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Letter from the Foundation

Welcome

Dear Prospective Partners,

For over a century, The Rockefeller Foundation has been dedicated to enhancing the well-being of humanity. Today, we are focused on finding and scaling people-centered solutions to advance opportunity and address the climate crisis. We will do this by partnering and supporting ambitious leaders to accelerate science-based innovations that build stronger, more climate resilient communities. By transforming four key systems—energy, food, health, and finance—we aim to make the planet more livable and equitable. Our collaboration will help us all realize this vision, unlocking a new era of progress for people and the planet.

In this toolkit, you'll find resources designed to foster a strong and productive partnership. It includes an overview of what to expect while working with The Rockefeller Foundation, guidance on key grantmaking processes and requirements, and links to the materials you will need for our grant systems. Additionally, you'll find a description of the values and beliefs that guide our approach to philanthropy.

Our theory of philanthropy is grounded in the belief that by supporting innovative and bold ideas and leaders, we can create lasting change. We prioritize teamwork, evidence-based strategies, and an unwavering commitment to equity and sustainability.

The Rockefeller Foundation wouldn't be what it is today without organizations like yours, and we are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with committed, ambitious partners. We look forward to working together to make opportunity universal and sustainable.

Best,



Elizabeth Yee

Executive Vice President of Programs



About Us

About The Rockefeller Foundation

From our initial grant to the American a century ago, The Rockefeller Foundation's history is marked by bold initiatives, breakthroughs, and unique partnerships, driving transformative change over the past 111 years. Since 1913, we have worked with grantees and partners in driving impact across the energy, food, health, and finance systems while also providing space and resources to spur creativity and education. We are proud that our history of impact includes support to create the World Health Organization, the Historical Black Colleges & Universities in the United States, the enablement of agriculture research that improved food security in Asia and Latin America, the development of the field of impact investing, and prototyping solar mini grids that has been taken to scale through the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet.

Working with The Rockefeller Foundation Today

Today, much of our work is focused on addressing the most significant crisis of our time: climate change.

In 2023, RF made a \$1 billion, 5-year commitment to reverse the effects of climate change and advance people-centered climate solutions that ensure that climate transformations benefit everybody — not just those living in wealthier countries. We are working with our partners to **transform four key global systems** by:

- **Accelerating renewable energy transitions** to reduce carbon emissions and empower the nearly 2.5 billion people still living in some form of energy poverty.
- **Building better food systems** to nourish people and planet and fuel a more sustainable future.
- **Advancing health systems** to address climate change's many health threats, ranging from heat-related illnesses to future pandemics.
- **Unlocking the trillions in financing** needed to address the climate crisis and realizing a more equitable global economic system.

We believe in advancing innovative climate solutions to unlock opportunity for billions of people and ensuring our shared future is safer, healthier, better nourished, empowered, and sustainable.

How The Rockefeller Foundation Collaborates to Deliver Impact

We are uniquely positioned to enable those transformations using our core strengths, namely RF's convening power, capital, and voice. We do that in three ways:

- **Connect:** By building alliances, convening experts, and mobilizing capital to spur commitments and action.
- **Invest:** By funding evidence-driven development of climate solutions and leading by example in RF's operations and endowment.
- **Inspire:** By developing thought leadership, supporting advocacy work, and changing narratives.

Our journey to become a learning organization

The Rockefeller Foundation is committed to measuring our impact, learning alongside our partners, and transparently sharing insights to promote dialogue and inform action, both internally and externally.

We know the path to transforming energy, food, health, and finance systems in the face of massive climate change disruptions will be challenging and non-linear. The way we work will need to be increasingly dynamic to address the greatest challenge of our time with ever-changing contexts on the ground. Learning about what does and doesn't work (and why) – from a diversity of sources and data types - is integral to adapting and improving our work, together

Our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

We operate from a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything we do, from our grantmaking to our operations. For more than a century, RF has worked to advance opportunity for all Americans, from our founder, John D. Rockefeller Sr., who provided financial support to historically Black colleges and universities, like Spelman College, to our efforts to advance economic opportunity for marginalized communities.

