



**The Giving  
Project**

a program of Maine Initiatives

# Funding Opportunity Announcement 2025



**Maine Initiatives is now accepting applications for the 2025 Giving Project Fund for Community Organizing.**

The 2025 Giving Project Fund for Community Organizing at Maine Initiatives is a participatory grantmaking program that provides one (1) year of unrestricted, general operating support of up to \$20,000 to at least five (5) community organizing groups advancing social, economic, environmental, and racial justice & tribal sovereignty in Maine, unceded Wabanaki Territory. Grants will be awarded and announced in March 2025.

**Application deadline:**

**November 15, 2024**

Learn more about [Maine Initiatives](#) and [The Giving Project](#) at Maine Initiatives.

**START APPLICATION HERE**

for eligible organizations

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# OVERVIEW

## We believe in self-resourcing, community-led movements to build power.

The purpose of **the Giving Project Fund for Community Organizing at Maine Initiatives** is to resource social change movements and organizing efforts by shifting money to community organizing groups advancing social, economic, environmental, and racial justice & tribal sovereignty in Maine, unceded Wabanaki Territory.



Maine Initiatives is part of [The Giving Project Network](#), a coalition of nine progressive funders across the country dedicated to moving money and power to their local grassroots organizing ecosystem. A Giving Project is a model of social justice philanthropy that engages people across race and class to resource community organizing in their communities. At its essence, a Giving Project is a mechanism for donor organizing, wealth redistribution, and community accountability.

## We need to build our skills and infrastructure to fund our own movements.

Through the Giving Project, **approximately 20 Giving Project participants convene** regularly over six months for engaged learning and training to collectively mobilize resources to support community organizing. These donor-organizers will raise funds through their networks for the Giving Project Fund and then make the grant award decisions. Maine Initiatives is convening its inaugural Giving Project in September 2024 and will announce the Giving Project Fund grantees in March 2025.



# GRANTS



### AMOUNT & TERMS

**\$10,000 - \$20,000**  
One-year, unrestricted

### GRANTS AWARDED

Between 5 and 10  
grants awarded

**DEADLINE**  
Nov 15, 2024

**AWARDED**  
March 2025



# FOCUS

The Giving Project Fund at Maine Initiatives is dedicated to funding grassroots, community-based organizations across Maine that use community organizing as a core strategy to advance equity and justice. We recognize that there are many ways of making change happen and achieving important social justice victories.

We focus on **community organizing** because we believe that lasting change comes from the bottom and goes up, affecting not just political and economic systems but also the culture of communities. We also believe that community organizing involves the most people, allowing for the greatest diversity and number of perspectives to be expressed. Community organizing is the exercise of democracy in action.



# FUNDING PRIORITIES

In response to the continuing impact of structural racism and colonization, the Giving Project Fund prioritizes funding for community organizing groups focused on **Black Liberation** and **Indigenous Sovereignty**, and more generally, frontline groups led-by and -serving **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)** communities. Groups organizing in the LGBTQ+, working class, rural communities, and other historically targeted and marginalized communities are also encouraged to apply.



# CRITERIA

The Giving Project Fund at Maine Initiatives welcomes applications from organizations and groups who bring affected people together through community organizing to mobilize collective power to win improvements in their community, change the power structure, and advance social justice. **The Giving Project Network** has identified the following key components of community organizing that will serve as the primary criteria for evaluating organizations for this year's grant awards:

- **Constituent-led:** led by the people most directly affected by the issues the organization is working on, promoting self-determination
- **Systems Change:** works to change conditions by understanding and addressing the root causes of issues, not just the symptoms
- **Collective Liberation:** brings people together – across generations and issues – to build collective power to create systemic change that impacts folks beyond the organizers or the campaign
- **Social Justice Vision:** has a strong vision for social justice and sees itself as part of a larger movement for social change, and works towards strengthening that movement
- **Building People Power:** builds power/base-building: builds leadership from within its own membership, base, or community



# ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the 2025 Giving Project Fund, applicant organizations must:

- use **community organizing** as a core strategy to advance equity and justice;
- have annual operating expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year, including administrative and programming expenses, of under \$1,000,000; and
- be a **Maine-based** organization or group or a coalition/alliance of groups, working exclusively or primarily in Maine communities (we do not fund individuals or for profit entities):
  - » If your organization is a **nonprofit with 501(c)(3)** designation from the IRS, you may apply.
  - » If your organization is **fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit**, you may apply.
  - » If your group is - or is sponsored by - a Wabanaki Tribal government you may apply without additional IRS designation.



