



## TIPS FOR APPLYING FOR A FRIENDS OF THE POOR GRANT

*If your SVdP Conference is lacking financial resources to help people who come to you with pressing needs, we hope you'll consider applying for a grant from the Friends of the Poor fund. Donors have given these funds to the National Council with your Conference in mind.*

### Are you thinking:

- **“...but I don't know how to write a grant request.”**  
You don't need any training or experience to apply. You can tell us about your situation in your own words. Explain clearly & simply how you would distribute the funds.
- **“...but I'm not a very good writer.”**  
There's no need to be formal or fancy. Your application will be read and ranked by Vincentians just like you, who have done home visits and service in their own communities. They just want to hear your story.
- **“...maybe other Conferences need it more than we do.”**  
The application is designed so reviewers can rank the applications. It's okay for you to apply, too.

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## **How Can Funds Be Used?**

**This grant is intended for emergency assistance** to individuals or families — such as avoiding homelessness. Funds should alleviate an urgent need for the neighbor being served, and your conference members should create a personal connection with the neighbors being

served so that you can offer spiritual support, friendship, and perhaps other kinds of financial or in-kind support.

**Examples:**

- Paying overdue rent or utilities to prevent eviction or disconnection.
- Paying a medical bill to avoid a collection service.
- Providing in-kind goods to those in great need - such as food, clothing, fans, mattresses, diapers, bus passes.

Funds are intended to be used for direct aid **within six months** after you receive the funds.

Grants will not exceed \$5,000 per Conference.

**Ineligible purposes:**

- Organizational or capital costs, such as buildings, renovation, staff, equipment, thrift stores, or Twinning or Extension expenditures.
- 'Pass-through' dollars to support a partner organization's needs or programs.
- Purchasing in-kind goods to support another organization's project.

If you're trying to fund a program to help overcome a root cause of poverty (*rather than direct aid for an urgent need*), consider the [Systemic Change grants](#) through the National Council.

## **Be Sure You Are Eligible to Apply**

**SVdP Conferences** and Special Works Conferences in good standing may apply, if they meet the criteria below. (District Councils and Diocesan Councils may not apply for Friends of the Poor, but may apply for [Systemic Change grants](#).)

Applicants must meet these 5 requirements:

**1. You have not received a Friends of the Poor grant in the most recent two fiscal years.**

Those who were awarded a grant in one fiscal year may not apply during the following two fiscal years. (The National Council's fiscal year runs from October 1 – September 30.)

**2. Your Conference is aggregated.**

[Aggregation](#) means your Conference has been accepted as an official member of the [International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul](#).

- If you aren't sure if your Conference is aggregated, you can ask your District Council contact or Membership Services at the national office: [membership@svdpusa.org](mailto:membership@svdpusa.org).
- If you have **applied** for aggregation, you can apply for a Friends of the Poor grant even if you haven't yet received your official letter of aggregation.

**3. Your Conference's Annual Report** was submitted for the most recent year. Not sure?

Contact [membership@svdpusa.org](mailto:membership@svdpusa.org).

4. **Your Conference's [solidarity contributions](#)** to the National Council are up to date. Not sure if you're current? If your District Council submits all its conferences' payments together, ask them. If you still need help, contact [membership@svdpusa.org](mailto:membership@svdpusa.org).
5. **Your Conference has an EIN and is in compliance with the IRS 501(c)(3) status.** If you have nonprofit status with the federal IRS, you'll have an EIN (Employee Identification Number) and a letter verifying your nonprofit status. Some Conferences have this status through their District Council; others hold it independently. If you don't know about your nonprofit status, you can ask your District Council or contact [membership@svdpusa.org](mailto:membership@svdpusa.org).

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## What to Expect in the Application Process

**Timing:** You have the opportunity to apply once each year. There are 3 "rounds" of grants, and Conferences in three of the regions are invited to submit applications in each round.

Submission deadlines by region will be posted on the [Friends of the Poor website page](#). Timing for submissions may vary year to year.

**Writing:** The application is a fillable form in Adobe Acrobat Reader format. *If you do not currently have Adobe Reader program installed on your computer, please visit <https://get.adobe.com/reader/> to download the program for free.* You'll be able to enter information and save the document as you go.