This work continues. RF's grantees are supporting communities around the world to access funding for new clean energy projects and decarbonize their local economies. Distinguished women leaders, who met at RF's Bellagio Center, spoke of the global gender equity policies that are needed to speed up the estimated 132 years it will take for women to have the same rights as men worldwide. And our work on renewable energy investments can and should empower women across the developing world.



About this Guide

About this Guide

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) is committed to developing supportive, equitable relationships with our partners. This guide has been developed to offer you clear guidance and support on the RF's grantmaking expectations, processes, and requirements. Our aim is to provide you with the necessary resources to successfully develop your proposal and navigate RF's grantmaking processes.

While this guide is intended to assist you with your application, it does not guarantee acceptance of your proposal. We hope that the information provided will enhance your understanding of what is involved in forming a grantmaking partnership with a U.S.-based private foundation and will prove useful to you, regardless of the outcome of your application.

Working with RF

When you begin your grantmaking journey with RF, you will work closely with your **Program Officer**. Your **Program Officer** is the representative within the Foundation that has invited you to submit a proposal for review and possible funding. The **Program Officer** will be your primary point of contact throughout the application process and if approved, the lifetime of your grant.

Once you have completed the development of your proposal with your **Program Officer**, it will be submitted for approval. Through this review process you may also engage with a **Grants Manager** from the **Office of Grants Management (OGM)**. The **Grants Manager** will support your **Program Officer** in reviewing your submitted grant for compliance with U.S. tax law and RF policy. You may receive questions through your **Program Officer** from OGM to clarify the activities proposed for support, or you may receive an email directly from the **Grants Manager** assigned to your grant. If needed, **OGM** may reach out to schedule a call to clarify questions regarding your proposal or to better understand your organization's operations and financial management practices as part of the Foundation's due diligence review.

At this same time, your proposal will be reviewed for approval by senior management and may require a few levels of approval depending upon the amount being requested for funding. During this process, questions may be raised that your **Program Officer** will bring to you for clarification.

Once a grant is approved, you will receive an email inviting you to register for the online portal and requesting that your banking information be submitted. Once the banking information is

submitted via the online portal, our **Finance Team** will contact your Finance department to confirm the banking details provided. We are required to confirm by phone that all banking details have come from a verified staff member from your organization.

OGM will be simultaneously finalizing your grant agreement which is then emailed to the head of your organization for countersignature. Once the countersigned agreement is returned to OGM through the grantee portal, the first payment is released, and the grant is open.

Once the grant is open, it is anticipated that you will have regular check-in calls with your **Program Officer**, to monitor the work supported by your grant. Your **Program Officer** and **Grants Officer** will also be working to review any reports or deliverables that are requested to be submitted during the course of the grant.

Once all grant requirements are completed and funds awarded have been accounted for in your final report, the grant will be closed. There is no guarantee that a project will receive ongoing funding, and both the grantee and the **Program Officer** should be discussing any ongoing support or the ending of support as a grant comes to a close.

The full details of the RF grantmaking process and policies are detailed below, providing helpful guidance for each stage. If you have any questions as you review these materials, please contact your **Program Officer**.



Project Grants

Project Grants

RF provides support to the work of a variety of organizations and partners, which also enables RF to achieve our strategic goals and charitable mission. The primary type of support, and the focus of this guide, are **Project Grants**.

Project Grants fund a specific project, area of work or deliverable that will contribute to the strategic goals of the Grantee and align with RF's impact goals. However, depending on the areas of work and/or project, a **Project Grant Rule Grant** may be the funding mechanism. The IRS Project Grant Rule requires foundations to show that a grant is not specifically earmarked for lobbying by demonstrating that the amount of a foundation's grant does not exceed the non-lobbying portion of the project.

