MANGO
Marianas Alliance of
Non-Governmental Organizations

I Tinituhon-Bweletal

Legislative Support for Community Projects



A step-by-step guide to help CNMI nonprofits request funding for projects benefiting our community.



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Executive Summary

The I Tinituhon–Bweletal: Legislative Support for Community Projects is a guide developed to help nonprofits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) understand and access legislative appropriations for community-benefit projects. Created by the Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations (MANGO), this resource offers a step-by-step approach tailored to the real-world conditions of CNMI's legislative funding process.

This guide provides detailed guidance on:

- **Understanding how legislative appropriations work in the CNMI,**
- **Determining your organization's eligibility,**
- **Preparing a strong, complete proposal, and**
- **Submitting the necessary documentation to be considered for funding.**

MANGO developed this guide in close collaboration with legislators and partners in the nonprofit sector, with the shared goal of improving transparency, accountability, and equitable access to public funds. This effort reflects an ongoing commitment to strengthening the role of nonprofits as effective partners in community development.

Through this guide, MANGO aims to equip CNMI nonprofits with practical tools and strategic support to navigate the proposal phase and increase their readiness for funding opportunities.

Si Yu'us Ma'åsi and Ghilisow,
Frances M. Sablan



Executive Director
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Acknowledgements

The I Tinituhon–Bweletal: Legislative Support for Community Projects is a guide developed to help nonprofits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) understand and access legislative appropriations for community-benefit projects. Created by the Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations (MANGO), this resource offers a step-by-step approach tailored to the real-world conditions of CNMI's legislative funding process.The development of the I Tinituhon–Bweletal: Legislative Support for Community Projects — beginning with this guide, How to Apply — would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and contributions of many individuals and organizations dedicated to strengthening the nonprofit sector in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

First and foremost, we express our deep gratitude to the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) for their generous support and belief in the value of this work. Their funding and partnership enabled MANGO to co-design this guide and invest in tools that empower nonprofits across the CNMI.

We also thank the members of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation (SNILD), who provided valuable insights into the legislative process and demonstrated their commitment to community-centered appropriations. Our thanks go to the Tinian and Aguiguan Legislative Delegation (TALD) and Rota Legislative Delegation (RLD) for reviewing and approving their inclusion in this guide. This guide reflects their call for more equitable access to public resources.

Special thanks to the many nonprofit leaders and practitioners who participated in early feedback sessions, shared their lived experiences, and shaped the real-world relevance of this guide.

Your time and honesty helped ensure that this resource reflects the practical needs and local conditions of our sector.

We acknowledge the contributions of the MANGO Board of Directors and staff, with special recognition to Laurie Peterka for leading the concept development and authorship of this guide. Her vision, research, and dedication shaped the framework and ensured it remained grounded in the realities of nonprofit work in the CNMI. The support of the full MANGO team helped bring this guide to life, reflecting our shared commitment to equity, transparency, and community impact. Your dedication to equity, transparency, and community impact is embedded in every section. Turnkey Solutions LLC provided critical support in the final editing and layout of the guide.

As part of its continuing commitment, MANGO hopes to build on this foundation with future resources that support nonprofit leadership, expand access to public funding, and respond to the evolving needs of our sector.

To accompany this guide, MANGO has launched the I Tinituhon–Bweletal: Legislative Support for Community Projects program — a hands-on initiative designed to help nonprofits put these tools into practice through coaching, peer support, and direct engagement with the legislative process.
To our partners in government, education, and the private sector who continue to support capacity building for nonprofits — Si Yu'us Ma’åsi’ and Ghilisow. Your collaboration is vital to the vision of shared leadership and sustainable development for our islands.

Finally, we recognize the broader community of the CNMI. Your voices, your needs, and your hopes are at the heart of every page.

Together, we are building a stronger foundation for nonprofit leadership and public accountability across the CNMI.

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Frequently Asked Questions
About Legislative Appropriations

1. What is the role of legislative delegations in the CNMI?

Legislative delegations in the CNMI manage the appropriations of funds generated within their jurisdictions. These funds are allocated to projects and programs that serve public purposes, as outlined in the CNMI Constitution and relevant laws.

2. What's the best way for nonprofits to seek legislative funding support?

Nonprofits are strongly encouraged to adopt a coordinated, delegation-wide approach rather than trying to secure commitments from individual legislators. Addressing the full delegation fosters broader support, increases transparency, and reinforces the shared responsibility of decision-making. Pursuing funding through only one lawmaker can create confusion, misalignment, or the perception of favoritism — which ultimately may undermine the proposal's credibility or success.

3. Who should submit the funding request when multiple organizations operate in the same sector?

When multiple related entities exist—such as clubs, chapters, or federations within a shared sector—it's most appropriate for an established lead or umbrella organization to take the initiative. That lead organization should represent the collective interest and take responsibility for fairly managing and distributing any resulting appropriation among its member entities. This ensures more strategic use of public funds and reduces duplication or competition within the same sector.

4. What types of projects are eligible for funding?

Projects that meet a public benefit and align with the legislative delegation's priorities are eligible. These may include community programs, infrastructure projects, environmental sustainability initiatives, and educational activities. The proposal must demonstrate clear benefits to the community and alignment with constitutional requirements.

5. How do I know whether my project meets the definition of public benefit?

"Public benefit" means that the funding request must clearly serve the broader community — not private individuals or businesses. Legislative appropriations must meet a public purpose, as required by the CNMI Constitution. This includes projects or services that contribute to the well-being, safety, or development of the community as a whole or of a defined group in need, such as youth, elders, or rural populations.

Examples of public benefit include community-based education programs, traditional knowledge preservation, environmental restoration, infrastructure that improves access to services, and other initiatives that address social, cultural, or economic needs. To be considered for funding, proposals must show how the project's outcomes will positively impact the public, rather than serve a narrow or private interest.

