



Civic Engagement Fund User Guide

What is the Civic Engagement Fund?

The Civic Engagement Fund is a resource for Washington University students, staff, and faculty that provides civic projects and community initiatives with funding. Projects can include events, lecture series on health, art installations, panels, and more.

The Application Process

1. Letter of Intent

The Civic Engagement Fund application process can be thought of as three parts: the Letter of Intent, the Proposal Review meeting, and the final application submission. The letter of intent is a brief form that lays out the basics of your envisioned project. The letter of intent serves as a way to provide the Gephardt Institute and yourself, with an initial understanding of your project. The Letter of Intent itself is not considered when looking at the final application; instead, it serves as a discussion guide for your proposal review meeting, allowing the grant chair to better understand your project and their own thoughts prior to the actual meeting.

2. Proposal Review meeting

Proposal review meetings occur after Letter of Intent has been submitted. Typically after a letter of intent is submitted, the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will reach out to the applicant to set up a meeting between the applicant and the chair of the grant to which they are applying. The grant chair will have thus seen the letter of intent prior to the meeting, and will have had time to review it and come prepared with comments to the meeting. The actual proposal review meeting will likely take place at the Stix House, on 6470 Forsyth Boulevard across the street from the Danforth University Center. At that meeting, the applicant will discuss their project with the chair. This meeting is not an evaluation of the project, but instead an opportunity for the applicant and chair to discuss the project and address any concerns or questions. This

one on one meeting allows the chair to have a better understanding of the project, provide initial feedback, and serve as an advocate for the applicant during the actual grant review period, as the chair will then know the applicant's intentions and perspective.

The proposal review meeting is thus only meant to help the applicant, in better understanding their ideas and logistics. Following the meeting, grant chairs would like to see the feedback they suggested and the content of their discussion in the actual application. Because the purpose of the proposal review meeting is to better develop the letter of intent, following the meeting, the letter of intent should be deepened, developed, and changed to reflect the suggestions or innovations that came about as a result of the proposal review meeting.

Though the grant chair will be at the proposal review meeting, no other members of the review committee are. This means that if new ideas discussed in the proposal review meeting are not included in the actual application, the grant chair can only do so much to convey them to the rest of the committee. While the grant chair can be your advocate during the review meeting, we ask that you be your own advocate first by reflecting on the proposal review meeting and incorporating ideas from that meeting into your final application.

3. *The Application*

Finally, the third part of the application process is the final application. As has been established, this final application should show growth from the letter of intent, as the applicant thinks more deeply about their proposal. There are a few key points in the formal application to highlight.

Sustainability. The grant review committee is focused on sustainability in the proposals they read. They would like to understand how the impact of your project will go beyond the funding provided or beyond a one-time event. If it is a one-time event, how will it continue to create an impact past the actual occasion? If it is not a long-term or ongoing project, how will this programming be able to continue without future funding from Gephardt (as the same project cannot receive the same grant more than once)?

Evaluation. Means of evaluation are often overlooked when developing grant proposals. Although the focus should be on the logistics of the actual project itself, evaluation is an incredibly important part of understanding a project's ultimate impact. As you develop your project, goals, and outcomes, think about how you will both define and measure success. The grant committee is

invested in seeing projects that are intentional with their evaluation measures and that put thought into how the applicant will measure their impact.

Partnership. If your project works with a community partner, the grant review committee would like to see the indicators of a positive relationship within the project. Specifically:

- Is this partnership mutually beneficial and respectful?
- Is there a deep understanding of the goals of the community organization, and understanding how this project might meet those?
- Is this something the community partner has made clear they want?
- What role will each group, yourself or your student group, and the community partner, play?

Budget. Make sure the budget makes sense! Please use the provided budget template and review your budget before submission. Is it easy for someone reading the budget to know what each item you are asking for is? Similarly, make sure that what you are asking for facilitates the goals of the project that you have written out.

Overall Tips for a Successful Application

- Do not hesitate to reach out and ask questions! The role of the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator is to help the applicant. Contact them at civicengagementfund@wustl.edu with any questions or concerns.
- Follow the directions. Answer the questions in the order listed, and include only the materials specified.
- Be clear, concise, and accurate
- Proofread carefully. Make sure numbers add up and typos are removed.

Receiving a Grant

If you are awarded a Civic Engagement Fund grant

1. *Grant Acceptance Form*

You will be asked to complete a “Grant Acceptance Form.” This form signifies that you acknowledge the award, that you agree to follow Washington University Policy and act in accordance with the [goals](#) of the Gephardt Institute, and that you understand the reimbursement process.

2. *Intake Meeting*

A short meeting between the awardee and the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will be set up in order to go over expectations, communication, and the project timeline.

3. *Communication*

Throughout the project, the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will periodically be in contact with the awardee in order to check in. These communications will include asking for updates and coordinating site visits.

4. *Site Visits*

Site visits are an important part of how the Gephardt Institute interacts with the projects it funds and markets the Civic Engagement Fund to potential applicants. The Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will be in contact asking about what potential dates a Gephardt staff member may be able to see your project. If an applicant does not feel as though a site visit is appropriate due to the nature of the project, please reach out to the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator.

5. *Summary Report*

Once the project is complete, the awardee will be asked to complete a [Summary Report](#). The Summary Report is a place for awardees to think about the impacts of their project, and provide the Gephardt Institute with their final thoughts on civic engagement, their project, and on the application process in general. This is an important source of feedback for the Gephardt Institute, and we ask that applicants take the time to complete it thoughtfully.