Note: *RF is primarily an invitation only funder. Acceptance of a proposal and the final grant structure will be made by RF, in consultation with grantees.*

Grantmaking Policies & Regulations

By definition, a private foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization, usually established for the purpose of granting money to charitable causes. However, private foundations are different from public charities and are subject to specific compliance regulations that govern their operations and financial activity, including requirements for how grant funds can be awarded and what activities can be supported.

Here are some supplemental materials to providing an overview of key requirements of Private Foundations and the types of institutions and projects that can be funded:

Expenditure Responsibility

The IRS imposes certain restrictions (“Expenditure Responsibility”) on the issuance of grants by private foundations, like RF, to entities that are not U.S. 501(c)(3) public charities or the equivalent thereof.

These restrictions require a grant agreement with the grantee and compliance with the rules highlighted in the downloadable ER Guidance document below.

Important: Grantees who are not U.S. 501(c)(3) public charities or the equivalent should

take these requirements into account when accepting a grant from RF.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Expenditure Responsibility \(ER\) Guidance](#)

Equivalency Determination (ED)

An Equivalency Determination (ED) is a good faith determination that a foreign organization is the equivalent of a U.S. public charity. The grantee must provide detailed information about its organization, operations, and finances so that a qualified tax practitioner may make a reasonable assessment of its equivalency. RF uses NGOsource and Paragon Philanthropies for this process and can support grantees who have not yet applied for equivalency to obtain it.

Lobbying Guidance

Unlike 501(c)(3) public charities, private foundations, like RF are strictly prohibited from engaging in or using funds for "lobbying" activities, as defined in the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Lobbying Guidance](#)

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation - Project Grant Rule Guidance](#)

Fiscal Sponsor

A fiscal sponsor is a non-profit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of charitable projects. Using a fiscal sponsorship arrangement offers a way to facilitate support for a project even when it is not yet recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), or to support organizations with or without non-profit status who need additional capacity to manage a grant.



Grant Process and Timeline

While not all grants are processed within the same time period, they do all follow the same process at The Rockefeller Foundation (RF). The average grant takes 1-4 months from Proposal Development to Award and goes through three stages.

1) Concept Note: Before a grantee is invited to submit a proposal, RF's Program Officer develops a concept note for senior leadership to review and approve. This concept note outlines the key Impacts and outcomes anticipated for the grant and aligns the proposed concept with the team's strategy and budget. Once the concept note is approved, the program officer will begin the proposal development process with a grantee.

2) Proposal Development: Working with your RF Program Officer, this is the phase where you will be required to provide the details of your project, including the detailed proposal, impact outcomes and budget. Details of requirements will vary, please see Section 2 of this guide for specifics.

3) Due Diligence & Review: At RF, Due Diligence is conducted by the Office of Grants Management and aims to ensure the grantee can substantively complete the proposed work and has the capacity to manage the grant. Concurrently, the proposed grant is reviewed by the Program team and RF Leadership to ensure it aligns and contributes to RF's strategic goals.

What is Due Diligence and Why is it Done?

