensitive to cultural differences or that excludes or offends any group of people (based on their ability/disability, age, ethnicity and race, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, etc.).

Communication is not what you say, but how it's heard. Making a conscious effort to use language that is more inclusive offers us a chance to grow and become better communicators while also caring for those with whom we are communicating. Here are some guiding principles:

- **Put people first:** Default to person-first constructions that put the person ahead of his/her characteristics, e.g., instead of “disabled people” or “the homeless,” use “people with disabilities” or “people experiencing homelessness.” People-first language keeps the individual as the most essential element; there is more to each of us than our descriptors. Mention characteristics like gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group, or ability only when relevant to the discussion.
- **Be respectful of a person or group’s preference regarding vocabulary and be guided in your communication by that preference.** Listen to the words they use, and adopt those terms, e.g., Latino, developmental disability, transgender. If you’re unsure about the preferred language, simply ask. Also, if you meet someone with a name that is unfamiliar to you, repeat it back to the person and ask if you’re pronouncing it correctly. Practice until you get it right.
- **Avoid microaggressions:** Impact is more important than intent, so make a real effort to avoid unintentional microinsults based on stereotypes and biases. Examples include: Telling a person of color, “You are so articulate”; asking a person who appears Asian, “Where are you from?”; and downplaying the reality of racism with comments such as, “I don’t see color.”
- **Avoid phrases that suggest victimhood or deficit,** e.g., suffers from, confined to a wheelchair, needy, vulnerable. Instead, simply state the facts: has muscular dystrophy, uses a wheelchair, is experiencing poverty, historically underrepresented.
- **Don’t underplay the impact of mental health conditions.** Terms like bipolar, OCD, and ADD are descriptors of real mental health conditions. They are not metaphors for everyday behaviors. Also, avoid derogatory terms that stem from the context of mental health, e.g., crazy, mad, or psycho.
- **“Guys” is not a gender-neutral term.** The “universal male” (i.e., using “guys” to mean “people”) assumes that the default human being is male. Although “he” and “man” are often meant to be neutral, studies show that these words cause people to think specifically of males.

Some habits are hard to break. When trying to change a language pattern, it is easy to fall back into old habits. Below are some suggested language substitutions for common situations. Please be open-minded (and even grateful) when someone suggests that your language could be more inclusive. If you are unsure of the most appropriate terminology for the situation, simply ask—and then listen.

	More Inclusive	Less Inclusive
<i>When referring to a group of people</i>	Folks, people, you all, teammates, friends	Guys (or women) when referring to people overall
<i>When referring to staff</i>	Workforce, personnel, workers, team, colleagues	Manpower, man hours
<i>When referring to board leadership or facilitators</i>	Chairperson, chair, moderator, discussion leader	Chairman, foreman
<i>When referring to someone's significant other</i>	Spouse, partner	Wife, husband, boyfriend, girlfriend
<i>When describing norms</i>	Typical	Normal
<i>When referring to groups traditionally called "minority"</i>	Historically excluded groups, marginalized groups, or underrepresented groups	Minorities (Not all marginalized groups are minorities.) Vulnerable (implies there is something inherently wrong with them)

To further illustrate the important difference language choices can make, please consider the following examples of questions or comments.

Less Inclusive	Concern	More Inclusive
Smithfield is a poor town with a lot of problems, but we want to help that community.	<i>Condescending; increases power dynamic</i>	We appreciate the important work you do in Smithfield and want to learn how we might support your efforts.
Your location doesn't seem convenient/safe/etc. Why didn't you locate it in XYZ?	<i>Implies you know more than the nonprofit about its community or cause</i>	Why did you choose this location?
As a first-generation college student, have you inspired your family to place a higher value on education?	<i>Implies that the family did not value education highly before</i>	How, if at all, has your college experience affected your family and their feelings about higher education?



## Guidance to 10-Year Grant Candidates

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**From:** Andrew Bishop  
**To:** 10-Year Grant Candidates  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024  
**Subject:** Cummings Presentation Days -- suggested steps and FAQs

Good afternoon,

The Cummings Foundation 10-Year Committee volunteers are looking forward to meeting you and hearing more about your organization. To the extent that it is helpful, we have included **some suggested steps and FAQs about Presentations Days below** to support your planning.

In the meantime, we are readily accessible should additional questions arise.

Be well,  
Andrew

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Andrew E. Bishop | Deputy Director | Cummings Foundation  
[www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org) | Direct: 781-569-2337 | [aeb@cummings.com](mailto:aeb@cummings.com)

### Steps for a Successful Presentation Day Experience

#### 1. Decide who will represent your organization.

It is up to each organization to determine whom its representatives will be. Suggestions include the executive director, grant writer, program staff, volunteers, and/or, if appropriate, a person you serve. Consider involving those who are most knowledgeable and passionate about your work. To ensure conversations can be fully participatory for all those present, we kindly request that each nonprofit select *no more than five* representatives to attend.

