

Collaboration Grants

Aligned with Amplify Fund's initial theory of change that stated a commitment to “fund an ecosystem of groups and prioritize deep collaboration,” in 2021 we introduced collaboration grants (alongside our usual general operating grants). These grants support work that Amplify grantee partners are taking on with other trusted allies.

In 2021, Amplify granted \$634,000 to 16 collaborations in two rounds of funding. In spring 2021 (Round 1), we received 16 applications and funded 7 collaborations totaling \$245,000. In fall 2021 (Round 2), we received 12 applications, and funded 9 collaborations totaling \$389,000. Grants ranged between \$24,000 - \$50,000. A second round of renewal collaboration grants were made in 2022.

PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION GRANTS

1. Staff emailed the RFP to all grantees with the details of the collaboration grant process and purpose.
2. Grantees had 4 weeks to apply via JustFund. In the proposal they were asked to describe the goals of the collaboration, activities, financial need, list of participants, and how the funds would be split amongst collaborators. Grantees were encouraged to discuss proposal ideas with Amplify Program Team members before submitting proposals.
3. Amplify's Program Team made grantmaking decisions in a 3 week review process. Two or more team members reviewed each application using a shared rubric. If further information was needed, staff emailed grantees follow-up questions. Final grant decisions were made as a full group. Applicants either received an award, were asked to reapply in the next cycle, or declined.

AMPLIFY FUND
NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP



Photo credit: Taller Salud

LESSONS LEARNED

COLLABORATION GRANTS ARE USEFUL ALONGSIDE GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT GRANTS.

We have always believed that general operating grants allow organizations to do long-term planning and handle broader organizational concerns rather than just specific programmatic issues, but we also received feedback from grantees that additional grants targeted towards a specific activity can also be useful. For example, many grantees told us that receiving funds specifically for wellness activities, as was the case in December 2020 when they received Amplify's Wellness Grant, was deeply appreciated. Similarly, earmarked funding for collaboration has given grantees an opportunity to get specific funds to work with others.

GRANT RFPs SHOULD BE FULLY TRANSPARENT ABOUT HOW GRANTMAKING DECISIONS ARE MADE.

Given that collaboration grants were new to us, we created space for the process to emerge as we implemented it. In practice, this meant we sent out the RFP with general criteria before we developed the scoring rubric. The challenge with that sequencing is that we were not fully transparent about the scoring criteria in the RFP. For example, initially, grantees did not know that we preferred collaborations which 1) leaned into a political moment or opportunity, 2) engaged groups with complementary skills, 3) bridged differences in strategy, approach, priorities, and cultures, and 4) built long-term capacity. We followed up with some groups in the first round to gain more clarity but will be more specific at the outset in all future grantmaking rounds.

ASK SPECIFICS ABOUT HOW FUNDS WILL BE SHARED AMONG COLLABORATORS.

During the second round of grantmaking, we asked who will receive the money and how it will be distributed in the JustFund application (as opposed to in follow-up conversations, as we did during the first round of grantmaking). Asking these questions plainly and directly up-front encouraged our grantees to have difficult conversations about trust, distribution of responsibility, and ownership of the project, which we see as a benefit.

CONSIDER COLLABORATIONS BEYOND OUR GRANTEE POOL.

Our original RFP required collaborations to be amongst Amplify Fund grantees, but halfway through the first round of grantmaking, we decided to allow collaborations that only included one grantee. We made this decision because our theory of change guides us to think about the ecosystem in which our grantees work (that includes other organizations beyond Amplify grantees) and also to "do what works for grantees". This shift had benefits. We received more applications, and richer collaboration proposals. We also noticed that bringing resources to collaborations with non-Amplify grantees gave our grantees more "street cred."

LESSONS LEARNED

SHARE PROPOSALS WITH FUNDER COLLEAGUES AS A FUNDRAISING STRATEGY FOR GRANTEE COLLABORATION.

Grantees were asked to “dream big” and provide the full budget necessary to accomplish their collaborative activities. However, given our limited grantmaking budget and desire for geographic spread of these resources, we did not have enough money to fully fund all the accepted collaborations. We encouraged funders to co-fund these collaborations with us by informing the Steering Committee of these applications, sending descriptions of the collaborations through our Amplify newsletter, and having 1:1 conversations with potential funders...with some success. In the future, we may ask our Steering Committee to create a matching fund for collaborations, but we still need to figure out how our grantees can best leverage these grants for additional funding.

CONSIDER NEXT STEPS FOR DEFERRALS OR DECLINATIONS TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIALLY COMPETITIVE NATURE OF COLLABORATION GRANTS.

In the deferral and declination letters, we provided significant reasoning for why the collaboration was not accepted, and Program Team members followed up with grantees to offer any additional explanation or guidance for future applications. The purpose of the follow-up was to help grantees refine and improve their application for the second round of grantmaking or clarify any unanswered questions or challenges that emerged in their applications.