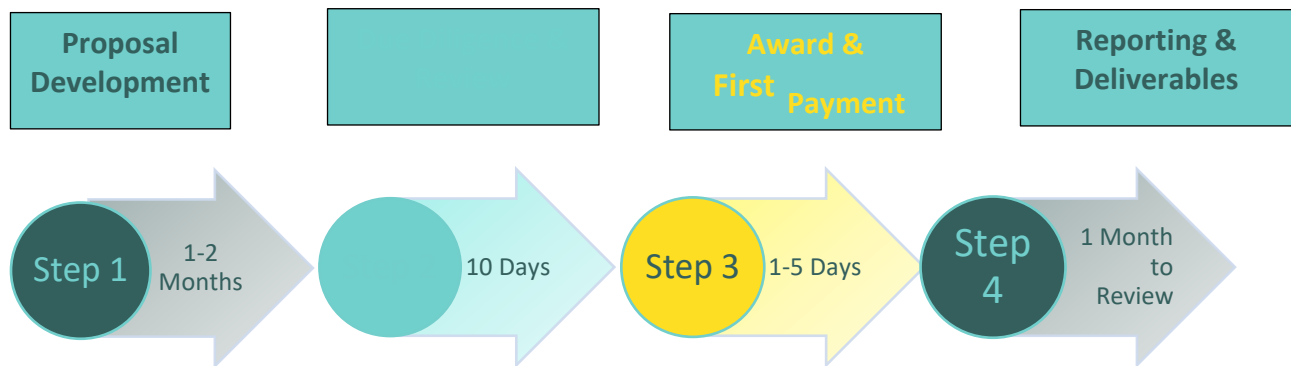
Let's define it: Due diligence is the investigation or exercise of care that a reasonable business or person is normally expected to take before entering into an agreement or contract with another party or an act with a certain standard of care.

RF perspective: Due Diligence and risk management are critical throughout the grant's life cycle and embedded in RF's mission of making impact. We believe that granting responsibly and ethically has a much better chance of achieving high impact. It is a win-win strategy of going in with both eyes open, so you can take risks to make stronger impact and support grantees to "do their best work".

Award & 1st Payment: Once your proposal has been approved by RF, the Grant Agreement process will begin to ensure that a detailed legal agreement including expectations and deliverables are in place. Once the grant agreement is countersigned, returned, and accepted by RF, the first grant payment will be released, as long as any other open grant from the organization is in compliance. If there are any overdue reports, then payment will be held until they are submitted.

Reporting & Deliverables: For all Project Grants, narrative and financial reports will always be required. Other types of deliverables will vary based on the proposed grant and will be included in the grant agreement.

Illustrative outline of The Rockefeller Foundation Grant Process & Timeline





Developing a Complete Proposal

Proposal Components

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) requires a complete proposal for grant consideration. Outlined below are the specific required components for a complete proposal with links to additional guidance or templates for each.

Pre-Grant Questionnaire

The purpose of the Pre-Grant Questionnaire (PGQ) is to collect key data to provide RF with information about your organization, its governance, and financial practices to enable RF to better understand your organization ahead of beginning a funding relationship.

Key information collected in the PGQ:

- Organization tax status
- Organization officers
- Financial processes, with the overall goal to understand the practices of the organization; and to identify any risks in how the organization manages its finances.
- Organizational policy checklist to provide context for assessments.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Pre-Grant Questionnaire](#)

Letter of Request

Every grant proposal is required to have a formal Letter of Request which MUST:

- Be on the letterhead of the organization that has ownership and responsibility for the project.
- Be signed by an executive or other official of the prospective grantee organization authorized to solicit grant funds (e.g., Board Member, Development Director) or co-signed by such an official and the Project Lead.
- Provide the name of the project for which funds are requested, specify the amount being requested from RF and give the time period during which RF's funds will be expended.
- Make clear the request for funding is being made by the prospective grantee organization for a project which they have ownership and responsibility for.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Letter of Request Guidance](#)

Grant Proposal

A formal grant proposal should be approximately 5, and no greater than 10, pages in length and should generally include the following elements:

- **Cover Page:** Including project name and contact information.
- **Brief Executive Summary:** A summary of the proposal information requested in the sections below.
- **Rationale and Context:** An outline of the issue your project is aiming to address
- **Project Outcomes and Impacts:** Describe the outcomes and/or impacts that this project aims to bring about, including theory of change and intended beneficiaries.
- **Project outputs and key activities:** Describe proposed project activities, including status of the work and accomplishments to date.
- **Plans for Knowledge Management and Communications:** How your organization plans to manage and disseminate information.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning:** Detailed plan for impact monitoring, evaluation activities, and learning agenda
- **Risk Management:** Identification of and plans for mitigating any risk associated with the project.
- **Project Budget:** A detailed project budget.
- **Budget Narrative:** Describe and provide justification for each major category in the budget.

