

# Liberty Hill Foundation

## GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

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

Liberty Hill believes that lasting social change emerges from community organizing and social change movements. The **Fund for Change** (FFC) is Liberty Hill's primary competitive grantmaking program, whose goal is to support community organizing that builds power to win institutional change. FFC supports organizing models in Los Angeles County that have a strong membership base, pipeline for leadership growth and decision-making, campaign development, and coalition building in low-income communities and communities of color.

*Who decides the grantmaking priorities? The overall strategy for the fund? What's the process by which these decisions are made?*

The Fund for Change reaches out to organizations that:

- ◆ Are driven by people who are directly affected by injustice.
- ◆ Have a process for developing leaders from the membership base for the purpose of furthering the organization's mission.
- ◆ Have a clear plan to win concrete systemic or institutional changes to policies, practices, regulations or laws in the public and private sectors.
- ◆ Incorporate multiple organizing strategies such as engaging strategic allies, coalition building, research, advocacy, communications, and voter engagement.
- ◆ Advance racial justice by addressing institutional policies and practices that cause racial disparity. Liberty Hill applies an overarching racial justice lens to our grantmaking, recognizing that the distinct mark of racism is collective, systemic, and societal power that requires fundamental institutional change to undo.
- ◆ Link local efforts to broader social movements.
- ◆ Build power and increase impact over time.

Liberty Hill's Community Funding Board (CFB) is composed of community leaders and experts who provide strategic guidance and support in our Fund for Change grantmaking process. They conduct site visits for FFC applicants, prepare a comprehensive assessment tool for all site-visited groups, engage in a landscape analysis of organizing in Los Angeles County, and determine the role of each applicant within that landscape to help determine final grants. This landscape analysis sets the stage for subsequent funding cycles, with periodic convenings around emerging or heightened issues to sustain or change our funding priorities.

*How are these practices socialized within your organization?*

The CFB model has been in place since Liberty Hill's inception in 1976. All proposals are pre-approved by the board of directors, then placed in the hands of the grantmaking committee to conduct the funding cycle. Until 2010, all final grant awards were decided by the CFB, which recommended moving to a process in which staff would decide final grant amounts on the basis of a rigorous CFB-managed due diligence process.

The CFB currently provides High, Medium and Low (H-M-L) recommendations based on their site visits and landscape analysis. The staff will make final grant recommendations based on initial screening, CFB site visits, landscape analysis, and strong alignment with CFB H-M-L recommendations. Our entire grantmaking process and final results are shared through a full report to our board of directors and staff. Our grantees are strongly highlighted in our social media, provided with additional support through our **Wally Marks Leadership training program**, and engage in other partnership activities throughout the year.

## TYPES OF GRANTS

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

The Fund for Change largely provides general support grants, as well as project-based grants as needed. It also strongly supports capacity-building.

***What is the range in amount of the grants you award? Is the participatory decision-making process the same for all grant types and sizes? If not, why?***

The Fund for Change decision-making process is the same for all grant types. The FFC provides one-year grants of up to \$50,000, including:

- ◆ **Rising Activism Grants** (\$10,000–\$30,000) support emerging and developing organizations with: a growing membership base of people directly affected by injustice, basic organizing skills, leadership development mechanisms, and a commitment to outreach and organizing.
- ◆ **Impact Grants** (\$30,000–\$50,000) support organizations that are leading campaigns to win and implement institutional change and that show evidence of broad base building and leadership growth, along with movement-building strategies and strongly developed coalition engagement efforts.

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

Although we do not earmark funding for specific purposes, we are a public charity supported by individual and institutional funders who may earmark their FFC contribution for specific funding areas. Our process for ensuring diversity in funding occurs at the front end through outreach and screening.

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

Unless the funded organization has a fiscal sponsor or organizational structure beyond our geographic focus, all grants are general support grants. The size of grants is largely based on H-M-L recommendations by the CFB, then allocated by staff with final approval by the CEO.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

***Who is eligible to apply for a grant?***

Liberty Hill considers applications from organizations based in Los Angeles County for work that is consistent with the Fund for Change's goal and strategy. Specifically, the Fund supports organizing models in low-income communities and communities of color that have a membership base, a pipeline for leadership growth, and experience in organizing around economic, racial, environmental, and LGBTQ justice issues. Eligible organizations must be tax-exempt under

section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or have a fiscal sponsorship agreement with a 501(c)(3) organization.

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

Liberty Hill announces the funding cycle on our website and conducts webinars to inform potential grantees about the FFC's goal and strategy. We also field phone and email queries and put these on our outreach list to notify when the fund is opened up.

***How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?***

The Fund for Change's grant process is conducted once a year. Generally, we announce the funding cycle in the fall, accept letters of inquiry in January, and send out RFPs with a March proposal deadline.

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

We conduct webinars that review the application guidelines and questions. We encourage follow-up calls when the proposal is being prepared for one-on-one conversations. We have also provided periodic clinics by appointment to review proposal drafts.

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

Funding guidelines and attachments that list what documents are required are available [here](#) (Word document). The [proposal intake form](#) (Word document) is the check list.

