

Global Greengrants Fund

GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

What are your grantmaking and/or strategic priorities (in terms of geographic focus, issue, etc.)?

Global Greengrants Fund makes grants to grassroots efforts around the world in support of environmental justice, human rights, and sustainability. We give approximately 800 grants to 90 countries annually and have an advisory network of 160 advisors reaching over 140 countries. These grants can be grouped across the following action areas: climate justice, healthy ecosystems and communities, local livelihoods, right to land, water and resources, and women's environmental action.

Who decides the grantmaking priorities?

Grantmaking priorities are determined by decentralized advisory boards made up of environmental and social movement leaders and experts from the region where the grants are made. Advisory boards are managed by a coordinator who also comes from the local movements. Each advisory board sets its own grantmaking strategy, priorities, and criteria based on their assessment of local needs and opportunities. The advisory boards meet in person annually to review strategy and grantmaking results and adapt their approach to changing needs and context. Overall grantmaking guidelines (such as maximum grants size, principles of grassroots grantmaking, and conflict of interest policies) are set by staff and board of directors with input from advisors.

The overall strategy for the fund?

Our strategic plan and theory of change are developed through committees with representation from various parts of the organization—advisors, staff, and global board members. All staff are convened for input, and advisory boards provide feedback during meetings and through interviews and surveys. The board of directors makes the final approval of the organization's strategic plan.

What's the process by which these decisions are made?

Grant decisions are made by advisory boards who self-manage an annual budget, usually over two or three grant rounds, one of which occurs in-person during an annual advisory board meeting. Usually decisions are made by consensus among peers on an advisory board. Staff and the global board are involved in decisions about overall growth and strategy for the fund with input from advisors.

How are these practices socialized within your organization?

New advisors in the grantmaking process receive orientation from the coordinator, fellow advisors, and information contained in an advisor handbook. Program staff join advisory board meetings to meet, share practices, and build trust with advisors and the wider networks.

TYPES OF GRANTS

What kinds of grants do you provide (e.g., general, rapid response, capacity building, field-building, etc.)?

We do not limit the type of grants we provide. Our grants are used for a wide range of support, from processes like action planning, exchange visits, capacity building, awareness raising, trainings, communications, innovative projects, advocacy, general funds, data collection, research, etc. We can quickly turn around emergency grants when needed.

What is the range in amount of the grants you award?

\$500 to \$15,000

Is the participatory decision-making process the same for all grant types and sizes?

Yes. (We have a separately managed donor advised fund program that gives larger grants and employs different grantmaking models not described here.)

Do you earmark funding for a specific purpose in order to ensure diversity in who/what you're funding?

No, we do not set targets, although advisory boards consider diversity in their strategy development and decisions.

Occasionally, our donors restrict funds for specific types of grants such as those supporting women's environmental action. We ensure that our restricted funds match the grants priorities of our boards.

Who determines the type and size of grants, and how?

During funding rounds, advisory boards make decisions about the type and size of grant to be given to a particular group.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

Grant proposals must be invited by an advisor, who will then present it to an advisory board for consideration. We fund a broad range of organizations: community based organizations, indigenous groups, voluntary associations, cooperatives, small NGOs, networks, and coalitions. We also fund groups that are not formally registered.

What kind of outreach happens to make potential grant applicants aware of your grantmaking?

Advisors circulate notice of funding rounds by email to networks and coalition members with whom they work and orally with their contacts. They sometimes run their own participatory process by asking a coalition of actors to make grant recommendations. They also get proposals from groups and informal networks.

How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?

It depends on the number and frequency of grantmaking rounds of a particular advisory board.

Can applicants get assistance in applying? If so, what kind?

Advisors frequently offer assistance to organizations in applying, e.g., providing feedback on a proposal idea through a one-on-one consultation with an advisor. Our administrative staff (part-time consultants based in the regions) also help grantees with proposals and translations as necessary.

What type of information is collected from applicants, and who has access to this information?

A proposal and organizational form; documents of registration (if applicable, we can do non-profit equivalency determination with non-registered groups, depending on the rules for each country); and then, after acceptance, a non-profit equivalency form with bank information. Advisors,

administrators, coordinators, and grants/program staff all have access to this information, and it can be audited at any time.

INITIAL VETTING/SCREENING/DUE DILIGENCE

Are applications initially screened or vetted to ensure eligibility? How and by whom is this done?

Yes, by the administrator/advisor. During a grant round, the coordinator will also ensure relevance and eligibility before inclusion in the proposals under consideration.

If more than one person is involved, how do you ensure that the same criteria have been considered in all cases?

The administrator is the most knowledgeable and reviews every proposal.

GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

Who comprises your grantmaking selection panel(s)?

Our panels are made up of leaders from environmental and social movements.

How are they selected (e.g., by nomination, application, etc.)?

Advisors are recruited through our existing advisory boards.

How do you think about representation of specific population groups or geographies?

Depending on the strategy of each advisory board, we seek people from particular countries and geographic regions and people connected to different movements and networks. We also look for gender and ethnic diversity.

What, if any, is the term limit for members of the selection panel? Why?

We have no set term limit; however, some advisory boards set their own terms based on their strategies and desire to reach new groups, networks, and geographies.

What is the process by which the selection panel determines grant decisions?

The process varies from one advisory board to another but generally involves:

- 1) Advisors identify promising organizations and projects through their own work and networks and invite them to present proposals.

