

# Applying for an Impact Fund Grant from the OtterCares Foundation

*Helpful tips, tools and information to  
create a competitive grant application*



# It is more than just a grant - it is an investment in the world-changers of tomorrow.

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We are on a mission to Ignite Tomorrow Today by inspiring students to become entrepreneurs and philanthropists who create real and tangible change in their communities. This comes to life through partnerships with schools and nonprofits that share our vision for igniting the maker, doer and giver inside every kid. We proudly support programs and projects that are intentionally teaching students to develop and hone an entrepreneurial mindset and philanthropic spirit.

Every grant we provide to schools and nonprofits through our Impact Fund is an investment in the world-changers of tomorrow. That is why we work closely with prospective applicants to ensure that our collective efforts are impactful and effective.

We are excited to have the opportunity to come along side you in your journey to inspire kids to be makers, doers and gives who will make our world better and brighter!

# The Grant Application Journey:

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Writing a grant can be an intimidating experience. Every funder has different requirements for formatting, data and information. For even the most seasoned grant writer, the grant writing process can feel like a huge mountain to climb.

We've worked hard to ensure that our grant application process is user-friendly and accessible to anyone regardless of grant writing experience. Our goal for this process is simple: we want to know all about the program you are dreaming about. The more we know about your vision, the easier it is for our Grant Review Committee to envision the impact that the program will have on students!

We've included some tips and best practices for writing the best grant application ever as well as created a handy dandy checklist to help you through the grant application process.

Last but not least, we're here for you through your entire grant application journey. We understand the process can seem long but we're here to make sure you have all the answers you need when crafting your application! Don't hesitate to reach out to a member of our team if you have any questions along the way.

## Setting You Up for Success!

We want to help you prepare your grant writing process by sharing some of the finer details of how we manage and review grant applications for our Impact Fund. Below, you will learn more about:

- Our eligibility requirements
- Our funding limitations and exclusions
- Why our focus is on teaching entrepreneurship & philanthropy
- How to determine if your program aligns with our mission and vision
- Our application windows and timeline for review and determination
- Application requirements for submitting your grant request
- The nuts and bolts of applying for a grant
- How much you should request in your grant application
- What is expected of you if your program is awarded a grant

# Is My Program Eligible to Apply or Receive a Grant?

We're just as excited as you to get started on your grant! But before you jump in, let's make sure that your program is eligible to receive a grant from OtterCares.

As a private foundation, there are rules and guidelines we have to follow when it comes to giving grants. We are also responsible for carrying out the vision for impact that of our Board of Directors has created. So, to make sure we're in compliance with rules and are meeting the expectations of our Board, our prospective grantees must be eligible to receive our funding.

Consider the following questions to determine if your organization and program are eligible to apply for a grant from the Impact Fund:

Is the organization recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity?  
NOTE: Public schools qualify under their school district's EIN.

Is the primary purpose of the program related to teaching principles of philanthropy and/or entrepreneurship?

Does the program directly and intentionally teach principles of philanthropy and/or entrepreneurship?

Will the program serve students located in Larimer County or Weld County, CO (Impact Fund)?

Did you answer "yes" to these? Great! Let's move on to the next section to learn about limitations and exclusions to the grant making process.

# What Limitations or Exclusions Does OtterCares have for Grants?

As we mentioned in the previous section, there are certain rules and limitations that we have to follow as a private foundation. Some rules and limitations are set by our Board of Directors and others are IRS-mandated guidelines that we have to follow to ensure we can maintain our good standing.

Before you start writing your grant application, please take a look at the limitations and exclusions below. If you have questions about any of these limitations or exclusions, please make sure to reach out!

- An organization may receive a grant from the Impact Fund once per calendar year.
- Grantees may receive funding for three consecutive calendar years and then will need to take a year off before they can apply for or receive funding again.
- The OtterCares Foundation does not provide grants that support the following:
  - Political campaigns and/or legislative lobbying efforts
  - Reproductive choice advocacy groups
  - Direct support for individuals
  - General operating support/unrestricted funds
- The Impact Fund does not provide grants that support the following:
  - Building/construction projects or capital campaigns.
  - Travel expenses.
  - Organizations redirecting funding outside of Larimer or Weld Counties, Colorado

Now that we've gotten all of the rules out of the way, let's move on to the fun part – creating impact together! In the next section, you will learn a little more about who we are and why entrepreneurship and philanthropy are the pillars we have chosen to plant our flag around to make a difference in the lives of students and change our communities and world for the better.

