

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation | Democracy Grant Program | LOI Scoring Rubric

Grantmaking focus:

Our Democracy Grant Program will consider proposals that address one or more of the following:

- Organizing across issues (e.g., economic justice, climate justice) that builds power and strengthens democratic participation and/or works to improve the material conditions of Minnesota communities
- Narrative infrastructure and storytelling that expands civic voice and dialogue toward an equitable democracy and a just Minnesota
- Infrastructure and institution building that expands our movement landscape, strengthens leaders and equips our changemaking ecosystem for lasting power-building

We understand this work of realizing and strengthening our democracy manifests across issues. We also understand that organizing leverages various strategies required to shape political agendas and social conditions for long-term change include strengthening narrative infrastructure, organizing resources, increasing democratic participation, and building new institutions.

Organizing that works to change the material conditions of communities will both fortify our civic infrastructure and strengthen the democratic participation of communities across the state. Efforts grounded in strong issue-based campaigns, the defense of democratic institutions, leadership development that brings new leaders into the fold, and an orientation of institution building all lay the groundwork for long-term change.

Funded work could include any of the following and more:

- Cross-issue organizing around topics of economic justice, public safety, environment/climate, LGBTQIA+ rights, racial justice, immigration, Indigenous governance and sovereignty, civic engagement working to improve the material conditions of Minnesota communities
- Organizing strategies that expand base-building and grow new constituencies to build a bigger “we”
- Organizing that builds narrative infrastructure and power to shape storytelling and expand civic discourse for a just Minnesota

Section 1: Overview & Proposed Work

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant clearly describe their current focus, key initiatives or programs, and the communities they serve? Strong proposals will show how the organization positions itself within broader efforts to advance societal change, and how its work contributes to strengthening democratic participation and building a more just society through power-building organizing.

Score	Description
5	The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response provides a cohesive explanation of the organization's work, who the organization works with, and why the work matters. It clearly situates the organization within broader efforts to strengthen democratic participation and building a more just society through power-building organizing, demonstrating strong alignment and purpose.
4	The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization describes its programs and communities clearly, though some elements may not be fully developed or connected. The role within the broader change efforts is present but may be more implied than explicitly articulated.
3	The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response offers a basic description of key initiatives, programs, and general understanding of the organization.
2	The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The information provided is fragmented, vague, or overly general, making it difficult to understand the organization's focus or whom it serves. Little connection is made to strengthening democratic participation and building a more just society through power-building organizing.
1	The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not clearly explain the organization's work, communities, or relevance to strengthening democratic participation and building a more just society through power-building.

**Comments
or
Questions**

Section 2: Vision & Approach

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant articulate a compelling long-term vision for strengthening democratic participation and advancing justice? Strong proposals will demonstrate how their work adapts, transforms, and builds power through strategies such as power building, base building, organizing, advocacy, or narrative change. The applicant should show how their work is informed by, formed with, and directly beneficial to the communities most impacted, and how guiding principles or frameworks shape their approach.

Score	Description
5	The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization articulates a compelling long-term vision and clearly explains how its work contributes to a resilient and thriving arts and culture ecosystem. The response demonstrates authentic connection to communities most impacted and shows how stated values or frameworks actively guide decisions and practices.
4	The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization describes a meaningful vision and references community benefit and guiding principles, though some relationships between vision, practice and impact could be more explicit.
3	The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response expresses aspirations or values but provides limited explanation of how they shape actual work or partnerships. Community connection is mentioned but not clearly integrated into the organization's approach.
2	The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization shares high-level intentions or language about impact, but it is unclear how this translates into practice or benefits communities most impact.

1 The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not clearly articulate a long-term vision or how the work contributes to strengthening democratic participation and building a more just society through power-building organizing. Little to no connection is made to community influence, benefit, or guidance practices.

**Comments
or
Questions**

Section 3: Organizational Readiness & Capacity

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant demonstrate organizational readiness and capacity to carry out this work? Strong proposals will describe leadership, staffing, financial health, and infrastructure in ways that convey both current strengths and areas for growth. The applicant should show how funding will support continued growth, strengthen organizational infrastructure, and expand their ability to lead long-term systems and/or social change to strengthen civic participation and an equitable democracy.

Score	Description
5	The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response clearly describes leadership and a readiness that inspires confidence in the organization's ability to carry out the work. Information shared thoughtfully identifies how funding will strengthen infrastructure, support sustainability, and build capacity to lead change over time.
4	The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization provides a clear overview of its structure and readiness, though some elements may lack detail or connection to future growth. The use of funding to strengthen capacity is described but may not be fully developed.
3	The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response offers general information about leadership or operations but does not fully convey

how the organization will sustain its work. Connections between funding and long-term capacity building are present but remain broad.

2

The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The description of leadership and financial position is minimal or fragmented, making it difficult to understand readiness to implement work.

1

The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not provide enough detail about organizational leadership, capacity or financial context to determine readiness. It's unclear how funding would support the organization's ability to carry out or sustain the work.

**Comments
or
Questions**