**Please note not all sections will be required of all prospective grantees, and you may also be asked to provide additional information.*

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Proposal Guidance](#)

Project Lead Bios

Grant proposals must include a detailed list of key personnel involved with the execution of the grant project including biographies outlining the skills and expertise of each individual.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation
Key Project Lead Bios Template](#)

Project Grant: Budget (Guidance & Template)

A grant budget includes all the costs associated with carrying out the grant project or program. RF does not require a specific budget format or template for project grants, however if an organization does not have a standard budget format you can access a sample template here.

Important: *Regardless of the budget format, a financial report will be required to report against expenditures as part of any grant awarded.*

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Project Budget Guidance](#)

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Project Budget Template](#)

Other items that may be required depending on the project:

Project Grant Rule: Budget

(For grants that include lobbying activities)

A Project Grant Rule budget allocates the total project's expenses by non-lobbying and lobbying costs. There must be multiple funders named in the budget though no individual funder's contribution can be allocated. Therefore, RF's funding must not be earmarked to any particular costs, but its total award amount must be represented. Further, Rockefeller's award amount **MUST NOT** exceed the total non-lobbying costs of the project. Please contact your RF program officer for further guidance or connect with a Grants Manager for help.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation - Project Grant Rule Guidance](#)

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Project Grant Rule Budget Template](#)

Cybersecurity Questionnaire

The purpose of this component of a grant proposal is to assess any potential risks with a prospective grantee's cybersecurity practices, including when significant systems are developed, specifically if the organization collects personally identifiable data. By working with the prospective grantee to identify potential risks it allows RF to provide added guidance, if necessary, and to develop a plan to mitigate risk with the prospective grantee.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Cybersecurity Questionnaire](#)

Statement of Responsibility

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) requires that, prior to the payment of funds for a study involving micro-organisms, plants, animals, or human subjects, the grantee signs a **Statement of Responsibility**, attesting that the grantee will secure all the relevant authorizations required by the grantee institution and any other institution at which the study is being conducted and comply with any governmental regulations that apply in the location where the study is being conducted.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Statement of Responsibility Sample \(v2024\)](#)

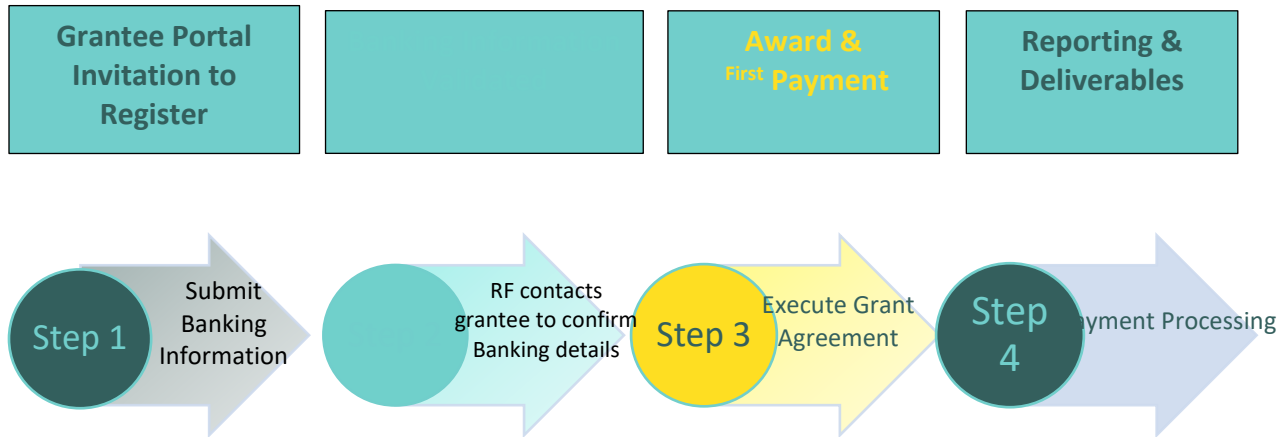
Project Grant Checklist

Outlined below are the required components by organization type for submitting a complete Project Grant proposal to The Rockefeller Foundation (RF). This should be used as a checklist when developing your proposal:

