



## **Request for Proposals: Community-based Grant Program Partner for Native Nations**

### **Purpose**

The Bush Foundation is seeking a partner to operate two grant programs to distribute funding to support Native nations and Native communities. This partner will operate the programs alongside three other partners. Our four grant program partners will help us get funding to more communities and organizations to inspire and support creative problem solving to make our region better for everyone. The partners will design and operate a grantmaking program consistent with the spirit and intent of the Bush Foundation's Community Innovation grant program. The partners will also co-own and operate the Bush Prize program. Organizations will be selected for a six-year term beginning 2022 and operating through the end of 2027. This RFP will remain open until a partner is selected. In mid-January, we will review proposals received by Thursday, January 13, 2022. If you are interested in applying, we encourage you to submit by this date or reach out to us to tell us when your organization will be submitting.

This is the second time we have offered this request for proposal. This time we are emphasizing that collaborations of organizations can consider applying and we are also open to applicants located outside of the Bush Foundation region if they are already doing work in this region. Additionally, we determined that Program 2, the Bush Prize, will not operate in calendar year 2022 as we would like to gather input from all four partners about how to operate the Bush Prize going forward.

### **About the Bush Foundation**

The Bush Foundation invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. Established in 1953 by 3M Executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth, the Foundation supports organizations and people to think bigger and think differently about what is possible in their communities. We work to inspire and support creative problem solving – within and across sectors – to make our region better for everyone.

### **Background and Where We Are Heading**

Since 2013, the Bush Foundation has partnered with Community Innovation intermediary partners to provide flexible, responsive grants to grassroots and constituency-led organizations engaged in community-powered problem-solving. These partnerships have allowed us to have more impact and stay more closely connected within the community. There are currently three state-level intermediaries operating grant programs through 2021. The programs have been closely connected to the Community Innovation program at the Bush Foundation. In 2021, we made a number of strategic changes, including updating the Community Innovation grant program criteria and rethinking our Bush Prize program.

Community-based grant programs partners are an expansion and extension of these intermediary programs that will give more funding to communities and more grantmaking power to community-rooted partners. We know the value of community-rooted organizations that understand what their communities need and will continue to have one partner operating in each of the states in our region.

In October 2021, we selected three partners to lead this work in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Those partner organizations will be announced in 2022.

### **Programs to be Led by Grant Program Partners**

We are looking for a grant program partner to focus on serving Native nations and Native communities across the Bush Foundation region. The Native nations partner will cover the entire geography, including urban communities, making grants to nonprofits and units of government. We expect that the state-focused partners will also fund Native-led and Native-serving organizations and we will work with partners to develop practices to minimize duplication of efforts.

This partner, like the three partners selected in the fall of 2021, will operate two programs:

- 1) Each partner will create a grant making program to distribute at least \$1.2M in grants to organizations each year. The programs should be consistent with the spirit and the strategy of our Community Innovation grants but partners will have the opportunity to design the program to work best for the area they serve.
- 2) Each partner will also co-own the Bush Prize with the Bush Foundation. Rather than having a single Bush Prize program, we will have four programs operated with our grant program partners (e.g. “The Native Nations Bush Prize, presented by [name of grant partner] and the Bush Foundation). Before launching this program, the Bush Foundation and the program partners will gather to provide input about how to operate this in a way that best fits the underlying goals and serves the community well.

For both of these programs, we expect grant partners to work closely with the communities they serve, with all decisions guided by community advisors. For the Bush Prize program, the Bush Foundation may have a role in the review or selection process.

### **Scope of Work**

Partners will create and operate both the grant and Bush Prize programs for their specific geography – Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. While the criteria and process may be unique to each partner and the communities it serves, there are some requirements that each will follow.

#### *Program 1: Grant program*

Each partner will design a grant program including the name of the program, criteria, eligibility, application, selection process, grant size and number of grant rounds per year (or have an “always open” application). These elements can be different for each partner.

