



GRANT SAMPLE #1

A. Mission, History and Accomplishments

XXX is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works in the public interest to advocate for, increase public support for, defend and improve the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law. For more than a decade, XXX has led the effort to defend the Maine Clean Election Act by thwarting repeated efforts to repeal or partially repeal the law while simultaneously ensuring the program is adequately funded. As a result, public financing has been available to qualified candidates in each election cycle since the law went into effect in 2000. XXX has also promoted campaign finance reforms in the legislature and courts that place voters, not campaign donors, foremost in our political process.

In the past year, XXX has defended against further attempts to weaken Clean Elections and campaign finance laws in the Maine legislature. We spearheaded efforts to have Maine add its name to the growing list of states calling for a U.S. constitutional amendment that fights back against the disastrous Citizens United ruling, successfully mobilizing more bipartisan support than any of the 16 other states to pass such a resolution to date. We have developed programs that have engaged a growing number of people in state and federal advocacy on campaign finance and have educated the public through an aggressive direct contact and media outreach campaign.

B. Purpose of, and Rationale for, the Grant Request

The effort to create a truer democracy in our country is as old as our nation itself. The United States' history is consistently marked by struggles to advance greater self-governance. Beginning with our Constitution, the founding fathers created a representative democracy that has since guided public policy. As our country grew, our governing representatives continued to uphold democratic ideals. With each act, we expanded our shared ownership of government as the just, righteous, and fair course of action, even though the struggles were difficult, and at times seemed impossible.

Today, the advancement of representational equality and self-governance faces a growing threat – while we all may have a vote, some have more influence in our government than others by virtue of their financial resources. The reliance of candidates from every level of government on private, special interest money affords an increasingly small group of people the ability to wield enormous, growing – and often unchallenged – power. Those who *can and do* give large amounts of money to influence elections, not surprisingly, *can and do* influence the policy-making process. Maine fought back against this trend by passing Clean Elections, and XXX aims to continue the fight by promoting policies that reduce the role of money in our elections and our government.



Our first-in-the-nation public financing law pushes back against the outsized influence of big money by ensuring that *voters are in the driver's seat* of our state government. Though it has been successful for more than a decade, the Clean Election system has been repeatedly compromised by court rulings, legislative action and inaction, budget raids, and gubernatorial vetoes. The current diluted law is a far cry from the robust and innovative system voters enacted in 1996. Consequently, participation among legislative candidates has dropped from a high of 81% to 63% in the 2012 cycle as candidates in expensive races resorted to private fundraising to remain competitive. If action is not taken soon, a majority of our lawmakers will abandon Clean Elections and revert to raising campaign funds from PACS, wealthy individuals, and corporations.

Restoring the viability of the Clean Election system is well worth doing. Public opinion polls show that sizable majorities of people, both in Maine and around the country, support advancing campaign finance reforms including publicly financed elections. As lawmakers and the courts systematically weaken campaign finance laws, the public becomes more convinced that strong laws are necessary. In Maine, 80% of Maine voters approve of our Clean Election law and believe that the U.S. Supreme Court has grossly misinterpreted our First Amendment, contorting it to favor the speech rights of the wealthy and corporations over those of everyday people. All over the country, Americans want what we have here in Maine – a campaign finance system that puts people first; encourages a broad range of qualified people to run for office; allows candidates to forgo private, special interest fundraising in favor of tiny contributions from ordinary voters; and provides adequate public funds for competitive races. Our job is to see to it that our system is robust enough to deliver on its promise.

We submit this grant request to support our work to refresh Maine people's mandate on Clean Elections, strengthen the law, increase transparency, and close loopholes. We have begun the process to place a citizen's initiative on the ballot. With your help, we will build a strong foundation for the coming referendum.

C. & D. Specific Activities & Short-Term Outcomes and Benchmarks

Governance. We are now an organization with a more traditionally functioning board of directors and defined board committees, with day-to-day workflow managed by staff, consultants, and volunteers. As XXX matures, the board will work to adopt appropriate policies that minimize internal and external risk, take on a greater role securing the financial resources to carry out our important work, and chart a course for the organization into the future. We have secured funding for an organization-wide strategic planning process, and we will begin fleshing out that process after our ballot initiative.

We will continue to develop a pipeline for future board leadership and have made strides in this area over the past year. We welcomed four new board members last year, and we hope to add several more this year. We are also focused on leadership succession. XXX continues to serve on the board but has exited her longstanding role as president of the organization. XXX was recently elected president of the board, and will take a proactive role assisting the Executive Director in strengthening the organizational structure and functions. XXX, who came to us first as a volunteer in 2012 via our outreach efforts, was elected vice president with the expectation that he will step up as president after XXX's term.