BFCL Grant Guidelines

Background

The Building Full Capacity Locals (BFCL) initiative was launched by the Michigan Education Association around 2015 to enhance local union leadership and strengthen member engagement. Shortly thereafter, the BFCL Grant program was established to support these goals by providing financial assistance to locals working to **engage current members, recruit new members, and strengthen local leadership capacity.**

Grants are awarded twice per year, during the following cycles:

- ➔ **Applications for Spring BFCL Grants are accepted November 1–30.**
- ➔ **Applications for Fall BFCL Grants are accepted May 1–31.**

Applications are reviewed after the application window closes. Grants are not awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

All applicants will be notified of their grant status following the completion of the application review process.

- ➔ Late applications will not be accepted.
- ➔ Locals may receive only one grant per calendar year, and preference will be given to first-time applicants.

Grant Goal

To utilize BFCL grant funds in a fiscally responsible way that reaches the maximum number of existing and potential members. Locals are encouraged to leverage local or other funding sources when possible to extend the reach and impact of their efforts.

Spending Guidelines & Explanations

To uphold the integrity of this grant and the values of MEA, please follow the guidelines below:

Do not use BFCL funds for:

- **Gift Cards, Alcohol, or Lottery Tickets**
  These items are difficult to track or justify and may violate audit standards or insurance guidelines. Additionally, alcohol, lottery tickets, and gift cards do not align with MEA's mission and are considered cash equivalents, which are not permitted.
- **Dues, Giveaways, or Raffles**
  Grant funds should not be used to cover member dues or for activities like raffles or general giveaways that may lack strategic impact or violate legal restrictions. Raffles, in particular, are regulated in Michigan and may require licensing. View raffle regulations

- **Purchases from Walmart or Sam's Club**
  These companies are widely known for anti-union practices. As a labor organization, MEA encourages all locals to support union-friendly businesses that align with our values.

Branding, Union Vendors & Support

MEA is a union, and how we spend our money reflects who we are. The following guidelines ensure we uphold union values, protect our brand, and model ethical leadership:

- **Apparel**
  All apparel purchased must include the new MEA logo. This protects the integrity and consistency of MEA's brand across the state and helps members and the public recognize union-sponsored events. Contact **Gus Schowengerdt** at GSchowengerdt@mea.org to request approved logos and branding guidance. The final artwork may need approval before production.

- **Trinkets, Swag, and Print Materials**
  Please work with USA-made vendors and prioritize union print shops. Look for the union bug on printed items as a mark of ethical sourcing. Supporting union shops helps sustain fair-wage jobs and strengthens solidarity within the labor movement. For assistance identifying union vendors, contact **Aaron Eling** at aeling@mea.org.

Tips for a Competitive Proposal

In the past, successful BFCL grant proposals have been **low-cost**, **high-impact** initiatives that thoughtfully use resources to maximize **member engagement**.

As you prepare your next application, we encourage you to:

- **Collaborate** with one or more **locals**, *or*
- Host events at the **regional** level

These strategies can:

- **Expand** your reach and visibility
- **Foster** connections across locals
- **Promote** leadership development
- **Use** resources more efficiently
- **Strengthen** solidarity and organizing capacity
- **Help** build a broader public presence for your local and MEA

Leveraging partnerships and planning for sustainability will make your proposal more competitive and create lasting value for your members *and* community.