

# Fund to Build Grassroots Power Gift Acceptance Policy

UPDATED DECEMBER 2021

The Fund to Build Grassroots Power (the FBGP or the Fund) was seeded in 2018 by The JPB Foundation and, until 2021, The JPB Foundation was its sole funder. However, the need for additional resources to support grassroots environmental and climate justice organizations is significant, and the FBGP believes the time is right to invite other donors to join this effort to support a more democratic process for distributing funds to organizations led by people on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

The following document outlines parameters that the Fund's steering committee and advisory board have established for accepting additional resources.

## Values

As with all aspects of the Fund's work, the following values guide this gift acceptance policy:

- **Movement-centered:** We seek to create a power dynamic that prioritizes the solutions that communities working on environmental and climate justice challenges are engaged in over funder interests. To do so, we engage representatives of grassroots networks who sit on our advisory board to lead in determining the Fund's priorities, identifying grantees, and directing resources.
- **Responsiveness:** Grantees may use our resources flexibly to address their needs, and we aim for an efficient grantmaking process so grantees can access resources in a timely manner to address pressing challenges and opportunities.
- **Efficiency:** We try to minimize the burden the applicant organizations face during the application and reporting processes so community members can spend less time trying to access funding and more time on their important work. We also try to balance the time our advisory board members spend guiding the Fund's strategy and decision-making with the demands of their day-to-day jobs.
- **Transparency:** We seek to be accountable to the communities we serve and solicit frequent input on how our operations affect those communities. We take time to reflect and adapt so we are truly being guided by those communities.

## Governance

Members of the FBGP's advisory board recommend grantmaking decisions to the Fund. The advisory board members are representatives of four leading networks in the environmental and climate justice field. These networks include Climate Justice Alliance, PowerSwitch Action (formerly Partnership for Working Families), People's Action Institute, and Environmental Justice Leadership Forum (coordinated by WE ACT for Environmental Justice). The FBGP supports the members and affiliates of these networks, which are located across the country.

The FBGP is a project of the Windward Fund, a 501(c)(3) public charity, which has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the Fund. Per the requirements of the Windward Fund, overall strategic guidance and grant recommendations for the FBGP rests with a steering committee of donor partners and field leaders.

There are many ways new donors can engage with the Fund, depending on both the funder's interest and the needs of the Fund's advisory board and steering committee. In some instances, it might make sense for funders to join the steering committee, or in other instances the Arabella Advisors and/or Windward Fund teams can update and communicate with funders separately. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis in partnership with the contributing funder, advisory board, and steering committee.

## **Grantmaking**

The Fund reaches frontline organizations that have historically been underfunded by philanthropy but are achieving impressive victories with fewer resources. In 2019–2020, the fund prioritized:<sup>1</sup>

- Organizations that represent or are led by representatives from communities that are predominantly composed of people who are Black, Indigenous, immigrants, undocumented, and/or refugees.
- Organizations working in the Southeast, Midwest, or other regions understood to have received significantly less philanthropic investment.
- A mix of local (city, county, rural, urban), state, regional (multiple states), national, and tribal focus among grantees.

To date, the FBGP has awarded or committed over \$19 million in grants and responsive relief funds (i.e., responding to crises such as COVID-19 or climate disasters) to over 130 grassroots organizations that are advancing environmental and climate justice. The FBGP team can share more information about the Fund's grantmaking, including the Fund's grantee list and lessons it has learned through its evaluation activities.

## **Contributing to FBGP**

The FBGP is excited to expand its impact and grow its partnerships with funders. At the same time, it recognizes that philanthropy, as an institution, reflects the mass accumulation of wealth in society at the expense of people who have been historically harmed by violence and systemic barriers, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. The FBGP aims to redistribute this wealth to communities that are most impacted by environmental injustices and extreme climate events. The FBGP will do so using a process that places people who are closer to these issues at the forefront of decision-making on where and how resources should be distributed. The FBGP exists to create opportunities for national networks that are leaders on environmental and climate justice, frontline-led organizations,

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<sup>1</sup> Prioritizations for future funding allocations may change given shifting assessments and needs.

and funders to partner together in supporting important work that is advancing environmental and climate justice movements nationwide.

The process for accepting gifts to the FBGP includes:

- Advisory board members consider all prospective partnership opportunities with funders to assess how the funder’s giving practices align with the FBGP’s stated values and the funder criteria listed below. The advisory board will then decide, through a consensus model, how to proceed with engaging the potential funder.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing that each partnership might look different, the advisory board will meet with the prospective funder to explore, on a case-by-case basis, what a partnership between the funder and the FBGP could look like, including the funder’s level of engagement in the governance bodies. In doing so, the advisory board will seek to identify opportunities for authentic and meaningful partnership as well as determine whether the prospective funder’s contribution may or may not compromise the integrity and structure of the Fund in any way.
- Steering committee members review the advisory board’s recommendations and, if applicable, provide additional insights to help inform the advisory board’s decision-making process. The steering committee defers all decision-making on accepting new funders to the advisory board.
- Once the advisory board approves each new funder to join the FBGP, then the Arabella Advisors and Windward Fund teams will work with the funder to process the grant.

The FBGP accepts gifts from funders that:

- Prioritize unrestricted operating support.
- Uphold the advisory board’s authority to make grant recommendations. In some cases, the advisory board might decide to prioritize directing new resources to frontline communities and grassroots organizations that are or have been directly impacted by harmful activities related to the funder’s wealth generation. This will occur if the advisory board determines that the funder’s individual/institutional reputation and/or source of wealth is connected to those harmful activities.
- Trust that the advisory board follows an equitable process in providing grant recommendations and strategic guidance while also engaging in dialogue, as needed, to learn more about their grantmaking decisions.
- Have an authentic commitment to investing in historically underserved communities and/or redistributing wealth through democratic processes, such as the FBGP, and do not seek to bolster their own image or reputation (i.e., “greenwashing”).
- Seek to build relationships between peer funders, advisory board members, and grantees, where appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> The advisory board and steering committee will align with the funder on their desired level of anonymity. The advisory board reserves the right to share the funder’s organizational or individual name with their organization’s executive leadership (e.g., executive director, deputy directors, development director), with the expectation that all parties will respect the funder’s requested level of confidentiality while potentially contributing to the FBGP.

- Are not in an immediate position to directly support grassroots environmental or climate justice organizations and/or are directing new resources to these organizations. The FBGP does not wish to attract resources that were already supporting grassroots organizations in a different fashion. Instead, the FBGP seeks to grow the pool of resources for the environmental and climate justice field as a whole.