

CREATING OPPORTUNITY & INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS 2024 APPLICATION GUIDE



This Application Guide is intended to help you through the application process. Creating Opportunity & Independence (CO&I) grants support nonprofit organizations that provide programs and services that enhance quality of life for individuals and families living with spinal cord injury (SCI). These grants cover diverse efforts that include discrete projects, ongoing program support, and capacity building.

The Nielsen Foundation partners with and supports organizations that have significant impact on their communities, affect people across the lifespan, demonstrate partnerships, and empower individuals with SCI. Grantees are expected to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within their organization and in the communities they serve.

Submissions from the project/program leader (referred to as “Applicant”) must adhere to these guidelines, as they are updated annually.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES	
January 29, 2024 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)	Letter of Intent (LOI) Due via ProposalCentral
Late March 2024	Notification of LOI Results
April 19, 2024 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)	Full Grant Application (FGA) Due via ProposalCentral
Late August 2024	Notification of FGA Results
October 2024	Awarded Grants to be Funded

Applicants should carefully review this guide. Our staff invite questions relating to submission of either a LOI or FGA. Contact the CO&I Program Officer via email at darrell@chnfoundation.org or refer to Part 3 below for additional contact details.

To learn more about previously funded CO&I grants, use the *Search Funded Grants* link at the bottom of the [Neilsen Foundation homepage](http://www.chnfoundation.org) (www.chnfoundation.org), and enter “COandI” in the search bar. To combine two related searches, use “AND” (e.g., *COandI AND employment*).

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PART 1: COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS

A. What Are Community Support Grants For?

- Support for community integration, participation, and independence for individuals living with SCI
- Removing barriers and promoting access
- Increasing health and wellness in rehabilitation, through transitional stages, and in the community
- Promoting self-efficacy
- Addressing diverse regional needs and accessible resources

Applicants should describe their proposed work within the following context. Applications may include a combination of these three types of support:

“Projects” are initiatives designed to achieve a specific, identified goal during the funding period. Funding can be requested to develop, launch, or augment solutions that respond to a need or eliminate barriers to participation.

“Program support” funds the activities and/or services provided by an organization to serve the community. Funding may be requested to support or improve participation as well as provide options and opportunities to achieve greater independence for persons with SCI.

“Capacity building” supports an organization’s effectiveness, operations, and potential for long-term impact. Funding may be requested for specific needs such as equipment, alterations to promote access, strategic and/or collaborative planning efforts, staff training, etc. This is not intended to subsidize organizational start-up costs.

Community Support Grants are not intended for:

- Large capital construction or renovations
- Academic Scholarships
- Consumer-based Conferences
- Research to develop or test treatments for SCI or medical devices
- Individuals, private foundations, or non-functionally integrated Type III supporting organizations.

B. Funding Details

- Funding can be requested for one or two years; the budget for any year cannot exceed \$125,000. Only total budgets between \$25,000–\$200,000 will be considered.
 - Salary for personnel/consultants is allowed if it clearly supports the activities being proposed.
 - Requests for general operating support (indirect costs) are allowed up to 10% of the total request minus large equipment expenditures.
 - Indirect costs are not allowed on the purchase costs of individual pieces of equipment costing \$5,000 or more.
 - Equipment purchases may not exceed \$100,000 total over the life of the grant.
 - “Other” category—can include costs such as fees, outreach, training, shipping, disability accommodations, etc. Childcare costs can be requested up to \$2,500 per year.

- A subcontract may be established by the grantee organization with another organization to carry out selected activities. If included, describe the subcontract in the Proposal and Budget.
- For two-year grants, funding for the second year will be contingent on a favorable review of an annual progress update.
- Final project and expenditure reports are required at the end of all grants.

TOPIC AREAS AND EXAMPLES:

Arts, Sports and Recreation: e.g., community teams/clubs, arts programs, and activities.

Assistive Technology: access to a piece of equipment, device, or product (e.g., an app) to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities.

Education: programs with a primary focus on educational initiatives and readiness.

Employment: e.g., vocational training, placement, and return-to-work programs.

Independent Living: e.g., accessible housing and transition/reintegration projects, adaptive driving, independent living centers.

Rehabilitation: e.g., health/wellness literacy, patient/family education, patient assistance funds, and equipment used in inpatient or outpatient programs.

FOCUS ON SCI:

While it is understood that spinal cord disease/conditions may be closely linked, *the Neilsen Foundation's primary area of focus is on traumatic SCI.* Applicants must clearly address how the needs of people living with SCI will be served and are encouraged to consider the following.

Impact: The potential to enhance the quality of life of people living with SCI, address barriers, or expand services or opportunities within the grant period or beyond.

