

GRANT ID:
LEGAL NAME OF ORGANIZATION:
RECOMMENDING PROGRAM AND STAFF:
AMOUNT RECOMMENDED:



NOTE: Based on our Docket I and II experience, we can expect Chris to refer to organizational records of grantees on Foundation Connect. Being familiar with this information prior to your docket meeting (i.e. OSF funding history, number of currently open grants to the organization, etc.) or bringing your laptop to the meeting to access this information is highly encouraged.

Overall, please remember the key point of the write-up is to share your assessment of the proposed grants with Ken and, for now, Chris. This is still a work in progress and will evolve further. In drafting your write-ups, please remember that Ken wants enough information to understand your assessment, even as he seeks conciseness and to avoid more time focused on internal writing than necessary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

8-10 lines

This is a brief summary of the grant being recommended, and includes information on:

- Type of grant recommended
 - ✓ If *general support grant*, briefly mention grantee mission
 - ✓ If *project grant*, provide a brief description of the project
- Purpose of the grant
- Amount recommended and term

The audience includes George Soros, Chris, Ken and the general public, as OSF's website will present the Executive Summary section precisely as it appears on Foundation Connect. This section should allow your audience to understand what the organization does, what the grant is trying to accomplish and why this is important to us. This is the place to show off your best and most original writing. Please use complete sentences, grammar and punctuation while avoiding acronyms, specialized terminology or repeating language from other parts of the write-up.

Please note we removed the "Proposal Description" section from the write-up. This section can be found in Foundation Connect and including it in the write-up adds repetitive info.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Up to 15 lines

This section includes objective information such as organizational history, mission; structure, area(s) of work; recent achievements, etc.

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Up to 1.5 pages

- Provide a **qualitative assessment** of the organization's capacity and ability to deliver on the grant. This should rely more on your judgment of the organization's capacity than on providing broad, generic information, particularly if Chris or Ken are familiar with the organization.
- Provide a **balanced reflection** that identifies an organization's strengths **AND** weaknesses or concerns. No organization is perfect. This is an opportunity to explain how the organization is dealing with issues, or how we (or others) are. The credibility of your analysis is reflected in your understanding of the organization and its place in the field – both on the positive side and in terms of issues that may exist. Avoid sense of being "cheerleading" for the organization.
- Approvers will expect first-person analysis. Please attribute any direct quotes from the proposal or conversations with the organization's staff. This will enable approvers to differentiate between your analysis and grantee-provided information.
- Please provide a brief explanation for any organizations undergoing strategic planning processes.

- When recommending funds for a project of a larger group, maintain focus on the project instead of the organization, unless the latter is relevant.

The questions below are meant to offer you guidance and give you a sense of the issues that may be asked of you during the docket approval meeting. Please use your discretion to determine what information is relevant to share through the write-up. It may not be relevant to address each one of the questions below in your write-up, but be prepared to answer them should they come up in your discussions with Ken or in the docket approval meeting.

If this is a **renewal grant** for an organization for which you **already did a full organizational capacity analysis**, please refer to your previous analysis, use relevant pieces of information and discuss what has changed since the last submission (i.e. new 990, new audit, changes in personnel, etc.).

If you **have not done a full organizational capacity assessment of this organization in the past**, and if this assessment has not been done by anyone else in USP or OSF and saved into FC, please use the guidelines below to prepare your write-up:

FINANCIAL HEALTH

What are the funding sources of this organization? Are there cash flow issues? If the organization's funding is primarily from OSF, explain whether this is a risk as well as the organization's plans to diversify revenue sources. Review the organization's financial statements to identify potential red flags, including un-audited statements if audited statements are unavailable. Your analysis will reflect your understanding of the organization's revenue model, knowledge of how it has been changing, and assessment of whether it is appropriate and sufficient for the organization's goals.

How do you assess the organization's financial health and integrity? Are there reasons for concern around these areas? Chris suggests starting with your straightforward opinion of the organization's financial health and providing one or two supporting factors for your judgment. When a problem is identified, explore it to understand its level of severity. If you are recommending funding to this organization despite the presence of real challenges, an appropriate explanation must accompany your analysis. The point is to demonstrate your examination and judgment of the organization's financial condition based on specifics about its health and integrity.

GOVERNANCE

What is the Board's role in terms of direct contributions to the organization? Other factors to consider include the Board's size, level of involvement, skill and experience of members, members known to OSF as good fiduciaries. You are expected to provide your own assessment of the strength of organizational governance. Chris suggests speaking with Board members of a grantee organization on a quarterly basis or at least twice a year, and avoiding solely gathering input from an organization's Executive Director. You are not expected to provide a list of Board members or a description of the organization's governance structure (unless this information is deemed necessary to explain a complex organization).

