



## 2020 Charitable Giving Guidelines

Please read all information before applying for a grant.

### Who We Are

The CenterPoint Energy Foundation (“Foundation”) strives to be a catalyst in our communities by leveraging everyday opportunities and resources to achieve extraordinary outcomes. That’s why we invest in initiatives that not only improve our stakeholders’ lives today, but also build a strong foundation for tomorrow. Our corporate giving focuses on ensuring a high quality of life in the communities we serve.

CenterPoint Energy recognizes that our success – and the success of our neighbors -- is inextricably linked to the vibrancy of our communities. We seek to improve the communities we serve by supporting programs that encourage community connections, improve quality of life and promote inclusion to help communities thrive. We recognize that an educated and engaged community is critical to the future of our business and our communities. We are committed to ensuring all students have the opportunities and tools they need to succeed academically, explore potential careers and be equipped to enter the workforce.

### Key Facts to Understand Before You Apply

The Foundation awards grants annually to eligible organizations in Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas, where our company has a business presence.

In 2020, we have an open grant cycle for organizations from Indiana and Ohio. **If you are in Arkansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas**, we will accept grant applications on an invitation only basis. To inquire more, please email [CNPgives@centerpointenergy.com](mailto:CNPgives@centerpointenergy.com).

**Beginning in 2021**, we will have grant cycles for organizations in Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas, where our company has a business presence.

Our 2021 grant cycles will be:

- **Cycle 1:** January 4<sup>th</sup>- February 15<sup>th</sup> (cycle closes at midnight CST)
- **Cycle 2:** April 19<sup>th</sup>- May 31<sup>st</sup> (cycle closes at midnight CST)
- **Cycle 3:** August 2<sup>nd</sup>- Sept 13<sup>th</sup> (cycle closes at midnight CST)

### Submitting Grant Applications

All grants must be submitted via our online grants application system [https://www.cybergrants.com/centerpoint/CNPGives\\_EligibilityQuiz](https://www.cybergrants.com/centerpoint/CNPGives_EligibilityQuiz).

Due to the volume of grant applications we receive, each application is evaluated on a competitive basis as we strive to fund programs with strong impact and measurable outcomes within our funding priorities. While CenterPoint Energy values our business relationships and takes tremendous pride in serving our

communities, the Internal Revenue Service stipulates that the Foundation may not consider business relationships when making grant-award decisions in order to avoid self-dealing practices.

### Event Sponsorships

If you are a **501(c)(3) organization** looking for a sponsorship for an event, visit [https://www.cybergrants.com/centerpoint/CNPGives\\_EligibilityQuiz](https://www.cybergrants.com/centerpoint/CNPGives_EligibilityQuiz). Sponsorships are decided in conjunction with regional teams and must be received at least 90 days prior to an event. Note that events are not considered as part of our Foundation giving priorities, but consideration will be given to organizations who align with those priorities.

Any changes to the application process will be posted on [www.centerpointenergy.com/CNPGives](http://www.centerpointenergy.com/CNPGives).

### Funding Priorities

Our funding targets innovative, effective and measurable programs that enhance the quality of life within our communities and support the following giving pillars: **Community Vitality, Education, and Local Initiatives**. Priority consideration is given to programs that serve low- to moderate-income families and under-represented populations. Key focus areas within the giving pillars include:

#### Community Vitality

- *Community Catalyst* – Community Development initiatives leading to thriving neighborhoods, cities and states
- *Affordable Housing* – Initiatives leading to increased access to quality, energy-efficient and affordable housing
- *Safety and Environment* – Ensuring our communities are safe and green

#### Education

- *Quality Literacy Programs* – Early childhood through adult literacy and tutoring programs
- *STEM Programs* – STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education programs targeted to under-resourced areas and/or under-represented populations
- *Workforce Development* – Programs addressing needs of our communities

#### Local Initiatives

- *Local Collaborations* – Initiatives that enrich relationships and strengthen the communities in which we operate

## Foundation Charitable Giving Programs

The Community Relations staff administers the following *primary* charitable programs, which are detailed below. If approved for funding, all payments will be made electronically as outlined in more detail in one of the *Frequently Asked Questions*.