**Submit** the finished document by attaching it to an email message to [grants@svdpusa.org](mailto:grants@svdpusa.org). You'll receive an email reply acknowledging receipt of your application. Paper applications cannot be processed. If you are having trouble with the technology involved in applying, please ask your Conference members or a knowledgeable friend to help you.

**Review:** Members of the SVdP Grants Committee will read and rank your application. The Grants Committee is made up of 9 active Vincentians (one from each Region) who volunteer for this responsibility through their Regional Vice President. Together they approve grant awards, focusing on helping those with the most need make the best impact.

- Some grants are funded at the full amount requested. Some may be partially funded, so that available funds can be shared across more of the applying Conferences.
- Unfortunately, there are always many requests that cannot be funded because there are not enough donated funds available. The amount of available funds and the amount of requests will vary — but you can expect that perhaps 25% of applications might be funded.

About 6 weeks after the submission deadline, you'll receive an email to let you know whether or not you will receive a grant.

- If you do not receive a grant, that's likely because other Conferences submitted requests that showed greater immediate need for the funds, or fewer resources to help. You are welcome to submit again next year. [See below for tips about re-submitting](#).
- If you're notified that you'll receive a grant, a check will arrive soon by mail. (See *below for more about [managing a grant](#)*).

Grant awards are announced through the National Council website and members' newsletter. On the website, you'll see the number of applications received; the total amount requested, the amount we were able to award, and the list of Conferences that will receive funding.

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## Writing Your Application

Please avoid these pitfalls:

- **The submission deadline is firm.** It's best to send it early.
- **Be very sure you are [eligible to apply](#)** and that you are proposing an [eligible use of funds](#).
- **Every question needs an answer.** Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Please remember:

- **Be concise.** Reviewers will be reading 30-70 applications. It helps if you can be clear and to the point. Write or type your answers in your own words — then go back and simplify what you have to say.
- **Be specific when you can.** Instead of "Utility costs are rising," maybe you can say, "Since Summer 2025, average monthly utility bills have risen 35% over last year due to a change in the utility ownership."
- **Pretend you are explaining things to a non-Vincentian.** Don't assume the reviewers know how you do things. Different conferences have varied situations, practices, and terminology. For example, there are varied ways to conduct encounters with those in need, or make decisions about financial aid. Here's your chance to explain your approach.
- **Pretend you are the reviewer** – a stranger who doesn't know your conference or community. Help reviewers understand your situation – and please your descriptions in the portion of the form that asks for them. If reviewers can easily find and re-visit the points you want to make, this helps them score your proposal.
- **Ask a friend to proofread.** They might help you simplify, clarify, and make sure you're telling the story you want to tell with the correct facts and details. Also, reading your draft out loud can help you spot missing words or confusing phrases.

## Question by Question Tips

**Eligibility section** (page 2 of application): see [“Be Sure You Are Eligible”](#) above

**Question 1:** In the table, provide:

- **Purpose:** What the grant funds will pay for — with one purpose per line. Your grant might be for a single purpose (like Rent) or up to three Purposes (like Rent, Utilities, Food). It’s helpful to state maximums, like “rent payments up to \$500 per family.”

If you choose just 1 or 2 purposes, it will simplify your application, record-keeping and grant reporting.

- **Amount Per Purpose:** This is an estimate only. All your amounts need to add up to the total you are requesting. You’ll have flexibility to use grant funds across all the purposes you listed, to meet the requests you receive.
- **# Families & # Individuals You Expect to Help (Per Purpose):** These are estimates only. A “household” is counted here as a “family” and is counted on each line for which they would be receiving aid. This might feel like “double counting” (if a household is helped in more than one way). But this is the kind of reporting that our donors appreciate — so they know how people were helped in each specific way.

**Question 2:** Tell why you chose to ask for funds for this purpose in particular. This will be unique to your Conference, community and situation. The following questions might help you think of what to write — but *you do NOT have to address each question in your answer.*

- Why did you choose the purpose(s) you named above?
- How do you propose to help?
- Is this purpose something new for your conference?  
If not, what was your experience in recent months in using your conference funds for the purpose named? How much money was shared, and how did it help stabilize situations for those you helped?
- Besides tracking the number of people you serve.... can you identify other impacts or outcomes you expect for them? How do you plan to measure that impact?

