



Community Funds

Introduction

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged Oregon communities and widely exposed the racial, gender, and economic inequalities in marginalized communities, the [Oregon Worker Relief Fund was born](#). A coalition of more than 100 immigrant rights and community-based organizations, OWRF came together to launch a relief fund for undocumented workers who, despite being deemed “essential” to America’s economic health, had been left completely out of state and federal aid efforts.

OWRF had been successful in getting \$10 million from the Oregon Legislature for direct worker relief, but was forced to find additional funding to cover all administrative costs, including the creation of the technology infrastructure and the hiring and training of the staff needed to help workers navigate the aid process.

There was one problem: there was no centralized mechanism to receive donations and no one to manage the distribution of the funds to the navigating organizations.

Seeding Justice stepped in, not only kick-starting the OWR Infrastructure Fund with the largest grant we’ve ever awarded (\$185,000), but also effectively leveraging our relationships within the philanthropic community to raise more than \$2.5 million to cover the coalition’s administrative needs.

The OWR Infrastructure Fund was the beginning of our Community Funds program. Since then, we have raised almost \$7 million for various funds, have distributed nearly \$4.6 million in grants, and have received requests from government agencies, new community-based organizations, and even legislators to open new ones.

Types of Community Funds

Community Funds have taken many forms since we started the program—they have been funded with dollars received from legal settlements, donations from individuals and foundations, or government relief funds. Depending on how they're set up, the funds may be directed to specific Tribal Nations or organizations, have an open grantmaking process that's managed by representatives of a community-led coalition, or be distributed by Seeding Justice through a participatory grantmaking process that's facilitated by us but led by members of the communities most impacted. We've loosely categorized community funds in three ways:

Mission-Driven Funds

Some community funds are meant to reach specific efforts (restoration of the Columbia river) or communities (Tribal nations) and we think it's crucial for the communities most impacted to be at the center of the decision making. For example, the Since Time Immemorial Fund was created to aid Native American communities in Oregon and Washington as they battled the COVID-19 Pandemic. The grantmaking process was facilitated by Seeding Justice, but the criteria was established, and the funding decisions were made by a grantmaking committee composed of five Tribal leaders from communities across both states.

Community-Driven Funds

Other community funds are entirely driven by community coalitions, with Seeding Justice's role focused on facilitating the distribution of the funds. An example of this type of fund is the Oregon Worker Relief Infrastructure Fund, where the Steering Committee (comprised of [OWRF](#) representatives from [CAUSA](#), [APANO](#), [PCUN](#), [Consejo Hispano](#), and [Innovation Law Lab](#)) decides who will receive a grant and Seeding Justice distributing the funds according to their wishes.

Pass-Through Funds

These funds are set up to support organizations and coalitions that lack the capacity to manage and distribute large pools of funding. For example, we created the Chúush Fund in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs because they had no way to receive public donations themselves. Every month, all donations received in the fund are transferred to the Tribes for the restoration of their water infrastructure. Another example is the Addiction Recovery Assistance Fund, created to ensure CARES Act funding

(and later Measure 110 funding) kept BIPOC people in recovery safely housed.

Interested in starting a fund?

Here are some questions to consider:

1. What issues will your fund solve?
2. Who will be at the table?
 - a. What communities will it serve?
 - b. Who will be making decisions?
 - c. How will you ensure those most impacted are represented in decision making roles?
3. What types of organizations or groups do you envision receiving the funds?
 - a. Will there be an external application?
 - b. Will the steering committee direct the funds?
 - c. What's the reasoning behind your choice?
4. Is this a temporary or permanent fund?
 - a. If temporary, what's the timeline for distribution of funds?
5. How quick will the turnaround for grantmaking be?
6. What role do you need Seeding Justice to play? (See below for a matrix of what each fund type entails)
7. How will Seeding Justice be involved with the coalition/steering committee?
8. How will decisions be communicated to Seeding Justice? Who will be the contact person?
9. How will you ensure transparency to the communities you serve?
10. What discussions have you had about your own sustainability and capacity?
11. How and how often will you need to receive financial reports?
 - a. Monthly?
 - b. Quarterly?
12. Will you manage donor relationships (Thank You letters, receipts, etc.)
13. Who will be responsible for developing and disseminating information?

Community Funds Matrix

Community-Driven Funds (RVRF, OWRF): *These funds serve to fundraise and distribute funds to communities most impacted via grants to steering committee members and external organizations.*

Who makes funding decisions?	Role of Seeding Justice	Seeding Justice Fee	What's needed to start the fund
<p>Coalition of CBOs create a representative steering committee that makes decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sits in the steering committee for strategic and informational purposes. Seeding Justice has no decision making vote. ● Grantmaking according to Steering Committee's criteria ● Facilitates (but doesn't lead) fundraising efforts ● Facilitates (but doesn't lead) communications efforts ● Facilitates (but doesn't lead) community engagement efforts ● Financial tracking and reporting to Steering Committee (1x month or quarterly) ● Limited reporting on donors (we cannot disclose donor information without their express permission) ● Limited reporting to funders 	<p>2.5 - 7%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Signed MOU ● EINs of all coalition members if not already available ● Contact names and emails of coalition members, including of fiscal sponsors ● Grantmaking criteria and process ● Fund description, including purpose, who is being served, and who is leading the work ● Social media handles and websites of all coalition participants ● Link to donate page

Mission-Driven Funds (STIF, CRF): *These funds serve to fundraise and distribute funds to communities most impacted via grants to groups who apply for a specific opportunity.*

Who makes decisions?	Role of Seeding Justice	Seeding Justice Fee	What's needed to start the fund
External (non-Seeding Justice) grantmaking committee makes all decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and coordination of the grantmaking committee • Grantmaking, including development of criteria • All Fundraising • All Communications • All Community Engagement • Financial tracking and reports (1x month or quarterly) • Reporting to Donors • Reporting to Funders 	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bio and pic of grantmakers • W9 of grantmakers • Develop application criteria, questions and application form • Develop fundraising materials • Develop communications materials

Pass-Through/Other (Chúush, ARAF): *These funds serve to distribute (government) resources to communities most impacted via grants to specific or designated groups.*

Who makes decisions?	Role of Seeding Justice	Seeding Justice Fee	What's needed to start the fund
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect funds and distribute to one or more organization(s) • Provide limited reporting to funders 	2.5 - 7% for community-based orgs; 10-20% for government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOU • EINs of grant recipient(s) • Contact name(s) and email(s) of grant recipient(s) • Grantmaking criteria and process, if needed/available