# Why Entrepreneurship & Philanthropy? And What Exactly Do Those Words Mean?

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At OtterCares, we believe one young and inspired mind can change the world. We support programs that teach philanthropy and entrepreneurship as key competencies, and encourage students to create lasting and impactful change.

**Entrepreneurship** is more than just a fancy business word; it's a mindset. It's the willingness to take risks, experience failure and build resiliency. It's the ability to identify problems or needs and create solutions to solve them.

**Philanthropy** is more than just giving away money. It's the idea that every person can use their time, talent or treasure to make the world a better place. It's teaching people to identify needs in their community and to utilize their personal strengths to support those needs.

We're doing tomorrow today. Because the thing about tomorrow, ready or not, it's already here. So we're frontloading the future by teaching kids to be entrepreneurs, philanthropists, makers, doers and givers — today.

See, tomorrow is theirs anyway. And we're privileged to inspire, prepare, teach, engage, equip and entrust them with everything we've got. Instead of crossing our fingers and hoping for the best or sticking our head in the sand and wishing for yesterday, we're stacking the deck and betting on the bright side.

Sound like a nonprofit? It is. But make no mistake. We don't give handouts. We don't give hand ups. We give boosts. Boosts of confidence. Boosts of inspiration. Boosts of rocket-fueled passion aimed for the stratospheres of possibility. Three. Two. One. Blast off!

Light the fuse, press ignition and pass the wheel. It's their turn to fly this crazy craft called Tomorrow toward a bigger, better, brighter future for all of us.

But alas, it's here now. So to create the kind of change that lasts, we've got to...

**#IgniteTomorrowToday**

# How Do I Know If My Program Directly Teaches Entrepreneurship or Philanthropy?

Teaching philanthropy and entrepreneurship can be accomplished through a variety of pathways and we love supporting programs that creatively incorporate these principles into other content areas. Here are a few considerations for how we look at each concept:

Ideas/examples related to teaching entrepreneurial principles:

- Students learn about specific components of a business plan (customer identification, marketing plan, profit margins, etc.) and then create a business plan themselves
- Students develop an understanding of the customer and the market need, as well as how to create products/services that fill a need
- Students learn about and/or utilize specific entrepreneurial frameworks such as the Design Thinking Process, Business Model Canvas, and/or Lean Start-Up

Ideas/examples related to teaching philanthropic principles:

- Students learn how to identify specific needs in their community and why they matter
- Students research different organizations that serve identified needs and evaluate the merits of different methods and/or approaches
- Students brainstorm ways they can give their own personal time, talent and/or treasure to make a positive impact and create an implementation plan to do so
- Students have ownership/say in what needs are important to them and what actions they take to fill that need

Like we said, teaching entrepreneurship and philanthropy can be done in lots of different ways. But what matters most to us is that one or both of these principles are being taught in an intentional and direct manner. Entrepreneurship and philanthropy will come to life in different ways at different grade levels and that is okay! How these principles manifest in the classroom is completely up to you. We want to make sure that entrepreneurship and/or philanthropy is the main course for students, not just an appetizer or dessert.

# What is the Timeline?

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So, you've read through the grant eligibility, you've made sure that you understand our limitations and exclusions for investing in programs, you've learned more about our why and you know for sure that your program is the perfect program for us to invest in. Now what?

Now we get to talk about timelines!

Our Impact Fund has application deadlines, twice a year. If you happen to miss one deadline, don't worry! You can still submit your application for consideration in our next granting cycle.

- The Impact Fund has two application deadlines annually: **April 30** and **October 30**.
- Requests should be submitted for programs that will be taking place after the application deadline. In general, the April 30 deadline is for programs taking place during the fall semester or the full upcoming school year, and the October 30 deadline is for programs taking place during the spring semester or summer of the upcoming year.
- Applicants must submit a Pre-Application Form by March 30 for the April deadline, or by September 30 for the October deadline. A member of our team will follow-up within two weeks and provide the full application if your request meets the criteria to apply.
- Applications will be reviewed after each deadline and award notifications will be sent within 45 days.

You're probably wondering what happens if you miss the deadline. Because we receive so many grant applications, we cannot extend or make exceptions for our deadlines. But like we said, fret naught – you can apply for the second grant cycle.

Now you know when to apply, but what should you include in your application to make it stand out? Check out the next section to learn more about the evaluation process!



