

June 28 Innovation Fund Webinar
Questions Sent in through the Chat Function

Eligible Initiatives

- Q:** Are all the projects "new" or can they be early efforts that meet the expected outcomes?
- A:** Foundation projects or initiatives must constitute *new* funding for the local or regional philanthropy. However, the projects or initiatives themselves need not be new. Activity may be underway on the ground without local foundation funding, and this grant may be used by the foundation to begin funding these existing bodies of work.
- Q:** Is this a viable opportunity to take current food access and policy initiatives to the next level or is this opportunity meant more for "emerging" initiatives?
- A:** This could serve as an opportunity to take current initiatives to the next level, provided the local or regional foundation does not have an extensive existing portfolio dedicated to this type of work. A foundation may take this opportunity to begin funding initiatives that are already underway in the community; or a foundation may choose to expand an area of funding that currently focuses solely on programmatic activities, or incorporate a purposeful focus on equity in existing initiatives that already address policy and environmental change strategies.
- Q:** Do we need to choose a project or initiative, or can it be an initiative including a lead project?
- A:** For the purposes of the Innovation Fund, projects and initiatives have been defined as different activities, with initiatives constituting more substantial undertakings. The Innovation Fund will prioritize funding of new grantmaking initiatives. Funding for new projects that do not entail the launch of an initiative will be considered for smaller grants. Project funding may be provided to those foundations that might not be prepared to launch a new initiative, but could make progress toward a launch by undertaking a specific project in their community. These projects must meet the same criteria as initiatives. If a new grantmaking initiative is launched and there is a project that you can foresee funding as a part of that new initiative given the alignment of the project with the Innovation Fund strategies, that is fine.
- Q:** You have been describing very locally specific strategies. Are statewide initiatives appropriate?
- A:** Statewide initiatives are acceptable. For an example of how funds from the 2010-2012 IF cohort were used to achieve state policy change, check out the case study about the [New Mexico Community Foundation](#).
- Q:** Does a community have to be geographic, or can it be defined by another factor, for example, homelessness?
- A:** Communities can be defined in many ways. Initiatives and projects supported by the Innovation Fund must invest in places that demonstrate concentrated poverty (indicated by poverty rates above 30%), a lack of healthy food retail outlets, or abundance of vacant land within low-income communities or communities of color. The "place" can be a city, or even a state, but you will need to point to how specific populations or places within that larger geographic region have high poverty rates or are disadvantaged in the other ways described in the RFP, and how the new initiative will specifically target these disadvantaged communities.

Eligible Applicants

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Only local or regional foundations are eligible to serve as lead applicants.

Q: Can a non-traditional funder, such as the United Way, a government funding agency, Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), an intermediary or a corporation's social responsibility arm, apply for grant? Is this only for a foundation as defined by the IRS?

A: Only private foundations are eligible to serve as lead applicants for the Innovation Fund. However, non-traditional funders – including the United Way, government agencies, CDFIs, intermediaries, corporations, and others – are encouraged to apply in partnership with a local or regional foundation and may contribute funds towards the matching requirement. A primary goal of the Innovation Fund is to support long term changes within foundations.

Q: Will prior grantees be considered for this round of funding?

A: The IF is meant as a one-time funding opportunity to allow foundations to take risk, build capacity and create sustainable shifts in the foundation to sustain the work. Because of this, IF partners from the 2010-2012 cohort are not eligible for this funding opportunity. Foundations that are the recipients of National Convergence Partnership funding through other initiatives (such as Regional Convergences) are eligible applicants.

Q: How many letters of support are recommended?

A: There is no recommended number of support letters. If you have partners in the new initiative you plan to launch, we encourage you to have support letters from each of those partners.

Funding

Q: Is travel included in the grant or is that an additional cost to be considered?

A: Innovation Fund dollars may not be used for the purposes of travel to attend the required in-person meetings associated with the initiative. Some travel expenses will be reimbursed by the National Convergence Partnership, but foundations must commit to covering a portion of the incurred expenses.

Q: Is in-kind staff time or salary support from another funder part of the application?

A: If there are a group of funders coming together to apply in partnership, there should be one staff person that holds responsibility for coordinating. This may be the person best suited to receive the in-kind matching support. Staff time, not to exceed 10% of the total required match the foundation is submitting, can be considered in-kind support and calculated towards the foundation's match. For example, if a foundation provided \$400,000 in order to access the maximum \$200,000 match, they would be allowed to calculate a maximum of \$40,000 of personnel time towards the match.

Q: Can the ineligible activities be covered by the match funds, or are they excluded from the scope all together?

A: Ineligible activities are excluded from the scope of this funding initiative and may not be covered by any portion of funds – whether contributed through the match or through the actual grant from the National Convergence Partnership. If activities such as trainings or research are critical to the trajectory of the policy or environmental change outcomes, they should be a small

portion of the overall efforts, and it should be very clear how they will be stepping stones to achieving the larger policy and environmental change.

Q: What percentage is evaluation? We are interested in evaluating more than just the policy development/implementation and it looks as though the funds only allow for us to assess/evaluate policy development/implementation. Is this correct? We would like to evaluate the impact that IF efforts have on the community (i.e., partnerships developed, unforeseen changes in the community, jobs created, health impact). Is this something that we can include in the proposal that we submit to Convergence for the IF?

A: A specific proportion of the funding has not been designated for evaluation purposes; and in fact, evaluation is not a required function of this grant, although it is a permissible activity. Evaluation should not be the primary focus of the initiative, and therefore should be represented correspondingly in the budget and programming. Many of the examples you provide can be interim measures of advancing policy and advocacy power. Policy change itself can take many years, therefore interim measures of success related to advancing policy and environmental change can be part of the evaluation.

Q: Is any of the IF money intended to support programming "on the ground" in communities, or is the IF funding intended exclusively to offset the costs a foundation incurs in developing its new grantmaking initiatives?

A: A majority of the funding is expected to flow through the foundation to community-based grantees in the form of a new grantmaking initiative or project. Only a small portion of the funding—no more than 10% of the total required match the foundation is submitting—is allowed to be utilized to offset costs a foundation incurs in developing its new grantmaking initiative.

Q: How much of the match is required initially?

A: It is preferred that applicants have the total match dollars secured upon submitting the RFP. If that is not possible, lead applicants must, at minimum, have half of the total match budget at the time of the application submission deadline and commit to procuring the full match by January 18, 2013 (approximately 14 weeks after the October 1 start date). Those without a full match at the time of submission, if selected, will receive conditional grant approval. If the match is not met by January 18, the Convergence Partnership will reassess the merits of the application based on an adjusted budget and scope.

Q: How much funding is available in this round, and how many grants will be awarded?

A: The National Convergence Partnership expects to award approximately \$2 million in matched grants through the Innovation Fund. The number of grants will be dependent on the funding amounts requested by eligible applicants.

Q: Do funds committed by the foundation need to be from new sources or can they come from the foundation's existing corpus?

A: Funds committed from the local or regional foundation towards the match may come from the foundation's existing funding pool. We expect many foundations to re-dedicate existing funds towards a new grantmaking initiative.

The RFP for the Innovation Fund can be accessed online:

http://www.convergencepartnership.org/site/c.fhLOK6PELmF/b.8110763/k.4722/Innovation_Fund_Call_for_Proposals.htm

An archived version of the webinar from June 28 is available online:

http://www.convergencepartnership.org/site/c.fhLOK6PELmF/b.8023463/k.9D4B/Other_Webinars.htm