# DECISION-MAKING

Along with raising the funds to support the Giving Project Fund, participants in Maine Initiatives' inaugural Giving Project cohort will read and evaluate grant applications, conduct site visits with selected applicant organizations, and make collective decisions about which organizations will be selected for the grant awards.

The Giving Project cohort is a cross-class, multi-racial, multi-generational group of community members who come together over several months to move money to community-organizing focused on systems change. Through political education, community building, grassroots donor organizing, coaching, and collective grantmaking, Giving Project participants develop a shared understanding of race, class, and power as resource mobilizers within the social movement ecosystem.



# HOW TO APPLY?

Applications are now being accepted for the 2025 Giving Project Fund until November 15, 2024. Please follow the process below to apply:

- 1. Check your eligibility:** Please confirm that your group meets the eligibility criteria listed above. Contact [stacey@maineinitiatives.org](mailto:stacey@maineinitiatives.org) with any questions about eligibility.
- 2. Read the application:** Prior to starting your application, please read the entire Giving Project Fund Application How-To ([provided here as a PDF for reference](#)) and the Evaluation Criteria (provided on the following page) that will be used by application reviewers.
- 3. Attend an applicant information session:** [Click here to register](#) for the applicant information session on Monday, October 21, from 1:00pm-2:00pm via Zoom. If you are unable to attend, please register to receive the recording of the session via email after the event.
- 4. Access portal:** Create account on our grant management portal at: [t.ly/maineinitiativesgrants](https://t.ly/maineinitiativesgrants).
- 5. Apply:** Login to your grant management portal account and follow the link in the Giving Project box to complete the application. For more guidance on this process, check the 'How to Apply' page on the portal.
- 6. Initial Review:** Maine Initiatives Staff will conduct an initial review of your application and will select no more than twenty five (25) applications for consideration by the Giving Project Cohort.
- 7. Site-visit conversations:** In January and February of 2025, finalists for grant awards will be selected by the grantmaking committee for a conversation, in person or virtually, with a small group of grantmaking committee members and Maine Initiatives' staff. These conversations are intended to give applicants an opportunity to speak to their work in their own words and/or to elaborate on their written application.
- 8. Timeline:** All applicants will be notified of award decisions by March 15, 2025. Groups that are selected to receive a Giving Project Fund grant award can anticipate receiving funds by March 31, 2025 or within a month of providing Maine Initiatives with documentation of fiscal sponsorship or 501(c)(3) status, if applicable

**Application deadline:  
November 15, 2024**

**START APPLICATION HERE**  
for eligible organizations





# Evaluation Criteria

## *for reference only*

In a commitment to transparency, we are pleased to share the evaluation criteria our Giving Project will use to evaluate each application. The following assessment areas are intended to be directly related to the application narrative questions. This evaluation form summary is provided for reference only.

### ASSESSMENT: ORGANIZATION

- What is the general impression of the organization?
- Is the organization's mission clear, important, and timely?

### ASSESSMENT: THE WORK

- Does the organization's approach make sense?
- Does the organization make the case that their efforts or activities will bring about the impact they seek?

### ASSESSMENT: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

- To what extent does the organization use community organizing to bring affected people together to use their collective power to win improvements in their community and change the power structure to advance social justice?
- To what extent does the organization's efforts align with one or more of the following Giving Project Network identified components of community organizing:
  - 1. Constituent-led:** led by the people most directly affected by the issues the organization is working on, promoting self-determination
  - 2. Systems Change:** works to change conditions by understanding and address the root causes of issues, not just the symptoms
  - 3. Collective Liberation:** brings people together – across generations and issues– to build collective power to create systemic change, which includes altering unjust power relations, thereby effecting community wide change that impacts folks beyond the organizers or the campaign
  - 4. Social Justice Vision:** has a strong vision for social justice and sees itself as part of a

[Evaluation Criteria continued next page >](#)





larger movement for social change, and works towards strengthening that movement

**5. Building People Power:** builds power/base-building: builds leadership from within its own membership, base, or community

**ASSESSMENT: SUCCESS**

- Is the organization's success story of community organizing compelling and important?
- Does the organization's success story demonstrate meaningful impact in this area?

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