# How Will My Grant Application be Evaluated?

The OtterCares Grant Review Board meticulously reviews each Impact Fund application to identify programs and projects that spark entrepreneurial ingenuity and philanthropic passion in students. The evaluation process assesses the intentional integration of these principles into educational programs, the clarity and feasibility of measurable goals, and the robust implementation plans coupled with realistic timelines. Ultimately, the board looks to fund programs and projects that not only demonstrably educate and equip students but also align with mission of the Foundation. Below are some examples of keywords or themes that the Board looks for in each Impact Fund application.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP		PHILANTHROPY	
• Failure - Failing Forward	• Business Plan/ Model Canvas	• Generosity	• Learning to See Need / Empathy
• Resilience	• Prototype	• Giving, Value, & Belonging	• Nonprofits + Ecosystem
• Critical Thinking	• Business Acumen	• Serving Community, & Purpose	• Purposeful Action
• Problem Solving (real problems)	• Pitch/Sell	• Exploring Strengths & Passions	• Social Responsibility
• Adaptability	• Market Research	• Understanding Self	• Better Community
• Creative Process	• Solution Design	• Positive Impact & Social Change	• Initiative
• Design Experience	• Soft Skills	• Turning awareness into Action	• Understanding what Time, Talent, & Treasure you have & How to Apply it
• Product/Service Development			

The Board celebrates the innovative spirit of every organization and learning environment, recognizing that every program and project contributes to the OtterCares’ mission in its own remarkable way. Use this list to spark your creativity and guide you as you craft your own impactful proposal.

Inspired and ready to take the next step? Let’s dive into the application process and bring your vision to life!

# What is Required to Apply?

Here is where you get to share your incredible ideas with us. But before we can put ink to paper (or fingers to keyboard), let's go over the requirements and steps for getting your application from start to finish.

## Pre-Application Steps

In order to apply for a grant from the Impact Fund, an applicant must first submit a Pre-Application Form through the electronic grant portal.

- Fill out the Impact Fund Pre-Application Form.
- The Pre-Application Form is due by March 30 for the April 30 grant deadline, and by September 30 for the October 30 grant deadline.
- The Pre-Application form includes:
  - Organization name, location and EIN (public schools qualify under the EIN for their school district)  
*PLEASE NOTE: To be eligible for a grant from OtterCares, an organization must be a federally recognized 501c3 public charity*
  - A summary of proposed project or program and how it intends to intentionally teach K-12 students entrepreneurship and/or philanthropy.
  - The expected request amount and what that funding would purchase or support.

Following submission of the Pre-Application, a member of the OtterCares team will be in contact with the applicant to discuss follow-up questions, provide feedback on how your request fits with our funding criteria and provide a link to the full application to qualified applicants.

# What is Required to Apply?

If a Pre-Application request meets basic OtterCares funding criteria, the applicant will receive access to the full application form via the online portal. Please note that the full application is only available via email from an OtterCares staff member.

## Full Application Steps

- Full applications are due by April 30 or October 30 at 10PM MST. This deadline does not change if the date falls on a weekend.
- Application content should include:
  - A clear explanation of how the program will intentionally teach entrepreneurship and/or philanthropy, including specific examples of tactics and activities
  - Budget information and documents that include:
    - An explanation of what the grant dollars will fund
    - An overview of the full cost/budget for the program
    - An overview of the organization's fiscal year budget
  - An implementation plan for the program that includes a proposed/tentative timeline for key milestones
  - Complete answers to all application questions
  - A letter of support from the Principal if the request is from a school

Whew! This might sound like a lot of work but don't worry - we're here to help as much as we can each step of the way! If you get stuck, have questions or are feeling a little overwhelmed, feel free to reach out to us. We're always ready to give you the help you need through the application process.

# How Much Should I Ask For?

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As much as we would love to be able to give an endless supply of funding to our partners, we do have limited funds that we are able to invest in programs each year. We strive to ensure that we are stewarding these dollars in a responsible and impactful way and that grants to our partners are used in a fiscally responsible manner. But we also know that investing in a program that will inspire kiddos is, well, an investment! Here is more information about how our grant dollars are invested and what we look for in a grant request.

- Grant awards typically range between \$1,000 and \$25,000 depending on program reach and scope. If your Pre-Application submission meets basic funding criteria, the OtterCares team will discuss a reasonable request amount or target range based on the details of your program.
- The applicant's ability to demonstrate how requested funding will achieve specific program goals is more important than the exact amount requested. Be clear about why your request is for the amount it is, and how that funding will be used to achieve success.
- If there are other funding sources for your program, be sure to share them. Programs with diverse funding streams are often more sustainable long term and demonstrate to the board that others are also invested in this work. Having additional funders will not hurt your chances of receiving a grant from OtterCares.

