



Impact Report Committee Guide

Thank you for volunteering to review impact reports from Cummings Foundation grant recipients. We are most grateful for the important contributions you will make toward ensuring that current grantees are eligible for future grant payments. This guide includes information about the impact report review process. In addition, we are readily available to assist you with any questions.

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Timeline

The review of impact reports will take place Monday, April 22 through Sunday, May 26.

Process

1. View your **personalized Google Sheet** (provided via email on April 19) for a list of impact reports to review.
2. Access the impact reports via the Foundant, our grants management system (see step-by-step instructions on page 4).
3. Review the impact reports, bearing in mind the items to watch specified below. Although not expected, you are welcome to review all or portions of the original application.
4. Enter your comments in the **Comments** column of your Google Doc spreadsheet.
 - If all appears to be in order, a simple “[DATE] – OK per [YOUR NAME]” will suffice.
 - If you have questions or concerns, or feel there is information about which the Foundation should be aware (see Items to Watch), please note accordingly.
5. Email Andrew when you have completed your Google Sheet. There is no need to email us your results, as the Google Sheet resides online, and we will have access to it.

Items to Watch

Cummings Foundation requires each grant recipient to submit an annual report describing how that year’s grant funds were used and detailing any variances or challenges. It is important that we exercise due diligence to ensure that the Foundation’s resources are being used effectively; however, we do not want to overburden grant recipients with unnecessary reporting requirements. Knowing that nonprofit professionals often work long hours and wear many hats, we intentionally designed the report to be brief, and we encourage the report authors to be concise.

Typically, the vast majority of reports do not raise any concerns. In such cases, the nonprofit will receive its next grant installment in June or, if the grant has been fulfilled, will be eligible to apply for a new grant.

When questions or concerns do arise, Foundation staff contact the nonprofit, or return the report via our online system with a request for revisions or additional information. Although it is rare, the Foundation has suspended grants due to serious concerns. Please watch in particular for the following issues:

Funds have not been spent

The Foundation never wants a grant winner to feel that it must “use it or lose it,” which can lead to imprudent spending. Accordingly, we have no concerns when a small portion of the grant has not been expended and the grantee explains how the rollover funds will be used in the upcoming year. If, however, a large portion of the funds has not been spent, we will want to reach out for further information and discussion. If a project has been delayed, for example, we might discuss moving the next scheduled installment to the end of the grant term.

Funds have been spent in a way other than what had been planned

The Foundation is generally amenable to small variances in expenditures. Please make a note on your spreadsheet if you feel any variance warrants further discussion or is a cause for concern.

Significant changes to the organization or challenges to the project

Like for-profit businesses, many nonprofits experience staff turnover and encounter small obstacles throughout the year. Please alert us if you feel that a change or challenge is substantial enough to be cause for concern. Examples include a merger with another organization, a move or expansion outside the Foundation’s geographic focus area (Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties, plus a small portion of Norfolk County), concern about the nonprofit’s ongoing sustainability.

Questions for the Foundation

Grant winners sometimes pose questions or seek guidance through impact reports. Please alert us to any such inquiries.

Sample Comments from Committee Members

- No funds spent yet. Looking for an advocacy person, and funds will be used to compensate that hire.
- Some significant staff departures and layoffs. Some employees furloughed or switched from hourly to stipend.
- The organization recently lost \$70K in state funding, but is working with town and state officials to secure replacement/new funding. Programming has continued uninterrupted.
- Not clear whether the grant-funded renovation work has begun or whether the grant money has been expended.
- New leadership but orderly transition.
- Board resolved to change legal name of org to City Lights. Mission unchanged.
- Funds not expended because burst pipe in facilities prevented in-person classes while repairs/restoration work took place. Requesting to save grant funds for next cycle of the program given anticipated increased demand upon resumption of in-person classes.

Our Guiding Principles

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

This “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 here were inspired by portions of the United Nations’ document “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” Cummings Foundation, Inc. supports the [SDGs](#).

Our Approach to Nonprofits

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.***

Viewing Impact Reports in Foundant

For data privacy and to protect the information of applicants/grantees, the Foundation does not make its grants management system user guide publicly available. Volunteers on grant selection and site visits committees are provided with access to applicant/grantee materials (e.g., letters of inquiry, applications, impact reports, site visit reports, contact records) to be well informed and adequately carry out relevant activities while representing Cummings Foundation.