Project Grant Proposal Materials Checklist	
All Organizations	
	Pre-Grant Questionnaire
	Letter of Request Required for ALL proposals: An official request from the grantee institution, on their letterhead and signed by an executive or other official and must include the name of the project for which funds are requested, specify the amount being requested from RF, and give the time period during which Foundation funds will be expended.
	Grant (Project) Proposal: The grant proposal should provide sufficient detail to enable RF to assess whether the activities proposed will contribute to their Funding Initiative's intended outcomes.
	Project Lead Bio: A detailed list of key personnel involved with the execution of the grant project including biographies outlining the skills and expertise of each individual.
	Project Budget: The proposed project budget should clearly align with the project proposal and provide detail on how the funds will be used. The project budget should clearly show how RF funding will be spent, as this will be the template which the grantee will be asked to report against. <i>Note: There are special requirements for Expenditure Responsibility budgets.</i>
	Cybersecurity Questionnaire - If requested by RF.
	Most recent audited financial statement (or unaudited financial statements if no audit is available) - Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For ALL new grantees ○ Every 3 years for existing grantees ○ If requested by RF
U.S. 501(c3) Organizations	
	Form 990 Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For ALL new grantees ○ Every 3 years for existing grantees ○ If requested by RF
	Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement (if appropriate)
Organizations outside the U.S. without equivalency determination and non-charities	
	Incorporation Documents
	Policy for time tracking
	Travel and expense reporting policy

Grant Award Process

Once a grant has been approved by The Rockefeller Foundation (RF), the grant agreement process begins and follows the four steps outlined below:



Grantee Portal: RF uses a secure online portal for collecting all grant information, including Banking Information, Grant Reports and Amendment requests. The first step of the Grant Award process is to set up a user account in the Portal. Grantees will be sent an e-mail inviting them to set up the account and provide Banking Information (see below).

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Grantee Portal Instructions](#)

Banking Information: RF prefers to make payments outside the United States via wire transfer. Please select the appropriate form, complete and upload to the Grantee Portal, when requested.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation U.S. Organization Payment Form](#)

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Non-U.S. Organization Payment Form](#)

Grant Agreement: The grant agreement is a contract between the grantee organization and RF that sets the terms and conditions of a grant, including what the funds can be used for, details about who each party is, and the purpose of the grant.. The grant agreement will also outline the requirements of the use of grant funding, including reports and deliverables with due dates and payment terms. Grant agreements will be provided to you via email and should be signed electronically and returned via the Portal.

All grant agreements require that the grantee make certain representations and warranties, including about litigation, political activity, lobbying, interactions with government officials, and compliance with law, such as OFAC and data privacy regulations.

Certain grants agreements will require specialized terms based on the project and grant funding. Those terms can include:

Intellectual Property: Intellectual Property is defined as a work or invention that is the result of creativity, such as a manuscript or a design, to which one has rights and for which one may apply for a patent, copyright, trademark, etc. Specifically, as it applies to grantmaking, Intellectual Property that has been created or results from any research or development that has directly or indirectly been funded or financed in whole or part by RF grants.

- The default position in our grant agreements is that the grantee retains ownership of all intellectual property created with the use of grant funds and provides RF with a non-exclusive license to use and license others to use the work. The grantee retains the right to provide licenses to others to use the work. This option permits grantees to retain all rights to their work while also allowing RF to use the work in furtherance of its charitable purposes.
- For certain projects, RF requires the grantee to make certain work products or data available to the public under an open-source license. This option is used when RF and the grantee agree that the work funded by RF's grant would provide the greatest charitable impact if it is publicly available.

