



## **Request for Qualifications**

For consultants with experience & expertise in nonprofit organizational development and challenges facing grassroots organizations or organizations in the start-up lifecycle phase

**Submission Deadline: April 18, 2025**

## **Background**

**POWER (People & Organizations with Energy & Resilience)** is a one-year capacity building cohort program developed to support grassroots organizations and organizations in the start-up lifecycle phase (based on Susan Kenny Stevens' Nonprofit Lifecycles model) to enhance organizational development. Starting June 2025 and concluding June 2026, the program facilitates a brief self-assessment, planning, and capacity implementation period designed to strengthen the operating capacity of five grassroots and/or organizations in the start-up lifecycles phase. The Foundation recognizes that these organizations are vital to the community as they provide an outlet to address new community needs/issues and a voice and path for emerging community leaders.

The Foundation launched this capacity building initiative with lead consultant Maria Fibiger of Three Dog Consulting, in 2015 with five participating organizations and ran a total of three cohorts over a five-year period. The organizations that have completed the program include:

100 Black Men of Syracuse, Believe in Syracuse, CNY Arts Center, Cuse Pit Crew, Dance Theater of Syracuse, David's Refuge, Firefighters of Color United in Syracuse, Good Life Foundation, Helping Hounds Dog Rescue, Onondaga Earth Corps, Open Hand Theater, Northside Learning Center, RISE (Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment), PGR Foundation, and Purpose Farm.

The Foundation recognizes that organizations in the start-up phase are unique in that they generally have minimal staff or none at all and many times operate with volunteer manpower. They usually do not have well-established governance and compliance procedures and often rely on a single source of revenue with no additional dollars available for organizational development. Nearly all of their energy goes into programming. These unique characteristics can make it difficult for start-up/grassroots organizations to move forward into a positive growth phase and many times cause these organizations to become stagnant, frustrated, and single-minded in their problem-solving approach to achieve goals. Many of them become ineffective in their good work, lose momentum and/or to even disband. The POWER program will address many of these needs and provide facilitated expertise and support via consultants to these organizations as well as funding for organizational capacity building items which will assist the organization in their next steps toward positive growth.

Gifford will select five organizations to participate in this round of POWER based on the following criteria:

- Organizations must be receptive to change;
- Organizations must have strong leadership;
- Organizations must be "Ready, willing and able" to commit to the program;

- Organizations must be able to field a leadership team - Minimum 4 people on each leadership team;
- Leadership Team members need to be committed to stay with the team to monitor the progress of the capacity work plan and stay engaged for the entire year-long program;
- Organizations must be a grassroots organization or organization in the startup lifecycle stage
- Organizations must have ongoing programming that is important to the community
- Organizations must serve Onondaga, Madison, and/or Oswego Counties

### **Role and Expectations of Consultants**

Each participating consultant must be able to make a one-year commitment to work with one selected nonprofit organization and be willing to utilize the Nonprofit Lifecycles Selfie tool and techniques developed by Dr. Stevens as outlined in the book *Nonprofit Lifecycles™*. A copy of the *Nonprofit Lifecycles™* book will be provided to each consultant. The first four chapters of this book should be read prior to phone interviews.

If selected, consultants will be matched to one of five selected nonprofits to serve as both a guide and a coach. Additionally, participating consultants are required to attend or have completed the following professional development trainings:

- Half-day POWER Orientation June 5, 2025
- Successfully completed [Lifecycles 101](#) training before the first cohort meeting, last option is May 1 & 2, 2025 (Gifford will pay for the training, please reach out to Lindsay McClung if training is needed)

Consulting activities include:

- Facilitating the grantee's individual "Selfie" using certain components of the [Nonprofit Lifecycles™](#) Assessment model, to identify a few key capacity building opportunities to focus on during the program term. The development of a correlating work plan (Capacity Improvement Plan or CIP) to address these opportunities, which will serve as the basis for the capacity coaching and resources to be provided over the program term;
- Helping grantees identify their start-up lifecycle capacity challenges; help to develop an effective approach to improving capacity in identified areas; and how to best utilize a \$7,500 financial investment from the Gifford Foundation;
- Serving as the grantee organization's consultant/coach for capacity improvement and habit change activities throughout program term;

- Attendance at all Cohort Consultant and Leadership Team meetings/learning sessions (there are 3 of each scheduled over one year);
- Communication with the Lead Consultant regarding progress, concerns, ideas, etc.
- Providing a final written reflection of work you have done as well as insights you have learned as part of your work in POWER.

Participant Consultants will be paid \$7,500 over the program term to complete the program (estimate of 50 hours at \$150/hr.);

- Completion and approval of Selfie and Work Plan -- \$2,100 (September 2025);
- Ongoing Participant Coaching/Consultant and Leadership Team Meetings - \$5,400 (payable in three installments of \$1,800 each: December 2025, March 2026, and June 2026).
- In addition to compensation for their services, consultants will receive additional training and support from Lead Consultant, Maria Fibiger, as well as participate in a learning cohort with their peers.

