

THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION

Grant Guidelines

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Greetings.

Thank you for your interest in The George Gund Foundation.

The Foundation was established in 1952 as a private, nonprofit institution with the sole purpose of contributing to human well-being and the progress of society. The George Gund Foundation is rooted in Cleveland, and the Foundation's commitment to Cleveland derives not just from our history but also from our belief that Cleveland can continue to develop original responses to issues that can benefit people everywhere.

Moreover, the urban emphasis of our work stems from a belief that thriving cities are and will remain one of the nation's best hopes for addressing essential issues. We invest in this city with an eye toward building the sense of community—locally, nationally and globally—that human progress requires. We commit to this for the long term, working alongside those who are making concrete progress.

To learn more about the Foundation's history and mission please visit gundfoundation.org. For a listing of the grants the Foundation has awarded, please see [Awarded Grants](#).

The Foundation does not require a letter of inquiry as part of our application process, so we encourage prospective applicants to review these guidelines to determine fit before applying. Please [reach out](#) if you have questions.

The George Gund Foundation

Grantmaking Overview

- 1) Applicants must be 501(c)(3) organizations based in the U.S.
- 2) Applicants are asked to show how they are responding to one or more of the key challenges articulated in the Foundation's [What We Believe](#) statement (Pg 5):
 - climate change and environmental degradation
 - entrenched and accelerating inequality, especially racial inequity
 - weakened democracy
- 3) Applications must be working within one of the Foundation's five program areas. Each program has its own priorities, which are outlined in this document.
 - Climate and Environmental Justice (Pg 7)
 - Creative Culture and Arts (Pg 8)
 - Economic Justice and Community Power (Pg 9)
 - Public Education (Pg 10)
 - Thriving Families and Social Justice (Pg 11)

Deadlines

Proposals are considered three times a year by the Foundation's trustees:

- November 15 deadline > February Trustee Meeting
- March 15 deadline > June Trustee Meeting
- August 15 deadline > November Trustee Meeting

Please note that proposals submitted for a specific deadline date are not guaranteed consideration at the corresponding trustee meeting. On occasion, the Foundation can consider requests for up to \$100,000 between trustee meetings, so we welcome applications at any time. Up-to-date deadlines for submitting proposals for consideration can be found on [our website](#).

How to Submit

After reviewing these guidelines and determining fit, please complete an application through [our online portal](#).

The Foundation's application is in BlackBaud's GrantsConnect portal. Applicants must create a new BlackBaud ID if they do not have one already. The system allows multiple users for each organization, and for applicants to duplicate previous applications. [Click here to see a guide to the online portal](#).

See page 12 for a full list of required application materials.

What We Believe

When seeking partnerships, we invite potential partners to provide insight into how they are addressing one or more of the three issues the Foundation elevates as major threats to Cleveland and the wider community:

Climate change and environmental degradation

Climate change is a threat to the very future of humanity. Its consequences grow more apparent even as many ignore both the evidence before their eyes and the scientific consensus that calls on all of us to act. In 2016, the world community reached an agreement in Paris that set targets for greenhouse gas reductions to limit global temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius. The United States government turned its back on that accord for four years, rejoined in early 2021, and withdrew again in 2025. In response to the interruption, many states, cities, businesses and foundations—including The George Gund Foundation—asserted their commitment to the Paris goals and took action to help achieve them. Even if the Paris targets are achieved, however, human activity already has triggered a chain of damaging climate change and environmental degradation. Adaptation to these consequences is a growing need, and it is increasingly apparent that those who suffer first and foremost will disproportionately be people of color who live in more vulnerable locations and the poor who have fewer resources to adapt. Collective action across all sectors is required to meet these challenges.

Entrenched and accelerating inequality, especially racial inequality

Inequality also is a worldwide issue, and its American dimensions pose grave societal questions. Can the American dream of upward mobility survive in an economy that distributes benefits so unequally? How does the concentration of wealth at the top effect our capacity for justice and the effectiveness of our politics? Can we finally overcome the deep-rooted racial aspect of inequality that is so conspicuous in America, repair the enduring damage of slavery and undo the countless actions, decisions and policies throughout our country's history that have embedded racial inequity into nearly all societal systems? Cleveland has its own distinct version of this history, and the racial dimension of inequality is present in nearly every community issue. Likewise, issues of justice for women, the LGBTQI community, people who are disabled, immigrants, refugees and others have become more prominent in recent years. The George Gund Foundation supports targeted groups as public discussion increasingly highlights them, and especially when they are attacked with language that is xenophobic and coarse.

