



U.S. Soccer Foundation Guide to Grants

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the U.S. Soccer Foundation's annual grants cycle. Since 1995, the U.S. Soccer Foundation has awarded grants to more than 600 non-profit organizations in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Our grants support soccer programs and field-building initiatives in the U.S. that keep children in underserved communities active, healthy, and safe. This guide contains the necessary information you need to know as a potential applicant. While Foundation staff is always available to answer questions, we ask that you read through this guide before contacting the Foundation.

Please call 202.872.9277 or email grants@ussoccerfoundation.org with any questions.

Who We Fund

Eligibility Requirements for All Grant Applicants:

- **Operate in the United States:** Funding may only go towards programming or projects located in the United States. Organizations that are based in the United States, but only offer programming abroad, are not eligible for the Annual Grants cycle. While the Foundation commends organizations that provide soccer programming abroad, we do not support such organizations financially through our Annual Grants cycle. International organizations may qualify for donations of soccer equipment through our *Passback* program. For more information on the *Passback* program, please visit our website (www.passback.org).
- **Tax-exempt:** Application must be submitted by an organization with IRS approved tax-exempt status at the time of application.
 - Examples of tax-exempt organizations: any group with 501(c)(3) status, churches, individual schools or school districts, cities or municipalities, etc.
 - Individuals are not eligible to apply for funding.
- **Soccer programming:** Applicant must offer soccer-specific programming.

Additional Requirements for *Safe Places to Play* Applicants:

All *Safe Places to Play* Projects:

- Applicant must own or have a minimum 10 year land lease/land use agreement for the land where the field is or will be built. No exceptions will be made to the 10 year minimum (10 years counted from the date of the grant application).

Lighting Projects Only:

- Applicant must have written authorization from the community where the lighting project will be installed. It is the applicant's responsibility to determine who in their community can authorize such a project (usually a mayor, city council, etc.). Authorization must be in the form of a letter stating that the community is aware and approves of the installation of lighting at the specified field location.

For an idea of the types of groups that the Foundation funds, please [click here](#) to see a list of past grantees.

What We Fund

Safe Places to Play Grants

Safe Places to Play grants are available in four categories: **Synthetic Turf**, **Lighting**, **Irrigation**, and **Sport Court**. Multi-sport field projects are eligible for funding, but such fields must be used a majority of the time for soccer. Multi-field projects are also eligible. Projects that must go through a bidding process are eligible. *All Safe Places to Play* grants (except for Irrigation) can be awarded for either indoor or outdoor field projects. *Safe Places to Play* grantees have 12 months from the date of the award announcement to use their funding.

- **Synthetic Turf** – grants are awarded for the installation of a synthetic field surface from FieldTurf. This funding can be applied toward new field construction or the refurbishment of existing turf fields.
 - Grant Amount: Up to \$200,000
 - FieldTurf Requirement: Grants are disbursed as in-kind credit with FieldTurf. No cash is disbursed as part of this grant. Grantees must use FieldTurf as the supplier for their field project, if awarded this grant.
 - Field Size: Preference is given to full size soccer fields. The Foundation understands that space issues dictate that full size fields are not always an option, so smaller fields *are* eligible. Grant amount is largely dependent on the size of the field. For fields under 25,000 square feet, applicants are encouraged to consider Sport Court as an alternative to synthetic turf.
- **Lighting** – grants are awarded for the purchase of Musco Lighting products to light futsal, natural grass, or synthetic turf fields. Funding does not cover installation.
 - Grant Amount: Up to \$50,000
 - Musco Lighting Requirement: Grants are disbursed as in-kind credit with Musco Lighting. No cash is disbursed as part of this grant. Grantees must use Musco Lighting as the supplier for their field project, if awarded this grant.
 - Musco products come with a 25-year warranty.
- **Irrigation** – grants are awarded for the purchase of Hunter Irrigation products to irrigate natural grass or synthetic turf fields (while irrigation is not required for synthetic turf, it is recommended for cleaning and cooling purposes). Funding does not cover installation.
 - Grant Amount: Up to \$15,000
 - Hunter Irrigation Requirement: Grants are disbursed as in-kind credit with Hunter Irrigation. No cash is disbursed as part of this grant. Grantees must use Hunter Irrigation as the supplier for their field project, if awarded this grant.
 - Irrigation funding can **ONLY** be used for sprinklers, valves, and/or controllers; funding does **NOT** cover pipes, wires, fittings, electrical splices, etc.
- **Sport Court** – grants are awarded for the installation of Sport Court, which is an innovative modular (non-turf) sports surface that delivers superior playability, speed, safety, shock absorption, and traction that is perfect for small-sided soccer or futsal. With its engineering-grade polypropylene surface, a Sport Court is quick to install and can be easily customized to fit the needs of your soccer project.
 - Grant Amount: Up to \$65,000

- Sport Court Requirement: Grants are disbursed as in-kind credit with Sport Court. No cash is disbursed as part of this grant. Grantees must use Sport Court as the supplier for their field project, if awarded this grant.

