

Global Impact Cash Grant Program

Social Impact Investments &
Cisco Foundation



Eligibility & Application Guide

Cisco welcomes applications for Global Impact Cash Grants from social impact partners around the world who share our vision and offer an innovative approach to a critical social challenge.

We identify, incubate, and develop innovative early-stage solutions with the highest potential for impact. Global Impact Cash Grants go to nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that address a significant social problem. We're looking for programs that fit within our investment areas, focus on the underserved, and use technology to improve the reach and efficiency of services.

We accept applications year-round from eligible organizations. A brief Letter of Inquiry (LOI) is used to determine whether your organization will be invited to complete a full application.

Eligibility requirements

Global Impact Cash Grants multiply the impact of eligible organizations around the globe with national or multinational operations. Before applying, invited NPOs/NGOs can determine their eligibility by reviewing the requirements below and the [grant giving policies](#).

Organizational and programmatic requirements

- Organizations within the United States must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) and classified by the IRS as a public charity.
- Organizations from outside the United States must provide information and documents to determine whether the organization is the equivalent of a U.S. public charity.
- Programs to be funded must serve an audience greater than 65 percent economically underserved, relative to the average standards of the target geography.
- Organizations and programs must focus on at least one of our four [social investment sectors](#): crisis response, education, economic empowerment, and/or climate resilience.

- For education, crisis response, and economic empowerment proposals, we will also consider proposals that address environmental sustainability within the context of that investment area. For example, we would consider funding an economic empowerment program that specifically focuses on creating jobs that support climate resilience.
- An organization's overhead is not to exceed 25 percent. (Organizations are occasionally exempt from this requirement; however, they must be exceptionally aligned with Cisco's values and criteria, and they must clearly explain and justify their overhead costs. Exemptions to the requirement on overhead expenses are determined on a case-by-case basis.) Cisco Foundation does not tend to make grants to colleges and universities. In the case that such a grant may be made, Cisco Foundation does not support additional institutional overhead rates for colleges and universities.
- The maximum request amount for first-time grant recipients is US\$100,000.

Ineligible programs and/or activities

All applications must be completed using our online grants management portal. Cisco will not consider incomplete proposals or paper-based applications.

Proposals in the following areas are not eligible for a Global Impact Cash Grant:

- Miscellaneous exclusions: general operating expenses, other than directly associated with the program itself; individuals; research programs; membership-based activities; programs that promote or serve one culture, race, religion, population group, or political viewpoint—rather than the community at large; religious, political, or sectarian organizations (Note: A direct service program run by a faith-based organization may be eligible. See our [grant giving policies](#).)
- Hospitals: private or public hospitals; hospital foundations; medical centers, research centers, etc. (Programs based in a hospital may be eligible; however, grant funds must go exclusively to direct service in the community, not to general hospital operating expenses.)
- Healthcare: programs focused on improving physical or mental health
- Schools and scholarships: private, public, or charter schools; school foundations, booster clubs, and/or fundraising organizations affiliated with a particular school; colleges/universities; scholarships, stipends, or loans within a program; and/or school-related activities such as field trips, research programs, etc.
- Events: athletic events, competitions, tournaments; conferences, seminars, workshops; festivals, field trips, or other recreational events; fundraising events or sponsorships (benefit dinners, walks/runs, concerts, sports teams, etc.)

- Philanthropic: capital building funds, challenge grants, grant-making organizations (all other foundations including private foundations, family foundations, school foundations, etc.)

Policy on the funding of equipment

In general, Cisco does not fund the purchase of computer hardware or software but may consider doing so only in cases where: 1) such resources are leveraged in a strategically innovative manner, thereby extending their impact well beyond everyday/staff use; **and** 2) such resources are not available through other, more cost-effective means such as in-kind donation. Applicants must demonstrate that they have thoroughly explored such avenues without success.

Policy on board review and approval

Cisco requires applicants to certify that the chairperson or at least one officer of the organization's board of directors has reviewed the grant proposal and that the organization's board is aware of the application and supports its submission. Cisco also requires applicants to certify the accuracy of the proposal and to confirm that the organization complies with the policies stated on this web site.

Policy on reviews of accuracy/compliance

All applicants are subject to reviews of their representations in their grant applications, their compliance with the policies stated above, and, if applicable, their adherence to the terms of the grant contract. If such a review reveals significant inaccuracies or violations of the policies stated above, or if an organization does not cooperate with the review, the organization may be required to return any granted assets and forfeit future funding eligibility.

Written grant contract

Grantee organizations are required to sign a donation agreement electronically before donations can be delivered.

Reporting and performance tracking

Cisco looks for grant proposals in which concrete measures of success can be used to assess performance. Organizations that receive funding will be required to use our online grant platform to customize performance metrics for their project and measure their progress over the life of the grant award. Meaningful participation in this process is a requirement for continued funding eligibility.

