



# **Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions**

## **What is Operation Round Up?**

Operation Round Up (ORU) is a combined effort by Cullman Electric Cooperative and the Cullman Power Board to financially support local educators. The funding is provided by electric utility customers who have their monthly bill rounded up to the next whole dollar. Since the program was started locally in 1993, more than \$5 million has been given to schools for classroom use.

## **Who serves on the Operation Round Up board?**

The board is made up of sixteen (16) volunteers from the community. There are eleven (11) members appointed by the Board of Directors of Cullman Electric Cooperative and five (5) members appointed by the Cullman Power Board, representative of their service areas and schools within the districts. Each member serves a 3-year term and can be reappointed.

## **When does the Operation Round Up board meet and vote on grant applications?**

The board meets regularly on the second Thursday of January, February, March, April, September, October, and November.

## **What is the annual “paper” grant?**

Each April, the ORU has continued to award a set amount of money for the school systems’ administration to purchase copy paper for the start of the upcoming school year. In 2018, the grant was amended to include printer lease agreements and toner cartridge purchases, in addition to paper.

## **APPLYING FOR A GRANT**

### **Who can apply for an Operation Round Up grant?**

Any teacher or educator with an Operation Round Up account can apply for a grant.

### **What kinds of purchases can be made with Operation Round Up grant funds?**

Per the by-laws that govern the ORU trust, funds “will be awarded to recipients who complete a grant application with the full name of the requested items and thorough description of how the items will be used to benefit the student educational purposes in the classroom.” And “expenditures may not be used for salaries or capital improvements and may only be used to directly benefit students in the classroom.”

### **What are some examples of grant requests that are not allowed?**

Whether or not the application’s request meets the requirements as outlined by the by-laws is at the discretion of the board members during voting. Some board members may vote yes, while others may vote no. Examples of previously denied items are furniture, office or cleaning supplies, food, field trips, clothing, teacher’s equipment (laptops, printers, organizational or decorative supplies), or extra curriculum materials.



## **Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How do I apply for a grant?**

Log into the ORU website and complete the fields in the application.

<http://operationroundup.azurewebsites.net/Login.aspx>

### **Is there a minimum or maximum dollar amount I can request?**

No, however, most grants range between \$100 and \$250. Any grant greater than \$500 should be discussed with your principal before applying.

### **When and how often can I apply for an Operation Round Up grant?**

You can apply for a grant once per application period. Please refer to the Cullman EC website, Cullman Power Board website or other printed materials for a list of current application periods and cutoff dates.

### **What are some best practices when writing a grant application?**

- Be specific – especially in the description of the products to be purchased and how it will benefit students in your classroom. Answer what and why. EX: I would like to purchase several manipulatives – a set of farm animal toys, a box of building blocks, and a kit of string beads – to use for language development and fine motor skills.
- Include a website link to the product(s)
- Get a quote for the full amount including taxes, shipping, and discounts. Request only what is needed to make the purchase
- Copy/paste your grant application into a word document and save it. If you are not approved, reapply. See *'Why was my grant not approved?'* for more information.

## **THE GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS**

### **Once I submit my grant application, what happens next?**

Your principal or site administrator will review your application and either approve or deny it. The Operation Round Up board only reviews and votes on grants that have been approved by the principal or site administrator. Once approved by the principal or site administrator, the application will be reviewed by the board at their next meeting.

### **How does a grant application get approved by the Operation Round Up Board?**

Each application is reviewed by the board members and voted on – either a yes or no vote from each board member. The number of yes votes is recorded. If a predetermined number of board members (usually the majority of the quorum present) votes yes, the grant is approved. If the grant application did not receive enough yes votes, it is denied.

### **Why was my grant not approved?**

There is one of two reasons. The first reason may be there simply are not enough grant funds available to award your grant. See *'How does a grant application get approved by the Operation Round Up*



## **Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions**

*Board?’ for more information. You should submit your application again. The other reason may be the application did not meet the requirements or was too vague. See ‘What kinds of purchases can be made with Operation Round Up grant funds?’ or ‘What are some examples of grant requests that are not allowed?’ or ‘What are some best practices when writing a grant application?’ for more information. Revise your application and reapply.*

### **MAKING PURCHASES USING GRANT FUNDS**

#### **My grant application has been approved. Now what do I do?**

You have 60 days to make your purchases and submit your receipts/invoices to your school’s bookkeeper. If requested, you can receive an additional 30 day grace period.

#### **I need to make my purchase from multiple stores, vendors, or websites. Is there anything I need to do differently than if I had just one transaction?**

Please hold all receipts/invoices until all purchases have been made then submit all at once. It will prevent errors and having to issue multiple checks.