COLLABORATION GRANTS LIST

Missouri

ARCHCITY DEFENDERS
ACTION ST. LOUIS

The People's Plan is a comprehensive policy agenda designed to help build power and redistribute resources in St. Louis that unifies 40 local organizations. (Spring 2021)

HOMES FOR ALL ST. LOUIS
EQUAL HOUSING AND OPPORTUNITY FUND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND

Strengthen movement infrastructure in St. Louis by hiring full time legal staff and a housing advocate to support immediate landlord-tenant issues and other, long-term goals. (Fall 2021)

Nevada

FAITH IN ACTION NEVADA
MAKE IT WORK NEVADA
MAKE THE ROAD NEVADA
PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE OF NEVADA

To build the power of the Nevada Housing Justice Alliance (a coalition of multiple organizations) to meet the needs of tenants and develop a long term strategic plan to win legislative policies in Nevada. (Fall 2021)

North Carolina

BRUNSWICK HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
COLUMBUS COUNTY FORUM
PENDER UNITED

A Shared Future Collaborative to provide training, admin/HR, accounting, management, info sharing and back office support to small Black- and Brown- led community nonprofits in Eastern North Carolina. (Spring 2021)

AMEXCAN
COLUMBUS COUNTY FORUM

Begin regional community conversation to address intersecting needs of Latinx and African Americans toward civic engagement, education and environmental justice in Eastern North Carolina. (Spring 2021)

A BETTER CHANCE A BETTER COMMUNITY
ALPHA LIFE ENRICHMENT CENTER
BLUEPRINT NC
MEN AND WOMEN UNITED FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES
DEEP ROOTS CPS FARMS

Conduct a feasibility study to explore the development of a food sovereignty and food security infrastructure, including the examination of Black and other POC growers, Black-led food hubs, food processing and distribution centers, and centralized databases. (Fall 2021)

Pennsylvania

PITTSBURGH UNITED
ALLIANCE FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Strengthen the movement ecosystem in Western Pennsylvania, and continue to build a pipeline of BIPOC and frontline leaders who are ready to participate in trainings, take advantage of leadership development opportunities, and build a shared language.

IHOOD MEDIA
ABOLITIONIST LAW CENTER
ALLIANCE FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

To support the Coalition to Reimagine Public Safety, an initiative creating a community-led approach to public safety by creating models of intervention and prevention that reduce incarceration and police contact in Black and Brown communities throughout Allegheny County.

Puerto Rico

EL PUENTE (ENLACE LATINO DE ACCIÓN CLIMÁTICA)
CAMPAÑA AUDITORÍA YA

A report on ecological debt in Puerto Rico for a campaign that brings together environment, community, trade union and debt resistance groups around impacts of public debt and climate crisis. (Spring 2021)

CAMPAÑA AUDITORÍA YA
ESPACIOS ABIERTOS

A campaign to restructure debt fairly and mobilize sustainable alternatives to the debt crisis. (Spring 2021)

AYUDA LEGAL
LA MARAÑA
AMIGXS DEL M.A.R

A campaign to foster public discussion and policy changes for future post-disaster by designing and implementing popular education, storytelling and multimedia actions toward narrative shift and a policy roadmap that embraces housing, land and climate justice. (Spring 2021)

INICIATIVA DE ECODesarrollo DE BAHIA DE JOBOS (IDEBAJO)
CASA COMUNITARIA DE MEDIOS (CCM).

Strengthen the coalition between IDEBAJO and CCM, extend the reach of the "Desde el Barrio" podcast, develop the IDEBAJO web page, promote the documentary El Poder del Pueblo, and set up pre-production for a documentary about the impact of the climate crisis to people and coastal communities. (Fall 2021)

TALLER SALUD
THE MARIA FUND

To support the Cimarronas' Action Table - a cross-sector collaboration space where organizations, private sector partners, and researchers will engage in design and planning of projects aimed to increase women of color's access to land and capital. (Fall 2021)

HASER
URBE APIE

To strengthen the relationship between HASER and Urbe Apie and to organize trainings focused on finance/fundraising, accounting, budgeting, proposal writing, and financial management. (Fall 2021)

South Carolina

CENTER FOR HEIRS' PROPERTY PRESERVATION
SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (SCACED)

To explore cross-sector collaboration between South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED) and the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation, with specific focus on minority business opportunities in the areas of land preservation, conservation, and production. There is a significant need for commercial operators to serve small tract landowners with activities such as tree and crop planting, mowing, weeding, land preparation, irrigation and other agricultural services. (Fall 2021)

Tennessee

STAND UP NASHVILLE
THE EQUITY ALLIANCE

Pipelines, not Pipedreams Campaign - An alternative planning process for community engagement to ensure a 300 acre redevelopment process centers affordable housing, workforce development, racial and economic equity. (Spring 2021)