Weakened democracy

The effectiveness of government and the democratic processes that give it legitimacy have been, and are being, eroded by both foreign and domestic attacks. These include international interference with our elections, state-by-state efforts to restrict voting under the guise of preventing fraud, general apathy that has depressed voting turnout and the corrosive effect on our politics of vast amounts of money from secret sources. These distortions call into question both the willingness and the ability of government to tackle issues such as racial inequality and climate change. And the corrosion of democracy extends beyond the walls of government. Free and robust media, already unsettled by changing technology and business models, have been under unprecedented assault, damaging our country's ability to reach the shared understanding of issues so necessary to a functioning democracy. This lack of common ground has contributed to a broader decline of social cohesion and public participation in many aspects of community life. We support renewed civic engagement and democracy because they are essential to moving forward.

These are great challenges, but we are continually inspired by the undaunted individuals and organizations fighting for progress. Our Foundation strives to support them through all of our work with a special emphasis on community in the various senses of that word. "Community" means a continued emphasis on Cleveland with its many needs and opportunities to be a stronger community—inclusive and welcoming for all, vibrant and successful in a global economy, and using its unique assets and resources to provide global lessons. But "community" is not just an expression of geographic proximity; it necessarily represents an inclusive outlook. In elevating community we promote and demand equity, especially with attention to those groups that continue to be victimized by systemic exclusion. Through all of our grantmaking we support efforts to unite people in community, to resist the forces that divide us into factions. "Community" also expresses our belief in democracy and its aspiration to give everyone a meaningful voice in shaping our common destiny. Without a vigorous, inclusive and functioning democracy, there can be no realistic opportunity for justice in a society beset with racial, economic and political division. We are encouraged by the countless opportunities to build the powerful collective forces that are essential to meet the challenges we face.

Climate and Environmental Justice

Program Area Overview & Priorities

The George Gund Foundation seeks to leverage and build on Cleveland's unique history as a catalyst of the modern environmental movement. We focus on projects and policies that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in Ohio in ways that are centered on equity and justice.

We make grants to organizations with a presence in Cleveland and/or Ohio whose work or policy advocacy focuses on greenhouse gas emissions, climate justice or protection of Cleveland's freshwater resources.

The Foundation has particular interest in:

- Air, energy, land use, and water policies
- Climate justice
- The intersection between climate policy and democracy building

Successful grant applicants will make a connection between their work and one or more issue areas in the Foundation's What We Believe statement (Pg 5).

The Climate and Environmental Justice program area does not currently prioritize the following areas:

- Environmental education
- Youth or leadership development in the environmental field
- Land trusts that do not have a local (central basin of Lake Erie), water-specific focus

If you are an existing grantee, please contact Program Director [Trey Johnson](#)

If you are a prospective applicant, please contact Program Officer [Donovan Young](#)

[Click here to learn more about this program area.](#)

Creative Culture and Arts

Program Area Overview & Priorities

The George Gund Foundation promotes a vibrant, diverse and thriving arts community in Cleveland that enhances learning, strengthens pride of place, creates an emotional connection to our environment and deepens the impact of opportunities for those who might otherwise be denied them.

We make grants to arts organizations located in or that make a direct impact in the City of Cleveland.

The Foundation has particular interest in:

- Investing in the operational vitality of arts organizations
- Encouraging the local art community to engage with civic work at the governmental level to foster a deeper understanding of issues that face Cleveland residents
- Strengthening arts administrator professional and leadership skills
- Advocacy for policy work that promotes a vibrant arts ecosystem
- Supporting local arts organizations that partner with schools in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District on impactful art education programs

Successful grant applicants will make a connection between their work and one or more issue areas in the Foundation's What We Believe statement (Pg 5).

The Creative Culture and Arts program area does not currently prioritize the following areas:

- Individual artists
- Art acquisitions
- Art exhibitions
- Theater or film productions
- Organizations not working in the City of Cleveland
- Art education initiatives that do not primarily serve the Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Program Director: Jennifer Coleman, jcoleman@gundfdn.org

[Click here to learn more about this program area.](#)

Economic Justice and Community Power

Program Area Overview and Priorities

The George Gund Foundation supports work to build intergenerational wealth and power for all of Cleveland's neighborhoods and residents.

The George Gund Foundation makes grants to local organizations whose work has a direct impact on the neighborhoods and residents of the City of Cleveland. The Foundation is interested in systems-change efforts that increase pathways to economic mobility through improved access to good jobs; high-quality, affordable housing; and equitable development. Additionally, the Foundation supports efforts to expand the capacity for community-based leadership through greater access to resources, talent and networks.