Cisco grant giving policies

In addition, organizations must adhere to Cisco policies related to nondiscrimination, religious proselytizing, nonsupport of violence and terrorism, advocacy, lobbying, and other political activities and other areas listed in [grant giving policies](#).

Evaluation criteria

Global Impact Cash Grants multiply the impact of eligible organizations around the globe with national or multinational operations. To improve the quality of your grant application, we recommend that you carefully review the criteria we use to evaluate grants.

Addresses a critical social challenge with unmet need

The program addresses a problem that affects many lives within one of Cisco's four [social investment sectors](#), and which has severe effects on the lives of individuals and communities within the target area. A significant unmet need exists due to a gap in funding or a need for innovative approaches.

Incorporates metrics to measure program impact

The program defines and utilizes SMART metrics (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) to help Cisco and the grantee measure progress toward success. The highest priority and funding consideration are given to proposals that clearly articulate the planned result of their efforts, as well as the metrics to measure that result.

Serves the underserved

The target audience is greater than 65 percent economically underserved, relative to the average standards of the target geography.

Makes innovative use of technology

The target audience is greater than 65 percent economically underserved, relative to the average standards of the target geography.

Makes innovative use of technology

The program makes innovative use of information and communications technology to improve the efficiency and reach of program services.

Employs an innovative approach with potential for broad impact

The program provides an innovative solution that creates an opportunity for significant reach beyond the direct benefits of specific Cisco-funded activities. For example:

- Market effects due to major shift in economics, productivity, or effectiveness
- Ability to catalyze behavior of other key agents or partners in ecosystem to achieve an order of magnitude more together than apart

Is designed to be replicable, scalable, and sustainable

The design of the program allows it to be easily and cost-effectively replicated in communities around the globe and to meet the needs of the target population without a nearly equivalent investment for each individual or group. The long-term plan for the program enables it to flourish significantly beyond the resources provided by Cisco.

Possesses outstanding leadership

The organization has an outstanding leader or management team with qualities such as vision, execution ability, passion, ethical approach, expertise, external relationships, and a credible track record in the relevant area.

Application process

Global Impact Cash Grants multiply the impact of eligible non-profit and non-governmental organizations around the globe with national or multinational operations. We welcome applications from potential partners who share our vision and offer an innovative approach with potential for broad impact.

Step 1: Determination of eligibility

Before spending time on a submission, we urge you to use the following resources to determine if your program is a strong fit with Cisco's mission, strategic approach, and objectives for grant support. Only optimally aligned programs can be considered for funding.

We welcome you to introduce us to your concept, using one of the two online pathways linked immediately below. We offer a primary pathway for all NPO/NGO grant proposals, and then a second pathway for for-profit climate investments.

Please choose the most appropriate pathway for your concept:

- For **climate, education, crisis response, and economic empowerment nonprofit grant proposals**, please complete our Eligibility Quiz for NPOs/NGOs on our Cisco Grants and Cash Donations [portal](#). If you complete the quiz successfully, you will move on two Step 2, below, within the same portal.
- Otherwise, **for climate resilience for-profit investing**, please complete our [climate impact investing inquiry form](#) and then follow the separate impact investment process.

Step 2: Submission of Letter of Inquiry (LOI)

For NPOs/NGOs who successfully complete the eligibility quiz on the Cisco Grants and Cash Donations portal, the portal will support you in submitting an initial grant concept that we call a Letter of Inquiry (LOI). This form requests detailed information about your organization, the program you expect to fund, the population served, and your budget. Your answers will determine whether you will be invited to complete a full proposal in Step 3, below. Before you complete the form, we recommend that you review our four [social investment sectors](#) and our [grant giving policies](#).

Submission of an LOI does not guarantee that your organization will be invited to submit a full proposal. The forms are reviewed wholly within the discretion of Cisco and the Cisco Foundation. Review may take up to one business quarter (i.e., up to 3 months).

Step 3: Invitation to submit full proposal (where applicable)

If a Cisco grant administrator determines that your organization's Letter of Inquiry (LOI) is aligned with Cisco's mission, strategic approach, and objectives for grant support, they will invite you to submit a full grant proposal. If we need further information, a grant administrator will contact you. Once a full proposal is submitted, you can expect to receive our decision on your proposal within one business quarter.

A request from Cisco to submit a full proposal application does not constitute a guarantee of funding.

Additional information

Cisco is not responsible for any proposal-related expenses incurred by your organization at any step during the grant application process. Grant policies and requirements are subject to change without notice and become effective immediately upon posting to this website. The interpretation of these policies is wholly within the discretion of Cisco and the Cisco Foundation. All grants are made at the discretion of Cisco and the Cisco Foundation. Qualification under the policies listed on this website does not entitle an organization to receive a grant. We reserve the right to decline to make any grant requested.