For certain grants, other IP terms may be negotiated as appropriate for the work.

Payment Processing: Payment terms will be detailed in your agreement based on the grant specifics, however normal payment process 'terms' are as follows:

- **First Grant Payment:** Initial grant payment for the project, which will be automatically processed after the countersigned grant agreement is returned and accepted by RF.
- **Standard Payments:** Future grant payments will be scheduled to be released/paid based on the receipt and approval of reports and deliverables, as outlined in the grant agreement.

Reporting & Deliverables

A deliverable is a tangible work product or report that a grantee is required to submit to The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) to demonstrate progress on a grant-funded project ('progress report') or to provide evidence the work is completed ('final report') to ensure the success of the project.

For all Project Grants, narrative and financial reports will always be required, other types of deliverables will vary based on the proposed grant. All deliverables will be explicitly agreed upon and set forth in the Grant Agreement so that there is a shared vision of what constitutes success and a shared agreement on what needs to be delivered.

Types of Deliverables

Narrative and Financial Reporting Requirements

Narrative Reports should report on the progress and outcomes of the project supported with RF funds, as detailed in the grant agreement.

- **Project Grants:** These reports should detail how the funding was spent, and the progress made in accomplishing the purposes of the grant. The reported activities should match the project and activities outlined in the grantee's approved proposal.
- For **Project Grant Rule** grants, these reports should detail the overall project and should not discuss or detail how RF funding was used.
- For **Expenditure Responsibility Grants:** **Narrative** and **Financial** reports are required as of the end of the grantee's fiscal year.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Narrative Report Guidance and Template \(v2024\)](#)

Financial Reports should demonstrate how RF funds were expended against the approved budget the grantee submitted with their proposal.

- The grant agreement outlines specific requirements for the content and format of a **Financial Report**. Although RF does not require financial reporting on a particular template, it does request reporting against the submitted budget and does have a sample template if requested.
- **General Support Grants: RF** requires a report on the operating expenses of the organization for the year of reporting.
- **Project Grant Rule Grants: RF** requires reporting of the full project, without specifying how RF funds were spent.
- For **ER: Narrative and Financial** reports are required as of the end of the grantee's fiscal year.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Financial Report Template \(v2024\)](#)

Expenditure Responsibility Reporting

If an Expenditure Responsibility grant is awarded, in addition to any specific project deliverables outlined in the grant agreement, grantees will be responsible for providing the following reports and maintaining records related to the grant for a period of 4 years:

- Interim (if applicable) and final **narrative reports** that describe the progress made in achieving the agreed upon deliverables and milestones, periodically and at least at the end of each of the grantee's fiscal year(s) in which grant funds are held by the grantee.
- Interim (if applicable) and final **financial reports** in Excel that track actual expenditures against the budget approved for the grant, at the same intervals as narrative reports. Please note that financial reports should not be formatted like or referred to as invoices.
- **Equipment Reporting:** The purchase of any capital equipment with RF grant funds requires annual reporting for the charitable/useful life of the item. Examples of capital equipment include vehicles, office equipment, computer software and equipment, equipment used to conduct scientific research or testing, and buildings. Please note that ER grantees must detail any proposed equipment purchases in their budget and these purchases must be reviewed and approved by RF before the grant agreement is signed.
- **Pass-Through Reporting (applicable to private foundations grantees ONLY):** As of the end of each distribution period, private foundation grantees are required to provide a statement to RF in which the grantee:
 - Certifies that qualifying distributions have been made.
 - Lists the names and addresses of the recipients of the distributions (or, in the

case of distributions for administrative expenditures, a description of the purpose of such expenditures).

- Certifies that the amount of qualified distributions is not less than the amount required.

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Expenditure Responsibility \(ER\) Equipment Reporting Guidelines](#)

[Click here to download The Rockefeller Foundation Equipment Reporting \(ER\) Template](#)

Appendix: Links to Forms & Templates

Here are links to The Rockefeller Foundation forms and templates.

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