### **Responding to the RFQ and Selection Process**

This Request for Qualifications is part of the screening process the Gifford Foundation is undertaking to identify and grow their pool of consultants with experience and expertise compatible with the objectives of the POWER program.

Consultants who are successful in Lifecycles capacity building programs share these characteristics:

- Are independent consultants working within the nonprofit sector, and have the ability to acquire clients and effectively complete a wide variety of projects.
- Are experienced in individual and group dynamics, have the wherewithal to get a group and project “back on track” when it strays, and are comfortable with ambiguity.
- Have, through their consulting experience, identified the lifecycle stages they are most successful working in and have developed methods for working within those lifecycles.
- Completely understand the “meet them where they are” philosophy and take a holistic approach to organizational development.

Also, on an ongoing basis the Foundation taps into local consultant pools to assist organizations with a variety of nonprofit management needs and issues, including but not limited to: board development and training, leadership coaching, succession

planning, organizational assessment, strategic planning, fund development, business planning, human resources, marketing, etc.

Potential consultants are asked to respond to this RFQ with a letter addressing the following:

- Your interest and capabilities in participating as a consultant in this program;
- Your primary skill sets and how you developed these skills;
- Your understanding and/or experience using a version of Lifecycles self-assessment to launch capacity building initiatives. If you have specific experience using a Lifecycles Selfie to launch capacity improvement initiatives, please elaborate;
- Your primary skill set regarding capacity issues such as governance, finance, marketing management systems, program development, visioning, etc., as well as the lifecycle stage in which you feel most comfortable working;
- Include a set of nonprofit references and a list of nonprofit clients (past 2 years);
- Your hourly/daily billing rate for nonprofit clients;
- Your ability to take on new clients during the time frame of this program;
- Attach your curriculum vitae and/or other information about you and/or your firm.

If you are not interested or available for this program but are interested in being listed on our consultant database on the Foundation's website, please contact us.

Preference will be given to consultants who have a holistic approach to organizational development with experience and an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing grassroots and start-up organizations.

Qualified consultants will be contacted the week of April 21st, 2025 to schedule a Zoom interview between April 28 - May 7, 2025, with POWER Lead Consultant, Maria Fibiger. Once screened, consultants will be chosen based on best match to selected grantees' capacity needs. Grantee/consultant matches will be made by week of May 26, 2025.

### **POWER Timeline**

The schedule below is subject to change, but is provided to ensure complete understanding of the expectations of participating consultants. A similar timeline will be provided to each participating organization.

#### ***Phase One: Program Design, Consultant and Grantee Selection (March – May 2025)***

- Deadline for consultant qualifications – April 18, 2025

- Completed [Lifecycles 101](#) training before the first cohort meeting, last option is May 1 & 2, 2025
- Consultant must read the first four chapters of *Nonprofit Lifecycles* before scheduled interviews
- Consultant Zoom interviews with Maria Fibiger April 28 – May 7, 2025
- Consultant final notification and grantee/consultant match up – week of May 26, 2025

**Phase Two: Self-Assessment/Work Plan Process (June – August 2025)**

- Consultant Orientation – June 5, 2025 (Noon – 4pm)
- First Leadership Team Orientation Meeting (Consultants & Grantees) –June 5, 2025 (4pm – 7:30pm)
- Organizational Selfie & Work Plan development occurs June 6– August 20, 2025
- Organizational Selfie Due (August 20, 2025)
- Organizational Capacity Improvement Plan Due (August 20, 2025)

**Phase Three: Capacity Improvement Period (September 2025 – June 2026)**

- Second Consultant and Leadership Team Meeting: Present on Assessment (September 2025)
- Capacity Improvement Implementation begins (September 2025)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Consultant payment upon approval of assessment (\$2,100)– end of September 2025
- Capacity Investments- up to \$7,500 (by September 30, 2025)
- Additional consultant trainings by Maria Fibiger (TBD)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultant payment upon invoice (\$1,800) – end of December 2025
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Consultant payment upon invoice (\$1,800) – end of March 2026
- Final Leadership Team Cohort Meeting/Celebration (June 2026)
- Final written Reflections due (June 30, 2026)
- 4<sup>th</sup> and Final Consultant payment upon completion of Reflections (\$1,800) – end of June 2026

**Submission**

Please email qualifications to Lindsay McClung at [lindsay@giffordfoundation.org](mailto:lindsay@giffordfoundation.org)  
Submissions must be received no later than 5:00 pm on April 18, 2025

Please direct any questions or if you need Nonprofit Lifecycles training contact Lindsay McClung, Associate Director, 315-350-1020 or [lindsay@giffordfoundation.org](mailto:lindsay@giffordfoundation.org).