Inclusion: Application of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility practices to break down barriers and expand opportunities to promote greater equity.

Collaboration: Community partnerships. To avoid duplication of services, demonstration of shared community resources is encouraged.

Feasibility: Include the experience and expertise needed for success. A request for more than 50% of an organization's Annual Operating Budget should address the organization's capability to undertake the proposed effort.

Evaluation: Identify how success of the proposed work will be measured, including but not limited to citing the number of persons with SCI served.

Medical supervision, if equipment is requested: An organization's request for medical/clinical equipment must demonstrate that appropriate medical supervision will be provided by clinically trained staff.

Other funding: It is strongly recommended that organizations have or seek to identify additional sources of funding.

PART 2: APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESSES

A. Submission Requirements

The 2024 application process begins with submission of a LOI from an eligible organization.

ON-TIME SUBMISSION

All application deadlines, dates, and times are strictly enforced. The online system used to review and manage grants, [ProposalCentral](https://ProposalCentral.altum.com) (<https://ProposalCentral.altum.com>), will automatically close at the deadline listed on Page 1. We strongly recommend that you complete the ProposalCentral application process well in advance of all deadlines.

If you need assistance as you prepare the application or convert to PDF, Neilsen Foundation staff is happy to help. Late submissions will not be considered, including those due to technical difficulties at the deadline.

NEILSEN FOUNDATION APPLICATION TEMPLATES

Applicants are required to use the most recent templates we provide in ProposalCentral for the LOI and FGA processes. *Applicants may not modify any Neilsen Foundation template.* For example, Applicants should not change margins, delete template text (including instructions), or change font sizes on the template. Modifications may lead to disqualification.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

The Applicant must have their organization's authorization to apply for a grant and is expected to be responsible for conduct of the grant activities. The Neilsen Foundation relies on accurate ProposalCentral contact information to communicate with its applicants and grantees, so the Applicant must enter accurate contact information in ProposalCentral, including a *current* email address. The name entered in ProposalCentral should be consistent with the name listed on the application template.

To ensure receipt of important information, the Applicant and other organization contacts (e.g., grants administrator, signing official, financial officer) must keep their ProposalCentral information up to date. If the ProposalCentral contact information is not current and we are unable to contact the Applicant, we will assume that they are no longer interested in funding from the Neilsen Foundation.

Applicants are advised to check the "Auto Notify" box, in the ProposalCentral "Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal" section, for at least one other contact at the organization. The "Permissions" access level for other contacts can be set as view, edit, or administrator.

B. Submission and Review

ENSURE YOUR APPLICATION IS UPLOADED ON-TIME

Refer to Page 1 of this Application Guide for the LOI and FGA deadlines. ProposalCentral will automatically close at 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on the due date. *Late submissions will not be considered.*

ProposalCentral will not allow an application to be submitted until all required information and files are provided. To check for missing information/files before submitting, click on the “Validate” button located in the “Validate” section.

FORMAT

The current templates in [ProposalCentral](https://ProposalCentral.altum.com) (https://ProposalCentral.altum.com) must be used. LOI and FGA applications must be submitted via ProposalCentral. Further instructions are provided on the templates as well as in the Proposal Sections (located in the navigation bar). All original template text and formatting must remain on the submitted applications.

INFORMATION CONSISTENCY AND ACCURACY

Respond to all sections of the templates. If a section or question does not apply to the application, enter “N/A.” Inaccurate or incomplete submissions may be disqualified.

- To be sure your proposal reaches us successfully, carefully proofread all sections of the LOI or FGA materials for consistency and accuracy before submitting in ProposalCentral. To verify that all PDF documents are legible, in the Proposal Sections, return to “Print Signature Pages” and click on the “Print Signature Pages with Attachments” button to view the uploads.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- If two or more individuals are directing a project, name only one as the Applicant; the other(s) should be listed as collaborator(s).
- The grantee organization will retain title to any equipment purchased and/or Intellectual Property developed with Neilsen Foundation funding.
- Perceived or real conflicts of interest (e.g., shareholder in a company providing a device for a study or program) must be disclosed in both the LOI and FGA.
- Generally, an organization may only submit one CO&I application in each annual cycle and may hold only one Neilsen Foundation CO&I Community Support Grant at a time. However, major academic or medical organizations (e.g., universities, large medical or healthcare systems) may submit concurrent applications provided that the proposed projects are distinct.
 - An individual cannot be the Applicant on more than one submission and cannot have an active Community Support Grant on the FGA due date, April 19, 2024.
 - For a current grantee to be eligible to apply, all activities on the active grant must be completed, and all required final reports uploaded, before the FGA due date, April 19, 2024. Applicants planning to complete an active Community Support Grant by this date must notify the [Program Officer](#) of their intent to submit an LOI.
 - Concurrent applications from members of a given academic or clinical team are discouraged. Contact the [Program Officer](#) for additional clarification, if needed.