#### **Program requirements**

1. The program will advance the overall purpose of the Bush Foundation and support organizations to:
  - a. Develop, test, spread ideas that make the region better for everyone.
  - b. Inspire, equip and connect leaders to more effectively lead change.
2. The partner will conduct regular outreach to communities across the geography it serves to understand needs and opportunities for impact and to build awareness of the program.
3. Applicant processes will be simple, supportive and equitable.

4. Grant decisions will be made through community-based grantmaking, with input from a diverse set of community stakeholders. The communities intended to benefit from the programs will have input in the grant selection process.
5. Partners will work together to coordinate their engagement and grantmaking to ensure that communities aren't overlooked across the three states and 23 Native nations.
6. Announcements and other promotion of the program will be led by the program partners, in coordination with the Bush Foundation.
7. Program evaluation will be led by each partner. Funding for evaluation will be included in the administrative funds from the Bush Foundation. Evaluation goals and reporting will be aligned in the planning phase.

*Program 2: The Bush Prize program*

Partners will design their own approach for sourcing and selecting winning organizations including creating selection criteria and an application process. The Bush Foundation's initial thinking is that the partner will select one organization to be a Bush Prize winner annually, starting calendar year 2023. The recommended organization must be a 501(c) public charity or unit of government.

The partners will discuss these preliminary program requirements in 2022

1. Program goals:
  - a. Honor and invest in organizations that are admired and valued in their communities.
  - b. Advance the Bush Foundation's purpose to creatively solve problems, within and across sectors to make our region better for everyone.
  - c. Award a general operating grant in the amount of 25% of the organization's expenses, up \$500,000.
2. Program design elements:
  - a. Conduct outreach to communities across the geography it is serving, ensuring enough engagement to source strong organizations and to elevate awareness and prestige of the Bush Prize.
  - b. Administer simple, supportive, and equitable applicant processes.
  - c. Lead grant decision-making through community-based processes, with input from a diverse set of community stakeholders. The communities intended to benefit from the programs will have input in the grant selection process. The Bush Foundation may have a role in the review or selection process.
  - d. Collaborate with other partners to coordinate their engagement and grantmaking to ensure that communities aren't overlooked across the three states and 23 Native nations.
  - e. Announce and promote the program, in close coordination with other partners and the Bush Foundation.
  - f. Lead the program evaluation. Funding for evaluation will be included in the administrative funds from the Bush Foundation. Evaluation goals and reporting will be aligned in the planning phase.

The Bush Prize will be co-branded with each grant partner. For example, "The Native Nations Bush Prize, a partnership of <your organization> and the Bush Foundation."

**Budget and Grant Term**

We anticipate that the grant term will be six years, with progress and alignment review after three years.

Each partner will receive \$1.5M in grant funding annually. Up to 20% (\$300,000) may be used for administrative expenses related to the two programs. The remaining funds (\$1.2M) must be used for grants for the Program 1 (name TBD). The Bush Foundation will issue separate payments to partners for the Bush Prize grants.

We expect that on average, perhaps 5% or so of the administrative expenses depending on the chosen approach, will be used for evaluation so that we can share learning and deepen connections together. Specifics of the evaluation plan, including evaluation purpose, goals and reporting requirements will be worked out as part of the planning phase.

### **Eligibility**

- Applicants must be a 501(c)(3) public charity.
- Applicants must serve Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or one of the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.
- Applicants may use an existing or new donor-advised fund to assist with absorbing and managing grant funds. The details of this arrangement would be discussed at the finalist stage.
- Collaboratives of organizations are encouraged, though a lead applicant must be named.

### **Request for Proposals**

Proposals will be submitted through our [web portal](#). Please respond to this RFP by preparing and submitting a proposal that addresses the following, not to exceed eight pages.

#### *Relevant experience of your organization*

- How does grantmaking fit with the overall mission of your organization?
- Describe your current grantmaking. Include the number of programs, the number of applications reviewed annually, the number of grants made annually, the high/low/average grant amount, total dollars granted annually and the general selection process.
- Provide information about grant program(s) you created. Include how the program was created and when it operated.
- Explain how antiracism and equity work is integrated in your operations. This should include a description of how you ensure racial and economic diversity in who applies for and who receives your grants.
- Please provide contact information for three references. They should be people who can speak to your connections to the community and/or your experience with grant making in the community. We may contact your references, along with other references we identify, if you are selected to move forward in the process. The reference information should include contact name and title, organization name, mailing address, email and phone number.
- If applying as a collaborative of organizations, please modify your responses to fit the above and include experience collaborating together.

