FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA

Tips to Support Community Impact Fund Applications

General tips, practical advice, and key data points to strengthen your Community Impact Fund application

Contra Costa County's Board of Supervisors have opened an application process to distribute funds in each district. The deadlines and questions may vary for each district, but this is an opportunity to support programs that serve families with young children and young children directly. The stated goal is to help organizations "that provide support for District residents with priority for marginalized individuals affected by recent national and state policy decisions."

We hope these tips encourage you to present your projects and programs for this grant opportunity, even though the timeline is tight. We also hope they'll be helpful for future funding proposals.

Please note: these are suggestions and guidance based on applications released by Districts 2 and 4, with deadlines at the end of September (9/26 and 9/30). Other districts may ask for different information from applicants.

Step 1: Get Organized

- Assemble the documents that you'll need to submit an application, such as your mission statement and goals, evaluation and prior funder reports (if available), previous grant applications that could help answer similar questions, and agency and project/program budgets. If your project has a Theory of Change or Logic Model, those could be helpful in explaining your goals and objectives, and how the proposed project connects to your broader goals.

- Avoid surprises: Print out the questions and requirements and write some notes about how you plan to answer each question, including if there's anyone else you work with that you will need information from. If you'll have to fill out an online application, make sure you or someone on your team is comfortable with using the online form.

- Assemble a small team to help with and talk through the application questions, noting ideas for who else to talk to and where some similar information might already exist (e.g., in a prior evaluation or funder report or grant application). This could include the proposal team, project staff, and/or others (such as Board members or volunteers). If you have others to help, assign roles: Who will be the lead writer? Who will assemble documents? Who will help create the budget and align it to the proposed actions? Who will be responsible for submitting the application before the deadline? Who will review your draft? (This is a great role for Board members, recently retired staff, and volunteers!)

General Tips & Advice:

- We have not seen any word or page limits, but do your best to be concise when answering the questions. The reviewers will thank you!

- We also have not seen questions that specifically ask about organizational experience, capacity, or staff expertise, so weave that in wherever you can to inspire confidence in reviewers that you can accomplish what you've described.

- Supervisors in Districts 2 and 4 have stated that they are prioritizing projects that serve their District's constituents. Do your best to tie your answer about activities, people served, and impacts to specific Districts in our County.

- Highlight key words or concepts in bold, if the application format allows you to. (Again, this will help reviewers who might be reading many, many applications.)

- Ask a reviewer who knows your organization (such as a Board member, former staff member, or volunteer) to review your draft and ensure your answers make sense to someone who has not been part of the proposal preparations and discussions. (Pro tip: identify this person as early as possible so you'll have time to make any necessary changes.)

- Aim to submit early, if possible. Even if it's just a day before the deadline, and especially if it's an online process, technical glitches happen. Make sure you get some sort of confirmation that your proposal has been received.

Step 2: Get Specific

Application questions available are organized into "Scope of Services Understanding and Experience," "Data Collection and Program Assessment," and "Financial and Organizational Administration." Answer these questions in the order requested in the application, but for discussion and proposal outlining purposes, it may be helpful to group them as questions about the project itself, about the people you intend to serve, and then the impact you hope to achieve.

Project-related Questions

What is the specific project for which you will seek funding, and how is it connected to broader goals for your agency/organization? What are the specific project goals (distinct from the broader agency/organization goals)? What needs is the project addressing, especially in your District? The data describing the needs you are addressing could be a combination of statistical data, stories from clients/partners, your own internal reports, and more—just make sure you explain where it came from and how current it is. See the *"Using Data to Make the Case"* section in this PDF for county-level statistics related to children that may have data you could include in your application. Remember, as you're noting needs and problems, try to describe assets and strengths as well.

What will the funding actually be used for (e.g., reach more people, add a staff member, train existing staff)? What services will you provide, and how?

What parts of the project are innovative (i.e., not business as usual)? Perhaps you're implementing an existing project in a new way (to a different age group or neighborhood, or in a different language). Perhaps you have figured out a more effective way to reach the people you're serving, or have found a solution to an implementation barrier. No matter how large or small your innovation may be, celebrate it in your application! You don't have to be breaking new ground with your entire project to be considered innovative.

People-related Questions

Who and how many people does your project serve (or who is it intended to serve in the future, if it's new)? What can you tell funders about them? How have they been affected by recent national and state policy decisions (e.g., immigration policy, Medicaid cuts, access to care)? How will people become aware of what the project offers?

District Connections and Partners

How are your organization and project connected to the District? Who are you already partnering with, or how could you expand your connections to other organizations (that are specific to the District)? If you are not sure what communities are included in the District, click here to view a map of the county's 5 Districts.

Step 3: Measuring Impact

This funding is for Community Impact, so be sure to explain the impact you hope to achieve (i.e., what will be different for the people you are serving, if your project is effective?). How will you know? What data can you realistically collect and interpret? Collected data don't have to be elaborate, but should give you and the Supervisors a sense of what you're accomplishing and how it connects to your project.

Learn more about the Community Impact Fund and stay updated on upcoming events and announcements from each district.

