

FundAction

GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

What are your grantmaking and/or strategic priorities (in terms of geographic focus, issue, etc.)? Who decides the grantmaking priorities? The overall strategy for the fund? What's the process by which these decisions are made? How are these practices socialized within your organization?

FundAction supports grassroots activists from across Europe that work on a variety of issues.

The overall strategy of the Fund was developed during a participatory two-day workshop organized in December 2016 by the four founding foundations (Open Society Initiative for Europe, European Cultural Foundation, Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation, and Guerrilla Foundation) that brought together more than 30 activists from many European countries. A facilitation group of seven activists and one foundation representative was proposed at the workshop and is now further developing and implementing the strategy. An annual assembly (which had its debut in April 2018) is the main forum for making major strategic decisions, e.g., types of grants offered, specific focus areas, and processes for grantmaking and recruiting new members.

Our goals are to shift power to make decisions about funding from foundations to those closer to the issue, strengthen collaboration and mutual support among European activists, and build the capacity of activists and the social movements they work with. We do this by inviting peers to both participate in and apply for funding.

TYPES OF GRANTS

What kinds of grants do you provide (e.g., general, rapid response, capacity building, field-building, etc.)? 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? Do you earmark funding for a specific purpose in order to ensure diversity in who/what you're funding? Who determines the type and size of grants, and how?

FundAction currently makes two types of grants, while a third is planned but has not yet been implemented:

- 1) Rethink Grants provide up to 5000 EUR for capacity building, exchange, and community building among European activists.
- 2) Renew Grants provide up to 20.000 EUR for projects that are systemically challenging the status quo and/or building viable alternatives to the current systems of oppression and exploitation that we want to see changed.
- 3) Resist Grants (currently being designed by the community) will provide up to 2000 EUR for urgent response direct action

The decision to create the first two funding streams was made at the first strategic workshop in 2016. We completed the first rounds of grants for both Rethink and Renew grants and discussed them at our annual assembly in April 2018. We are currently debating, reviewing, and designing future rounds of these grants.

Decision-making process:

- 1) Rethink Grants applicants fill out a short online application that is then reviewed by FundAction members who comment and vote on proposals through an online portal. Preliminary winners are based on the number of votes up to the budgeted funding amount for that particular round. After undergoing an eligibility/legal check by the hosting organization, the EDGE Funders Alliance, applicants sign a grant agreement and funds are disbursed.
- 2) Renew Grants: The application process is similar to the Rethink Grants, with ten applications selected for consideration. A five-member peer-to-peer panel (randomly selected from non-applicant members) then does a detailed reading of the ten applications and conducts interviews with them. The panel then meets in person at the annual assembly to make the final decisions, which is followed by an eligibility check by the hosting organization (currently EDGE Funders Alliance). Winners are announced on our online platform.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for a grant? What kind of outreach happens to make potential grant applicants aware of your grantmaking?

All FundAction members can apply for a grant. Currently, we have 163 members who are made up of activists and volunteers (see [here](#) for more information about our members). We plan to invite more participants to grow the community. Currently, our list of countries eligible for funding are EU28, EFTA (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein), Western Balkans (Serbia, BiH, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania), Ukraine, Moldova, and Turkey.

How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?

Renew Grants: Once a year

Rethink Grants: 3-4 times per year

Resist: Planned: Frequency TBD (We'd love to do this ad-hoc, to provide a more timely stream of grants, but planning a quick and participatory process is not easy—so we are still designing and determining logistics.)

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

We say that if anyone needs help, the Facilitation Group—a subsection of the FundAction members—is available. The group helps with translation and any necessary clarifications. In our first round, we reached out to applicants whose applications were not very clear. While we had this ad hoc assistance, we plan to discuss this process in detail and possibly develop a more formal system.

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

At the moment, our application collects basic information such as who the applicant is, what they want to accomplish, how much money is needed, and why. New questions and criteria are currently being discussed. We share information with Edge Funders Alliance, who is hosting the Fund, but they do not have input on the application design.