6. How can I align my proposal with legislative priorities?

To align your proposal with legislative priorities, research the delegation's current focus areas, investigate local agency plans, or check with the Office of Planning & Development, and survey community needs. Highlight how your project supports these plans, needs, or goals, and include specific references to local or regional plans or collaborator partner projects, where applicable.

7. What resources are available to help nonprofits prepare proposals, especially for first-time applicants?

MANGO provides resources such as templates for proposals, budgets, and sustainability plans. First-time applicants can also access tailored workshops, step-by-step guides, and one-on-one consultations designed to simplify the process and help nonprofits submit strong proposals. These resources ensure that even those new to the process have the support needed to prepare competitive submissions.

8. How Long Should I Plan for Proposal Prep?

Every organization is different, but many first-time applicants spend 2–4 weeks getting their proposal ready. If your documents and partners are in place, you might move faster. If you're starting from scratch, give yourself extra time to gather paperwork, build a budget, and reach out to collaborators.

9. What is the funding cycle?

While formal annual CNMI-wide budget deadlines exist, the legislative appropriations for nonprofits discussed in this guide are not tied to fixed funding cycles. Instead, these appropriations come from extra funds — either new money collected in each district or leftover funds that weren't used for earlier government projects.

10. How does the timing of legislative funding submissions work?

Delegation meetings, where such appropriations are considered, are often announced on short notice. Submitting your proposal as soon as it is ready ensures it can be included in the agenda when these meetings occur. A strong, well-prepared proposal significantly improves your chances of being considered for funding. To maximize your chances of being considered, stay in regular contact with legislative offices and keep a complete proposal package ready for submission when opportunities arise.

11. Can nonprofits apply for multiple funding opportunities at the same time?

Yes, nonprofits can apply for multiple funding opportunities if they have distinctly different projects that meet eligibility criteria. For more details on eligibility requirements, refer to Section 3 of this guide. However, ensure that each proposal is tailored and complete, with clear justifications for funding.

12. Is there a maximum amount of funding I can request?

While there is no formal cap on funding requests, it is advisable to align your request with the scale of your project and demonstrate clear justification for the amount requested. Legislative offices may use informal guidelines based on available funds.

13. How are proposals evaluated?

Proposals are evaluated based on community impact, alignment with planning goals, budget clarity and justification, sustainability planning, and organizational capacity.

14. How will I know if my proposal is selected for funding?

Selected proposals are typically approved during delegation meetings. Nonprofits may receive notification through official correspondence or a phone call from the legislative office. If you haven’t received an update after several months, it’s okay to follow up directly with the delegation office to check your proposal’s status. Staying in contact can help ensure you don’t miss important updates.

15. How long does it take to get a decision?

The timeline for decisions varies, depending on factors such as the availability of funds and the legislative agenda. Decisions may take several weeks to months after submission. Staying in touch with legislative offices can provide updates on your proposal's status.

16. What happens if I submit a proposal and the legislature changes?

If the legislative delegation changes after your proposal has been submitted, you will need to resubmit it to the new delegation once it has convened. Transitions between legislative sessions do not carry over prior submissions, so it's essential to monitor delegation turnover and act accordingly. Proposals should always be addressed to the current seated delegation for consideration.

17. Will I be notified if my proposal is rejected?

Proposals that are not selected usually do not receive a formal rejection notice. If you haven't heard back, you can reach out to the legislative office to ask about your proposal's status. When possible, request feedback — it can help strengthen your proposal for future opportunities.

18. Can I revise my proposal after submission?

Once a proposal is submitted, revisions are generally not permitted. However, nonprofits may withdraw their proposal to make necessary updates and resubmit it. Minor clarifications or updates may also be allowed if requested by the delegation office. Contact the relevant office for guidance on how to proceed.

19. What happens after a proposal is approved?

Once a proposal is approved, the legislation will be passed to the Governor's office for signature. After the Governor signs the bill, the Department of Finance will coordinate with the nonprofit on fund disbursement, reporting requirements, and project timelines. Accountability and transparency are critical to maintaining eligibility for future funding.

20. Does MANGO offer support for managing funds after approval?

Yes, MANGO provides support in managing funds through tools, templates, and guidance on reporting and compliance. This ensures that nonprofits meet funding requirements and build credibility for future proposals.

21. Can nonprofits appeal if their proposal is rejected?

There is no formal appeal process if a proposal is not selected. However, you are encouraged to ask for feedback from the legislative office or review team. This input can help you revise your proposal and be ready when future opportunities arise.

22. How can I access additional information or support?

For more information, visit the MANGO website or contact directly through email at info@mangocnmi.org or call (670) 233-6200. Additional resources, such as guides and templates, are available online or upon request.

Quick Start Guide for
I Tinituhon–Bweletal: Legislative Support for Community Projects

Understand the Basics

What are Legislative Appropriations?
These are funds allocated by local delegations for public projects that align with community priorities, such as environmental sustainability, education, or infrastructure development.

Why Apply?
Legislative funding supports initiatives that address community needs, fostering development and creating long-term impacts.

Key Steps to Request Funding

Identify Your Delegation

- Rota Legislative Delegation (RLD)
- Tinian & Aguiguan Legislative Delegation (TALD)
- Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation (SNILD)

Ensure Eligibility

- Provide legal documents (e.g., incorporation, tax clearance)
- Demonstrate financial stability. (e.g., audited reports or financial plans)

Develop a Strong Proposal

- Clearly define the problem and your solution
- Align with regional goals (e.g., CNMI Sustainable Development Plan)
- Include a sustainability plan to show long-term viability

Submit Supporting Documents

- Proposal letter
- Budget breakdown
- Letters of support

A House Bill Gets Passed - Now What?

- The Governor requests the Attorney General to review, then signs the bill into law
- Request an appropriation spending plan template from the CNMI Department of Finance
- Submit a work plan timeline with deliverables that include your budget breakdown
- Secure a MUNIS account (used to receive CNMI government payments) and submit progress and final reports showing impact and financial use

How MANGO Can Help?

