request for proposals

Civic Engagement: Increasing Participation through Creative and Innovative Uses of Technology
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Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation was created 10 years ago to focus on the community’s most challenging problems, convene regional private- and public-sector leaders and initiate policy discussion at the regional, state and national levels. Since 2008, SVCF has made a total of $90 million in grants to over 500 organizations as part of our strategic grantmaking and community impact work in four key strategy areas: economic security, education, immigration and building strong communities.

As we celebrate our 10-year anniversary, we are proud to announce a special $1 million dollar grantmaking initiative. Through this initiative, 10 grants of up to $100,000 each will be awarded to deserving organizations that are doing the most innovative and effective work to make our region a better place.

Two grants will be awarded to projects within each of our existing four strategy areas: economic security, education, immigration and building strong communities. Two additional grants will also be awarded to projects aimed at increasing civic engagement and participation through creative and innovative uses of technology.

This request for proposals, or RFP, focuses specifically on increasing civic engagement and participation through creative and innovative uses of technology. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of open government advocates, civic hackers and developers, social media experts, educators, nonprofit service providers, public-sector agencies, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Grant Application Deadline

The application process will open beginning July 31, 2017.

Responses to this RFP must be submitted through our online application system, apply.siliconvalleycf.org, by 11:59 p.m. (PST) on August 25, 2017.
Problem Statement

Civic participation is critical to a healthy democracy. For purposes of this RFP, Silicon Valley Community Foundation has adopted the definition of civic engagement offered by the American Democracy Project (ADP). According to the ADP, civic engagement means working together to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. It can take many forms — from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.

The historical challenges to attaining optimal civic engagement are well documented. For example, an early statewide report on civic engagement from 2004 concluded “those who are white, older, affluent, homeowners, and highly educated have a disproportionate say in California politics and representation in the civic life of the state.” According to a more recent June 2016 report, this imbalance remains, with significant racial disparities in voting and non-voting forms of political participation. For example, fewer than one in 10 blacks and only about one in 20 Asian Americans and Latinos, respectively, had contact with their public official to express their opinions, compared with nearly one in six whites. Similarly, 15 percent of whites had attended meetings where political issues were discussed, compared with participation rates of 11 percent among blacks, seven percent among Asian Americans and six percent among Latinos. Of particular importance is to ensure SVCF’s civic participation efforts engage and increase the political participation of residents, and in particular, those with lower incomes, people of color, immigrants and youth.

Grant Opportunity

The intent of this grant opportunity is to support ideas that harness new technologies and methods to overcome the barriers to civic participation and spur increased individual engagement in the wide range of civic activities that keep our democracy strong, from volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. The extent to which contemporary information and communication technologies can support more civic engagement, particularly within and among
diverse groups, is worth further exploration. From open data portals to apps that solve public problems, the possibilities are endless — and secondary benefits such as more responsive government, innovative public-private partnerships, cost savings or new, exciting services abound.

We are not defining this grant opportunity narrowly because we don’t want to limit applicants’ creativity. We encourage applicants to imagine what might be possible, share one of their new and innovative ideas with us, and explain how SVCF funds could help them apply that idea. It is important to note that this is a special one-time-only grant opportunity associated with our 10-year anniversary. This particular opportunity will not be continued in future years.

For more information about this grant opportunity, we invite you to participate in our upcoming informational webinar (see “Key Dates”).

**Proposal Eligibility Criteria**

- San Mateo and/or Santa Clara county-serving organizations will be considered. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to these areas to be considered, or be partnered with another organization based within the two core counties.

- Organizations must fall into one of the following categories: those with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.

- Organizations must not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law. If an organization serves only a specific population (e.g. women or specific ethnic populations) SVCF will consider the proposal on a case-by-case basis.

- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the proposal for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.
Application Process

1. **Participate** in the informational webinar. This is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP. This session provides an opportunity for applicants to review the RFP’s content in depth and ask questions. To register for this session, please visit [siliconvalleycf.org/calendar](http://siliconvalleycf.org/calendar).

   More specific questions about program concepts, content, eligibility and evaluation can be asked in phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits.

2. **Please respond** to the short set of questions below by the proposal submission deadline.

   **Application questions:**
   1. What is the specific challenge your project will address to help promote civic engagement and participation? (1,000 characters maximum)
   2. Tell us about your idea to address this challenge. What do you hope to achieve? (1,000 characters maximum)
   3. Who will be served by your project? (1,000 characters maximum)
   4. Why is your organization uniquely positioned to lead this project? (1,500 characters maximum)
   5. Who are your partners and what will they contribute to the project? (1,000 characters maximum)
   6. What is the projected cost of your project, and do you have any other funding to support it? (1,500 characters maximum)

3. **Submit grant application** through our new online application system, [apply.siliconvalleycf.org](http://apply.siliconvalleycf.org). Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. (PST) on August 25, 2017.

4. **If selected** to move forward in the process, applicants will be required to provide additional information about their organization’s history, infrastructure, financial background and proposal budget.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions listed above. Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following...
criteria:

- Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing, leadership and operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record in specific program content area or potential to achieve needed content expertise.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources leading to greater impact.
- Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

Total Awards

Successful applicants are expected to receive grants of $100,000 for a maximum one-year period. Budget requests will be closely analyzed, and applicants should include a brief budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project’s specific line items.

Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees and future applicants, as well as members of the community at large.

Review and Selection Process

An advisory committee with issue expertise will help staff review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF’s board of directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the proposal review process.

Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in October 2017.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities

Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF’s requirements for a final financial and narrative report, as well as a presentation to SVCF staff and donors if requested. Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.
About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. As the largest community foundation in the world, we engage donors and corporations from Silicon Valley, across the country and around the globe to make our region and world better for all. Our passion for helping people and organizations achieve their philanthropic dreams has created a global philanthropic enterprise committed to the belief that possibilities start here. Find out more at siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.930.9885

To get all the latest grantmaking information, follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our community e-newsletter at siliconvalleycf.org/publications.

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