**Question 3:** Begin with facts about the area you serve:

- Geographic area — do you serve in a parish boundary, zip code, an entire city? Is this area rural, suburban, inner city, etc? (Ex: “Most people we serve live in zip codes 50315 and 50309: a blend of downtown and working class areas.”)
- Are you the only SVDP Conference in the wider community?

- Paint a picture of why people are in need of these grant funds here – and include some facts and statistics related to the grant’s purpose (ex: poverty rates, wait times for affordable housing, absence of shelters, no public transportation)
  - It’s most helpful to know facts about “your portion” of a city (not the whole metro or state).
  - To learn local statistics, you might ask a librarian or United Way. Search online for your zipcode/town + the factor (i.e. “poverty rate”). Online sources like your state’s official website (\_\_\_\_.gov), <https://censusreporter.org> or <https://data.census.gov> might help.

**Next, simply describe the area you serve** – as if to a stranger who hasn’t been there, but cares about your neighbors’ needs. What is your community like for those you are serving? Are certain situations especially causing people to turn to you with emergency needs that grant funds would help?

*The bullet points below are given as examples of the kinds of things applicants often describe. You do NOT need to speak to each of these topics:*

- Recent natural disaster (fire, flood, hurricane, tornado)
- economic blows to the community (i.e. major employer closures)
- Special challenges among those you serve (i.e. language barriers, job barriers, refugees)
- Loss or lack of community resources that can help with basic needs or urgencies (i.e. public transportation, shelters, food)
- High cost of living; Mostly seasonal / low-paid / part-time jobs

**Finish by sharing why you are receiving requests for this grant purpose.** Do other Conferences, agencies or or nonprofits refer people to you? Are you able to collaborate to meet these needs?

**Question 4:** Simple numbers are sufficient here. For Question 4c, count as “home visits” a meeting of two Vincentians together in any location with the person seeking help. You can explain more in Question 5, if you like.

**Question 5:** . Explain how the distribution of grant funds will work in your conference. The following questions might help you think of what to write.

- How do requests come to you?
- Will you provide Home Visits or other kinds of personal contact? Do you want to tell us more about your Active Members or clergy who are involved in encounters with those in need – or the challenges in meeting people face to face?
- How does your conference decide whether to help, and in what amount?
- Do you often talk with others - landlords, utility companies, agencies, other Conferences or nonprofits - to help find solutions for the situation your neighbor in need is facing?

- Along with grant funds, what other support or funds are your Vincentians likely to provide to those served? (Food, clothing, referrals to services, follow-up visits, etc.) ?
- Will you be offering follow-up contact or ongoing coaching to those trying to stabilize their home's financial situation?

**Questions 6-9:** these paint a picture of how money flows through your conference.

In some cases, answers may be on your most recent Annual Report – but if your situation has changed much since then, please use numbers for the past 12 months or tell us about the changes.

Question 6: Estimate how many requests you received **for money** (*such as payment of rent, utilities, etc*) **not in-kind goods** (*food, clothing, fans, mattresses*). Reviewers hope to understand the pace of requests you're receiving for financial assistance, compared to your financial ability to help.

Questions 7: Estimate the kinds of income you might expect in a normal fiscal year, or in the next 12 months. You can base this on recent experience and adjust for any factor you know will impact your income. In each line, place an "annual" amount or "0" in the blank.

Parish support: If your parish offered monthly special collections for SVDP last year, but will only offer 2 special collections a year in future, estimate what you'll receive from 2 collections. Count any amount coming through your parish council, social justice committee, Knights of Columbus, etc. on this line.

Individual donations: checks or cash given directly to your conference or treasurer; or individuals' online giving through a parish or conference/council website if it's directed to your conference by the donor.

Secret Collection: given anonymously by those attending your meetings

FOP Walk / Fundraising events: funds raised for your conference through an event or outreach led by your members/volunteers or by others on your behalf.