- Workshops on proposal writing and financial management
- Templates for proposals, budgets, and sustainability plans
- Support with advocacy and reporting

Need Help? Contact MANGO

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org

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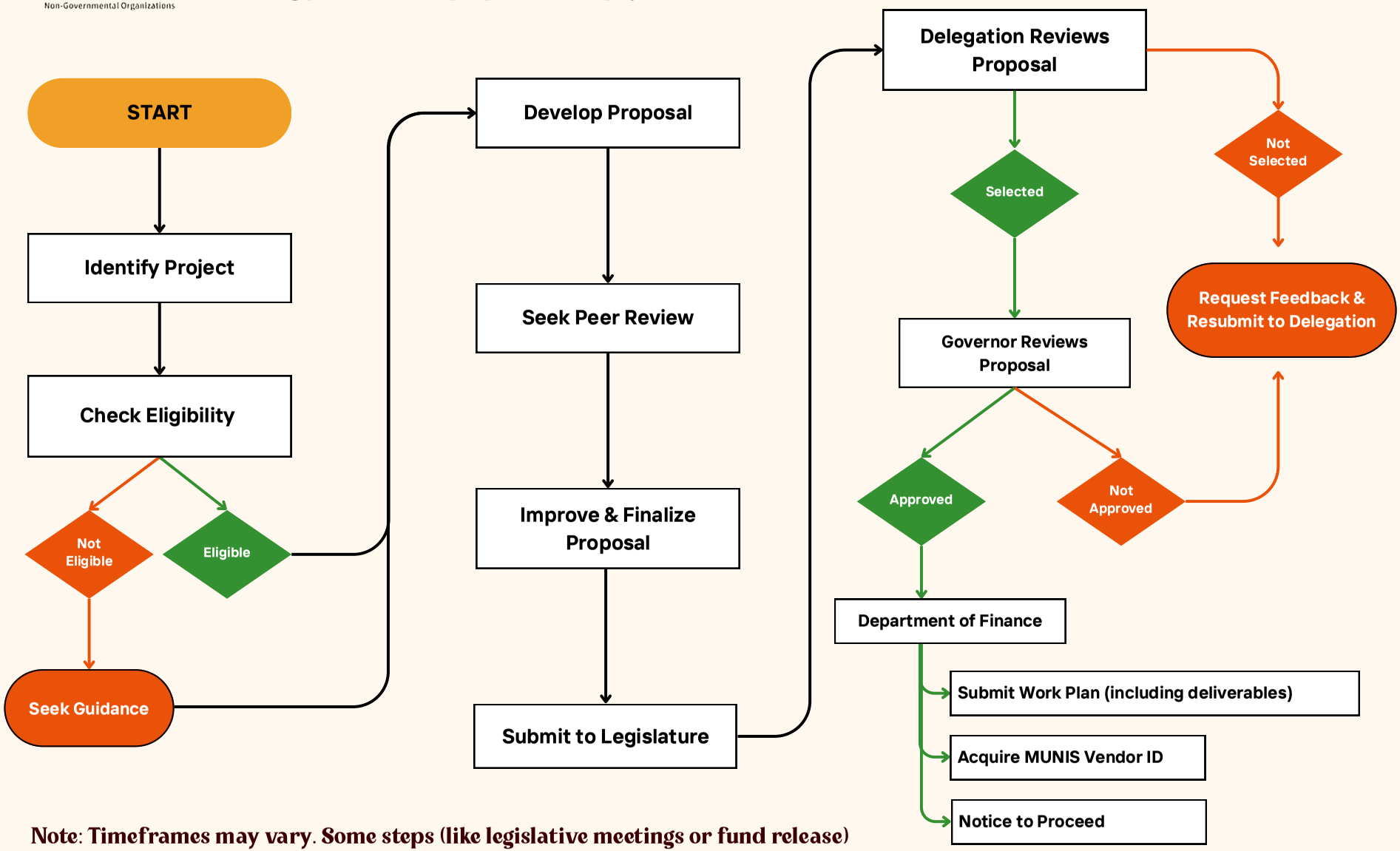
CNMI Legislative Appropriation

PROPOSAL PREPARATION WORKFLOW

This simple roadmap shows how your proposal moves through the funding process, from preparation to payment.



Note: Timeframes may vary. Some steps (like legislative meetings or fund release) can take weeks or months depending on the schedule and availability of funds.



Introduction

Purpose of the Manual

Welcome to this guide! It's here to help your nonprofit successfully secure legislative funding for community benefit projects. It provides a step-by-step approach, ensuring nonprofits are equipped to present compelling, transparent, and impactful proposals.

This manual is designed to walk organizations through the legislative funding process, from understanding how appropriations work to preparing and submitting a complete proposal. MANGO will endeavor to secure funding to create future resources to cover topics like advocacy, compliance, and reporting. For now, this guide focuses specifically on the proposal phase and how to navigate it effectively. It offers practical tools, strategic insights, and real-world examples tailored to the CNMI, equipping nonprofits with the knowledge and confidence to seek and manage legislative funding.

Overview of Legislative Appropriations

Legislative appropriations are not grants. They are funds raised and allocated by each island-specific delegation for public purposes, using local bills. These funds, generated within the jurisdiction, must comply with constitutional mandates and benefit the local community.

Understanding Oversight from the Office of the Public Auditor

Nonprofits receiving legislative appropriations are subject to public accountability standards set by the CNMI Office of the Public Auditor (OPA). These include compliance with fiscal laws such as the Procurement Regulations (1 CMC § 7401 et seq.), adherence to Public Law 20-67 (Ethics in Public Contracting), and clear documentation under the Public Auditor's Oversight Authority (1 CMC § 2301–2319).

Organizations must maintain transparent financial records and ensure funds are used solely for the public purpose outlined in the appropriation legislation. Recipients may be audited and should be prepared to provide complete documentation of how funds were spent in accordance with applicable CNMI laws and regulations.

