

**Society of American Archivists Foundation
Board of Directors Meeting
November 4-5, 2018
Chicago, Illinois**

**Proposed Revisions to the
Grant Application Evaluation Procedures
(Prepared by Scott Cline)**

BACKGROUND

The SAA Foundation Grant Review Committee is responsible for regularly reviewing the grant evaluation procedures to ensure that they remain current and take into account any insights gained from the most recent grant review cycle.

DISCUSSION

In the 2018 grant cycle, one application indicated that a current Board member would be the primary consultant on the project and would thus be the direct recipient of grant funds. The Board determined that the current conflict-of-interest statement is not specific enough and asked the Grant Review Committee to revise the statement accordingly.

Although these revisions were made, the Review Committee thought it important to recommend further editorial and organizational changes to ensure that the procedures are consistent with the grant application guidelines and are easy to understand.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following revisions to the SAA Foundation Grant Application Evaluation Procedures be approved (*underline=addition, strikethrough=deletion*):

Application Evaluation Procedures

1. Grant Review Committee. ~~The Grant Review Committee (Review Committee) is an appointed body of the SAA Foundation Board. The SAAF President will appoint members of the Review Committee from among Board members no later than the close of the annual business meeting. The committee consists of the SAAF President and no fewer than three additional members of the Board appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Board. The Executive Director shall serve ex officio with voice, but without vote.~~ The Grant Review Committee is ~~a working~~an appointed body of the Foundation Board. ~~It comprises~~ It comprises ~~d by the SAA Foundation President, and no fewer than three additional members of the Board, as well as and the Executive Director (who serves in an , who shall serve ex officio role). .~~ Its responsibilities include The Review Committee is responsible for the following:

- Review the evaluative criteria (including strategic initiatives identified in the Development Plan) for new grant proposals.
- Receive and solicit direction from the [SAAFoundation](#) Board on the annual funding allocation and any special program priorities that support the [SAAFoundation](#) or SAA mission and strategic plan.
- Assist the Executive Director ~~to in issue~~ issuing the Call for Proposals ~~before December 1~~ no later than November 1.
- Be prepared to meet as a group and to work individually to analyze, evaluate and, if necessary, contact others to gather information for a recommendation on grant applications ~~submitted to SAA~~ received.
- Report to the Board and make recommendations for ~~funding recommended~~ awarding of grants, including providing a list of proposals that are not recommended for funding and the reason(s) why.
- Monitor the submission of impact statements or reports from previous ~~award winners~~ grant recipients.
- Review as needed the Grant Application Process and Guidelines and the Application Evaluation Procedures.

~~**2. Requirements Checklist.** The Committee will review annually a **Requirements Checklist** the **Grant Application Process and Guidelines** and the **Application Evaluation Procedures** which that will guide all applicants and committee members in producing the information that must accompany all proposals. The checklist is an administrative tool that may be distributed to inquirers and be used as part of the overall **Evaluation Form**.~~

~~**112. Schedule.** The letter of inquiry deadline is December 1. The Review Committee will consider the letters and respond to applicants with potential suggestions within three weeks of the deadline. The application deadline is February 1. The Review Committee will consider applications, conduct its review, and report its recommendations to the Board by March 30. The Board will consider and vote on the committee's recommendations before May 1. The President will notify the applicants of the Board's decision by May 15.~~

3. Initial Letter of Inquiry. Applicants are ~~encouraged~~ encouraged to inquire about the suitability of their proposals with the requirements of the Foundation's grant program. An initial letter of inquiry may be a one-page, 750-word statement of interest that provides at a minimum the following five pieces of information:

- Applicant's identifying information (acting as an individual or for an institution).
- Description of project or activity and product.
- Specific reason(s) for applying with reference to [the SAAFoundation](#)'s funding priorities.
- Amount requested and expected expenses.
- Other relevant information.

4. First-Pass Review. The Executive Director and/or the [Grant](#) Review Committee will conduct an initial review of each ~~Letter~~ letter of ~~Inquiry~~ inquiry. Included in that review will be a determination of any apparent conflict of interest, as outlined in paragraph 6. The Executive Director will distribute inquiries as soon as possible with a recommendation to proceed or decline further consideration of the proposal based on her/his/their first-pass review. The Committee will consider the Executive Director's recommendation and respond with an "up or down" decision on the appropriateness of the proposal. The key criteria to be considered at this stage are:

- The proposal requests funding within the award guidelines (e.g., \$500-\$5,000). If not, the Committee may consider the proposal if a compelling reason exists to exceed the funding guidelines.
- Unambiguous evidence has been provided to identify the individual and/or the entity that will be the recipient of the funds and who will conduct the work.
- The proposal addresses the overall mission and priorities of [SAAFoundation](#) and/or SAA.
- The applicant pointedly addresses how the proposal implements or advances at least one of the goals or activities of the SAA strategic plan.
- The activity being funded does not replicate established [SAAFoundation](#) activities (e.g., scholarships, travel to annual meeting, etc.) nor does it ask for funds that are excluded by the [SAAFoundation](#) Board (such as travel and internships).

The Executive Director will inform the proposer(s) of the [SAAReview Committee](#)'s decision to receive a full proposal, to decline the proposal, or, in some cases, ~~to reapply after~~ to encourage reapplication feedback for following revision.

