

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FUND

Rapid Response Grantmaking: 2011 Criteria, Guidelines & Protocols

SOF Overview

A function of the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) is to respond in a timely way to opportunities or challenges that represent core issues of concern to U.S. Programs and that provide a window of opportunity to make an impact. Currently all USP funds and campaigns have rapid response capabilities through an allocation in each fund's grantmaking budget. Additionally, SOF is aware that funds and campaigns are monitoring events such as key Supreme Court decisions, sensitive voter engagement issues around election cycles, and other flashpoints of high-impact decision-making and action-taking in the public sphere that directly affect USP communities of concern. SOF therefore performs a unique rapid response function within USP to provide high-impact, time-limited funding to unanticipated and/or emergency situations that threaten the core mission and values of USP *across funds*.

SOF's Approach to Rapid Response Grantmaking

The development of rapid response strategies will be guided by the following considerations:

- Setting clear goals for initiatives at the outset.
- Outlining the number and type of key activities that will form the SOF response.
- Determining a timeline for each activity.
- Evaluating and dedicating appropriate budget and staff resources.
- Determining SOF's role and whether it will lead strategy development or partner with other funds.

In 2010, SOF's rapid response grantmaking included:

- Partnership with the Equality & Opportunity Fund to support a New York City-wide effort to train and mobilize legal service providers to assist Haitians living in the United States prior to the devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti with applying for a special legal status (Temporary Protected Status) to allow them to live and work in the United States for an initial period of 12-18 months. This effort, led by the Fund for New Citizens, also included a targeted media outreach campaign that reached over 150,000 Haitians in the New York region and resulted in the submission of thousands of TPS applications.
- Partnership with the Transparency & Integrity Fund to support a multi-pronged DC-based response to the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision that supported Campaign Legal Center, as well as a collaboration of the Center for Public Accountability, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and the Committee for Economic Development, to educate and mobilize the public and corporate shareholders by investigating and exposing the special interests behind political advertising and inspiring changed attitudes about corporate giving in politics.
- The Advancement Project's efforts to support voter protection work in Harris County, Texas (of which Houston is a part) following the destruction of voting machines and other equipment due to a suspicious fire in the lead up to the mid-term elections.

Eligibility for Rapid Response Grants

Rapid response eligibility will be determined through several steps. SOF staff will conduct a review process that includes consultation with the **Rapid Response Review Committee** (which currently includes Program Officer representation from the following funds: Transparency & Integrity, Democracy & Power, Criminal Justice and OSI-Baltimore). The criteria and guidelines presented herein serve to differentiate rapid response needs that advance cross-program/cross-fund goals from those that lie outside the core goals of the funds and campaigns of USP.

Criteria for Determining Rapid Response Grants

The criteria to identify rapid response grants, guided by conversations held at staff and/or board level, include:

- Unanticipated developments that threaten USP's core goals and communities of concern.
- Need for urgent action.
- Window of opportunity to affect change of some significance.
- Evidence of need for infusion of timely funding.
- Opportunity for public mobilization.
- High impact prospects for one-time or time-limited grants.
- Understanding of risk factors.
- Expectations and outcomes can be assessed.
- Intervention represents a priority for the field or for a set of issues.

Requests that meet these criteria will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Guidelines for Submitting Rapid Response Requests

Rapid response requests may be brought to SOF staff via a number of channels, including through SOF staff, through USP colleague funds, and through third parties (i.e. other funders, colleagues in a related field, and grantees themselves). Requests may be raised through recommendations to flag emerging events and situations, through full proposals, or in an email outlining the rapid response need. Please include the funding request, even if it is an estimate, where possible.

All requests should be in writing so as to facilitate an expedient response from SOF staff and the Rapid Response Review Committee. Requests should include:

- documentation of the intra-fund conversation(s) that informed the decision to make a rapid response request;
- the Rapid Response Cover Page (attached below for reference and available on KARL <https://karl.soros.org/communities/u.s.-programs-central/files/programs-and-strategies/strategic-opportunities-fund/rapid-response-cover-sheet.docx/>);
- the rationale for the rapid response request;
- whether matching funds (from the requesting fund or other funders) are proposed.

Formal requests should be submitted to Timothy Dorsey, Program Officer for the Strategic Opportunities Fund, at tdorsey@sorosny.org by the 1st or 15th of every month. Program Directors may also use the Senior Management Team meetings to discuss potential requests before the decision is made to submit a formal request.

For situations that require less urgent action, SOF staff will be available to act as liaisons to other USP core funds to support colleagues in developing an appropriate response plan.

Rapid Response Process

Once an event or situation has been brought to the attention of SOF for rapid response consideration, the following process will be followed:

- SOF staff will hold a conversation within 24 hours to determine next steps;
- SOF staff will monitor the event or situation as necessary and set a timeline for response;
- The Rapid Response Review Committee will be notified via email to engage them in conversation about how to respond;
- SOF staff will convene the Rapid Response Review Committee on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of every month (or as needed) to determine an appropriate response, including invitation of a full proposal, funding levels of request, whether the response will require matching funds from USP funds, and other critical considerations. Staff from the requesting funds will be invited to field questions from the committee either in person at a meeting or in writing.
- If a full proposal is to be invited, SOF staff will determine the best USP point of contact for the grantee, and will play an advisory role to the requesting fund and the grantee.

Rapid response grants may be brought to the SOF staff on an ongoing basis and, grantmaking will either be linked to the USP docket schedule or will be proposed for out-of-docket consideration depending on the time-sensitivity of the request.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS
U.S. PROGRAMS – STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FUND

RAPID RESPONSE REQUEST COVER SHEET

Name of Organization(s):

Previous OSF Support:

Proposed Grant Amount:

Proposed Term:

Target Timeframe for the Proposed Scope of Work:

Matching Funds:

- Are other funders contributing to this effort? If so, who and at what levels?
- Does your fund/campaign propose co-funding? If so, at what level?

Attachments (please specify):

Please include the most recent write up if the organization is a current or past OSF grantee.

Rationale for Rapid Response Request (within this section, please describe the unanticipated nature of this request):

Submitted By: _____

Date: _____