MRG Foundation

**General Fund Grants
Spring 2020**

Okay. Okay. We're going to go ahead and get started. Welcome again everyone to the information webinar on our general fund grants for this Spring coming out on March 16, which is Monday.

A few reminders

➔ We are recording!
  ◆ Recording and transcript will go on website soon
➔ Slides available via link in Chat box
➔ Questions?
  ◆ Use your Chat button 👇🏽
  ◆ Send questions to grants@mrgf.org

Just a few reminders for you. We are recording this webinar and we will post it shortly after we are done here. We are also going to post a transcript. Both of those will go on the website soon. The slides are available via the link in the chat box if you want to download them for future reference or if you want to take notes. And if you have any questions during our call, just use your chat button at the bottom of your screens.

After the call, you think of anything else and have some questions, just send them to grants@mrgf.org. I monitor those questions, so I will do my very, very best even at the busiest times to respond within a day or two.

Who we are

Hello!

Violeta Rubiani, Grants Director
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

So just to start off, let me introduce myself. My name is Vio Rubiani. I am the Grants Program Director here at MRG. My pronouns are she, her, hers. We have other folks on staff: Jude, Dena, Lindy and Se-ah-dom and we are all super excited about this opportunity.

Mission

MRG Foundation's mission is to inspire people to work together for justice and mobilize resources for Oregon communities as they build collective power to change the world.

Coming up, a little bit of background on MRG: our mission, for those of you who are new to our work, is to inspire people to work together for justice and mobilize resources for Oregon communities as they build collective power to change the world.

Background

➔ Born in 1976 in Eugene
➔ Three ideals:
  ◆ Shift not just wealth, but also power to make decisions
  ◆ Decision-making should be in the hands of those most impacted
  ◆ Change, not charity
➔ Funding comes from endowment and fundraising

We are a 44-year-old nonprofit organization born in Eugene on the banks of the Mackenzie river, hence the name McKenzie River Gathering foundation. Really three fundamental ideals are at the core of our work. One is that we want to shift not just wealth but also power to make decisions in funding. Two, the decision making should be in the hands of those most impacted and three, we are really all about change and not charity. Hence our focus on root causes of injustice and not just the effects of it. Our funding for those of you who are wondering actually comes from a small endowment from which we draw the interest to pay for our operations and probably 90% of the fundraising that we do goes out, back to the community in the form of grants.

Grantmakers

- **Alessandra de la Torre**, Medford
- **Bruce Morris**, Bend
- **Chris Baker**, Portland
- **Davis Rose**, Portland
- **Lisa Arkin**, Eugene
- **Mercy M'Fon Shammah**, Portland
- **Shaun Franks**, Ashland
- **Ubaldo Hernández**, Hood River

And speaking of communities most impacted making the decisions…. Our grant making model, unlike most foundations, is one rooted in community. So all of our grant makers are activists and organizers themselves. They come, as you can see, from all over the state. They also have very different backgrounds in terms of expertise. We have folks who are doing, again, community organizing, climate justice, environmental justice, food justice. We have folks that are artists and working with youth. We have folks in education. So they really bring to the decision making a wide range of perspectives and experiences and lived experience. And again, they bring with them the knowledge of their own communities from all over Oregon.

So this is probably why you're here, to just find out exactly what it is that we fund or what it is that we want to see in your proposals.

What we fund

Eligibility

➔ Be based in Oregon
➔ Have 501(c)(3) tax exemption, have a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor, or engage in "charitable activities"
➔ If current grantee, be current on grant reports
➔ Not have an active grant

And so here are the most basic eligibility requirements for our grants: that organizations are based in Oregon or are doing most of their work in Oregon, or that funding that they're requesting is going to go to benefit Oregon communities. They must have 501(c)(3) tax exemption, have a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor or if the group that you are representing is completely unincorporated and it's just really a group of people coming together wanting to do something for their communities, that's okay too. They just have to engage in what the IRS has termed charitable activities. That means basically no a personal benefit or business benefit will be derived from what you're doing. Starting in 2020, one thing that you're not going to see in our eligibility requirements anymore is that your organization must make or must have a budget of under $500,000 a year. This is because we are accepting applications from organizations of all sizes. Having said that, we are going to continue prioritizing funding small and grassroots organizations. And we'll talk a little later bit more about what folks can apply for in terms of in relation to their budgets. If you are a current grantee, your grant reports must be in and your funding must all be spent out by the time the new grant begins in June. So those that are the sort of tail end of your Spring 2019 grants, as long as you have your report and by the time the new funding begins, you're fine—don't rush to turn in your reports—and then you must not have an active grant, which means if you just received a grant in the Fall of 2019, you are not qualified to apply until the next Fall.