Across Neilsen Foundation portfolios: Applicants, excluding postdoctoral fellows, may apply for one grant per portfolio described in Part 3, below (i.e., SCIRTS, PSR, CO&I, and SCIMF), and may hold up to one grant in each portfolio at a time. Such applications will be evaluated independently, according to each program’s timelines, guidelines, and review criteria.

REQUIRED SIGNATURES FOR FGA

The Neilsen Foundation accepts either *ink or secure, dated e-signatures* (e.g., DocuSign). Signatures that are “typed in” (e.g., in Word or Adobe) using special fonts are not acceptable. When two signatures are required, **both must be provided**.

In ProposalCentral under Proposal Sections, select “Print Signature Pages” (located in the navigation bar), press the “Print Signature Pages” button, and **print only page one (Grant Application) of the PDF file**. Once this page is signed by the Applicant AND the Signing Official, upload the PDF in the “Attachments” section.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For technical questions regarding online submissions, contact ProposalCentral Customer Service at (800) 875-2562 or via email at pcsupport@altum.com during business hours, Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). *There is no technical support available on weekends or holidays.*

ProposalCentral has a “[Grant Applicant Tutorials](https://ProposalCentral.altum.com/help.asp)” section on its website (<https://ProposalCentral.altum.com/help.asp>) that may be helpful in completing the application. The tutorials link can also be found by selecting “Contact Us” located in the “Help” dropdown menu.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

LOIs are reviewed based on relevance to the Neilsen Foundation, potential impact to individuals with SCI, and specific requirements noted in this Application Guide. FGAs are peer-reviewed by members of the CO&I Review Board. See the Appendix for an explanation of the review criteria.

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Applicants are notified via email whether they are invited to submit a FGA, or if the LOI has been declined. Only Applicants invited to apply through the annual LOI process may submit a FGA. Feedback will be available to the Applicant after the results are announced.

C. Award Process

After review is completed, the Neilsen Foundation will notify Applicants, via email, whether an application has been approved by the Neilsen Foundation Board of Directors or declined for funding. Approved FGAs will proceed to the award process.

Applicants approved for funding will be required to submit a signed Grant Agreement before grant funds are issued. We will provide instructions in the award notification for uploading this and any other required document(s).

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

The CO&I portfolio does not support research grants; however, some projects conducted at academic or medical institutions may require human subject protection. If the grantee organization deems that the project includes work that requires IRB oversight for use of human subjects, the Applicant must provide documentation of IRB approval no later than three months after the start date of the grant. Such Applicants must inform the [Program Officer](#) that an IRB is required.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY AND DUE DILIGENCE

The grantee must be a **nonprofit organization or rehabilitation facility located in the United States or Canada** with the capability to conduct grant-funded programs or activities. Application materials/communications must be in English and budgets must be in U.S. dollars.

Per the United States Pension Protection Act of 2006, the Neilsen Foundation, a private non-operating foundation, is required to verify the nonprofit status of all prospective grantees. When applying, the Applicant must provide the following:

United States-based organizations:

- A copy of the U.S. IRS Determination letter, which proves the entity's 501(c)(3) designation or tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 170(c)(1).
- *Organizations classified as a public charity under Section 509(a)(3) must refer to IRS Notice 2006-109, "Interim Guidance Regarding Supporting Organizations and Donor Advised Funds," and its subsequent modification in IRS Notice 2014-4. The organization will be required to provide additional documentation as specified in Section 3.01 of IRS Notice 2006-109. An organization that is classified as a non-functionally integrated Type III supporting organization is not eligible for Neilsen Foundation funding.*

Canada-based organizations:

- The Neilsen Foundation prefers to make grants to (i) a Canadian organization that holds a U.S. IRS Determination letter, or (ii) a Canadian organization's U.S.-based "friends of" charity, which holds a U.S. IRS Determination letter. A Canadian organization that satisfies either of these requirements must provide a copy of the entity's U.S. IRS Determination letter.
- A Canadian organization that cannot satisfy either of the above requirements must be a "registered charity" with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and provide a copy of the entity's CRA registration page. *If a grant is approved for funding, the Neilsen Foundation will require additional information to determine that the Canadian organization is the equivalent of a U.S. public charity.*

Do not upload copies of tax returns, EIN letters, W-9s, or internal documents noting the organization's nonprofit status, in lieu of, OR in addition to, the U.S. IRS Determination letter.

DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT FUNDS

Once the required documentation is accepted by the Neilsen Foundation and our due diligence process is complete, funds will be disbursed to the grantee organization.

FINAL REPORTS

At the end of the grant, Grantees will be required to report on final progress and expenditures. Applicable templates are available in the ProposalCentral Deliverables section. Grantees that do not comply with this requirement, or submit unsatisfactory reports, will not be eligible for future Neilsen Foundation funding until we receive acceptable required report(s).

PART 3: NEILSEN FOUNDATION OVERVIEW

A. About the Neilsen Foundation

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation is the largest private funder of spinal cord injury research, rehabilitation, clinical training, and programmatic support in the United States and Canada. The Neilsen Foundation partners with scientific, charitable, and educational organizations conducting spinal cord injury research, training in spinal cord medicine, and supports grassroots organizations providing services to assist individuals affected by spinal cord injury. The Neilsen Foundation values diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and is dedicated to improving the world for persons with spinal cord injury.

Vision

Individuals with spinal cord injuries, and those who care for them, live full and productive lives as active participants in their communities.

Mission

Craig H. Neilsen Foundation's funding is dedicated to supporting both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those affected by and living with spinal cord injury.

Values

Our values are inspired by our Founder, Craig Neilsen, who overcame barriers during his lifetime, empowered others to do the same, and created this organization to impact the field today and expand solutions for tomorrow. These are foundational to what we are and aspire to be: Leadership, Inclusion, Excellence, Creativity, and Collaboration.

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER

Craig H. Neilsen was an American entrepreneur well known for his attention to detail, uncompromising demand for excellence, and an ability to inspire those around him. In his personal life, he was also known for his generosity and led by example with his charitable giving. In 1985, a collision with a semi-truck left Craig with a severe spinal cord injury (SCI), and in 2002, he applied his entrepreneurial spirit to his charitable pursuits and established the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation to improve the quality of life for people living with SCI.

NEILSEN FOUNDATION ONGOING PORTFOLIOS

The Neilsen Foundation supports research grants, programmatic grants, and education grants. For information about our portfolios, please visit the [Craig H. Neilsen Foundation's website](http://www.chnfoundation.org) (www.chnfoundation.org) for application guides and deadlines.

Research Grants:

- Spinal Cord Injury Research on the Translational Spectrum (SCIRTS)
- Psychosocial Research (PSR)

Programmatic Grants:

- Creating Opportunity & Independence (CO&I)

Education Grants:

- Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Fellowships (SCIMF)
- Neilsen Scholarship Program (NSP)

B. Contact Information

APPLICATION SUBMISSION CONTACTS

- For technical questions regarding online submissions, contact ProposalCentral Customer Service at (800) 875-2562 or via email at pcsupport@altum.com during business hours, Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). *There is no technical support available on weekends or holidays.*
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NEILSEN FOUNDATION CONTACTS

- For questions regarding an application’s submission status contact, Ehrica Hernandez, Grants Management Associate, at ehrica@chnfoundation.org.
- For questions regarding the CO&I portfolio contact, Darrell Musick, Program Officer, at darrell@chnfoundation.org.
- For information about our portfolios, visit the [Craig H. Neilsen’s Foundation website](http://www.chnfoundation.org) (www.chnfoundation.org).

Applicants are strongly discouraged from contacting Neilsen Foundation Review Board members during the application process. Such contact will result in disqualification of the LOI or FGA.

APPENDIX: FULL GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA



As you prepare your application, it is important to keep in mind how it will be reviewed. Reviewers are asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of proposals and, working with Foundation staff, provide feedback based on the following criteria.

REVIEW CRITERIA

SIGNIFICANCE

The extent to which the proposed work, if successfully carried out, will make an important contribution.

1. Are the objectives relevant to the Nielsen Foundation's mission to support programs that improve the quality of life for those living with SCI?
2. Does the proposed funding help fulfill a significant need in the local and/or broader SCI community? Has the community been included in shaping the proposed work?
3. Does the requested support address additional sources of funding, collaborative efforts and/or planning for future activities?

FEASIBILITY

1. Provide an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed plan.
2. Is the scope of the effort suitable for the proposed timeline?
3. Does the work seem reasonable based on the organization's capabilities?

GOALS

1. Will the funding maintain and/or strengthen the organization and its ability to provide services to people with SCI?
2. Does the proposal define clear goals, appropriate for the type of funding being requested?
3. Do the proposed activities provide needed services for the population that will be served?
4. Are the expected outcomes for the population served well defined?

BUDGET

1. Is the requested budget appropriate and well-justified, based on the nature and scope of the proposed efforts, to support the anticipated outcomes?

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

1. Is the application complete, well written, and easy to follow?