



## Request for Proposals: Minnesota Program Partner

### Purpose

The Bush Foundation is seeking a Minnesota program partner to operate two grant programs that support Minnesota communities. This partner will design and operate two programs: 1) a grantmaking program that is consistent with the spirit and intent of our Community Innovation program; and 2) the Bush Prize: Minnesota.

### About Us

The Bush Foundation works to inspire and support creative problem solving — within and across sectors — to make our region better for everyone. To do this, we invest 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. Learn more at [bushfoundation.org](https://bushfoundation.org).

### Program Partner Approach

We are a region made up of many different geographic and cultural communities. We prioritize funding for efforts that are shaped and driven by people from the communities impacted by the work, and that are truly inclusive and collaborative.

One way we do that is to work with four program partners to lead programs in our region. They are Headwaters Foundation for Justice (Minnesota); Strengthen ND (North Dakota); South Dakota Community Foundation (South Dakota); and Good Relatives Collaborative (Native nations).

The four program partners work independently yet alongside each other with guidance and support from Bush Foundation staff, as well as opportunities to share and learn together.

We are currently seeking a new Minnesota-focused program partner to begin operations in 2024. This partner will design and operate two programs: 1) a grantmaking program that is consistent with the spirit and approach of our [Community Innovation program](#); and 2) the [Bush Prize: Minnesota](#).

Our current Minnesota partner, Headwaters Foundation for Justice, is operating programs through the end of 2023. We are grateful for the long partnership we have had with Headwaters and appreciate their commitment to making sure the programs transition well.

### Programs to be Led by Minnesota Grant Program Partner

We now are seeking a new Minnesota program partner to begin operations in 2024. This program partner will design and operate two programs:

1. A grantmaking program that is consistent with the spirit and intent of our Community Innovation program, distributing at least \$1.2 million in grants to organizations each year.
2. The [Bush Prize: Minnesota](#). The program partner will source applicants, operate the process and select and celebrate the winners.

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

## **Scope of Work**

The Minnesota program partner will operate two programs. While the criteria and process may be unique, there are some requirements to ensure alignment with the Bush Foundation and across program partners.

We would expect our Minnesota program partner to begin both programs in 2024.

### ***Program 1: Grant program***

The program partner will be expected to enter into an agreement with the Bush Foundation that spells out the actual program design and implementation plan to ensure alignment.

The program 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).

#### **Program requirements:**

1. Advance the Bush Foundation's purpose and support organizations in Minnesota to: 1) develop, test and spread great ideas to make the region better; and 2) inspire, equip and connect people to lead change effectively.
2. Conduct regular outreach to communities across Minnesota to understand needs and opportunities for impact and to build awareness of the program.
3. Develop applicant processes that are simple, supportive and equitable.
4. Make grant decisions 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. Collaborate with the three other program partners to ensure that communities are not overlooked across the three states and 23 Native nations.
6. Announce and promote the program in close coordination with the program partners and Bush Foundation communications staff.
7. 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.
8. Engage with Bush Foundation staff through regular updates and periodic meetings to keep the Foundation informed of progress, ensure alignment with the intent of the grant and receive support as needed from Foundation staff.
9. We require all program partners to share their plans with us and to receive approval before implementing. We also understand that a program partner might not pay out the entire \$1.2 million in the first 12 months, but we do expect that in the following years, all grant funds will be expended.

### ***Program 2: Bush Prize: Minnesota***

The program partner will design the approach for sourcing and selecting a Bush Prize: Minnesota winner. They also will create a selection criteria and application process. The winning organization(s) must be a 501(c) public charity or unit of government.

#### **Program requirements:**

1. The program will:
  - a. Advance the Bush Foundation's purpose to inspire and support creative problem solving — within and across sectors — to make our region better for everyone.
  - b. Honor and invest in organizations that are admired and valued in their communities.
  - c. Award the winning organization(s) a general operating grant in the amount of 25% of the organization's expenses, up to \$500,000.
2. Conduct outreach to communities across Minnesota, ensuring enough engagement to source strong applicants and elevate awareness of the Bush Prize opportunity.
3. Develop applicant processes that are simple, supportive, and equitable.