We don't fund

➔ Direct service or social service agencies
➔ Hospitals, colleges, schools, or co-ops
➔ Animal welfare
➔ Individuals or businesses
➔ Lobbying
➔ Illegal activities
➔ Union organizing
➔ Work that has already happened

Just very briefly, these are the things that we don't fund. We don't fund direct service or social service agencies, unless there is a very, very clear and direct connection to community organizing while doing that direct service or using that direct service as a catalyst or a tool for organizing. We don't fund, you know, really big, big organizations like hospitals or colleges or elementary schools or public schools or co-ops; animal welfare; individuals or businesses; anything

that's earmarked for lobbying; and then of course illegal activities, union organizing and work that has already happened. So when you're writing your proposal, think about work that's going to start beginning in July.

Priorities

→ **Community organizing, leadership development, collective action** and/or other strategies that build power; and

→ Understand and are actively fighting **against systems of oppression**, violence and injustice; and

→ **Intersectional lens**; and

→ Addressing root causes, not just effects; and

→ Led by the **people most impacted**.

Kind of the bulk of what you probably want to hear about is here: These are our priorities in terms of what is it that we really look for in applications that come into MRG. And the number one thing is that you must be utilizing strategies such as community organizing, leadership development or collective action. These are strategies that build the power of everyday people to change major things, major systems. You must understand and are actively fighting against systems of oppression, violence and injustice. You must have an intersectional lens. And by that we mean not necessarily that you'll have to work on multiple issues at the same time, but if whatever issue you are focusing on has to have sort of a multipronged approach. And again, that intersectional lens meaning, you know, oppression affects us all, but it affects some of us more than others. And so having the understanding and demonstrating the understanding in your application we'll be sort of crucial to make you competitive. Again, your work must be addressing the root causes of injustice and not just the effects—I think what other foundations term, you know, systemic change— and then you must be led by the people most impacted. And we'll talk a little bit more about that in a little bit.

Grants

Well, just to give you a little bit of context about our grant making.

We for this opportunity have $180,000 in the budget—not a lot of money. We expect more than a 100 applications this year, this Spring. About 15 to 20 are likely to be funded and the amount might range between $6,000 and $12,000. So you will notice that the maximum amount that you're allowed to request is $15,000.

We do—the grantmakers do—try to honor whatever it is that you're requesting. We assume that you need it. And so we try very, very hard to not cut back on funding, but sometimes the difference between funding you at the full amount and funding you at a less amount might mean that two more organizations or three more organizations can get funded. And so we try to weigh, you know, the individual requests versus how much we can sort of spread the love, for lack of a better expression.

Amounts + Types

➜ **Operating Support**

◆ 501(c)(3) exempt

◆ Annual budget under $500,000

◆ Max amount $15,000

Amounts + Types

➜ **Project Support**

◆ 501(c)(3) or sponsored - Max $15,000

◆ Non-incorporated - Max $7,000

We fund in two categories or we do two types of grants. We do operating support, which again trying to honor our a focus on small and grassroots grants, we will limit to organizations that are only 501(c)(3) exempt and whose annual budgets are under $500,000. Again, the maximum amount is $15,000.

And then for project support is for everyone else. So organizations that are either fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) or that are 501(c)(3) themselves can apply for $15,000 maximum. Or if you're a non-incorporated group, you can apply for a maximum of $7,000. Now, if you're a fiscally sponsored group, you might be wondering why we limit operating support to only 501(c)(3) organizations. And this is because as a sponsored group, you are technically a project of another organization. And if we do operating support to that organization, that's unrestricted funding, so they can use that money for whatever they want. So you may or may not see the money and we have actually seen this happen. So it's a way of protecting your project and being able to restrict the funding to your project specifically.

Process + app

So you will notice that we have a little bit of a different process this year, if you have applied to MRG before, so we'll go over that.