The Foundation has particular interest in:

- Supporting our most marginalized groups, including but not limited to people of color, women, people with disabilities, and LGBT communities
- Organizations whose leadership is representative of the communities it serves
- Efforts to address systemic barriers to accessing capital
- Strengthening networks of individuals and organizations, particularly those working inter-sectionally and across sectors
- Narrative change work that centers the lived experiences of individuals from marginalized groups and incorporates their experiences into decision-making processes

Successful grant applicants will make a connection between their work and one or more issue areas in the Foundation's What We Believe statement (Pg 5).

The Economic Justice and Community Power program area does not currently prioritize the following areas:

- Direct service organizations for specific industries/sectors
- Pitch competitions
- Standalone job readiness and training programs
- Direct grants to community development corporations for general operating support

Program Director: Treye Johnson, tjohnson@gundfdn.org

[Click here to learn more about this program area.](#)

Public Education

Program Area Overview & Priorities

The George Gund Foundation supports public education because it is fundamental to American democracy. It promotes the common good; brings together children and families across different cultures; and serves all students, regardless of means, ability, or circumstances.

We make grants to organizations that make a direct impact within and around the students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. The Foundation has an interest in district-wide impact from PreK through postsecondary completion; and in sound and consistent statewide policy that furthers our work with CMSD students.

Successful grant applicants will make a connection between their work and one or more issue areas in the Foundation's What We Believe statement (Pg 5).

The Public Education program area does not currently prioritize the following areas:

- Charter schools, private schools, or schools outside of CMSD
- Higher education, outside of select programs that support our Say Yes Cleveland Scholarship investments

Program Director: Ann Mullin, amullin@gundfdn.org

[Click here to learn more about this program area.](#)

Thriving Families and Social Justice

Program Area Overview & Priorities

The George Gund Foundation strives toward a more just community and society—one that removes the conditions that create human need, restrict fundamental rights, or prevent historically and systematically marginalized Greater Cleveland children and families from thriving.

While we make local direct service grants to mitigate urgent harms, our grantmaking primarily focuses on empowering historically marginalized individuals, organizations, coalitions, and communities to advocate for—and support implementation of—local, state, and/or federal level systems-level reforms that address the root causes of poverty and injustice.

The Foundation has particular interest in efforts that:

- Meet basic human needs (food, housing, and access to primary health care, including reproductive and children’s behavioral health)
- Promote healthy child and youth development during early childhood and adolescence
- Strengthen family stability through income supports
- Advance criminal legal system reforms affecting both youth and adults
- Support fair and adequate tax and fiscal policy
- Ensure reliable, ethical use of data while preventing its misuse against marginalized populations

Successful grant applicants will make a connection between their work and one or more issue areas in the Foundation’s What We Believe statement (Pg 5).

The Thriving Families and Social Justice program area does not currently prioritize the following areas:

- Programs addressing specific health conditions (e.g., cancer, asthma, autism)
- After-school programs, or summer programs outside the City of Cleveland
- Direct service programs outside Cleveland/Cuyahoga County
- State-level policy reform outside Ohio
- Basic academic research (note: applied research tied to public policy goals is of interest)

Program Director: Marcia Egbert, megbert@gundfdn.org

[Click here to learn more about this program area.](#)

Application Questions

All applicants are required to submit an application through the [online application system](#).

Organizational Information

	Organization name – Please list the legal name of the applying 501(c)(3) or fiscal sponsor organization
	Tax ID or Employer Identification Number
	Address
	Phone number
	Website
	Organization Mission (Please keep mission to a single sentence or up to 70 words.)
	Annual organization budget
	Fiscal year end date
	Is this a fiscally sponsored application? (yes/no)
	(If applicable) Name of the sponsored group
	Number of individuals served annually
	Number of full time staff
	Number of part time staff
	Request Type (Project Support/Operating Support)

Contact Information

Executive Director, CEO, or President		Additional grant contact, if different from ED	
First and Last Name	Pronouns	First and Last Name	Pronouns
Title		Title	
Phone number		Phone number	
Email		Email	

Proposal Information

	Project title (n/a if operating support)		
	Number of individuals served by this request's initiative (n/a if operating support)		
	Project budget (n/a if operating support)		
	Request amount		Grant duration in whole months
	Project start date		Project end date

Attachments

The Foundation will not consider grant applications which do not include all required attachments. Please submit the required attachments in PDF form, if possible.