- 2) Proposals are submitted to the advisory board for a grantmaking round.
- 3) Advisors on the board review and rate a docket of proposals, asking and answering questions via email, teleconference, and/or in-person discussion.
- 4) The advisory board decides by consensus which proposals to fund and for how much.
- 5) Administrative staff gather and review additional due diligence materials from grantees.
- 6) Staff make final authorization of grant payment and notify grantees and advisors.
- 7) Advisors remain available to grantees for questions, mentoring, and other grant-related assistance.

What considerations are taken into account to ensure inclusive and streamlined decision making processes?

We consider the overall administrative burden of our grantmaking process, including the amount of paperwork and questions asked of grantees in the application and reporting process. We accept proposals and materials in many languages, and advisors and local administrators are available to help groups understand and navigate the grant process. We assist grantees in finding alternative ways to get funds if they do not have bank accounts or face other challenges receiving funding. We also track the efficiency of our grantmaking process and survey grantees about their experience with us as a funder.

Can decision-makers on grantmaking selection panels be applicants? If so, are there any special processes or a conflict of interest policy tied to this occurrence?

Our conflict of interest policy prohibits advisors from taking part in funding decisions involving their own organizations.

What happens if there is disagreement among the decision-making committee? How is this resolved? (e.g., consensus, voting, etc.)

In most cases, disagreements are resolved through consensus; however, advisory boards may also decide to vote if necessary to resolve disagreements.

How are selection panel members trained and supported?

Advisors are given an orientation by the coordinator, supplemented by a written handbook and interactions with other advisors and staff. Much of the learning happens through participation on the advisory board with peers and annual reviews of grantmaking and strategy. We also provide distance coaching for some advisors.

What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?

We do not have a formal challenge process, but applicants can discuss with an advisor the possibility of resubmitting amended proposals.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

What percentage of staff members are “peers”, i.e. of the population the foundation seeks to benefit?

45%

What percentage of board members are peers?

20%

What percentage of the grantmaking decision-making committee(s) are peers?

100%

Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers?

We involve peers in organizational processes such as strategic planning and program evaluations.

How does the role of paid staff differ from that of peers?

Advisors are volunteers and review the proposals. Staff manage organizational operations and grant payments.

Do you pay members of your panel/committee?

We offer modest honoraria to advisors to help defray some of the costs of participating.

REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

What, if any, are your reporting requirements for grantees? Who develops them?

For all grants, a report developed by the grantee group or contact is due one year following the grant. Where language or literacy is an issue, an advisor can call or visit a grantee and help with the report form. A report can also arrive in the form of recording or video. A report must be received before repeat grants can be considered.

Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations?

Advisory boards and staff based in Boulder, Colorado in the United States work together to hire consultants, who, ideally, are from and knowledgeable about their communities.

Consultants conduct visits and participatory action research; visit grantees; and create spaces for feedback and learning. The learning is documented and often shared in workshops with grantees and key actors.

How do you evaluate impact?

Global Greengrants Fund's contribution to concrete change is studied through longitudinal case studies of our grantmaking within particular socio-environmental movements. The case is revisited every three to five years. The research covers a series or cluster of grants, rather than the impact of one particular grant or grantee. It queries the grantmaking strategy of an advisor within a movement. The case studies involve outside researchers working closely with advisory boards but interviewing a wide range of outside key actors to understand the trajectory of movements, their waxing and waning, tipping points, key event mapping, and the timing. This process contributes to better understanding the unique contribution and usefulness of small grants at different points in time relative to wider outcomes.

How do you learn about participants' experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants?

Advisors are usually highly respected and known to environmental and social justice networks based on their reputation gained over a career. Existing advisors recommend candidates for a new advisor, and staff can also recommend names through networks. The merits of each candidate are debated openly and all candidates are interviewed by advisors, references and outside contacts—a triangulated process that deepens understanding of the candidate. Final decisions are made by the coordinator of an advisory board, although Boulder staff can veto.

Grantee applicants' work or situation are known to advisors or recommend by trusted and knowledgeable actors within an advisors network. Because advisors are often working in coalition spaces, they gain broad understanding of a movement and its many actors.

With whom do you share the results of what you learn?

The most important audience is the advisory network specifically, the advisory boards so they can reflect and adjust continually, we well as learn from each other and across boards. Our staff and global board are also important audiences for our learning, as well as donors and the general public. We also share learning in peer spaces such as funder conferences or in thematic spaces on environmental and human rights topics.

Have you made changes to your programs based on feedback? If so, what is an example?

The advisory boards meet yearly to reflect and adjust strategy accordingly. One example might be our Next Generation Climate Board, which is made up of young climate activists who recommend grants to other youth climate activists. Granting to youth carries more risks because youth groups have high turnover rates and less experience with grant management. The board has learned and documented many lessons over time about assessing applicants' sustainability and advising potential grantees to think carefully about their ideas and projects.

For more information about Global Greengrants Fund, contact Allison Davis at allison@greengrants.org.

This resource was developed as a companion piece to the GrantCraft guide on participatory grantmaking. This resource is part of a suite of resources that showcase the rich and varied practices of participatory grantmaking across various organizations, reducing the burden on each funder to repeatedly outline their model. The guide and companion resources give insight to the philanthropy landscape about the what, how, and why of participatory grantmaking.

Visit grantcraft.org/participatorygrantmaking to explore further.