- **Foundation Grant**

This grant application is open to nonprofit organizations that meet the eligibility requirements as outlined on the next page. Organizations must be located within our corporate footprint and carry out programs related directly to our funding priorities, mission and vision. Applicants should expect a waiting period of up to 90 days from submission to final decision making.

- **United Way Corporate Contributions**

Corporate contributions are made to United Ways in communities where CenterPoint Energy has a business presence. Employees are also encouraged to make personal donations through our annual workplace campaign.

- **Easy Match**

Easy Match (the company's matching gifts program) furthers CenterPoint Energy's charitable giving by matching employees' personal donations dollar-for-dollar up to \$5,000 per year to non-profit organizations or causes that are important to them. Matching gifts are made to eligible 501(c)(3) organizations.

- **Volunteer Grants**

The Volunteer Grant program provides a grant to employees who volunteer 40 or more hours with a single non-profit in a calendar year.

### **To be considered for grant funding, organizations must:**

- Be a nonprofit organization and have obtained recognition of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) as a public charity under Code 509(a) and in good standing. (If an organization is exempt under Section 509(a)(3), it must be Type I or Type II.)
- Have their organization's primary address located within CenterPoint Energy's footprint

### **What we look for in an applicant organization:**

- Financial stability
- Mission closely related to the Foundation's priorities
- Strong leadership and governance
- Diverse board and staff; reflective of the community being served

### **When reviewing proposals, preference is given to funding opportunities/initiatives that:**

- Fit closely with the Foundation's funding priorities
- Address community needs related to our funding priorities
- Include financial commitments from a variety of sources

- Utilize an effective evaluation plan specific to the proposed funding opportunity/initiative
- Demonstrate measurable and sustainable goals and outcomes

## Restrictions

The CenterPoint Energy Foundation does not provide funding for the items or organizations listed below.

Please note, this is not an exhaustive listing and additional restrictions may also apply.

School clubs/organizations, including, but not limited to bands, athletic or academic teams, booster clubs, PTO/PTA	Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, or religion
Meals, tickets, dues, memberships, fees, travel, tuition, subscriptions, and other tangible benefits	Political, labor, military, international or fraternal organizations
Childcare fees/subsidies or K-12 tuition	Programs administered by religious organizations for religious purposes
Sponsorships, fundraisers, races, telethons, marathons, benefits, banquets, galas, golf tournaments, festivals, or other events	Debt retirement or funding of any activity that is already completed
Individuals	Contests, competitions, athletics, pageants, or talent contests
Scholarly or medical research	A 509(a)(3) Type III supporting organization charity
Endowments or scholarships	Previous grantees who have not submitted required reporting

## Frequently Asked Questions

Please review the questions below for more information before starting an application.

**1. Q: Are there deadlines for applying?**

**A:** For 2020, there are no deadlines for grant requests, but all requests must be submitted online.

Please see [www.centerpointenergy.com/CNPGives](http://www.centerpointenergy.com/CNPGives) or contact the Foundation at [CNPGives@centerpointenergy.com](mailto:CNPGives@centerpointenergy.com) for more information about our 2021 grant application process.

**2. Q: Does my organization have to be located in an area served by CenterPoint Energy to receive a grant?**

**A:** Foundation Grants are limited to organizations that have their primary address located in a community CenterPoint Energy serves.

**3. Q: Are nonprofits required to have a 501(c)(3) designation to apply?**

**A:** Nonprofits applying for a Foundation grant must be tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) and recognized as a public charity under Code Section 509(a) and in good standing. (If an organization is exempt under Section 509(a)(3), it must be Type I or Type II.)

**4. Q: My organization is a current grantee. Are we eligible to apply for additional funding?**

**A:** If your organization has been awarded a grant or received a grant payment within the last 12 months, additional requests for funding will not be considered until after the grant period has ended and a final report has been submitted.

**5. Q: Can I apply for both a grant and a sponsorship within the same calendar year or time period?**

**A:** Yes, however, please note that due to the volume of requests received, we will take into consideration all commitments made per organization into our overall decision.

**6. Q: Does the Foundation provide funding to daycare or childcare centers to subsidize the cost of tuition, fees, or other childcare related costs?**

**A:** Unfortunately, families across our footprint are facing rising childcare costs. Due to limited resources and a desire to remain fair and equitable, we are unable to fund tuition assistance programs or other childcare related costs.