Importance of Community Benefit Projects

Community benefit projects address critical needs, ranging from environmental sustainability to social equity. By aligning with legislative priorities, nonprofits can play a pivotal role in fostering community development. For example, a community project might involve restoring traditional fishing grounds through coral reef rehabilitation, ensuring food security and preserving cultural practices for future generations. Another example could be upgrading village water systems to provide clean, reliable access for homesteading in the Northern Islands.

Subsections to Guide You

To help you navigate each section with ease, we've broken it down into key components. These subsections are designed to provide clarity, actionable insights, and the tools you need to make the most of this manual:

Checklist

Stay organized with a quick summary of key steps and actionable tips for success.

How MANGO Can Help

Discover resources like templates, guides, workshops, and one-on-one consultations to strengthen your nonprofit's skills and strategies.

Bringing It All Together

Get a concise recap of the section's main points, so you're ready to take the next steps with confidence.

Toolkit Resources

Find extra tools and references, like sample templates and detailed guides, to deepen your understanding and tackle challenges with ease.



Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org

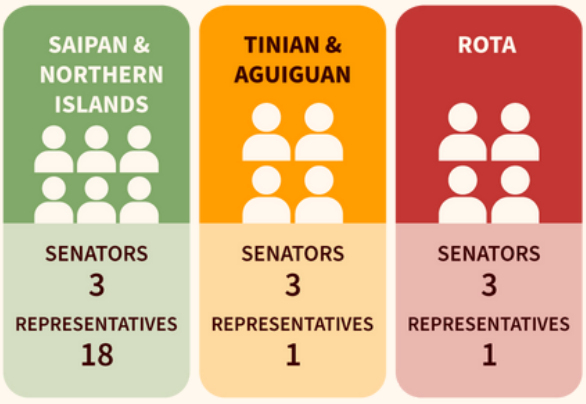
Understanding the Legislative Processes

In the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), legislative appropriations are managed by local delegations following the CNMI Constitution and supporting laws. Nonprofits seeking funding need to understand the role of these delegations and the legal framework governing appropriations to maximize their chances of success.

Local Delegations and Their Role

The CNMI's three legislative delegations are tasked with appropriating funds within their jurisdictions. Each delegation is composed of elected senators and representatives: Each delegation allocates funds generated within its jurisdiction to programs and projects that serve public purposes, as mandated by Article VI, § 3(f) of the CNMI Constitution.

You can find delegation contacts in the Legislature's directory (if this link is broken, you can visit https://cnmileg.net/).



Be Prepared Year-Round:
Pro Tip: Legislative appropriations don't follow fixed deadlines. Stay "proposal-ready" all year to take advantage of short-notice opportunities.

The Legislative Appropriation Process

Local delegations enact funding through local bills, which become law upon passage. These bills are limited to the revenue generated within the corresponding district and must align with constitutional mandates to benefit the public. For example, funds can support community programs, infrastructure projects, or other initiatives that serve the broader community rather than individual interests.

The legislative framework is outlined in Title 1, Division 1 of the CNMI Code (1 CMC § 1401-1409). This structure stems from the Local Law Act of 1983 (Public Law 3-77), with subsequent amendments refining delegation powers and processes.

Key Considerations for Nonprofits

To navigate the legislative funding process effectively, nonprofits should focus on:

1. **Jurisdictional Alignment:** Nonprofits must direct their proposals to the legislative delegation that governs the area where their project will be implemented.

2. **Public Purpose Mandate:** Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the requested funds will serve a public purpose, aligning with constitutional and legislative requirements.
3. **Collaboration Opportunities**: Understanding delegation priorities can help nonprofits tailor their proposals to meet shared goals, such as community health, environmental sustainability, or economic development.
4. **Be Prepared Year-Round**: Unlike formal grant programs, there are no fixed deadlines or application windows for legislative appropriations. Opportunities often arise in connection with delegation meetings, surplus fund availability, or shifting legislative priorities. Nonprofits that maintain open communication with legislators and stay "proposal-ready" throughout the year are more likely to seize these windows when they open. Understanding delegation priorities can help nonprofits tailor their proposals to meet shared goals.
5. **If the Legislature Changes**: You've submitted your proposal and then a new legislature is sworn in. Wait for the first delegation meeting then resubmit your proposal to the correct leadership. Proposals DO NOT carry from one legislature to the next – everything starts over.

Checklist

- **Identify** the appropriate legislative delegation for your project.
- **Demonstrate** a clear public purpose in your proposal.
- **Research** legislative priorities to align your project accordingly.
- **Compile** supporting documentation, such as strategic plans and community letters of support.

How MANGO Can Help

- **Insights**: Provide details on delegation-specific funding priorities.
- **Review**: Assist in aligning proposals with legislative requirements.
- **Workshops**: Offer training on the legislative funding process and proposal development.
- **Connections**: Facilitate introductions to community stakeholders for collaboration.

Bringing It All Together

Understanding the legislative process is key to navigating appropriations successfully. By identifying the appropriate delegation, aligning with constitutional mandates, and collaborating effectively, nonprofits can position their projects for funding success. MANGO is here to support you every step of the way.

Toolkit Resources

- Contact details for legislative delegations.
- Relevant CNMI Code sections.

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org



Ensuring Eligibility

Before you submit a proposal, your organization needs to show it is eligible for funding. This section explains the documents and information you need to prepare — and offers alternative paths for newer nonprofits. Don't worry if you're just getting started. There are flexible options, and MANGO can help you figure out what applies to you.

Organizational Requirements

- **Legal Status**: Nonprofits must provide legal documentation, such as certificates of incorporation or registration.
- **Tax Compliance**: Include tax clearance certificates or IRS determination letters (if applicable).