#### **I spent more (or less) than I was awarded. What amount will the reimbursement?**

The reimbursement will be for the lesser of the two amounts. For example, if you were awarded \$100 yet spent \$105, your reimbursement would be \$100. The school would need to absorb the \$5 that was overspent. Conversely, if you only spent \$95, your grant reimbursement would be only \$95 as well. As a best practice, get a detailed quote including taxes, shipping, and discounts before applying for the grant.

#### **What type of documentation do I need to provide once I make my purchase(s) and who should receive it?**

The receipts/invoices must include:

- Place and date of purchase
- An itemized list of the items purchased
- The total of the price paid including taxes, shipping, and discounts

***Write your last name and grant number on each page and turn it into your bookkeeper.***

#### **How long do I have to make my purchase?**

You have 60 days to make your purchases and submit your receipts/invoices to your school’s bookkeeper.

#### **What happens if I do not make my purchase or no longer need the items that approved?**

If the purchase is not made before the 60-day deadline, the grant will be voided and the reserved funds released. Notify Cullman Electric Cooperative if you no longer need the items so it can be voided as well.



## **Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions**

**The item I wanted to purchase and wrote the grant application for is no longer available. What are my options?**

If there is a comparable item, notify Cullman Electric Cooperative and request the description of the grant be edited before making the purchase. Note that the amount of the grant cannot be changed. If there is not a comparable item, the grant will need to be voided.

**All or some of the items I ordered are on backorder and will not arrive before the 60-day deadline?**

**What do I need?**

Submit the invoices or other documentation that shows the items are on backorder and will ship once available. Reimbursement will be sent, even if the items have not been shipped yet.

**How does the school receive the reimbursement money?**

Once all receipts/invoices are received for a grant, a check is made payable to the school and mailed.

**Can the check be made out to me instead of the school?**

No, the reimbursement is made to the school. Please work with the school for reimbursement if personal funds were used to make the purchase.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE/TECHNICAL/OTHER QUESTIONS**

**How do I get an Operation Round Up account?**

Please create your own account at <http://operationroundup.azurewebsites.net/Register.aspx>.

**The grant site says it is "closed." What does that mean?**

The site has been disabled either to prepare for the upcoming board meeting or the summer break.

**I have forgotten my username or password. What do I do?**

Please submit a request by clicking on the *Forgot Username* or *Forgot Password* links at the top center of the site. If you are still having issues, email [operationroundup@cullmanec.com](mailto:operationroundup@cullmanec.com) requesting your username or password. You'll be emailed a response.

**I have transferred to a different school. How do I change my account?**

Email [operationroundup@cullmanec.com](mailto:operationroundup@cullmanec.com) requesting your account to be updated. You'll be emailed a response.

**I have had a name change or email address change. How do I change my account?**

Email [operationroundup@cullmanec.com](mailto:operationroundup@cullmanec.com) requesting your account to be updated. You'll be emailed a response.

**I am the principal or site administrator. What is my role?**



## **Operation Round Up Frequently Asked Questions**

You'll receive an automated email each time a grant application is created. You'll need to log in to the site with your administrator username and password to approve or deny the application before the cutoff date. The Operation Round Up board only reviews and votes on grants that have been approved by the principal or site administrator. Please review the applications carefully. After the board meets, you will receive automated emails to notify you which grants were approved. Teachers receive a response as well. On the site, you can also view past approved grants and see the teachers who have accounts assigned to your school. Please notify Cullman Electric Cooperative if teachers have moved to a different school, resigned, or retired.

### **I am the bookkeeper. What is my role?**

You are the main point of contact for the program at the school. Please work with the principal and teachers to facilitate their applications and purchases.

### **I am the bookkeeper. How do I submit receipts/invoices for reimbursement?**

**Write the teacher's last name and grant number on each page.**

The receipts/invoices must include:

- Place and date of purchase
- An itemized list of the items purchased
- The total of the price paid including taxes, shipping, and discounts

Preferred method of submission: Scan all receipts for the grant into one PDF. Name the PDF with the teacher's last name and grant number. Email the PDF to [operationroundup@cullmanec.com](mailto:operationroundup@cullmanec.com). Faxes to 256-737-1639 are acceptable but may not be received or traced as easily as an email. Photos of receipts are acceptable. A balance due invoice is acceptable.

### **I am the bookkeeper. How can I find out which teachers received grants after a board meeting?**

If you are also the site administrator (delegated by the principal), you will receive automated emails. If not, please ask your principal to forward you the approval emails after each meeting.

### **DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?**

Please contact Cullman Electric Cooperative by email at [operationroundup@cullmanec.com](mailto:operationroundup@cullmanec.com) or call 256-737-3200.