

THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION

President
Cleveland, Ohio

THE SEARCH

The George Gund Foundation (Gund), a vital civic leader in Cleveland and beyond, seeks a President who will further its mission to advance human wellbeing through progressive, responsive, and accountable philanthropy. Since its founding in 1952, Gund has been anchored in Cleveland, the home of its founder and the focus of much of its work. It currently unites its grantmaking and community partnerships across three overarching, interconnected themes that are among the most profound and urgent challenges facing society today: climate change and environmental degradation; entrenched and accelerating inequity, particularly racial inequity; and weakened democracy.

Through grantmaking, collaborations, thought leadership, and advocacy, the Gund Foundation works to strengthen the base of equitable community power in Cleveland and to support approaches that might serve as innovative examples for other cities and communities nationwide. The Foundation helps to develop networks and alliances that advance environmental justice; creative arts and culture; robust public education for all; inclusive economic growth and opportunity; thriving families and neighborhoods; and racial and social justice. Gund favors an interdisciplinary approach and nurtures close, collaborative, and respectful relationships among its staff and with its grantees, community partners, and fellow funders. This approach is outlined in the Foundation's statement of [*What We Believe*](#).

The organization is supported by twelve staff and a nine-member board of trustees comprising six third-generation members of the Gund family and three Cleveland community leaders. The Foundation holds an endowment of \$649 million (as of July 2021), has an FY2021 grantmaking budget of \$45.6 million (a deliberately high pay-out due to COVID-19), and an operating budget of \$3.6 million. Gund complements its traditional grantmaking with program-related investments, shareholder activism, and convening and capacity-building efforts.

The Foundation seeks a President who shares its deep interest in Cleveland as a dynamic American city that is confronting the nation's most pressing societal challenges. The next President will work closely with board and staff to ensure that Gund's approach is grounded in the lived experiences of its community partners, that the individuals and organizations fighting for progress are supported via robust grantmaking and strategic collaboration, its internal culture is just and inclusive, and the Foundation remains at the vanguard of institutional philanthropy.

The Gund Foundation has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

BACKGROUND

The Gund Foundation was founded in 1952 by George Gund, former chairperson of the Cleveland Trust Company, to support institutions and issues of personal importance to him and his family in Cleveland and elsewhere. Mr. Gund believed the private foundation concept provided the most positive, farsighted vehicle for intelligent underwriting of creative solutions to societal ills in a manner that would not be limited to his own lifetime. The Foundation's mission statement, which has held true for years, states:

The George Gund Foundation was established in 1952 as a private, nonprofit institution with the sole purpose of contributing to human wellbeing and the progress of society. Over the years, program objectives and emphases have been modified to meet the changing opportunities and problems of our society, but the Foundation's basic goal of advancing human welfare remains constant.

Upon Mr. Gund's death in 1966, the Foundation's assets grew considerably and in 1969 it was able to hire its first staff members. During this time, the Foundation began to develop priorities that reflected not only Mr. Gund's interests but also new areas of focus critical for Cleveland. Today, Mr. Gund's vision to advance societal progress carries forth through strategic grantmaking, capacity-building efforts, and policy advocacy. Gund has also consistently and increasingly reaffirmed its commitment to Cleveland in particular, as an important and iconic city where the Foundation's wealth was acquired, where so many of society's challenges are manifest, and where innovative solutions can be tested and amplified.

THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION TODAY

What We Believe

In early 2020, following several years of thought and engagement among grantee partners, board, and staff, the Gund Foundation released a comprehensive statement that articulates its priorities and approach more sharply and explicitly than in the past. *What We Believe* highlights three overarching and interconnected challenges that now propel the Foundation in all its activities:

- Climate change and environmental degradation.
- Entrenched and accelerating inequity, particularly racial inequity.
- Weakened democracy.

The statement also describes the Foundation's focus on Greater Cleveland as a point of leverage and outlines Gund's approach and aspirations in its work with grantee partners and the communities they serve.