Financial Stability

Nonprofits must provide evidence of financial stability. Depending on organizational maturity:

1. **Established Organizations**
   - Three years of audited financial statements or equivalent records.
   - Evidence of diversified and consistent funding sources.
2. **Newer Organizations**
   - A detailed one-year financial report, financial projections, and a letter from a fiscal sponsor (see "Alternative Path for Newer Organizations").
   - Both pathways are considered equally valid for eligibility.

Options for organizations without three years of financial statements:

1. **One-Year Financial Report**
   - Summarize income, expenses, and funding sources for the past year.
   - Highlight key achievements or projects to showcase impact.
2. **Third-Party Validation**: Submit a letter of endorsement from a reputable fiscal sponsor or funding partner.
3. **Capacity Building Plan:** Outline strategies for financial management and future stability *(this can be a simple plan for training, budgeting, or strengthening your organization over time)*, including plans for external audits or financial oversight.

What if my organization doesn't have all the documents yet?

Start preparing the basics now. You can still meet with MANGO or delegation staff to discuss your idea and ask what's needed to move forward. New organizations may qualify using a simpler one-year financial report or support from a fiscal sponsor.

Alternative Path for Newer Organizations
For newly established nonprofits lacking historical financial documentation:

1. ***Provide Interim Proof of Stability**:*
   - *Submit start-up funding details or a financial plan demonstrating sustainability.*
   - *Include a letter from a fiscal sponsor or partner (a trusted group that can help manage your finances if you're a new nonprofit) verifying financial oversight.*
2. ***Focus on Transparency**: Provide a statement outlining plans to develop robust financial practices and secure long-term funding.*

Alternative Path for Newer Organizations:
Pro Tip: Don't let a limited financial history stop you. New nonprofits can qualify with a one-year financial report or fiscal sponsor support.

Project-Specific Criteria

- Clearly **identify** the community problem your project aims to address.
- **Demonstrate** alignment with legislative priorities, such as sustainability or social equity.

Checklist

- **Organization Proof**: Certificates of incorporation and tax clearance forms.
- **Supporting Documents**: Strategic plans, financial statements, and letters of support from stakeholders.
- **Fiscal Responsibility**: Detailed one-year financial report if audited statements are unavailable.
- **Supplemental documents**
  - For newer nonprofits, such as financial projections or fiscal sponsorship letters.
  - Capacity-building plan or financial oversight strategies.

How MANGO Can Help

- **Assist** in gathering and verifying legal and financial documentation.
- **Provide** templates and examples for financial stability plans and financial reports.
- **Offer** guidance on preparing supplemental documents, such as projections or fiscal sponsorship letters, for newer nonprofits.
- **Facilitate** connections with fiscal sponsors or partners to strengthen financial credibility.

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org

Bringing It All Together

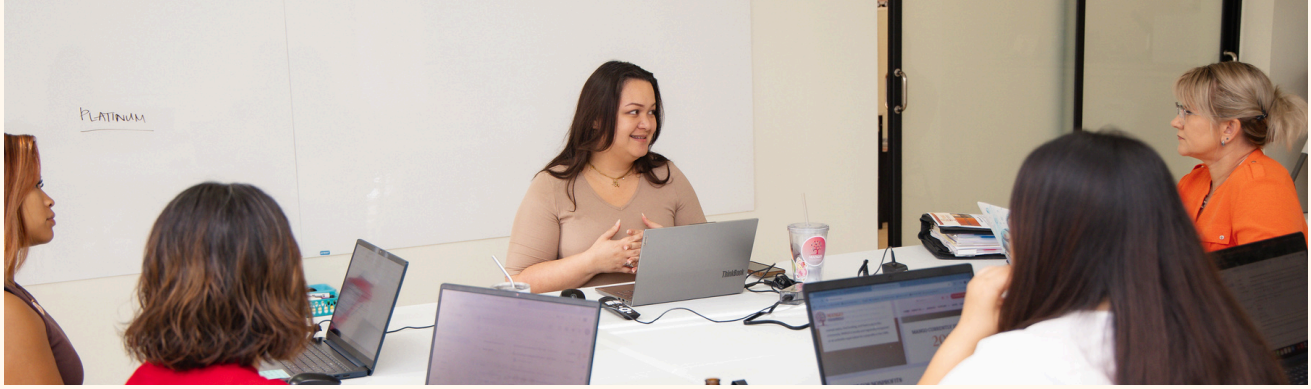
Ensuring eligibility is essential to building trust with legislators and stakeholders. By compiling the right documents and demonstrating financial stability, your organization can present itself as a reliable candidate for funding. MANGO is available to guide you through the process, from meeting documentation requirements to crafting a robust eligibility package.

Toolkit Resources

- Sample financial reports and templates.
- Checklists for documentation requirements.
- Guides for securing fiscal sponsorship or letters of endorsement.
- Tools for developing capacity-building plans.



Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org



Developing a Strong Proposal

A strong proposal is the foundation of any successful funding request. It tells the story of your project in a clear, compelling way, showing how it addresses a community need and aligns with local priorities. Developing a strong proposal isn't just about writing—it's also about listening, refining, and ensuring your project resonates with the people and agencies it will impact.

This section provides a step-by-step guide to developing a proposal that is clear, community-driven, and ready to share with decision-makers. These steps are shown in order, but in real life, they often happen more than once or overlap.

Give Yourself Time to Prepare

Preparing a strong proposal takes time — especially if it's your first submission or your organization is still gathering documents. Most nonprofits should plan for 2 to 4 weeks to complete a proposal, depending on how ready they are with materials like a budget, letters of support, and financial documentation.

Start Early and Schedule Time to Build

- Reach out to community partners and agencies
- Draft and revise your proposal letter
- Request supporting documents (like tax clearance or fiscal sponsorship letters)
- Develop a basic budget with justifications

MANGO can help you stay on track and reduce delays. Don't wait for a delegation meeting to begin — proposals can be submitted at any time once you're ready.

What are some common mistakes?