#### 2. Plan your presentation.

**Timing:** Organizations should prepare approximately 30 minutes of material; however, volunteers will likely ask questions throughout the 45-minute session. In our experience, these “presentations” often turn into engaging and enjoyable discussions. Please note, the final 15 minutes of your 45-minute presentation timeslot will be exclusively dedicated to Q&A with the committee members.

**Format/Technology:** Organizations may choose to utilize a variety of tools, including PowerPoint, videos, or simply the words of the presenters. There is no required method and, recognizing that nonprofits have varied access to technical tools and expertise, the presentations will be evaluated solely on substance, not style.

If you choose to prepare a slideshow (which is *not* at all required), a laptop with Microsoft PowerPoint and a 55-inch screen (with sound) will be available. If you plan to use your own laptop, including Apple MacBooks, you will need to bring your own HDMI-friendly adapter. Otherwise, we encourage you to email your presentation (or a downloadable link for larger files)

by 3:00 PM the day prior to [kmt@cummings.com](mailto:kmt@cummings.com). This will help ensure that tech set-up does not eat into your limited time. In this case, we encourage you to also bring your slides on a flash drive, as a backup.

Content: Before the presentation, volunteers will review each organization's 2024 grant application, its most recent impact report, and, if applicable, prior site visit reports. Given this preparation, organizations should not spend much time on background, but rather focus on the organization's capabilities and its future.

There are not standard questions asked of each nonprofit. Rather, the Foundation volunteers will seek to learn about the opportunities and challenges your organization faces, and how it is well positioned to maximize a decade of funding. Please note that the Cummings organization does *not* have a 10-year plan, and we do not expect grantees to have one either. Having a fully formulated 10-year plan is unrealistic, as any thoughtful organization or program model would need to evolve based on a multitude of factors (with many unknowns that lie ahead over 10 years).

Supplemental materials: Given that the committee members will already have a wealth of materials about each organization, we ask that all additional information be provided orally or visually through the actual presentation. Please also refrain from bringing handouts or gifts of any kind.

### **3. Let your representatives know what to expect.**

Location: Ensure that your team has the correct address, which will be provided in the same email in which we share your scheduled day and time. There are two possible addresses, both of which are in West Cummings Park, on Washington Street in Woburn. Please note that this location is *different* from the location of the Grant Winner Celebration.

Given that Presentation Days operate on a tight schedule, we will not be able to extend time slot if a presentation begins late. Accordingly, attendees should budget time for traffic or other unforeseen delays.

Pre-presentation: Upon arrival, representatives will be shown to a conference room ("the green room," as we like to call it), where you can gather. There will be seating, beverages, and light snacks, and you will have easy access to a restroom. Although we know this is an inherently nerve-wracking experience, we will do our best to make it as painless and enjoyable as possible for you.

Presentation: At your scheduled time, a Foundation staff member, typically either Deputy Director Andrew Bishop or Executive Director Joyce Vyriotes, will escort you to the presentation room. Chairs and tables will be arranged in an oval, and five volunteers will be there to greet you. The volunteer chairperson will ask the volunteers to briefly introduce themselves and then invite you to begin your presentation.

We ask that you not offer handshakes and individual greetings as you arrive or depart. Although the volunteers would very much enjoy this, we have found in the past that it takes precious time away from your presentation.

Foundation representatives: When we email your scheduled day/time, we will also share the names of the volunteers who will be present on your day. We think you will find them to be welcoming, inquisitive, and genuine in their interest in supporting local causes and communities. You may find it helpful to read Our Approach to Nonprofit Organizations, which guides each volunteer. Out of respect for the volunteers and the process, we request that you *not* contact them in advance of your presentation. Deputy Director Andrew Bishop will also be present, but will not participate in the decision-making process.

## **Presentation Days FAQs**

### **Will the organization be asked to request, or present a case for, a specific installment amount?**

No. While the Foundation seriously considers each applicant's desired annual installment (as requested in the 2024 application), it must often make adjustments to ensure that the total awarded among all 150 recipients equals \$30 million. As such, grant amounts will not be determined until after Presentation Days, and they will be shared through the official award packet, which we expect to email on Monday, May 20.

### **When will an organization find out whether its grant was elevated to a 10-year award?**

We expect to email notifications on Monday, May 20. Please note that nonprofits *not* selected for an elevated award will still receive three-year grants and may apply for additional funding once those grants have been fulfilled.