Current Program Areas

Climate and Environmental Justice

Gund has long been a leader of progressive climate change and environmental justice efforts, in Ohio and at the national level. The Foundation invests in myriad approaches to address environmental degradation, including the promotion of sustainable land use, clean energy, and transportation; strengthening urban cores, creating urban green space, fighting sprawl, and rebuilding cities; and

advancing systems change at the policy level. Gund prioritizes support for organizations that are led by and serve communities of color and socioeconomically disenfranchised communities, which are most vulnerable to the damaging effects of climate change and pollution.

Creative Culture and Arts

A robust arts and culture ecosystem contributes to the strong sense of community and civic dialogue necessary to make progress on complex issues. Gund supports Cleveland's artistic collaborations, legacy institutions, and smaller emerging organizations that reflect the full breadth and culture of the city's neighborhoods, paying particular attention to fortifying organizations led by and serving people of color. The Foundation also collaborates with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to help students realize their full creative and intellectual spirit through rich artistic experiences.

Public Education

Gund believes in the power of public education and works to ensure that every child in Cleveland attends a high-quality school and that every neighborhood has a multitude of great schools from which families can choose. The Foundation works primarily with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and its partners across the city and supports advocacy for sound and consistent statewide policy that strengthens public education and mitigates the effects of poverty on learning. Central to Gund's work in this program area is overcoming the continuing issue of racially segregated schools and communities.

Thriving Families and Social Justice

Gund strives toward a more just community and society which eliminate the conditions that create human need or limit fundamental rights. The Foundation invests in people who are historically and currently marginalized due to systemic racism and other entrenched discrimination. It focuses its efforts on critical life junctures, including pre-natal and early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Gund supports public policy advocacy, formation, and implementation that reduces poverty, strengthens family economic and social stability, seeks transformation of the current criminal-legal system plagued by racial injustice, and promotes fair tax and fiscal policies. It also promotes the fair use of data to accurately reflect the lived experiences of those most marginalized.

Vibrant Neighborhoods and Inclusive Economy

Gund invests in and advocates for the creation of city neighborhoods that are economically robust, safe, and healthy environments in which to live and work, and where innovative ideas and insights can flourish. The Foundation supports collaborative economic and community development efforts that foster environmental justice, fight racial segregation, reduce concentrated poverty, create quality jobs, and invest in entrepreneurs of marginalized backgrounds and identities.

Grant Allocation

In FY2021, Gund intends to direct \$3.6 million to creative culture and arts, \$4 million to climate and environmental justice, \$5.2 million to public education, \$5.2 million to thriving families and social justice, \$5.7 million to vibrant neighborhoods and inclusive economy, and \$8 million to interdisciplinary projects and various special commitments. The Foundation's median grant size is \$80,000 and its current average grant length is 17 months.

The Foundation also provides capital grants for construction or renovation projects in Greater Cleveland that seek US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. These grants are made only to nonprofit organizations that would otherwise qualify for grants based on the Foundation's guidelines and priorities.

Impact Beyond Grantmaking

The Foundation leverages tools beyond grantmaking to effectively achieve its mission. For instance, it communicates and collaborates actively with diverse entities across Cleveland and beyond to address challenges facing grantees and their constituencies and to allow for critical discourse around new ideas or potential approaches. Gund also regularly joins with other funders to coordinate around community priorities; foster relationships across issues and constituencies; share fresh perspectives and innovative solutions; and pool critical resources.

Since 2004, Gund has also operated an innovative Fellowship program, which provides a two-year, full-time paid opportunity for promising early-career professionals interested in work in public service or the nonprofit sector. Fellows work as full staff members within the Foundation on a wide range of substantive assignments including analyzing grant proposals, organizing and conducting site visits, and pursuing research related to Gund's grantmaking interests. Fellows often go on to be impactful civic leaders in Cleveland, northeast Ohio, and beyond.

Gund has long engaged in program-related investments (PRIs) in nonprofit ventures that fit particularly well with the Foundation's grantmaking objectives. PRIs can take the form of loans, equity investments, linked deposits, and loan guarantees and, unlike grants, are expected to be repaid. Gund has engaged in 35 PRIs and currently has approximately \$6.4 million actively invested across eight transactions.

