

## NFOIC State Challenge Grant Program Criteria - Approved 10/18/2019

### Purpose:

The NFOIC State Challenge grant is a competitive grant program available to eligible Members, i.e., board approved State Coalitions, of NFOIC with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status and whose membership is in good standing.\*

The State Challenge grants committee awards open government and transparency grants to strengthen and foster the growth of state coalition members and support a broad range of open government and government transparency endeavors across the United States.

The State Challenge grant requires a 1-to-1, dollar-for-dollar match by the grantee and can be used for:

1. projects that further public access to records, meetings and officials of state or local public institutions and improves open and transparent government. Project grants will be for periods of six (6), 12 or 18 months.
2. sustainable purposes that support the organization's mission or objectives. Sustainable grants will cover a 12-month period.
3. start-up grants to qualifying new state coalitions to assist with formation costs and fees.\*\* Start up grants do not require an immediate dollar-for-dollar match to be awarded. However, start-up grantees must show a 1-1 match within 12 months after receiving them.

### Criteria:

- Grants will be awarded in \$500 increments up to \$2,500.
- Coalitions "in good standing" may apply for one grant per grant cycle.
- For project grants, the initiative must be completed within the stated time frame in the application unless grantee receives written permission from NFOIC allowing for an extension.
- Start-up grants are available up to \$2,500.
- Periodic reports will be required **every six months** while the grant is being used.

Grants may cover costs already paid, so long as the costs were paid within the prior six months to the application and the costs are validated and clearly outlined in the proposal.

### \* Member/State Coalition in good standing requirements:

1. Current with annual dues;
2. Completed the annual state coalition survey;

3. Submitted one of the following documents: annual report, legislative update, or coalition accomplishments.
4. Attended at least one FOI Summit in the last three years. Start-up grantees will be expected to attend the next FOI Summit after joining NFOIC); and
5. Met obligations to satisfy requirements related to any past NFOIC grant.

**\*\* A new, start-up coalition may use funds toward expenses for their formation including:**

1. Annual member dues
2. Pursue 501(c)(3) nonprofit status or proof of fiscal agent
3. File necessary state paperwork for incorporation, charitable solicitations, etc.
4. By-laws and articles of incorporation
5. Travel
6. Marketing and branding including social media/networks and coalition website
7. Other organizational capacity building initiatives

**Funding Decisions:**

The funds will come from the existing State Challenge Grant program (budgeted for \$30,000 for FY 2020). Decisions pertaining to grant awards are made by the Challenge Grant committee members.

As this is a competitive grant program, NFOIC may receive grant requests exceeding the amount of available funds. It will be at the discretion of the grant committee to determine how the funds will be distributed. This includes whether to provide the full amount of requested funds which may exclude some applicants, or reduce the amount of requests in order to support more applications. With a competitive grant program, award decisions may take into consideration a number of factors, including:

- Financial status and need of the requester
- Nature of the request and its expected impact
- Time and additional resources (if any) it may require to complete the initiative
- Past performance of the requester's use of NFOIC grants
- Additional criteria the committee wishes to include

Existing and start-up coalitions must notify NFOIC as soon as possible if their tax exempt request or status falls through or otherwise is jeopardized.

Project and Sustainability grant applications will be accepted by NFOIC between **January 15, 2020 and February 15, 2020**. Funding decisions will follow in 30-45 days. Start-up grants are available on an ongoing basis.

## NFOIC State Challenge Grant Program 2020

### Examples for using grants can include, but are not limited to::

- Developing new programs or projects that support the member's mission.
- Improving the content of the organization's web site or support online marketing through social network sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram
- Creating and host an event for marketing or fundraising
- Developing or participating in the state's Sunshine Week event(s)
- Paying management and staff salary or contract support
- Purchasing technology, e.g., computer
- Tracking and/or reporting legislative activities relating to pertinent FOI bills, e.g., produce a legislative roundup report
- Producing or distribute a "Citizen Guide" to your jurisdiction's FOI laws
- Building criteria for offering training and education programs (to groups or to public officials) about state open government laws or issues
- Creating or maintaining an existing "Hotline" phone number for public inquiries.
- Producing and publish a Newsletter
- Hosting an awards presentations/dinner/luncheon
- Conducting FOI audits of public agencies
- Holding fundraising events for the organization
- Creating a contest for students around First Amendment rights
- Creating and maintaining a public speakers' bureau
- Conducting records search/petitions for the organization
- Conducting records requests for individuals