4. Make grant decisions 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 will have a role in the review or selection process.
5. Collaborate with the three other program partners to ensure that communities are not overlooked across the three states and 23 Native nations.
6. Announce and promote the program in close coordination with the program partners and Bush Foundation communications staff. Bush Prize winners are announced at the same time by all four program partners, even if the application timelines differ.
7. Lead the grant 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 is co-branded with each program partner. For Minnesota, it is co-branded as “Bush Prize: Minnesota, in partnership with <your organization> and the Bush Foundation.”

### **Budget and Grant Term**

We anticipate that the grant term will be four years, with progress and alignment review after year one.

The partner will receive \$1.6M in grant funding annually. Up to 25% (\$400,000) may be used for administrative expenses (including but not limited to sourcing, outreach, application and selection processes, communications and evaluation) related to the two programs. The remaining funds (\$1.2M) must be used for grants for Program 1 (name TBD). The Bush Foundation will issue separate payments to cover the amounts of the Bush Prize grants.

We expect that 5% or so of the administrative expenses 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 and be located in Minnesota.
- 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 welcome, though a lead applicant must be named.

### **Selection Criteria**

We will use the following criteria to assess to what degree the organization(s) fits the Foundation’s needs and values:

#### **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 selection processes.
- Experience with grant seekers in Minnesota. Grant seekers include 501(c)(3) public charities of all sizes, fiscally sponsored organizations and government entities.
- Commitment to equity in how they operate and how they work with the community.

### 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 of the Bush Foundation.
- Reasonableness of the preliminary plan for the first 12 months, January 2024 through December 2024. (This applies only to those selected as finalists.)
- Alignment of the program with the [Bush Foundation's values](#).

### Submission Requirements

If you are interested in this work, we strongly encourage you to schedule a call with our staff (contact information is at the end of this document) to better understand the opportunity and answer any questions you may have.

Please respond to this RFP by preparing and submitting a proposal that addresses the following questions, not to exceed eight pages. (See how to apply below.)

### Relevant experience

*Note: If applying as a collaborative of organizations, please modify your responses below and include experiences of collaborating together.*

- How does grantmaking fit with the overall mission of your organization?
- Describe your current grantmaking. Please include: 1) the number of programs; 2) the number of applications reviewed annually; 3) the number of grants made annually; 4) the high/low/average grant amount; 5) total dollars granted annually; and 6) the general selection process.
- Provide information about a grant program(s) you have created. Include how the program was created and when it operated.
- Tell us how antiracism and equity work is integrated in your operations. Please include a description of how you ensure racial and economic diversity in who applies for and who receives your grants.

### Initial thinking about the programs

- How will you ensure that outreach and the grantee selection process is inclusive of historically underrepresented and underfunded communities and organizations?
  - What existing networks do you have throughout Minnesota and how would you use them and/or further build on them to ensure the program is known and accessible throughout the state? How will you reach underrepresented communities in the geography you are proposing to serve?
  - What would be your approach to a community-based grant selection process be? How will you conduct community-based selection for the grantmaking?
- Share some thoughts on how you might connect and collaborate with the other program partners to ensure that our entire region is being served. Share any previous experiences with collaborations, if applicable.
- Describe the key staff members who will be responsible for the creation and/or operation of the two programs.
- If applying as a collaborative of organizations, please share how design and operational decisions would be made.

## References

Please provide contact information for three references including their name, title, organization name, email and phone number. They should include people who can speak to your connections to Minnesota communities and/or your experience with grantmaking in those communities.

If you are selected to move forward in the process, we may contact your references and/or people in our network that are familiar with your work.

## How to Apply

- Your proposal must be submitted through our [web portal](#).
- Proposals should be no more than eight pages.
- Proposals are due Thursday October 5, 2023, at noon Central.

Before applying, please reach out with any questions. Contact Eileen Briggs, grantmaking director, at [ebriggs@bushfoundation.org](mailto:ebriggs@bushfoundation.org), or call 651-379-2253. We also offer [online scheduling](#) to set up time to talk with us.

## Selection and Timing

- **October:** Bush Foundation staff reviews proposals.
- **Late-October:** Staff selects finalists. All applicants are notified whether they are finalists or not.
- **Late-October to mid-November:** Staff calls with finalists to learn more about proposals, conduct reference calls and 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, January 2024 through December 2024, 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 and make decisions for this grantmaking opportunity.
- **Early December:** Minnesota program partner is selected. All finalists are notified whether they are selected or not.
- **December 2023:** Grant agreement signed.
- **January 2024:** Planning for Program 1 begins and initial payment to the partner is made.

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