Missing documents, unclear budgets, or not showing how your project serves the broader community are common issues. Be as clear and complete as possible. Ask MANGO or a trusted partner to review your draft before you submit.

Step 1: Build Relationships with Local Agencies

Building strong relationships with local agencies is a crucial first step in crafting a proposal that aligns with community goals and secures support. Local agencies can offer valuable insights into planning priorities; help identify gaps your project might fill and provide opportunities for collaboration that strengthens your proposal's impact and credibility. This step focuses on establishing connections, gathering input, and refining your project to ensure it aligns with broader community strategies.

1. **Reach Out to Relevant Agencies**: Identify agencies whose work aligns with your project's goals, such as environmental, planning, or education departments. Schedule a meeting or visit to share your initial project idea and learn about their priorities.
2. **Ask for Input**: Present your idea and ask for feedback on how it fits with their existing plans or addresses gaps in their work. Refer to local and regional planning goals to ensure your project supports broader community strategies.
3. **Strengthen Alignment**: Use their feedback to refine your project and ensure it aligns with community plans, such as the CNMI Sustainable Development Plan and/or the NMC Green Growth Initiative.



Step 2: Define the Core of Your Proposal

To create a competitive proposal, balance emphasis on measurable community impact, alignment with regional planning goals, and sustainability. These are common criteria used during proposal reviews.

1. **Clarify the Problem**: Be specific about the issue your project addresses. For example: "Our project will reduce flooding in low-lying areas by implementing a community drainage system."
2. **Explain Your Solution**: Detail how your project will address the problem. Highlight unique elements, such as combining traditional practices with modern techniques.
3. **Show the Impact**: Clearly describe your project's benefits, including measurable improvements within the community.
4. **Sustainability Planning**: Include a dedicated section on how your project will sustain its impact beyond the funding period. Address partnerships, community systems, or additional funding strategies.

Define the Core of Your Proposal
Pro Tip: Be specific. A clearly defined community problem and a practical solution build credibility with decision-makers.



Step 3: Align with Local and Regional Goals

Aligning your project with local and regional goals ensures that it complements broader community priorities and resonates with decision-makers. This step focuses on demonstrating how your project supports or extends existing plans, addresses unmet needs, and positions your organization as a partner in achieving long-term community development. By aligning your proposal with key initiatives, you increase its credibility and relevance.

1. **Review Local Plans**: Explore documents like the CNMI Sustainable Development Plan or the NMC Green Growth Initiative to understand broader priorities.
2. **Position Your Project**: Frame your project as supporting or extending these goals. For example, if a plan emphasizes sustainability, show how your project contributes through renewable energy, waste reduction, or conservation efforts.
3. **Address Gaps**: If your project addresses a need not covered by existing plans, position it as a forward-thinking solution that prepares the community for future challenges.

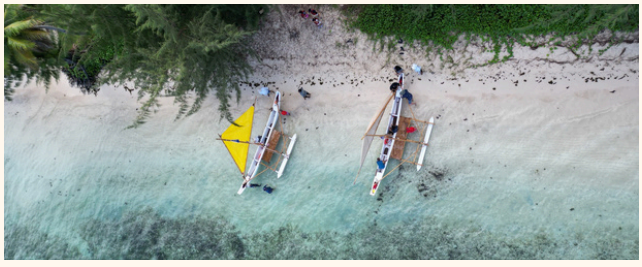
Align with Local and Regional Goals
Pro Tip: Show how your project supports CNMI priorities like the Sustainable Development Plan or Green Growth Initiative.

Step 4: Collaborate with Partners

Collaboration with partners is a critical step in strengthening your proposal and showcasing broad-based support for your project. By involving community stakeholders and organizations early in the process, you can build credibility, gain valuable insights, and demonstrate a shared commitment to achieving your project's goals. This step focuses on fostering partnerships that enhance your proposal's impact and aligning your efforts with those of like-minded entities.

1. **Engage Community Stakeholders**: Work with community leaders, nonprofits, or organizations whose missions align with your project. Involve them early to strengthen your proposal and build credibility.
2. **Secure Letters of Support**: Request endorsements from respected partners to demonstrate community and stakeholder backing.
3. **Leverage Partnerships**: Highlight collaborative efforts in your proposal to show shared ownership and resourcefulness. Connect these efforts to your organization's ability to carry out the project effectively.

Collaborate with Partners
Pro Tip: Letters of support from respected partners add legitimacy to your proposal and show community backing.



Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org

Step 5: Structure the Proposal Letter

The proposal letter serves as the formal introduction to your project and request. Its structure should be professional, clear, and tailored to the audience. A working template is provided for you at the end of this section. Below is the recommended structure for preparing your letter proposal:

1. **Salutation**
   - Address the letter to the Chair of the relevant legislative delegation.
   - Begin with a formal greeting: Håfa Adai yan Tirow, Congressman (or Senator) [Last Name].
2. **Opening Paragraph**
   - Introduce your organization briefly.
   - State the purpose of the letter, including the specific funding amount being requested and the name of the project.
3. **Project Relevance and Vision**
   - Describe how your project aligns with community goals, such as the CNMI Sustainable Development Plan or the NMC Green Growth Initiative.
   - Emphasize how the project fits into a larger vision for the community.
4. **Organization Overview and Community Impact**
   - Summarize your nonprofit's mission and history, highlighting past successes.
   - Demonstrate the potential of your project to address gaps or meet urgent community needs.
5. **Project Details and Budget**
   - Provide a clear overview of the project's activities, objectives, and timeline.
   - Include the total funding amount requested and a summary of key budget categories.
6. **Closing Paragraph**
   - Conclude with a statement of gratitude and a summary of the project's significance.
   - Provide your contact information and specify any deadlines or urgency regarding the funding request.