#### *Initial thinking about the programs*

- The Bush Foundation works to inspire and support problem solving within and across sectors to make the region better for everyone. How would you design the programs to meet these goals and benefit your communities?
- How will you ensure the outreach and the grantee selection process is inclusive of historically underrepresented and underfunded communities and organizations?

- How will you reach underrepresented communities in the geography you are proposing to serve?
- How will you conduct community-based selection for the grantmaking?
- Share some thoughts on how you might connect and collaborate with the other community-based grant program partners to ensure that our entire region is being served equitably. Share any previous experience if applicable.
- Describe the key staff who will be responsible for the creation and/or operation of the two programs.
- In addition to the above, if applying as a collaborative of organizations, please share how design and operations decisions would be made

### **Selection Criteria**

Decisions will be made based on how well an organization fits our selection criteria. To what degree does the organization or partnership demonstrate:

#### Relevant experience

- Experience in the creation, design and execution of at least one grantmaking program.
- Experience effectively engaging and building trusted relationships with people from different backgrounds.
- Experience with community-based selection processes.
- Experience with grant seekers in the geography you say you will serve. Grant seekers may include 501(c)(3) public charities of all sizes, fiscally sponsored organizations and government entities.
- Commitment to equity and antiracism in operations and community engagement.

#### Initial thinking about the programs

- Degree to which your vision and early thinking on plans align with the intent of the two programs and the overall purpose and values of the Bush Foundation.
- Reasonableness of the preliminary plan for the first 12 months, May 2022 through April 2023. (This will be for those selected as finalists.)
- Alignment of the program with the [Bush Foundation's values](#).

### **How to Apply**

- Your proposal must be submitted through our [web portal](#).
- Proposals should be no more than eight pages.
- This RFP will remain open until a partner is selected. In mid-January, we will review proposals received by Thursday, January 13, 2022. If you are interested in applying, we encourage you to submit by this date or let us know prior to this when your organization will be submitting.

### **Selection and Timing**

- Mid-January - Bush Foundation staff will begin to review proposals.
- Early February - all applicants who applied by January 13, 2022 will be notified by email whether they are moving forward in the process. Subsequent applicants will be notified roughly three weeks after they have applied.
- February - Bush Foundation staff will begin to schedule calls with finalists to learn more about their proposal, conduct reference calls, complete financial review and additional due diligence. Finalists will be expected to provide an estimated annual budget for the two programs. They will also provide a general timeline of the key activities for the first 12 months, May 2022 through April 2023, for both programs. This timeline should

include thoughts on staffing, amount of time dedicated to program development and outreach, and when you would make your first grants.

- If applying as a collaborative of organizations and selected as a finalist, please be prepared to share more about how your collaborative will operate together, share power, make decisions for this grantmaking opportunity.
- Late March - finalists may be notified whether they have been selected as a partner.
- It is anticipated that grant agreements will be signed and initial payments be made in April 2022 if the proposal was received on or before January 13. Applicants considered after that date may follow a modified timeline.
- It is our hope that this partner would begin planning Program 1 in May 2022. The Bush Foundation will work with the partners on their planning and implementation timeline for Program 1. For Program 2, we ask that you be prepared to give ideas and input about how the Bush Prize could be implemented as a part of gathering input from all four partners. It is understood that the partner may not pay out the entire \$1.2M in grants in the first 12 months but it's expected that in the following years all grant funds would be expended.

If you have any questions, email us at [ebriggs@bushfoundation.org](mailto:ebriggs@bushfoundation.org), call 651-379-2253 or use our [online scheduling tool](#) to set up time to talk with us.

Thank you in advance for your response and your interest in working with the Bush Foundation.