Recognizing the power of strategic investing to advance *What We Believe*, the Foundation is also carefully and prudently shifting its portfolio investment strategy to better align with its core values. This includes hiring investment managers who are women and people of color; strategic environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing; divesting from certain industries that harm the planet and its people; and engaging in shareholder activism. This has become an increasingly important strategy for the Foundation to ensure that it leverages all of its assets in ways that will best support its mission.

Pandemic Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation gave grantees the option of converting special purpose or project support to general operating funds and eased or waived reporting and application requirements. It also joined with philanthropic partners to create a Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund which has to date awarded more than \$16 million in critical community support. Significantly, the board also decided to seize the challenge and urgency of the moment to increase the Foundation's payout to ten percent for both 2020 and 2021, significantly increasing its grantmaking.

Even as it returns to a payout that will be sustainable over the long run, the Foundation intends to dedicate itself to greater flexibility and longevity in its grantmaking, a higher level of general

operating support, and a commitment to increase community input into its strategies and grantmaking decisions.

Governance

The Foundation is governed by a nine-member board of trustees, six of whom are members of the Gund family and three of whom are community leaders in Cleveland. Under the current by-laws, family trustees may serve for an unlimited number of terms and Cleveland trustees may serve two consecutive three-year terms, with the option for reelection after one three-year term off the board. Second-generation Gund family members, the five living children of George Gund, all of whom were born in Cleveland, serve as permanent members of the Foundation corporation with limited voting authority.

As of early 2021, the Foundation's six family trustees are all third-generation family members. These cousins currently live outside of Cleveland but are all firmly committed to the institution's continued focus on the city and region. The Cleveland trustees join the staff in bringing their deep community expertise and policy insight to bear on the Foundation's work, and they are heavily relied upon by their board colleagues for perspective.

The board meets three times a year to review grant recommendations and are unusually attentive to the comprehensive material sent in advance by the staff. Under the leadership of board chair Catherine Gund, trustees are increasingly engaged in governance, investment, and financial oversight while continuing to rely on staff for programmatic direction and decision-making.

Finance and Organization

For FY2021 the Foundation's grantmaking budget is \$45.6 million and its operating budget totals \$3.6 million. It has a staff of 12, several of whom have served for more than a decade. All staff report to the President and include the associate director, five program directors, the grants and office administrator, administrative assistant, executive assistant, and two fellows. The Foundation's current \$649 million endowment is overseen by the investment committee of the board, with assistance from external investment managers. With strong financial returns, the Foundation's historic spend rate has largely stayed in a five to six percent range (2020 and 2021 were an extraordinary exception), and the board remains committed to preserving the corpus for long-term sustainability.

Leadership Transition

The Gund Foundation's longstanding and widely admired President, David Abbott, announced his plans to retire at the end of 2021 following 19 years of leadership. Prior to joining the Foundation, David served in a variety of leadership roles in Cleveland, including president of University Circle Incorporated, executive director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, and executive director of the Cleveland Bicentennial Commission. He was also the Cuyahoga County Administrator and, early in his career, a reporter for The Plain Dealer.

David leaves an organization especially well-positioned to collaboratively respond to the region's current challenges, with an outstanding staff team, a committed and energized board, a network of community collaborators, and a compelling case for future impact and lasting social change.

PRESIDENT

The President of The George Gund Foundation will join a vibrant organization with a proud legacy and a mission as important today as it has ever been. With *What We Believe* as its North Star, the Foundation seeks to sustain, strengthen, and further leverage its work, and looks to a new President to bring passion, energy, and insight to this opportunity.

The key objectives for the incoming President are as follows:

Vision and Strategy

Lead the Foundation as it advances and animates the values, goals, and approach expressed in *What We Believe*. Work with Gund colleagues and partners to identify bold place-based strategies and tactics that will effectively address injustice; promote community sustainability and vibrancy; and align with critical local, regional, and national advocacy efforts. Continue to anchor the Foundation's work in Cleveland while furthering its potential to influence action and policymaking well beyond the region.