Step 6: Review and Refine

1. **Get Feedback**: Share a draft of your proposal with trusted partners or agency contacts for additional input. Ask them to review both the content and tone to ensure clarity and alignment.
2. **Ensure Completeness**: Double-check that all required sections, supporting documents, and attachments are included.
3. **Work with MANGO**: MANGO can help you polish your proposal, ensuring it meets the expectations of legislators and decision-makers. Use their expertise to identify any gaps or opportunities to strengthen your proposal.

Recommended Attachments

Include the following supporting documents to strengthen your proposal:

- Legal and tax documentation (e.g., Certificate of Incorporation, Tax Clearance).
- Financial statements, previous 990 filings, or a fiscal responsibility letter.
- Strategic or business plans.
- Budget worksheet with narrative justifications.
- Letters of commitment and support from partners or stakeholders.
- Resumes of key project staff and position descriptions for unfilled roles.

Tips for Crafting an Effective Proposal Letter

- **Be Concise and Clear:** While comprehensive, the letter should remain concise and focused. Avoid unnecessary jargon.
- **Tailor the Content:** Customize the letter for the specific delegation and its priorities.
- **Demonstrate Alignment:** Highlight connections between your project and state planning goals.
- **Show Measurable Impact:** Use data or past successes to illustrate the project's potential benefits.

What are some common mistakes?
Pro Tip: Missing budgets, vague goals, and unclear benefits are top reasons proposals fail. Double-check everything before submission.



Checklist

- **Build relationships** with relevant local agencies and stakeholders.
- **Clarify the community problem** your project addresses and the solution it provides.
- **Align your proposal** with local and regional planning goals (e.g., CNMI Sustainable Development Plan, NMC Green Growth Initiative).
- **Develop a clear sustainability plan**, detailing how the project will continue beyond the funding period.
- **Highlight measurable community impacts** and tie them to legislative priorities.
- **Structure** the proposal professionally, including:
  - An introduction with the funding amount requested.
  - A detailed project plan with objectives and a timeline.
  - A well-justified budget with narrative explanations for each category.
- **Secure letters of support** from stakeholders and partners.
- **Review and refine** the proposal for clarity, completeness, and alignment with legislative requirements.

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org



How MANGO Can Help

- Ask us about **workshops** on proposal writing and alignment with legislative goals.
- Providing **templates** for structuring proposals, budgets, and sustainability plans.
- **Reviewing** drafts to ensure clarity, alignment, and completeness.
- **Facilitating** connections with community stakeholders to gather letters of support.
- **Guiding** organizations in linking their projects to broader regional goals.

Bringing It All Together

A strong proposal combines clear messaging, robust planning, and strategic alignment with community and legislative priorities. By building strong partnerships, identifying measurable impacts, and including a clear sustainability plan, your proposal can stand out. MANGO provides the expertise and resources to refine your ideas and create a compelling case for funding. Collaborate with MANGO to ensure your proposal meets expectations and resonates with decision-makers.

Toolkit Resources

- Sample proposal letters and annotated templates.
- Budget worksheets with example narratives.
- Examples of effective sustainability plans.
- Guides for aligning regional planning initiatives.
- Tools for tracking and documenting community impacts.

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org


SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
500 Sails MANGO Nonprofit

Template: Proposal Letter

The following template is designed to show all the elements that a strong proposal might include. Your letter does not need to follow this structure exactly — it can be shorter or simpler depending on your project. Focus on being clear, honest, and community-centered. In the template, you will see [words inside brackets] like this. Replace the words in the brackets with your proposal information and remove the brackets.

Tip for First-Time Applicants!

Start small. If you're not sure how to begin, draft just the first two paragraphs: who you are and what you're asking for. Then contact MANGO - we can help you build from there.

For experienced proposal writers, your finished letter should be no more than 2 pages.



[Use Your Letterhead]

Hafa Adai yan Tirow, Congressman (or Senator) [Last Name],

Paragraph 1: Provide a summary of who you are, why you are asking, and the total amount of your request.

EXAMPLE: On behalf of [Insert Nonprofit Organization Name], I am writing to respectfully request funding support in the amount of [Insert Total Amount] to implement our [Insert Project Name]. Our organization, which has served the [island community] for [X years], aims to address [specific issue or challenge] through this initiative.

Paragraph 2: Explain the relevance and vision for your project. Describe how your project aligns with the Commonwealth Sustainable Development Plan or the NMC Green Growth Initiative, demonstrating its broader community benefit.

EXAMPLE: The [Project Name] aligns with the priorities outlined in the Commonwealth Sustainable Development Plan by [specific alignment, e.g., "promoting economic growth while preserving natural resources"]. This initiative envisions [describe vision, e.g., "enhancing community resilience through renewable energy projects"] and aims to deliver measurable benefits to [specific community or stakeholder group].

Paragraph 3: Describe your organization and its vision. Highlight how your efforts relate to community partners or fill a gap in community needs.

EXAMPLE: [Nonprofit Organization Name] was established to [state mission, e.g., "empower underserved communities through education and workforce development"]. Through collaborations with partners such as [name key partners], we focus on addressing gaps in [specific needs, e.g., "access to vocational training programs"] to create lasting change.

Paragraph 4: Connect your project idea to your organization's mission and explain how it addresses a specific community gap.

EXAMPLE: This project builds directly on our mission by [describe connection, e.g., "equipping residents with tools and resources to overcome economic challenges"]. By addressing the gap in [specific area, e.g., "affordable housing"], this initiative will empower [target audience, e.g., "low-income families"] to achieve greater stability and success.

Paragraph 5: Share your organization's history and accomplishments, particularly those relevant to the proposed project.

EXAMPLE: Over the past [X years], [Nonprofit Organization Name] has implemented impactful projects such as [list key accomplishments or programs]. These efforts have benefited [specific outcomes, e.g., "over 2,000 households through clean water access"] and demonstrate our commitment to driving meaningful progress in our community.