**7. Q: What is the difference between a Foundation grant and an event sponsorship?**

**A:** Foundation grants are provided to IRS designated 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations. Grants are charitable donations used to fund general operating costs, program costs, initiatives that are large in scope and impact, and other programmatic activities undertaken by nonprofit organizations.

Sponsorships are monetary contributions given in support of events or activities in exchange for advertising and/or publicity. These decisions are made at a regional level.

**8. Q: May we submit more than one application at a time?**

**A:** Yes. Priority will be given to the initial application. If a grant is awarded to an organization that will be considered with evaluating any additional application within the same grant cycle/calendar year.

**9. Q: What is the process for applying for a grant?**

**A:** The Foundation grant application is open to nonprofit organizations that are located within our corporate footprint and are seeking to carry out programs related directly to our funding priorities, mission, and vision. Applicants should expect a waiting period of up to 90 days from submission to final decision making.

**10. Q: How do I apply?**

**A:** Applications must be submitted online through the CenterPoint Energy or Vectren Foundation website. Proposals are not accepted via email, postal mail, or fax.

**11. Q: When does the Foundation board meet?**

**A:** The Foundation board meets quarterly to make decisions on grant applications.

**12. Q: What is an appropriate request amount for a Foundation grant?**

**A:** The amount requested from the Foundation should be proportionate to your program goals, funding opportunity budget and expected income from other sources. Funding is ultimately contingent upon the initiative's alignment with the Foundation's priorities and funding availability from the Foundation's annual budget.

**13. Q: What e-mail address should be used for the account?**

**A:** When setting up your online account username and password for the application, please ensure the appropriate individual has access to the account. Impact reports and communication regarding grants will be emailed to the submitter and future funding will be contingent on successful completion of all reports.

**14. Q: Can I copy and paste information from a Word document into one of the application's text boxes?**

**A:** Yes. The application consists of text and number fields. You can copy information from an existing Word document and paste into the appropriate text box in the application. You will also be able to upload attachments to the application.

**15. Q: I do not have all the required documents in an electronic format. How do I submit them?**

**A:** All documentation is required to be submitted in an electronic format with the application. Please scan the documents to create a PDF of your documents and attach them to your application.

**16. Q: What is required of my organization if approved for funding?**

**A:** All grant applications that are approved for funding will require the following:

- Signed Grant Agreement
- Payment will be made electronically via a third-party vendor (bill.com); if you cannot receive an electronic payment, you will have the option to request a paper check from the vendor
- Grant Reporting – an annual report will be required to be submitted electronically through your online account and is due within 30 days after the grant period is over.

**Note:** We have made some enhancements to our online grant applications with greater emphasis on measurable outcomes. These requirements are to be submitted in a timely manner. Overdue requirements can affect scheduled payments as well as future funding.

**17. Q: In what form of communication will you notify my organization about our application?**

**A:** Communications during the application process will be made primarily by email. Please add this email address ([CNPgives@CenterPointEnergy.com](mailto:CNPgives@CenterPointEnergy.com)) to your contacts to receive all communications during the application process.

**18. Q: What are some additional resources that I should consider if my organization/program may not be a good fit for the CNP Foundation?**

**A:** The following resources may be helpful:

- Foundation Center – Find Funding – [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org)
- Grants Alert – [www.grantsalert.com](http://www.grantsalert.com)
- Chronicle of Philanthropy – [www.philanthropy.com/grants](http://www.philanthropy.com/grants)

**19. Q: What are tips for a complete application submission**

**A:** Here are a few tips for a complete application submission

- Make sure you review each of the 3 funding priorities and measurable outcomes prior to starting a new application. This will help you to determine which funding priority best fits your project or initiative.
- Please read each question carefully to ensure all points are addressed.
- Make sure you upload your 501c3 exemption document and not your sales tax exemption document.
- If you have computer trouble, try the following steps – clear your cache, shut down your browser and reopen, try a different browser, and try to log in again.
- We suggest creating a group for your account so more than one person has access in case you have someone leave your organization.

For questions about the online application system and technical support, please contact [support@cybergrants.org](mailto:support@cybergrants.org).

For additional questions about the Foundation, giving priorities or giving cycles, please e-mail [CNPgives@centerpointenergy.com](mailto:CNPgives@centerpointenergy.com).