Timeline

Quickly the timeline. On Monday you will be able to go online and start filling out your application. The due date for the application is going to be April 17 just before midnight, so you have all day that Friday to complete your application. In late May, we will notify the folks that have been declined and we will also notify the folks that are moving on to the next stage. They will receive site visits from our grantmakers. And then in June 13 or 20, we will do a Presentation Day (some of you may have participated before) and we'll tell you more about that later. We haven't decided on the date yet. It may be June 13 or 20. And then in late June we will make the announcements, send out grant agreements, checks, etc., so you can start spending your money in July.
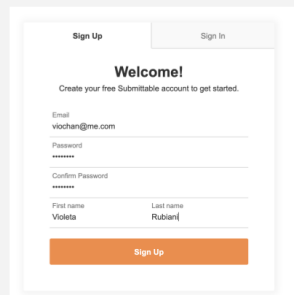
Submittable

Online grant portal—

mrgfoundation.submittable.com/submit

Web applications highly encouraged

So our process this year: we're going online. We have a portal, MRGfoundation.submittable.com. You can go in there and start creating your accounts. Web based applications are very, very highly encouraged both for your ease and for ours. However, there will be instructions on the page on how to fill out a Word application and submit it via email or via regular mail if you don't have reliable internet connection or if folks are just more comfortable doing that. Again, we do highly encourage you to submit your application online.

Submittable

The account creation is super simple. You basically will be asked to put in your email address, choose a password and do your first and last name.

Submittable

A few things to know:

➔ Accounts are individual

➔ Collaborative applications coming soon

➔ Searchable database of grants

A few things to know about that. So accounts are individual, meaning whoever's representing your organization, they will be the person basically holding the account. They will see their applications in there, the drafts, what has been submitted, what has been accepted or declined. Collaborative applications are coming soon, where more than one person in your organization can sign up to an account with Submittable and they will be able to collaborate on an application and then you can choose which person will submit it. One cool thing about Submittable is that it is a searchable database. So once you create your account, you'll be able to search and follow other organizations that may be able to give you funding.

Application

➔ Basic information

➔ Leadership demographics

➔ Info re: grant request

➔ Alignment with MRG

➔ Budget info

The application is just going to ask for some basic information, your mailing address, phone number, email, et cetera. We're asking about leadership demographics. By leadership we mean the key staff in your organization that are decision makers, and the board. We are asking some information about your grant request, just kind of like what kind of grant are you applying for and how much money do you want? And then the bulk of the work is going to be focused on, or you're going to have to do the bulk of the work in the following section, which is kind of like the alignment with MRG. And that's the section where we're going to ask about all of those priorities that I mentioned earlier. Like how are the people most impacted leading the work and how do you demonstrate that you have an understanding of how oppression shows up in your organization, both internally and externally. And then we're going to ask for some budget information.

Attachments

➔ Required:
  ◆ Budgets
➔ Optional:
  ◆ Additional materials
➔ Later in the process:
  ◆ Fiscal sponsorship agreements
  ◆ Financials

This is also where you're going to attach a budget. And that's really all we're requiring in terms of attachments: budget. And if you are asking for project support, a project budget. Optionally, you can submit up to three attachments of just some additional materials that you may want the grant makers to take a look at. If, for example, there are just some cool things that you have produced that would really explain your work better or in a different way than you just typing up an answer, we would love to see those. And then much later in the process, if you become a finalist, we will ask for financials, and—if you're a fiscally sponsored project—your fiscal sponsorship agreement,

Application Dos

➔ Read materials and instructions carefully
➔ Think about your audience
➔ Be bold, be radical, be disruptive
➔ Be realistic
➔ Tell a story with your budget

A couple of tips for application writing or proposal writing: I would say that, you know, please read your materials and instructions carefully. Think about your audience. Because we utilize an activist grant making board or committee, these are folks that may or may not have heard about your work. I think this is especially important for folks in Portland who just assume that because most big foundations are here, we're going to really know about your work or we're going to know who you're talking about. If you're naming names or naming leaders or talking about a proposed legislation that you're working on. So really be clear about your project or your organization, talk about your work as if you're explaining it to somebody who has never heard of you.

MRG is not really interested in status quo. So this is an opportunity for you guys to be really bold and radical, disruptive in what you're doing. Be really creative about what you're doing. I'm not saying come up with something super cool to submit, but what I'm saying is this is an opportunity for those of you doing really radical work to just really tell us about it. We would love to hear it. We are not afraid of risk. And in fact have funded a lot of organizations that would today be considered extremely risky. And so again, this is an opportunity for you to get funding for somewhere in the creative things. If you are submitting a project, be realistic. We understand perfectly well that in a year you're not going to change the world. So just, you know, we just really want to hear from you that, that you are thinking carefully about your project. And that you're, you're not promising the world when we all know that that's not going to happen. And then tell a story with your budget or more like align your story with your budget. And by this we mean that when our grantmakers are looking at your budgets, they're thinking about, you know, if you're saying that one of your values is worker rights or you are really concerned about a living wage and then your budget is not reflecting that, we're going to have some questions for you.
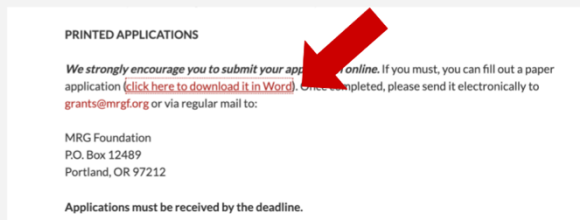
Application Don'ts