Program Grants

Program grants are awarded for grantees to purchase soccer equipment and/or to cover operating expenses. Program grantees have 12 months from the date of the award announcement to use their funding.

- Grants up to \$50,000 (total for equipment + cash)
 - **Equipment** – all equipment grants are awarded as credit with www.soccer.com; no cash is distributed for equipment. Grantees work with a soccer.com representative to put together an equipment order, which is then sent to the Foundation for approval; once approved, the order is shipped to the grantee and billed to the Foundation.
 - Eligible equipment expenses include: jerseys, shorts, socks, shin guards, cleats, balls, goals (pop-up or permanent), polo shirts for coaches, whistles, cones, ball bags, first aid kits, scrimmage vests, etc.
 - **Cash** – cash for operating expenses is disbursed in one check after the grant agreement and all paperwork have been completed. Grantees must submit two financial reports (one in July and one in December) to account for how the money was spent.
 - Eligible operating expenses include: stipends for coaches and program managers, transportation, healthy snacks, award banquets for players, field or facility rental fees, referee fees, background checks, family engagement events, etc.

What We Do Not Fund

Safe Places to Play Grants

- Natural grass fields (however, organizations that have or are building grass fields are eligible for lighting and irrigation grants).
- Any structures/amenities that are not part of the field itself, including:
 - Bleachers
 - Bathrooms
 - Concession stands
 - Fencing
 - Parking lots

Program Grants

- Scholarships/sponsorships/registration fees for individual players
- Tickets or transportation to professional sporting events
- One time camps or clinics
- Equipment for coaches (polos or sweatshirts are okay)
- Items to be used for auctions or fundraising (i.e. professional team jerseys or other collectable items)

Application Process

Safe Places to Play Applicants

- Letter of Inquiry (LOI) - Directions:
Please send an email to grants@ussoccerfoundation.org, with the subject line “*Safe Places to Play Grant LOI*” that includes all required information and documentation, outlined below. Within three weeks you will receive a response that includes an invitation to complete the Foundation’s full application or a brief explanation for why your organization was not selected to proceed.
 - Organization name and location.
 - Indicate what type(s) of funding your organization is requesting (Synthetic Turf, Lighting, Irrigation, Sport Court) as well as the level of funding requested. You may request funding in multiple categories in a single grant cycle.
 - Documentation of tax-exempt status.
 - Construction timeline including completion date.
 - Project budget from appropriate Foundation partner:
 - Synthetic Turf: FieldTurf
 - Lighting: Musco
 - Irrigation: Hunter Industries
 - Sport Court: Sport Court
 - Please attach a one page (Word document, double spaced) description of the project, including who the field will serve, why the community needs the field, and the current funding/planning status of the project.

Within three weeks of submitting an LOI, organizations will receive one of two responses:

- (1) An invitation to complete a full application, which must be submitted by the next application deadline. The application must be completed online.
- (2) A brief explanation of why an organization was not invited to formally apply (i.e. – eligibility issues, does not match the Foundation’s mission, etc.).

Program Applicants:

- The program application **does not** require a Letter of Inquiry (LOI); the application is available to all eligible organizations, as defined in this grants guide (tax-exempt and operating soccer programming in the United States).
- The application will be available on the Foundation’s website approximately six weeks before it is due. The application deadline is usually on/around October 1st.
- Please sign up for our email list (which you can do on our homepage: www.ussoccerfoundation.org) to be notified when the application is available.