Community Leadership

Advance and continually strengthen Gund's track record of empathic and empowering community engagement. Ensure that the Foundation continues to serve as much more than a grantmaker and as a constructive catalyst for social change. Stay well-informed about relevant issues and policy and political trends and respond nimbly as new challenges arise. Serve personally as an open and receptive presence in the community and represent the Foundation and its values to diverse partners and stakeholders across sectors with both determination and humility.

Team Leadership

Serve as a unifying, inspiring, accessible staff leader. Ensure that the internal culture reflects Gund Foundation beliefs and values and that it continually deepens team collaboration and cross-programmatic learning. Reinforce staff's sense of agency, autonomy, and flexibility in their work and decision-making while holding them to high standards. Encourage creativity, rigor, transparency, and accountability and invest in staff growth and professional development. Respect the work/life balance of team members and help to temper their relentless work ethic with good humor and esprit de corps.

Board Engagement

Build strong relationships with Gund trustees, supporting their ongoing learning and development as well as their governance and fiduciary responsibilities. Draw appropriately upon the expertise of individual trustees and assist the group as they decide how best to act upon their collective commitments.

Partnerships

Forge strong collaborations and strategic alliances with diverse partners across sectors and program interests. Work to empower community leaders and reinforce forward-thinking policymakers. Build ever-stronger relationships that advance equity and racial justice.

Communications

Pursue how best the Foundation might creatively pursue enhanced communication strategies to elevate and leverage its work and further its policy goals without in any way grandstanding or diverting focus from grantees and partners. Highlight Gund's role in thought leadership in order to influence not only the nonprofit community but also business, governmental, and political interests. Continue to assess critically the Foundation's reputation in the Cleveland community and maintain and further develop channels of candid and open feedback.

Administrative and Financial Oversight

Support the Associate Director in her management of financial, operational, and investment activities. Assist the board in aligning its investments with its grantmaking strategies, including through the Foundation's recent involvement in shareholder activism, strategic divestment, and the selection of fund managers.

Office Location

Determine the location and build-out of new Gund Foundation offices in preparation for the expiration of the current lease in December 2023. Explore with community residents how this new real estate might serve as an anchor and community resource that embeds the Foundation in a more accessible and welcoming location. Oversee the move and ensure that it lives up to its promise.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The next President will bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- Informed passion and sense of urgency for the mission, ideals, and values of the Gund Foundation. Demonstrated commitment to the values of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Experience advancing issues of social justice. Programmatic experience in one or more of the Foundation's overarching issues of climate change; systemic inequity, especially racial inequity; and threatened democracy preferred.
- Knowledge of, and ideally current or previous authentic connection to, Cleveland. Appreciation of its history in the region and the country and of its distinctive attributes.
- Track record of providing strategic leadership and effective management of a complex civic or public organization that works at the community level. The more varied and broader the leadership experience across sectors and issue areas the better.

- Experience as an outstanding team leader with a track record of highly supportive mentoring and professional development. An inclusive management style that values the capabilities, experience, and professionalism of staff, while providing clear guidance.
- Strong financial and budgetary acumen to oversee Foundation financial planning, budgeting, reporting, and investments; experience with impact investing would be helpful.
- Expertise in public policy and advocacy and understanding of the role of community organizations in driving change.
- Political savvy and strong negotiation skills. Experience navigating among diverse stakeholders who may have different and at times conflicting priorities.
- Excellent strategic and critical thinking abilities and analytic skills. Willingness to challenge conventional thinking, take calculated risks, and venture into controversial issues that other foundations often will not address.
- Proven skills in collaboration. Enthusiasm for building bridges between and among a range of stakeholders.
- Experience working with or serving on an engaged governing board.
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills.
- High integrity, honesty, humility, tenacity, patience, approachability, and good humor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY

The George Gund Foundation has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resumes and one- to three-page letters of interest responding to the objectives outlined above) should be directed in strict confidence to:

Karen Avery, Karen Wilcox, and Tatiana Oberkoetter
www.imsearch.com/Gund

The George Gund Foundation is an equal opportunity employer, hiring without discrimination due to race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristic established by law. The Foundation has a deep commitment to racial equity and inclusion and seeks a highly diverse pool from which to select the strongest candidate for this position.