5. Application. Upon receipt of an application, ~~The~~ the committee chair will assign a member to be the key contact to solicit from the proposer any additional information that may be needed to clarify the work/activity under review (methods, product, sponsor, budget use, qualifications, impact, etc.). The key contact will provide an overall assessment to the Review Committee on the basis of any additional findings that bear on the grant proposal. The key contact and the Review Committee may agree that no additional information is needed, in which case ~~and~~ the committee's assessment may proceed immediately. ~~The chair will assign proposals to each committee member and no member will be assigned an additional proposal before all other members have been asked to take an assignment.~~

~~**6. Conflict of Interest Reminder.** No committee member may serve as a key contact if he/she is familiar with the applicant or could be perceived as having a conflict of interest in fairly assessing or representing the applicant's proposal. Committee and Board members are expected to announce a potential conflict and to recuse themselves from any decision-making role or vote on a grant proposal that originates from or benefits an entity with which the member has a personal or other association. The association merely has to be one that a reasonable person could perceive as leading to favorable or unfavorable treatment on any basis other than a strictly professional and unbiased evaluation.~~

6. Conflict of Interest Reminder. Grant Review Committee and Foundation Board members are expected to announce a potential conflict of interest and to recuse themselves from any decision-making role or vote on a grant inquiry or proposal that originates from or benefits an entity with which the member has a personal or other association. (Such association is one that a reasonable person could perceive as leading to favorable or unfavorable treatment on any basis other than a strictly professional and unbiased evaluation.)

No current Grant Review Committee or Foundation Board member may be the direct recipient of Foundation grant funds or be reimbursed or paid with Foundation funds for serving, in any capacity, an entity receiving a Foundation grant. No Grant Review Committee member may serve as a key contact if that member is familiar with the applicant or could be perceived as having a conflict of interest in fairly assessing or representing the applicant's proposal.

7. Expert Review. The Committee, in consultation with Board members, may consider the input of individuals who can lend expertise to the review process for proposals that involve a specialist's knowledge, technical skills, methodologies, and/or similar unfamiliar domains. The key contact will

gather this input in those cases in which it is deemed necessary. The Review Committee is not required to seek outside opinion if the substance of the proposal is within their professional competence to evaluate.

~~The Review Committee's key contact may also seek one or more expert opinions and report their observations as part of an assessment report back to the full committee for the final grant review. These inquiries~~ Consulted experts should make every attempt to: (a~~1~~) evaluate statements of fact and declarative statements made by the proposer/proposal, and (b~~2~~) assess the overall value of the proposed activity to the profession. Such inquiries should protect the confidentiality of the application process for both the applicant and reviewer. ~~Neither the Review Committee nor the key contact is required to seek external input if all important aspects of the proposal are clearly stated and no additional information or expert commentary is warranted.~~

8. Committee Review. The Review Committee will evaluate and make a recommendation to the Board on every grant application that it receives after an invitation to apply. The Review committee ~~Committee~~ will use ~~shall~~ consider, but not be limited by, the following criteria in making its recommendations:

- Appropriateness of the methods (reliability, validity, population, etc.);
- Overall impact of the ~~product~~ project on the profession or a segment thereof;
- Uniqueness of the activity and/or ~~product~~ project (has it been done before);
- Availability of other equally useful routes to achieving a similarly valuable outcome;
- Value of a specific archival ~~product~~ project (e.g., supporting records of enduring value); and
- Soundness of the work plan, techniques, tools, and human resources.

~~During the evaluation, Review Committee members will review the full applications for any potential conflict of interest, as outlined in paragraph 6. If a conflict of interest is found or suspected, the Executive Director and the Board will be notified and asked to review the matter of a potential conflict of interest~~ full proposal; ~~before the Review eCommittee puts forward their final recommendation. it will be reported to the Executive Director and the Board for review and disposition.~~

9. Formal Evaluation. The Evaluation Form is the formal written tool used by the Review Committee to record its assessment of each application and prepare a recommendation to the Board. The formal evaluation should not precede an assessment report from the key contact if the Review committee ~~Committee~~ has requested additional information.

~~The committee will review the common Evaluation Form annually and adjust it as necessary to preserve its usefulness as a standard ranking tool. The form should make provision for both the assignment of a rank and the committee member's supporting comment, if explanation is deemed appropriate. The~~ All evaluations are anonymous and confidential in source beyond the Review Committee; however, the Executive Director may share the contents of the reviews with the applicant upon request.

10. Committee Recommendations. The Review Committee will confer in real time (via phone conference or in person) at least once to review and vote on all pending grant proposals, to reconcile differences in evaluations of individual proposals, and to prepare final recommendations to the Board. A final decision ~~on~~ about how to allocate the available funds in the annual distribution should not occur until all proposals have been received and evaluated in the annual grant cycle. An exception to this rule ~~would~~ may be an expedited request from the SAA Council or Executive Committee to meet an extraordinary contingency situation. All votes of the Grant Review Committee to recommend (or not to recommend) a grant to the SAA Foundation Board shall be by secret ballot. All voting members of the committee are required to vote, unless ~~excused for reasons of~~ she/he has ~~they have an acknowledged~~ conflict of interest.

~~11. **Schedule.** The application deadline is February 1. The Review Committee will consider applications, conduct its review, and report its recommendations to the Board by March 30. The Board will consider and vote on the committee's recommendations before May 1. The President will notify the applicants of the Board's decision by May 15.~~

12. Post-Award Accountability. In consultation with the Executive Director, it is the duty of the Grant Review Committee to prepare a brief report to the Board on the work of the Committee, including its recommendations ~~on for improving improvements to~~ the grant application and review process and other useful observations that will assist the next Review Committee.

The Review Committee will work with the Executive Director to examine and monitor ~~the~~ previous grant awards for ~~successful~~ expected outcomes and measures. If deemed necessary, the Review committee Committee (or the Executive Director) will report to the Board on the recipients' grant activity within 12 months of the conclusion of the grant cycle.

Support Statement: The proposed revisions clarify the conflict-of-interest statement to ensure that current Board members do not benefit directly from Foundation funds. Editorial changes and reorganization of the document make it easier to understand.

Fiscal Impact: None.