Timeline

Important Dates:

Safe Places to Play Grants

- Three application deadlines
 - October 1st
 - Awards announced on/around December 15th
 - February 1st
 - Awards announced on/around April 15th
 - June 1st
 - Awards announced on/around August 15th

Program Grants

- One application deadline
 - October 1st
 - Awards announced on/around December 15th

- Consecutive year funding
 - The Foundation has a one year on/one year off policy for Program Grantees; for example, if your organization receives a program grant for FY2014, you may not apply for the FY2015 cycle, but may apply again for FY2016 funding.
 - Because this is a new policy, all organizations, regardless of their funding history with the Foundation, are eligible to apply for FY2014 funding. Organizations that receive program funding in FY2014 will not be eligible for funding in FY2015.

Funding Details

Safe Places to Play Grants

- All *Safe Places to Play* grants are in-kind grants and function as a credit with the respective vendor. Once signed grant agreements and required certificates of insurance are submitted, the grantee works with the appropriate vendor to complete the field project. Once the project is completed, the vendor submits a Certificate of Completion to the Foundation and a credit for the appropriate dollar amount is applied to the grantee's bill with the vendor.

Program Grants

- Cash awards are dispersed in one lump sum. Checks will be cut a few weeks after grant agreements and certificates of insurance are submitted to the Foundation. Grantees are required to submit two financial reports (one in July and one in December) accounting for how the money was spent.
- Equipment credits with www.soccer.com are released once grant agreements and certificates of insurance are submitted to the Foundation. Grantees work directly with the Foundation's representative at www.soccer.com to build equipment orders in line with their grant application. Equipment orders are then submitted to the Foundation for approval; once approved, the order is shipped to the grantee and billed to the Foundation.

Reporting Requirements

Safe Places to Play Grants

- *Safe Places to Play* grantees must submit before and after pictures of their field projects.
- *Safe Places to Play* grantees must also submit six and twelve month progress reports as well as a community impact report once the field project is completed.

Program Grants

- All Program grantees must submit program reports approximately six and twelve months into their grant (exact dates are determined year to year and are communicated with grantees well in advance of submission deadlines). These reports include empirical data and narrative responses about the impact of the Foundation's grant on an organization's programming.
- Program grantees who receive cash for operations as part of their grant will also be required to submit six and twelve month financial reports accounting for how their grant funds were spent.

Characteristics of a Strong Application

Well-Written Application

- No typos or spelling mistakes; no evidence that answers were copied and pasted from another application; all questions are answered and all required documents are included; PLEASE PROOFREAD!

Youth Development Focus

- The mission of the Foundation is to use soccer as a vehicle for social change; programs and projects must have an intentional focus on one or more aspects of youth development (health, education, safety, etc.).

Urban and Underserved

- The priority of the Annual Grants program is to fund organizations that work with players in underserved urban areas, but the Foundation does not define “urban” or “underserved.” Organizations from suburban or rural areas are welcome to apply (and the Foundation has funded such groups before), but it is important to remember that the Foundation’s funding priority is programming that reaches players in urban and underserved communities.

Diverse Funding Sources

- Diverse funding sources (other foundations, corporations, individuals, etc.) show the Foundation that an applicant is financially sustainable and is not solely dependent on one or two sources of funding.
- The amount of funding requested from the Foundation should not account for more than 50% of a program or project budget.
 - Please use your best judgment on this guideline; if your organization provides strictly soccer programming, then this guideline applies to your entire budget. If you are applying on behalf of a soccer program run by a school district, this guideline applies to the budget for the soccer program, not the entire school district.

Sustainability

- The Foundation wants to be confident that the programs and projects funded through the Annual Grants cycle are sustainable; one-time events (such as camps or clinics) are not eligible for funding.
- Start-up and long-established programs are both eligible for funding; each organization should demonstrate what they have done in the past (if already established) and/or what they plan to do in the future (both financially and programmatically) to sustain themselves.

Community Impact

- The Foundation seeks to fund programs and projects that have a tangible impact on their community; a thorough measurement and evaluation strategy is highly important.

Players Served

- The Foundation strives to fund quality programming for the largest number of players possible; organizations need not serve hundreds or thousands of players, but the amount of the grant request should appropriately correspond to the size and scope of the program.

Why Strong Programs Do Not Always Get Funded:

- Limited Resources – like most funders, the U.S. Soccer Foundation has limited resources; as a result, every year there are high-performing, mission-aligned programs and projects that do not get funded.
- Highly Competitive – each year the Foundation receives approximately 600 applications and is able to award approximately 40-50 grants; the Foundation encourages organizations to re-apply every year they are eligible, as the pool of applicants is different each year.

Feedback

- Unfortunately, due to the large volume of applications, the Foundation staff is unable to give feedback on specific applications.