

Grant Guidelines

The history of The George Gund Foundation reflects a deep commitment to place, to the Greater Cleveland community that was the home of its founder and that remains the Foundation's home. The Foundation's philanthropic stewardship of this region derives not just from our history, but also from our belief that Cleveland can continue to develop original responses to urban issues and from our hope that collaborations across boundaries can create a crucible of innovation in all fields of endeavor. Moreover, the urban emphasis of our work stems from a belief that thriving cities are among the nation's best hopes for addressing our essential problems. This focus is especially vital in an era of diminished government involvement in urban issues, intensifying globalization and heightened awareness of the central role of regions.

The Foundation's guidelines reflect our long-standing interests in the arts, economic development and community revitalization, education, environment and human services because these areas embrace most of the major issues that any community must address. While we continue to organize much of our work within these program areas, there is increasing awareness that many issues and, therefore, many grant proposals do not fit neatly into one program category. Indeed, the work of a growing number of nonprofit organizations brings together aspects of several of our core interests, and, as a result, we are becoming ever more interdisciplinary in our approach.

This is particularly evident with initiatives that aim to make Cleveland, and urban areas generally, more globally competitive, livable, sustainable and just. It is in this domain that the greatest need and maximum opportunity converge with the Foundation's primary interests, expertise and ongoing stewardship. We especially seek to support innovative ideas being pursued by creative and entrepreneurial organizations.

Our primarily urban focus motivates us to devote attention and resources to the illumination of policies that shape the issues we care about. National, state and local policymaking affects all of the Foundation's work and the work of the organizations we fund. Consequently, we feel a special obligation to support the nonpartisan voice of nonprofit advocacy in policy deliberations that directly relate to our program interests.

Global climate change is an urgent issue that cuts across all the Foundation's programs. Every organization and individual can help to address this problem. The Foundation takes seriously our own responsibility, and we want to hear from grant applicants what they are doing or considering to reduce or to eliminate their organizational impact on climate change. Our website includes links to helpful resources, and Foundation staff will assist grant seekers—both new and those of long standing—in all of our program areas with questions they may have.

Arts

The Foundation values and supports the role the arts play in making Cleveland and its region a more desirable place to live, encouraging the growth of a creative workforce, catalyzing development in our neighborhoods and serving as a bridge between various segments of the community. The Foundation encourages a lively, diverse arts community in Greater Cleveland by funding projects in the city and its first-ring suburbs that contribute to Cleveland's urban vitality, attract new audiences, expand artistic offerings and increase organizational capacity. We also try to balance continuing support that ensures the stability of Cleveland's arts institutions with funding for new initiatives, programs and organizations that foster creativity in our community. Arts education continues to be a priority, with a focus on curriculum-related partnerships between arts organizations and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. In addition, the Foundation seeks to advance the region's understanding of the importance of the arts by supporting the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture.

Economic Development & Community Revitalization

Sustaining uniquely urban assets such as vibrant neighborhoods and a thriving downtown is a key part of a successful regional strategy to promote economic growth. The Foundation devotes considerable attention to these dynamics, in particular by supporting collaborative efforts that leverage resources. As a result, the highest priority is given to initiatives that bolster the impact of Foundation-supported intermediary organizations working to improve the competitiveness of Cleveland's neighborhoods and its metropolitan region. Examples of such initiatives include quality urban planning and design, improvements to urban parks and public spaces, promotion of equal opportunity and diversity in housing and the workplace and proposals to redevelop Cleveland's downtown, neighborhoods and first-ring suburbs.

Education

Education is fundamental to success, and if Cleveland is to produce, attract and retain talent and be the thriving center of a robust regional economy, expectations about education must rise exponentially. Consequently, our Foundation's focus is on the transformation of public education in Cleveland in order to equip children from early childhood onward with the skills they ultimately will need to meet the demands of college, the 21st-century workplace and international standards. Our primary area of interest is the creation and support of new, innovative, excellent schools in Cleveland that drive autonomy and accountability to the school level and create different teaching and learning conditions to ensure student success. We support statewide policy and advocacy efforts in furtherance of this work, particularly related to the importance of high-quality teachers and principals in every classroom and school. We also maintain a desire to support disadvantaged students through key transitions, especially to higher education.

Environment

Human well-being is inextricably linked to the quality of the environment. Urban areas bring this fact into sharp focus as historic disregard for the environment and modern development pressures create great challenges. Cleveland's relationship to these issues—and, therefore, its opportunity—are unique because the 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River was a key factor in launching the modern environmental movement. The Foundation supports organizations that seek to build on that legacy in order to transform the community into a model of urban sustainability. The Foundation focuses on opportunities to take advantage of Cleveland's distinctive ecosystem to advance environmental improvements, promote alternatives to urban sprawl, devise innovative ways for cities to take a leading role in the fight against climate change and increase public awareness of environmental issues.

Human Services

Heightened focus on developing a more globally competitive city and region demands recognition that people are at the heart of this effort and that all segments of society can make constructive contributions. To maximize those contributions, direct attention must be paid to the needs of those most at risk of being left out of social and economic transformation. Building human capital begins at birth, and the Foundation pays special attention to the needs of Greater Cleveland's disadvantaged children through grants to support early childhood care and education, abuse prevention and improved foster care and adoption systems. In addition, the Foundation provides some support for the local "safety net" of food, clothing, shelter and access to health care. A closely related set of interests is reflected in the Foundation's desire to help vulnerable populations achieve access to health insurance, the legal system, community support following release from prison and safe and affordable reproductive health services.

The Foundation normally does not consider grants for endowments. Capital requests must meet the Foundation's program goals and also adhere to "green building" standards of environmental sustainability. Details on these requirements are available from the Foundation. Grants are not made for debt reduction or to fund benefit events.

The Foundation does not make grants to individuals, nor does it administer programs it supports. Grants are limited to organizations located in the United States.

The Foundation makes grants only to organizations that meet Internal Revenue Code requirements as nonprofit tax-exempt organizations and to qualified government units and agencies. Grant funds may not be used to participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.