## **INITIAL VETTING/SCREENING/ DUE DILIGENCE**

***Are applications initially screened or vetted to ensure eligibility? How and by whom is this done? If more than one person is involved, how do you ensure that the same criteria has been considered in all cases?***

Initial screening is conducted by our program team under the guidance of the director of grantmaking. We vet all proposals as a team and decide which groups to move forward for CFB review.

We use a [staff proposal review form](#) (Word document) to capture the five basic elements of organizing that are the focus for FFC funding: base-building, leadership development, institutional change, racial justice, and capacity building.

## GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

### *Who comprises your grantmaking selection panel(s)?*

Our Community Funding Board is composed of community leaders and experts who provide strategic guidance and support in our FFC grantmaking process.

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

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

Potential candidates can be recommended by CFB members, staff, and board, as well as self-nominated. Individuals interested in serving complete a **CFB background diversity profile sheet** (Word document) to help us determine the various diversity and needs of our CFB.

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

CFB members generally serve two to three years but can be brought back in subsequent years if they wish and on an as needed basis.

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

The CFB conducts site visits for FFC applicants, prepares a comprehensive assessment tool (similar to the one used by staff) for all site-visited groups, engages in a landscape analysis of organizing in Los Angeles County, and determines the role of each applicant within that landscape to help determine final grants.

- ◆ The CFB reads through all proposals and completes a preliminary assessment tool, pulling out questions they have about the proposal.
- ◆ All questions are shared with the applicant in advance so they can be prepared to respond to them at the site visit.
- ◆ Groups are site-visited by a team of two people, who then complete a fuller assessment tool and submit that to staff.
- ◆ Staff gathers ratings from the assessment tools and places them in a database to average out the scores. These are then sent to the CFB teams.
- ◆ The CFB convenes a report-back meeting for a fuller discussion of the organizing landscape and then breaks out into groups to discuss issue-focused landscapes and site-visited organizations.

- ◆ The CFB draws up a landscape analysis with High-Medium-Low recommendations for funding within that landscape.

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

When the staff creates CFB teams that will site visit all applicants, it takes into account geographic focus, language, race, ethnicity, age, and other factors to ensure there is diversity within the teams.

### *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?*

Yes, since our CFB is made up of activists, we welcome their participation. View our conflict of interest policy [here](#) (Word document).

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

The CFB does not make final decisions about grantmaking, but does provide a space for strong conversation to vet arguments and perspectives. Since the CFB team is weighing the role of the applicant within the landscape, the H-M-L scores that are submitted collectively will determine the grant.

### *How are selection panel members trained and supported?*

We dedicate a full-day orientation meeting with our CFB to better understand the FFC's goal and strategy, provide an in-depth review of the assessment tool, and provide training on conducting site visits—see [“Guide to Site Visits”](#) (Word document).

### *What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?*

All grant decisions are final and there is no appeal process since all available grant funds are entirely allocated.

## GENERAL STRUCTURE

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

We have 26 people on staff, and all are considered “peers.”

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

I would say 100% of our community funding board are peers.

***Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers?***

Yes, there are a number of initiatives we are conducting, in addition to several other funds (Rapid Respond Fund for Racial Justice, Fund for Economic Equity and Dignity, Special Opportunity Fund, etc.), that involve peers.

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

Paid staff represent the foundation, while peers represent the community, although we all intersect on many levels.

***Do you pay members of your panel/committee?***

We do not pay members of our committees, but we do provide small appreciation stipends for various activities when we can.

## **REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION**

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

FFC grantees are required to submit a final report at the end of the grant period. In cases where two-year grants are awarded, an interim report is due at the end of the first year, and a final report is due after the second. The director of grantmaking develops the reporting forms with input from the program staff and after the funding guidelines have been revised.

***Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations? How do you learn about participants' experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants?***

The grantmaking team conducts a Grantee Perception Survey through Survey Monkey to all FFC applicants and grantees. We ask questions about the LOI and application processes, (clarity of process, time it takes, difficulty), site visits (similar questions), final decision (communication clarity, fairness, etc.), size of grant relative to the work involved in acquiring it, relationship with funder, etc. We also ask declined groups for feedback about their experience with the application process.

***How do you evaluate impact?***

FFC supports organizing that is building power to achieve institutional change. We track membership growth and leaders' development, as well as the trajectory of successful campaigns. We gather this information from proposals, site visits, grant reports, shared studies, and field observations.

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

We share most of what we learn through our website and Facebook, with special reports to our board of directors and our donors.

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

Yes, we've made quite a few changes over the last few years. We have been clearer about our commitment to being a responsive grantmaker and providing general support grants. We have also streamlined our application process by eliminating forms that proved to be very time consuming for groups to complete. Instead of filling out a budget sheet, for example, applicants now only have to submit their most recently approved budget. Instead of filling out a work plan chart, we now simply ask for the work plan within the narrative. We also narrowed down the number of questions asked (some were seen as repetitive) and created an entirely different application for existing groups that seek continued support.

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](https://grantcraft.org/participatorygrantmaking) to explore further.