

**COMMON COUNSEL FOUNDATION
GRASSROOTS EXCHANGE FUND
APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

*****UPDATED FOR COVID19*****

Common Counsel's Grassroots Exchange Fund (GXF) is a discretionary small grants program designed to support networking and collaboration between grassroots social change organizations throughout the United States. GXF prioritizes grants to small community-based groups seeking to meet with other grassroots organizations, to build collaborative campaigns, and to benefit from organizing training and technical assistance opportunities. The program strives to meet the following goals:

- To strengthen the ability of community organizations to participate in public debates;
- To strengthen key cross-region and cross-sector movements;
- To contribute to collaborative policy victories in the realms of social, economic, and environmental justice; and
- To support community organizations if they need to adjust their networking, collaboration, or organizing strategies in response to the COVID19/coronavirus pandemic. Examples include but are not limited to online meeting or online organizing technology and training, language translation and interpretation, emergency stipends for organizers/grassroots leaders, PPE (personal protective equipment) or other supplies to enable safer in-person meetings, etc.

Eligibility and Priorities

The Fund typically makes grants to grassroots community-based organizations working on social, racial, economic, and environmental justice initiatives that give voice to the needs of low-income people, women, youth, and people of color. Organizations are only eligible for one GXF grant annually. Organizations must have 501(c)3 tax exempt status or they must have a 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor.

A typical GXF grant is \$1,000.

Priority is given to:

- Organizations that most clearly demonstrate a membership-led community-organizing model that is working toward social justice, racial justice, or economic or environmental policy change.
- Organizations based in and organizing in low- or moderate-income communities.
- Organizations that operate with a clear racial justice and intersectional framework.
- Organizations that have a strong group of leaders and board members that represent the community they serve and who are accountable to the community.
- Organizations that have strong leadership development programs for their members.
- Organizations that have a concrete plan to grow and to build more power by getting more people involved.
- Organizations that organize collective action of members to bring concerns to public officials and other decision-makers.
- Organizations that can demonstrate alliances with base-building organizations.
- Proposed exchanges or events that promote strategy development and skills transfer between organizations and leaders.
- Organizations working in “hard to fund” areas, including the southern US, the “rust belt” and Rocky Mountain States.
- Current or recent grant recipients of other Common Counsel member funds.
- Small organizations that do not have access to large government, corporate or private funding sources, and for whom a small grant from GXF would make a significant impact.

- Applicants that have not received recent GXF funding (grants are typically not awarded for more than three consecutive years).
- *We will accept applications from groups that are not previous recipients of other Common Counsel funds, from organizations based in other parts of the United States, and from organizations that have received GXF funding for two or more years, but we will give preference to applications that meet the priority areas above.*

Exclusions

GXF generally does not fund the following:

- Organizations located outside of the United States;
- Direct social services;
- Government agencies and programs;
- Capital expenditure, endowments, construction or renovation programs;
- Scholarship funds or other aid to individuals;
- Schools and educational institutions, cultural institutions, or medical institutions;
- Film, video, publications or other media projects;
- Grantmaking institutions;
- Research or fellowships.

Reporting

Although a report is not required, Common Counsel would like to stay in touch with grantee partners about their work. In that spirit, grantee partners are invited to share a post-exchange/event recap, photo, article, newsletter, or story highlighting the impact of the exchange/event.

Timeline & How to Apply

Starting in June 2020, GXF grants will be distributed on a twice-monthly rolling cycle through November. Applications submitted by the first Monday of each month that a cycle is running will be reviewed for consideration in the first half of the month. Applications submitted by the third Monday of each month will be reviewed for consideration in the second half of the month. Turnaround time for requests to be processed and reviewed by our grants committee is approximately 2 weeks from the deadline.

GXF does not provide funds for events/exchanges that have already occurred. Therefore, please submit applications 2-3 weeks in advance of the application due date. If your request is urgent and not possible to submit in this timeframe, please contact grantsadmin@commoncounsel.org to see if an expedited review is possible. Organizations are only eligible for one GXF grant annually.

If your organization fits all or most of the above eligibility criteria, then you may submit a GXF Grant Application Form to the Common Counsel Foundation.

To apply, register and log on to Common Counsel's [online grant portal](#). While the application is open to the public, you will first need to create a user and organizational profile before you can submit an application. You can preview the questions below.

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APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

General Information:

- Project Name
- Exchange/Event Start Date
- Grant Funds Requested
- Organizational Budget
- Budget for the exchange/event
- Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable)
- Issue Area (Primary)
- Additional Issue Areas
- Target Population or Constituency
- Proposal Activity Type

Purpose, Mission Statement, and Demographics:

- **Organization's Mission Statement:** *(Recommended maximum word count: 50)*
- **Purpose of the Exchange or Event:** Please describe briefly the skills or information sought from the proposed exchange/ event, the urgency of your request, and how information from the exchange will inform your organization's goals and campaigns. If the purpose will foster your racial equity or policy goals, please include a sentence describing how. *(Recommended maximum word count: 250)*
- **Membership Demographic.** Please provide a broad overview (not a statistical breakdown) of your member base. We are interested in how your active membership reflects the demographic of the community you serve (in terms of income levels, ethnicity, and/or any other factors which you deem relevant to your work). Include the number of active or dues-paying members. Please describe how your organization plans to increase its base of low- and middle-income members who take leadership on local and regional issues to advance racial, social, economic or environmental justice. *(Recommended maximum word count: 250)*

Additional Grant Proposal Details:

- **Participants:** Names of those people who will participate in the exchange and their roles within the organization.
- **Budget:** A budget for the exchange, including a list of potential funding sources *(can be attached as an excel document)*
- **Lobbying:** If applicable, what percentage of this grant will be used for grassroots lobbying or direct lobbying purposes?