Scan the QR code or visit:
bit.ly/community-impact-fund-2025

Step 4: Costs and Budgets

The applications available so far ask for both your organization's annual budget and the cost of your specific project, as well as whether you've secured any other funding. They also want to know your ideas about whether and how the project might be sustained over time, given that this funding is one-time funding.

A budget template has not been provided, but project budgets often cover these categories:

- Personnel (including portions of salaries, fringe benefits)

- Travel costs (such as mileage to events)

- Equipment (such as laptops or printers)

- Supplies (meeting supplies)

- Subcontracts and vendors (translators/interpreters, consultants, printing, graphic design)

- Other (stipends, snacks)

- Indirect costs (a percentage of other costs to cover a portion of operational and administrative expenses incurred by the organization, such as HR, accounting/legal services, rent, and utilities)

It's helpful to provide a brief narrative that accompanies the amounts in your budget – a sentence or two about each category that explains any assumptions (e.g., a portion of two staff members' time, calculated at X% or supplies for Y number of training or community events).

It's rare that a budget is nailed down immediately; in fact, adjustments are a sign that you're fine-tuning your project ideas. That's why we recommend that after you've completed steps 3 and 4, go back to step 2. Do any of your answers need to be adjusted, based on what you came up with to measure impact and budget for your project?

It may be tempting to seek as much funding as possible, especially in these uncertain times. Do your best to present a realistic, defensible budget that matches the project and impact you've described.

Using Data to Make the Case

Using statistics or other quantitative data can help describe the community need your proposal aims to address. When using data in your proposal, try to use clear, easy-to-understand statistics that do not require a lot of background knowledge to understand. You can also provide a comparison to make your point about need, for example:

> In our county, the average family child care provider makes $18 an hour, yet the living wage needed for one adult with a child is $54 per hour, according to livingwage.mit.edu.

Often you may not have a statistic that addresses your specific neighborhood or maybe the specific aspect of a challenge your proposal addresses. You may consider using a broader countywide statistic to highlight the overall need, and couple that with something more descriptive like a story about a client or a specific neighborhood within the county your organization serves. For example:

> While 11.6% of children under age 5 in our county lived in poverty in 2023, we know from conversations with the families we serve that at least half of them have trouble paying their bills each month.

Below are some key countywide statistics for Contra Costa County related to early childhood or families with young children.

Population

There are 72,151 children under age 6 in Contra Costa County.

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates Tables, 2023

An estimated 4.4% of children 0-17 in Contra Costa County live with one or more serious difficulties in hearing, vision, cognitive ability, ambulatory ability, self-care, or independent living.

Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Jan. 2024.

Economic Security

As of 2023, 11.6% of children ages 5 and under (which amounts to 8,335 children) were in poverty (under 100% of the federal poverty level) in Contra Costa, and over a quarter more were in families with low income (between 100-200% of the federal poverty level).

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates Tables, 2023

Financial experts recommend that households not pay more than 30% of their gross income in housing. Yet a quarter of families in Contra Costa pay 50% or more of their income toward rent.

US Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, 2023.

Child Care & Early Learning

Countywide, among households in which all parents are working, there is only enough licensed child care seats for 72% of children ages 5 and under.

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates Tables, 2023; Aggregate Data on Licensed Child Care Providers in Contra Costa provided by CocoKids, 2025

Fewer than half of teachers and assistants working in child care centers and only 70% of family child care operators plan to continue in their current role in 3 years.

The Early Care and Education Workforce of Contra Costa County, by Anna Powell, Wanzi Muruvi, Lea J.E. Austin, and Abby Copeman Petig of the Center of the Study of Child Care Employment, 2024.

Across Contra Costa County, less than half of children are fully ready for kindergarten, and among children who live in low-income families, the percent ready for kindergarten drops to 26%.

Ready or Not, Here We Come: An Assessment of Kindergarten Readiness in Contra Costa, Applied Survey Research for First 5 Contra Costa, 2017.

Health

Babies born at a low birth weight due to preterm birth or other causes are at risk for developmental delays. In our county, 13% of African American, 9.5% of Asian and 6.7% of Latinx babies are born at low birth rate, compared to only 5.7% for white babies.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Data are from the Natality Records 2016-2023.

In 2022 in our county, only 48% of children enrolled in Medi-Cal had a developmental screening by age 3.

California Department of Health Care Services as reported in 2025 California County Scorecard of Children's Well-Being, Children Now, 2025.

In 2022 in our county, only 37% of infants enrolled in Medi-Cal received 6 or more well visits in their first 15 months. Among African American infants in the county, the proportion was considerably lower at 24%.

California Department of Health Care Services as reported in 2025 California County Scorecard of Children's Well-Being, Children Now, 2025.

Mental Health

In our county, 13.5% of parents experienced prenatal depression symptoms.

Maternal and Infant Health Assessment Survey Data Snapshots, Contra Costa County, 2019-2021.

It is estimated that in Contra Costa County there are approximately 7,900 to 10,900 children in need of early childhood mental intervention for mental health needs that meet medical necessity criteria.

An Early Childhood Mental Health System of Care for Contra Costa County, Early Childhood Prevention & Intervention Coalition, January 2020