6. *Reimbursement*

Following the completion of the project and submission of the Summary Report, reimbursement will be completed. Almost all Civic Engagement Fund grants awarded to students are given out in the form of reimbursement; if this presents an economic barrier, please email the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator funding can be provided in a different way. Following the submission of the Summary Report, the Coordinator will reach out to you with details about a reimbursement meeting. There are two ways to receive the funds awarded:

Reimbursement:

- *Required for all individual student applicants*
- May also be chosen as the reimbursement option for any staff, faculty, or student groups that choose to undergo reimbursement in this way

- Individuals are required to keep *all original receipts* that clearly break down the purchases by line item. If multiple group members are splitting the initial cost for items, please be sure to designate one person to handle all financial transactions.
- Following the project completion, these receipts will be presented to the accounting department, who will then reimburse the applicant.

Interdepartmental Transfer:

- *The option almost all faculty and staff elect to use*
- *Student groups are eligible to use this method following the completion of their project.*

For faculty and staff, this option allows individuals to receive funding at the start of the project, directly from their department. In order to receive funding via interdepartmental transfer, you must share your award letter with your department's accounting staff and ask them to bill the Gephardt Institute with an Interdepartmental Order (ID), department billing number 002063. Please communicate to the accounting staff that the following information is required by the Gephardt Institute to complete the ID:

- Reason for ID
- Project Title
- Awardee Name
- Award Amount
- This type of funds transfer is also an option for student groups who receive a grant and would like for their student group to be reimbursed, rather than a specific individual. Unlike interdepartmental transfers for faculty and staff, this would occur after the project occurred as reimbursement, and consist of a financial transfer between Student Union and the Gephardt Institute.

If you are not awarded a Civic Engagement Fund grant

If you are not awarded a Civic Engagement Fund grant, please know that these grants can be highly competitive. While the decision notification will contain a short rational for the committee's decision, we encourage applicants who would like more information about the selection process and criteria to meet with staff from the Gephardt Institute. Similarly, we strongly encourage applicants who did not receive funding to re-apply for future cycles, taking into considerations the concerns the committee presented in their decision. As always, please contact the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator with comments, questions, or concerns.

Civic Engagement Fund Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Civic Engagement Fund?

The Civic Engagement Fund is a series of grants distributed by the Gephardt Institute for projects and events focused on civic and community engagement.

Who can apply to the Civic Engagement Fund?

This fund is open to all members of the Washington University community, including students, faculty, and staff. Unfortunately, as of right now, community members and community organizations who would like to apply to the Civic Engagement Fund must apply through a student, faculty, or staff member.

How do I set up a meeting to discuss the Civic Engagement Fund?

Email civicengagementfund@wustl.edu.

How do I know which grant to apply to?

Each of the Civic Engagement Fund grants has a different focus. If you are uncertain which grant might be the best option for you, the Civic Engagement Fund page includes the details of each grant. Similarly, please feel free to reach out to the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator in order to discuss which grant is the best choice for the project.

Can I apply to multiple grants per cycle to increase my chances of being funded?

Applicants may only apply to one grant per cycle.

If I have already received a Civic Engagement Fund grant, can I apply again?

Yes– if you are applying to a new grant or with a new project. For example, applicants can apply for the Small Change Grant with a project, and then the next year expand and apply for the Community Planning Grant for that same project. Or, that applicant can apply to the Small Change Grant for a second time, but with a different project. Applicants cannot, however, apply to the same grant with the same project more than once.

How do I apply to a grant?

To begin the application process, applicants should submit a Letter of Intent, found [here](#). Following the Letter of Intent, the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will reach out to the applicant and set up a proposal review meeting, in which you may discuss your Letter of Intent and project with the grant chair and receive feedback. Finally, following this meeting the last step is to submit a formal application. This final application should show a deeper understanding of your project than the Letter of Intent presented, and should apply the feedback provided to you by the grant chair.

Why is there a Letter of Intent? Is that my application?

The Civic Engagement Fund requires a Letter of Intent so that both the applicant and the grant chair have a basic understanding of the project during the proposal review meeting, The Letter of Intent is not taken into consideration when reviewing final applications, and instead serves to guide the proposal review meeting discussion.

How do I set up a proposal review meeting?

Following the submission of the Letter of Intent, the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator will reach out to the applicant over email in order to setup the proposal review meeting.

Can applicants be given an extension on the final application deadline?

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer extensions to the final application deadline.

Is it possible for me to be funded upfront, rather than reimbursed, if I am unable to incur the expenses of the project?

Yes. If reimbursement presents an economic burden, please reach out to the Civic Engagement Fund Coordinator via civicengagementfund@wustl.edu, who will work with you to make sure funding can be provided at the start of the project.

Where can I find more information?

<https://gephardtstitute.wustl.edu/civic-engagement-fund/>

Can the Civic Engagement Fund money go towards unpaid internships?

The only grant that will provide money for unpaid, civic internships is the Community Engagement Opportunity Fund, which is run through the Office of Student Success and open to students eligible for financial assistance. For the rest of the Civic Engagement Fund grants, unpaid internships cannot be given funding.

Can we provide reimbursement for members of projects who are outside of the WashU community?

No, reimbursement must go directly to a member of the WashU community, though they may transfer the money to the community member on their own.

Do applicants need letters of support from on-campus community partners?

Generally, students do not need letters of support from on-campus partners. That being said, if you feel that a letter of support will strengthen your application, please feel free to include it.

Do projects need to have community partners?

Some of the grants require that the project or event work with a community partner. For example, both of the St. Louis Project grants require a partnership between the applicant and a community member or group. The Small Change Grant, however, does not require this partnership. Each grant description should include these details on their respective page.