Grants: include grants that are received, pledged, or routinely given annually – and that will be used to directly help neighbors in need. (Ex: a utility company's grant to help pay overdue utility bills). There's no need to include grants for buildings, staff, etc. Do not count this proposal or other pending grant proposals.

Funds from other conferences or Council: This includes "twinning" contributions to your conference, or funds that you can request from your council or other conferences specifically to help those in need.

In Question 9, you can explain any of these items you wish. Reviewers especially want to understand your Parish Support, Grants, and Funds from conferences/council.

**Question 8:** Please do your best to estimate the pace of expenditures for the urgent needs of neighbors in a recent 12-month period. Do not count the value of in-kind donated goods that you give to neighbors.

Ex: For your food pantry, count the amount you **pay** for purchased food – but not the **value** of donated in-kind food, clothing or other distributed items.

**Question 9:** Is there something you want us to know about your situation so that we can understand your Conference's upcoming limitations or opportunities for income? You can share anything that helps describe your support situation.

- Please explain how much money your conference expended for this grant's purpose in a recent time period. If you received funds restricted to this purpose. what were your sources & are they likely to renew their support? Will you have strong collaboration on funding the work of this grant?
- If you keep a level of reserve funds routinely, please tell more about why.

Here are other things you might care to share: but you don't have to address each item:

- Anything from Questions 6-8 that you feel needs explanation.
- What percentage of total expenditures were used for direct aid for those in need or to purchase in-kind goods you provide?
- Are you limited in asking parishioners for support?
- Are parish mergers/closures impacting your donations?
- Are you a newly formed conference?
- Are generous donors unable to give in the future?
- Will pursuing & sharing the work of this grant help you attract more support for people in need?

Be sure to put *something* in the Question 9 box to complete your application.

## Checklist to Review Your Application

- ✓ Your contact section is complete. The email address and phone number are correct.
- ✓ You meet all the eligibility requirements.
- ✓ All questions are completed. [No answer fields are left blank.]

Does your application clearly describe:

- ✓ How you would use grant funds to meet emergency needs (Questions. 1 – 2)
- ✓ The needs in your community (Question 3)
- ✓ How your conference's members will work together to fulfill this grant (Questions 4-5)
- ✓ Why your current funds are limited or used for direct, urgent needs (Questions 6-9)

## Submit Your Application

Save and send your application form to [grants@svdpusa.org](mailto:grants@svdpusa.org) (the e-address shown on the bottom of the application form.) If you're having trouble with your submission, contact [grants@svdpusa.org](mailto:grants@svdpusa.org)



## How Are Applications Ranked?

Reviewers use a scoring guideline to assign points for each section of information you provide. Reviewers' scores are averaged to create a numerical ranking for the requests. The Grants Committee discusses and decides funding requests, starting with those ranked highest in review points.

If you do not receive funds, it is likely because 1) other applications showed an exceptionally larger or rapidly rising unmet need in their community; 2) others showed exceptional lack of opportunity for donations or revenue; and/or 3) your situation could have been explained more clearly.

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## Expectations If You Receive a Grant

- **Financial:** Your Conference Treasurer will need a system to record receipt of grant funds, and to track expenses attributable to the grant. This will be needed for your final report.
- **Those who are being helped:** You'll need to keep notes on who was helped with grant: the number of families and individuals you've helped in each instance, the kind of help they received, and their situations. **You will not report the names**, but tracking by name will make it easier for you to prepare your grant report.
- **Reports are due six months after you've received the grant funds.** This is an important step. Grant reports must be on file for fiscal accountability, and so that the grants' donors can hear with pleasure about the impact their donations have made. If funds are not fully spent at six months, you'll send a brief update at six months and a final report promptly after all funds are spent.

## Tips for Re-Applying

If you receive a grant in fiscal year 2025-26, you will not be eligible to apply again until the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2028.

If you do not receive a grant this time, you can apply again next year.

Before you re-apply, we recommend discussing your needs with your Conference members. This can help you know how others think / communicate about things being asked in the application.

- Should you ask for funds for a different, emerging need?
- Could your situation be explained more clearly? Do you have supporting facts or details?
- Is it clear how your specific request relates to the community need you described?
- Find someone to help you consider how your past request could be improved.

**Thank you for all you do for our neighbors in need!**