➜ Send us a full-length feature film. Please.
➜ Worry about demographics
➜ Wait until the last minute

So a couple of application don'ts. Again, when submitting your additional materials, just think about your audience and think about these folks who are going to be reading your applications and how many they're going to have to read. And so don't send us something that's going to take us, you know, two hours to read or see because it's just probably not going to happen. So keep it short, keep it sweet, concise. Don't worry too much about the demographics in terms of like what we might think of you if your leadership does not really reflect the community that you're serving. But maybe this is an opportunity for you to think about why that is. And if you do want to explain why your leadership is not representative of the people that you serve you can submit something in the additional materials and kind of tell us why. And please don't wait until the last minute. Again feel free to create your account in Submittable right now. And you can start thinking about some of these things now as opposed to waiting until April 16 or 17 to try to do all of it.

Application preview

PRINTED APPLICATIONS

We strongly encourage you to submit your application online. If you must, you can fill out a paper application (click here to download it in Word). Once completed, please send it electronically to grants@mrgf.org or via regular mail to:

MRG Foundation
P.O. Box 12489
Portland, OR 97212

Applications must be received by the deadline.

Speaking of, starting to think about what you're going to say in your application. If you go to our website right now under our general fund grants page, you can find in the section about printed applications a link to download the application in Word so you can see exactly what we're asking for and you can start thinking about it or working on it already. Again, we do ask that you submit it via Submittable if you absolutely can. If not, you can read the instructions right here and there's more on the website on how to send it electronically via Word.

Questions?

So this is the part where we just get to your questions if you have any. So again, use your chat button at the bottom of your screen to ask us anything. And if you can't think of anything to ask right now and think about something a little bit later, just send us a question via email to grants@MRGF.org. We will respond super quickly, hopefully, and that includes, very specific questions about your organizations or your proposals. This is one of the advantages of having a grantmaking committee and not being part of the decision making as a staff—we get to think with you about how to best present that proposal. So don't hesitate to ask anything and we'd be happy to think with you about what the best strategy might be.

Somebody is asking if collaborative applications are coming soon and how soon. That is up to Submittable. I just noticed when testing the application process that they do have the collaborative button in your dashboard when you sign in. They are fairly quick in deploying things that they promised, so I would think that maybe not for the Spring cycle, but probably for the Fall cycle, they will have collaborative applications and by collaborative applications, by the way, I just mean that two people in your organization can have a Submittable account and they can collaborate on a particular application. Collaborative applications in terms of more than one organization submitting a collective grant application... I'm not sure what that would look like if you wanted to do that. However, I don't know that there is an advantage to doing that at MRG. Because if two organizations are working on something, you can just submit two applications.

So while we're waiting on other folks to, maybe ask their questions, if anybody has any, I want to tell you guys about a couple of things. One is, again, we are recording this webinar and we will post it on the website soon. So if you want to revisit it, you can. However, we will have a final webinar on Friday the 13th at 11 o'clock. If you know of anybody that missed yesterday's webinar and today's webinar, and for whatever reason, they don't really want to just listen to our recording. So again, Friday at 11 o'clock, we're gonna have our final webinar and then on Thursday at 10 o'clock, we're going to have a webinar about the Lila Jewel Fund for Women Artists. If you know any women, femme, gender nonconforming, nonbinary artists in your communities. We are giving out two awards of $10,000 each this year to folks working at the intersection of arts and social justice. So these are folks who are trying to change narratives and really disrupt the arts world with their, with their performances, their writing, their storytelling, their music. So if you know of anybody, please let folks know those applications are also going to open on Monday. And again, when you sign up to Submittable, you will see all of our grant applications that are open at that time from MRG. So again, a reminder, Lilla Jewel: there's going to be a webinar on Thursday at 10 o'clock. There's a final webinar on the general fund grants on a Friday at 11 o'clock and the recording for this webinar and the others will be up on the website soon.

THANK YOU

I don't see any questions coming through the chat box. So I think we're gonna end it here. Again, send us your specific questions to grants@mrgf.org. I'll get back to you as soon as I can. And I hope to see all of your applications coming in beginning on Monday. Thank you so, so much for participating. We're here for you. Anything you need, you know where to find us. So we will again, look forward to reading your applications when they start coming in on Monday.