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?

The Facilitation Group screens incoming applications to assure that they align with the goals and basic criteria of the fund they are seeking support from. One eligibility requirement we have is that applicants be registered nonprofits or have a fiscal sponsor who is a nonprofit. However, we see this less as an eligibility requirement and more as a legal hurdle we must jump.

Criteria that are used for screening are published and available to the all members, along with the call for applications. These criteria are also used for the Facilitation Group's assessment.

GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

Who comprises your grantmaking selection panel(s)? How are they selected (e.g., by nomination, application, etc.)?

Renew Grants are decided by a randomly selected group of five members who did not apply for the grant.

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

We strive for diversity of members by sharing diversity criteria along with our invitation phase, during which members are able to recruit new activists.

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

Members are appointed to the selection panel only once per decision cycle. This enables them to be able to apply themselves for grants during the next round.

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

The group holds a Skype interview with each applicant, after which each of the five members evaluate and score the applications. The collated scoring results are discussed at a face-to-face meeting, where the final decision is made through a confidential voting process.

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, but not during the same cycle during which they are an applicant. All members are invited to be applicants unless randomly selected as part of the grantmaking selection panel.

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

There is a final vote to determine the winners of the grant, and the majority wins.

How are selection panel members trained and supported?

There is a Facilitation Group member present during the final decision-making meeting. The Facilitation Group also supports the panel members before the meeting to assure that they understand the process and decision-making criteria for applications before they interview the 10 applicants.

What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?

While we don't have recourse options because, in our situation the applicants themselves are part of FundAction and participated in the design of the questions, criteria, and voted on the proposals. That said, several applicants shared disappointments at our in-person Annual Assembly and we reiterated that we can always change questions in the next round if they think they need improvement. So, in terms of challenging the decisions, people can do so on the online debates or at the in-person meetings.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

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

The Facilitation Group comprises a group of activists who are compensated financially for their support of the fund, but they are not considered "staff." All involved are considered peers.

What percentage of board members are peers?

We do not have a board.

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

100%

Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers?

All operational processes of the Fund involve peers, except the final legal eligibility check, which is done by the Edge Funders Alliance

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

N/A

Do you pay members of your panel/committee?

Yes, Facilitation Group members receive 500 EUR/month for about two days of work. The coordinator receives an additional 500 EUR to organize prepare the meetings and assure smooth operations. The Peer to Peer panel members can ask for compensation of their time if this is needed (250 EUR/day), but they automatically receive 300 EUR each to acknowledge their support for the fund. We encourage panel members to regrant this contribution as a gift/private donation to a grassroots movement of their choice.

REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations? How do you evaluate impact? How do you learn about participants' experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants? With whom do you share the results of what you learn? Have you made changes to your programs based on feedback? If so, what is an example?

The development of FundAction has been a completely participatory process, in which both foundations as well as activists were involved. During the formation, fundamental values were clarified and agreed on and are now outlined in a **Charter of Values**. The internal online platform was shaped and functions according to these basic values and principles, which are also the basis for evaluating FundAction's process and impact.

In line with its participatory ethos, FundAction's evaluation framework only outlines the overall framework and general objectives of the fund. Specific objectives and measures are defined by the grantees and other members of the fund.

FundAction aims to achieve impact on three different levels: the fund itself and its members; the philanthropic sector in Europe and beyond; and European society, especially activist communities. One objective has been formulated for each value defined in our Charter of Values: democracy; inclusivity; openness; mutual trust and respect; peer to peer interaction; transparency; and autonomy. The evaluation framework provides progress and outcome measures for each of these objectives.

Participants will be asked to fill in an online survey about their progress and outcomes. To get more detailed qualitative information, interviews were conducted by an external evaluator who reviewed FundAction as a whole, rather than grantee projects. In addition, data on the internal online platform will be analyzed and desk research will be conducted to enhance FundAction's objectives.

For more information about the FundAction, contact: contact@fundaction.eu.

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.