Paragraph 6: Provide detailed information about your project, including how the requested funds will be used to advance the initiative, with a budget breakdown across categories such as personnel, travel, equipment, and supplies. Outline the project timeline, specifying the start and end dates, key milestones, and any contingency plans in place. Highlight project partners and the commitments they have made to support the effort. Describe the key leadership team and their relevant experience that ensures successful project implementation. If applicable, include details of prior CNMI local legislative funding experience, highlighting specific outcomes and the impact achieved.

EXAMPLE: The requested funds of [Insert Total Amount] will be used to advance [Project Name] through a carefully planned budget that allocates [Insert Amount] for [Insert budget category eg: personnel], [Insert Amount] for [Insert budget category eg: equipment], [Insert Amount] for [Insert budget category eg: travel], and [Insert Amount] for [Insert budget category eg: supplies]. The project will begin on [Start Date] and conclude by [End Date], with key milestones including [List Milestones, e.g., "installation of 10 solar energy systems by September"] and [Additional Milestone, e.g., "a community training workshop in October"]. Our partners, such as [Partner Name], have committed [specific support, e.g., "in-kind contributions of equipment and expertise"]. The project will be led by [Name], a [Brief Title/Expertise, e.g., "renewable energy expert with over 15 years of experience in sustainable energy projects"]. Previous legislative funding of [Insert Amount], used for [Brief Description of Prior Project], allowed us to [Describe Outcomes, e.g., "establish solar energy systems in five schools, benefiting 2,000 students and reducing operational costs by 20%"], showcasing our ability to deliver impactful and measurable results. [Note: If no previous legislative funding, you can use another funding example.]

Paragraph 7: Include your closing statement, thank the recipient, and provide your contact information. Mention any project deadlines.

EXAMPLE: We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request and your ongoing dedication to supporting community-driven initiatives. Should you require additional information, please feel free to contact me at [Your Phone Number] or [Your Email Address]. We hope to secure funding before [Project Deadline] to ensure timely implementation.

Si Yu'us Ma'åsi' yan Ghilisow,
[Authorized Representative Name]
[Title]
[Nonprofit Organization Name]
xc: Congressman [Name], [delegation] Ways & Means Committee Chair

Attachments

1. Certificate of Incorporation
2. Certificate of Existence
3. Annual Corporate Report
4. Tax Status: CNMI Determination Letter, Business License, CNMI Tax Clearance, IRS Determination (if applicable)
5. Financial Responsibility: MANGO Letter of Engagement, financial statements, previous 990 filings
6. Strategic plan, business plan
7. Budget worksheet with narrative justifications
8. Letters of commitment
9. Letters of support
10. Resumes for key project staff, position descriptions for unfilled positions

Budget Worksheet Template

Use this template to outline your project budget, detailing the legislative request, organization contribution, and justification for each expense category. Replace [bracketed text] with specific amounts and descriptions relevant to your project.

Category	Legislative Request Share	Organization Share	Total	Justification
Personnel	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Explain how personnel costs support the project]
Fringe Benefits	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Justify fringe benefits, e.g., required employee benefits]
Travel	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Describe travel purpose and destinations]
Equipment	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Explain why equipment is necessary for the project]
Supplies	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Specify supplies and their relevance to the project]
Contractual	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Justify contractual needs, such as consultants or services]
Construction	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Explain any construction costs or improvements]
Other	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Include any other costs and justify them]
Total Direct Charges	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Leave this box blank]
Indirect Charges	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Describe the basis for indirect cost calculations]
Total Project Cost	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[$ Insert]	[Leave this box blank]

Budget Worksheet Template
Pro Tip: Use your budget to tell your story. Explain how each expense supports your project's impact and sustainability.

How MANGO Can Help

Tools, Support, and a Path Forward



Navigating legislative funding takes preparation, clarity, and confidence. MANGO is here to help nonprofits every step of the way — whether you're applying for the first time, resubmitting a refined proposal, or preparing to manage funds after approval.

This guide is just the beginning. Through I Tinituhon–Bweletal, MANGO offers practical tools, dedicated coaching, and system-level advocacy to ensure nonprofits have what they need to successfully access and manage legislative appropriations.

What We Offer

Proposal Development Support

- Templates for proposal letters, budgets, and sustainability plans
- Draft review and constructive feedback
- Coaching on narrative structure, alignment with priorities, and measurable outcomes

Workshops and Trainings

- Group workshops on proposal writing, financial documentation, and alignment with regional plans
- One-on-one support for advocacy, reporting, and sustainability
- One-on-one consultation tailored to your organization's needs

Financial Readiness and Compliance Tools

- Budget worksheets and justification templates
- Sample financial reports and 1-year alternatives for newer nonprofits
- Guidance on fiscal sponsorship and financial oversight

Post-Award Support

- Guidance on work plans, timelines, and required reports
- Templates for monitoring, evaluation, and storytelling
- Financial tracking tools and reporting support

Capacity Building and Peer Support

- Self-assessment tools to identify organizational strengths and gaps
- Capacity-building plan templates and examples
- Peer learning sessions and shared case studies

Looking Ahead

MANGO is committed to continuing this support through the release of practical tools and templates — available as part of our online I Tinituhon–Bweletal Toolkit. Helpful resources are available, and more will be released as they become available. Topics covered will include:

- Templates, checklists, and planning tools
- Advocacy strategies and ethical engagement
- Managing appropriated funds effectively

Toolkit Resources referenced throughout this guide are available by request from MANGO or can be downloaded at mangocnmi.org

You're Not Alone

If you're ready to begin or just need someone to walk through your draft, reach out. This is a learning process, and every proposal you write is a step forward. You don't have to do it alone — and you don't have to be perfect to get started.

Contact MANGO

670-233-6200 | info@mangocnmi.org | www.mangocnmi.org



Si Yu'us Ma'åsi and Ghilisow
We Look Forward to Supporting Your Journey.



My Notes

My Notes


MANGO
Marianas Alliance of
Non-Governmental Organizations