Does all of that sound good? Great! Let's find out what happens if you receive a grant.

# What is the Review Process and When Will I Learn if I Have Been Awarded?

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So you have crafted your grant application, you've read it three times, you've reached out to our team to review it for feedback, you've asked your dentist and neighbor to read it, too. All in all, you're feeling pretty confident that you nailed it! Well we can't wait to read it! But before you hit submit, here is some information about the review timeline.



Following each deadline, submitted applications are reviewed by an internally appointed review committee.



The committee reviews applications for alignment with OtterCares funding priorities, as well as the strength of the overall strategic plan and financial strategy for the program.



Grant decision notifications will be sent via email approximately 45 days after each submission deadline.



The OtterCares Foundation reserves the right to publish grant recipient name and project information on external marketing channels.

Ready to submit? Let's do it and move on to the last section to learn about next steps.

# What is Expected of Me if I Receive a Grant from OtterCares?

You did it! You hit submit and your application is now making its way to the OtterCares Grant Review Committee to have some minds blown! As you anxiously await to hear back about your idea, you're probably wondering what happens if you're awarded a grant. Wonder no more friends – here is what you can expect!

- All Impact Fund grant recipients are required to submit an electronic outcome report upon program completion. Reports must be submitted prior to application for subsequent Impact Fund grants.
- All grant recognition should be attributed to the OtterCares Foundation. Approved logos and brand guidelines will be provided via email, upon request.
- The OtterCares Foundation reserves the right to request site visits and status reports with the regard to the utilization of grant funds for the designated program or project.
  - Site visit request will be made at least two (2) weeks before requested date.
  - Status reports can be requested at any time before, during and after the implementation and execution of the funded program or project.
- The OtterCares Foundation reserves the right to document implementation and impact through video medium and publish video stories and testimonials using the program and/or project as an example of impact.

We are so excited to be part of your journey! Thank you for your interest in our grant programs. If you have any questions about the application process, the review process or want to learn more about how we can work together to create impact, just reach out. We're always happy to chat.

Good luck and thank you again!

The OtterCares Foundation

# Tips and Best Practices for Writing Your Grant Application

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Need help with crafting your grant application? Here are some helpful tips and best practices for sharing your vision!



Use direct and concise language as much as possible. Avoid jargon that is specific to your organization or industry.



Start with the “why.” Be sure you have a clear understanding of the purpose of your program and that it relates to either philanthropy or entrepreneurship. Review the section of this packet titled “Why Entrepreneurship & Philanthropy? And What Exactly Do Those Words Mean?” for ideas on how these concepts relate to other pathways and content areas.



Address the tactical HOW of your program. Describe the specific strategies you will use and/or the specific activities in which you will engage students.



Explain the goals of your program clearly: What do you hope to achieve? How will you measure success? Why are they important to your program and/or organization? Be sure that some of those goals are directly related to entrepreneurship or philanthropy. But if you have other major goals, include those as well for larger context.



Provide specific details in your implementation plan. When will this program take place? How long will it be from start to finish? Tentative timelines are okay if you do not have exact dates set in stone.



Describe other sources of support for your program such as additional funding, partnerships and collaboration, people resources such as dedicated volunteers, and/or overall logistical support from your organization. Ideal programs have a diverse funding stream and broad support from multiple sources, rather than being reliant only on support from OtterCares.

# Grant Application Checklist!

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## Pre-Application

- Submit the form at least 30 days before application deadlines (March 30 for the April 30 deadline and September 30 for the October 30 deadline).
- Provide clear summary of your proposed program or project and how it aligns with our mission of teaching students entrepreneurship and/or philanthropy.
- Include a projected request amount or range and explain what the grant would be used to fund if awarded.

## Application

- Submit before application deadlines (March 30 or April 30).
- Include clear and complete information about your program purpose, strategies/activities and target outcomes. (Supplemental support materials such as lesson plans or activity guides may be submitted via email if applicable).
- Provide an implementation plan and timeline with as much detail as possible. If the program is still in planning stages during grant submission, tentative timelines are okay.
- Include a Letter of Support from the school principal if your request is for a school-based program.
- Provide complete and accurate budget documents that explain what the OtterCares grant would fund, what the full budget for the program is, and what the overall organizational budget is for the fiscal year.