LEADERSHIP

How would you characterize the organization's leadership? Factors to consider include recent or imminent leadership changes, leadership's reputation on the field, their added-value to the organization, staff turnover, controversies or conflicts involving the organization's leaders, the Executive Director's reputation and tenure, the managerial skill and experience of new leaders. Do not cite leadership resumes. Analysis should focus on assessing strengths and weaknesses of the organization's staff discussed in the write-up.

COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY

How effective has the organization been in its use of media and web presence? Factors to consider include the organization's ability to effectively employ social media, whether its web products are downloaded or viewed on the organization's intended scale, the volume of site traffic and trends (i.e. repeat visits by target audience members). This section is about the organization's public sphere presence and how effectively it engages public dialogue. Today, the majority of public communication leaves a web trail – such as on the organization's web site, in comments posted on blogs, forums, websites or social media spaces (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) When an organization employs web-based

communication tools as a major part of its engagement in public debates, you should be able to gauge the effectiveness of this approach without exclusively relying on what the organization chooses to report. While the internet's quantifiable nature and web analytics can be helpful here, it may be more relevant to know the audience with whom an organization is engaging than knowing its social media following or the number of people it reaches.

PROGRAMMATIC CAPACITY

What is the organization's ability to carry out strategic activities, especially informed by prior OSF grants?

REPUTATION IN THE FIELD

Provide a qualitative assessment of the organization's **role** and **effectiveness** in the field. Why is a grant more appropriate to this particular organization than potentially others? One approach may be to consider the following questions: What value does this organization bring that other actors in the field do not? Why will our investment in this particular organization allow it to further an issue than other organizations? What uniquely qualifies this organization to move this specific agenda? Where or how does the organization fit with other actors in the field (grantees as well as non-grantees)? Other factors to consider include the organization's ability to collaborate and the extent to which it develops and implements effective projects.

Chris acknowledges that effectiveness is your real focus issue. Your analysis should provide sense of the existing range of opinions present in the field (from peers, experts, donors, etc.), both positive and negative, on how effectively the organization conducts its work. Reputation is merely an imperfect indicator of effectiveness, and he is **not** looking for a list of awards received by the organization or its employees. Quotes should be used sparingly.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES



Up to 1.5 pages

- Background or origins of the project
- Goals, objectives and expected outcomes of the project
- Strategies the organization will use to achieve these goals (i.e. research, litigation, etc.)
- Target audience(s) that the project is trying to influence and how the audience will be reached
- Monitoring plans to track the project's progress and evaluate its effectiveness. If no formal plans exist, discuss which questions we should be asking in order to assess if the grant was successful. Questions could include:
 - ✓ What is it that we are hoping to see happen by the end of the grant period?
 - ✓ What will be different as a result of our funding?
 - ✓ What are we expecting to see that will tell us that the project we are funding is on the right track?

Measures of success may be entirely organizational, such as with anchor grantees. In this case, we are mostly interested in the organization's ability and capacity.

RATIONALE FOR FUNDING/RECOMMENDATION



Up to 1.5 pages

- Provide a brief summary of recommendation, describing why it is important for your program to invest in this project, how it fits into programmatic strategy, and stating whether this is a field investment or a foundation-led concept.
- If this is a first-time grant to the organization, or a renewal or tie-off, please mention as it will provide better context for the recommended grant. In the case of a renewal, discuss what has changed since the last write-up, and if and how your previous experience has helped inform your understanding of the work, issues and decision to renew. You may want to lift up something that you learned or that your grantee learned. In the case of a tie-off, discuss justification for tying off an organization at the recommended level, lessons learned and future opportunities.

- If grant has a specific geographic or regional focus, provide context for why this is the case. Please also mention whenever our strategy in a specific region is under assessment. *[Ken acknowledges that he is still learning about some of our grantees, so staff should expect questions about context for our funding. This will be less the case as he becomes more involved in programmatic strategy and budget discussions]*
- Historical/political context – how did the issue arise? What is the power landscape and given this, why are you confident in this investment will yield a result?
- OSF's involvement in the issue and context for this involvement.
- Has the grant applicant performed a good job on the issue being addressed by the project? Why have we decided to recommend this organization, either as a first-time or repeat grantee?
- What are the external factors that may influence this project's ability to effect change? Factors to consider include political dynamics, and legislative and regulatory enactments.
- What are the potential risks and challenges of the project's proposed work, and how does the organization plan to mitigate or address them? What is the case against making the grant, reserving the resources for more effective organizations or other promising projects? The goal is to signal your awareness of any weaknesses or risks within the organization and confidence making the recommendation to approvers. It is an opportunity to explain these weaknesses or risks and why you deem it logical to move forward. You should demonstrate that you have identified where the real problems and risks lie, and avoid citing a few minor problems that can be easily overcome.