 **Applicants Gather, Learn about the 2016 Grant Cycle**

Late last month, 140 nonprofit organizations gathered in Center City to hear an overview of Impact100’s application process. The information session was generously hosted by Klehr, Harrison, Harvey, Branzburg, LLP.

Since 2009, the Grant Applicant Information Session has been held each fall to answer applicants’ questions about preparing their initial Letters of Inquiry -- the first step in Impact’s grant-making process. The deadline for Letters of Inquiry is January 4, 2016. **An important change this year is the requirement that all applicants have their own 501(c)(3**); it is not permissible to apply under the tax-exempt status of an umbrella or other organization.

Grants Co-Chair Emily Biscardi described Impact100’s aim to fill a niche by providing $100,000 grants to organizations that typically don’t have access to a grant of this magnitude. She stressed that a project’s fit within one of Impact’s five focus areas – Arts & Culture, Education, Environment, Family, Health & Wellness – is an important criterion, along with details about the project beneficiaries. **Does the project reach under-served populations? Does it address unmet needs?**

Grants Co-Chair Sandy Lazovitz reviewed the new Letter of Inquiry form [link], available online and streamlined to be shorter and easier to fill out. Since the number of letters of inquiry in each Focus Area changes from year to year, Sandy said that the best approach is to be authentic and apply to the Focus Area that most closely aligns with your organization and project.

The review of financial information is a critical element in Impact100’s process. Financial Review Panel Co-Chair Amy Kothari, in answer to a question about budget size, said that while Impact’s preferred range for organizational budgets is $300,000 to $5,000,000, **the main concern is that a grantee can manage $100,000 effectively**. She said, “An organization with a small budget may have handled huge projects in the past. There’s no set answer; we really have to look at the whole story.”

Other points brought up during the Q&A period were:

* All applicants apply for the $100,000 project grant, even though some grantees, in the end, will receive smaller operating grants.
* Capital expenditures are permitted to be part of the project budget – as are salary expenditures, expenses associated with project evaluation, etc. Whatever is needed to conduct the project effectively may be included in the $100,000 budget.
* Applicants may allocate up to 15% of the $100,000, or $15,000, toward organizational overhead. No itemization is required; just stipulate the overhead amount in the designated space on the Project Budget Form.

Emily Biscardi wrapped up by suggesting that applicants look closely at Impact’s website. “Step back and look at our funding priorities,” she said. “Be sure you are addressing those in your proposal.”

As the meeting ended, a young man in the back row stood up and said, **“I want to thank you for doing this. So often, we feel like we’re left with the crumbs after larger organizations are funded. You are giving us a fighting chance.”**