	Cover Letter – <i>Letter signed by the president or executive director acknowledging proposal submission.</i>
	Organizational Narrative
	<i>Describe the organization's history and mission. Include any significant recent or current organizational issues/changes, current programs and activities, and describe who you serve.</i>
	Project Description (if applicable)
	<i>If you are requesting funding for operating support, describe activities planned for the grant period, organizational goals and objectives, qualifications of key personnel and methods of evaluation.</i>
	<i>If you are requesting project support, describe the project's specific goals and objectives, justification of need, activities planned to meet goals and objectives, qualifications of key personnel and methods of evaluation.</i>
	Project budget (if applicable)
	Organizational budget
	What We Believe Narrative – <i>Tell us in a simple one-page statement what your organization is doing or thinking about doing regarding one or more of the issues articulated in the Foundation's What We Believe Statement. This can refer to your programs and/or your office operations. If this is addressed in other attachments, please keep this statement concise.</i>
	Board Member List – <i>Contact information not required</i>
	Financial Statements – <i>Please upload the most recently completed fiscal year's audited financial statements, independently reviewed financial statements, or compiled financial statements. Include notes and any management letters.</i>
	Most recently completed 990
	SMU DataArts Funder's Report (for arts organizations only)
	Optional Attachments
	<i>This could include letters of support from key collaborators and/or beneficiaries, or other readily available materials about the organization, such as annual reports, brochures, and links to other appropriate items.</i>

Post-Application

Grant Agreements

After a proposal has been approved, grantees will receive a grant agreement via DocuSign. This document must be signed by the Executive Director, President, or CEO, and returned to the Foundation in order to receive grant any payments.

Grant Payments

The Foundation issues payments through ACH direct deposit. Upon grant approval, applicants will be invited to submit their signed grant agreement and banking information via DocuSign. The Foundation requires grantees to submit a copy of a voided check or a bank authorization letter to confirm their banking information.

Payment timing will be articulated in the grant agreement and is contingent upon all necessary documentation being received by the Foundation.

Reporting

Grantees are required to submit a final report at the end of their grant period, and annual interim reports for multi-year grants. Specific reporting requirements and deadlines will be detailed in the grant agreement.

- Grantees who applied before September 2025 will complete a paper report, which can be found [here](#).
- Grantees who applied after September 2025 will complete the same short form through the [online applicant portal](#).

Gund Logo Usage

The Foundation does not require grantees to publish the Foundation's logo as a grant requirement, but if you would like to use it in grant-related print or digital materials, please use the [official versions linked here](#).

Fiscal Sponsorship

Fiscal sponsorship is an arrangement where a tax-exempt organization (the **fiscal sponsor**) lends its legal and tax-exempt status, typically a 501(c)(3) public charity, to support a group or project (the **sponsored project**) engaged in activities that align with the sponsor's mission. For applicants using a fiscal sponsor, the Foundation requires the following:

- 1) The application must be submitted by and under the name of the fiscal sponsor organization.
- 2) The application must include the sponsor organization's Executive Director/President/CEO's contact information.
- 3) Contact information for the sponsored group or project must be included as the other contact.
- 4) The application should include a written agreement between the fiscal sponsor and the sponsored group.
 - a. The fiscal sponsor is responsible for all legal compliance relating to receiving, reporting, distributing, and acknowledging charitable donations.

FAQ

I am not sure if my project/organization is a fit—can I send a letter of intent (LOI)?

The Foundation does not have a formal LOI process as part of its application. If you would like to inquire about the strategic fit of your work after reviewing the guidelines, please contact the Foundation with a short email to Julia Carey, jcarey@gundfdn.org, Grants Administrator.

Should my organization apply for project or operating support?

If your organization's mission fits within a program area and the Foundation's What We Believe statement, we welcome operating support applications. For some organizations, a grant for a specific project best supports their efforts. The Foundation provides flexible funding through both types of grants.

Should/can I meet with a program director before submitting?

If your organization's work is a fit based on the guidelines outlined in the Grants Overview, we encourage you to submit an application before reaching out to meet with a program director.

Does the Foundation make capital grants?

On occasion, the Foundation will consider a capital grant application related to construction or renovation to projects that seek U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Potential grantees are encouraged to contact the appropriate program director of the program area the project fits within before submitting a capital request to see if their project qualifies.

Resources

[The George Gund Foundation Grantmaking Page](#)

[Online Application Portal](#)

[Guide to the Online Application Portal](#)

[Newsletter Signup](#)

[The George Gund Foundation – Our Team](#)