



## Grant Advisor Orientation

### OVERVIEW

The Pollination Project exists to uplift grassroots changemakers whose work helps build a kinder, more compassionate world. We do so through grant funding and the provision of non-financial support such as capacity building and networking. Though we do have some [funding guidelines](#) which govern who may apply, we don't have narrowly defined criteria for the types of projects we fund or the costs that we can support. Instead, we prefer to be open to the imagination and creativity of our applicants and to fund any kind of work which moves us towards a more kind, just, and compassionate world. In this effort, we are led in our decision making by you, our community of volunteer grant reviewers.

Inherent to TPP's approach is the idea that how we do the work can have as much long term impact as what we do. That is, if we want to be truly effective in the long term then it is important to think about how we show up as we do our work: a failure to do so risks undermining our good intentions, may end up perpetuating the issues that we strive to address, or increasing our own suffering. This approach is summarized in this article about ['Heartivism'](#).

Accordingly, though we care deeply about what work our funding supports, we also pay attention to who we are funding. That is, we seek to not just fund work that will be immediately effective but also to fund people who are willing to learn from other approaches, to recognize that their work is part of a bigger whole, and who are open to collaborating with and respecting those who may differ from them. As a team, we also seek to grow together as a group of individuals committed to a better world, learning from our differences rather than letting them drive us apart.

## YOUR ROLE IN THIS WORK

We believe that those close to an issue are often those who are well placed to address it. This commitment to belief in local leadership is also why we defer our grant decisions to teams of volunteer reviewers. Yet, at the same time, we also recognize that there is power in incorporating the power of local knowledge with the experiences of those from outside of the community who may have deep prior experience in the kind of work being considered. This is why we welcome reviewers to our teams whose knowledge is more specific to the work being done than where that work takes place.

In essence, our review process is a collaborative learning process which, while taking place within the framework of TPP's theory of change, shifts the power away from TPP to holders of knowledge that is specific to both the region where work takes place and the type of work being done.

Due to the nature of this process, we ask our reviewers to commit to the following understandings before entering into this work:

- Productive disagreement is an important element to good decision making and we agree to honor each other's input, to be receptive to expanding our own perspectives, and to recognize that we all share an intention of reducing the suffering of animals around the world.
- Our role as reviewers is to identify opportunities to support good people doing work that we believe has the potential to be effective. Part of this is to put aside our feelings around what we would do in the applicants' shoes and instead to evaluate how effective their plan has the potential to be using our past experiences to guide us and trusting in their intentions.
- Projects under consideration may not adopt the same philosophical approach that we adhere to, yet we commit to funding them if we believe there is the possibility that they may constructively contribute to our shared desires for a more just and compassionate world.
- Our reviewers who are not familiar with the cultural context within which a project takes place will make recommendations based on the elements of the work to which they can speak but will defer to team members with more experience working in a given region on questions of local appropriateness.

## TOOLS TO SUPPORT YOU

We know that it can be tricky to manage these different elements as a reviewer and so, in order to support you during this review process and to allow you to balance your experience based assessments of applicants' work with TPP's mission and vision, we have created the following:

- Clear [guidelines](#) regarding who may or may not apply and for what costs they submit proposals so that you may trust that in the majority of cases the proposals you review are definitely eligible for funding.  
*n.b. From time to time, applicants may conceal information from us that is discovered during your review and which then disqualifies them, but this is rare. This would be the only case in which a proposal you review is of a kind or contains costs which are not fundable. We encourage reviewers to flag information of this kind during review.*
- A review rubric which asks you to consider elements of the proposal such as how the applicant's work fits in the context of where it takes place, their ability to effectively carry out the plan, the potential for long term impact, and how their work fits within TPP's goals of funding with immediate impact and/or longer term transformative shifts in mind.
- Areas in the review process through which you can share your own opinion and feelings about the proposal alongside the criteria based scores that you submit. These include:
  - an area for notes about your review or info you wish to share with the applicant, a 'red flag' button to alert TPP to any major issues
  - the opportunity to add a score based on your personal opinion of the proposal that is distinct from the rubric category scores
  - a separate field designed for use no more than once a month on applications about which you feel most strongly that allows you to 'boost' their score by a significant amount due to your support.
- Opportunities for discussion via Slack with your colleagues and with TPP staff during the review process. We encourage you to ask questions, share perspectives, and help to refine our process.
- The opportunity to engage in semi-regular calls about grant decisions, TPP's mission and vision, and other relevant topics.
- A clear process for finalizing grant decisions based on your input that directly translates your scores into equitable, justified decisions.
- A minimum threshold score below which no applicant can receive funding, thus allowing for a clear mandate on what is and is not a fund.

## THE REVIEW PROCESS

### Overview

TPP's application process is rolling and open on an ongoing basis. Applications are received in monthly cohorts, with any application received in full (meaning the application and any supplemental materials such as a reference) in one month reviewed by our team the following month (e.g. applications received in January are reviewed in February).

Grant reviewers are assigned to review teams which each have a specific issue or regional focus. On the first Monday of each month, TPP will send out a 'docket' of applications via our online portal to each of those review teams. Each team will have a 2-week period within which to read those applications and to submit scores on each application using our online review portal and rubric.

Each team of reviewers also has continuous access to a Slack channel for their team. We encourage grant reviewers to discuss their thoughts on proposals in the Slack channel for their panel prior to submitting their reviews. It is our hope that this forum for discussion reviewers the opportunity to learn from each others' insights and to clarify any areas of doubt in applications as a team prior to submitting applications.

At the culmination of the 2-week review period, TPP will use your scores and comments to determine a tentative list of grant recipients.

Once the group of awardees has been selected, TPP will share them back out via the reviewer slack channel for a 1-week optional review and discussion by the teams. This would be a great time to share any feedback for the grantees, offer resources, or just learn about who and what your colleagues funded in this docket. This is also an opportunity to flag any concerns which you believe should change our decisions as we will not send award emails until this 1-week time period is completed. If we do not receive any comments or feedback at this stage, we will proceed with sending decisions to applicants.

### Guide

The process will follow a single timeline for all review teams, and will take place within Slack and our review portal. Access to these will be provided by TPP prior to the commencement of reviews.

## STAGE 1: Review of Proposals (1st working day of each month)

- On the first day of a given month, TPP will send out an email letting reviewers know that the applications for review for that month are in the portal and ready for review.
- Reviewers will have until the end of the day on the 15th to read, discuss in Slack, and to submit their reviews/scores through our portal.
- Reviewers will complete their reviews by using the online portal to submit the follow for each application that review:
  - 6 scores based on our rubric, one of which is a measure of your personal enthusiasm for the application.
  - The opportunity to provide comments about the proposal, to flag things we should be aware of, or to offer resources etc. to the applicant.
  - A field to flag any applications with major issues. These include things such as ethical concerns, programs or activities which contradict TPP's mission and values, or other problematic issues you believe would/should prevent TPP funding this proposal.
  - A 'boost' field! This field should be used sparingly, and **no more than once a month, if at all**. This field signifies the highest level of support you can have for a proposal and represents a real excitement on your part about this project. It automatically boosts the applicant's score by 25% of your total score for them.
- We require a minimum of 3 reviews on each application to finalize the decision, but welcome more. You can tell how many reviews have been submitted by looking at the number in parentheses next to the applicant's name in the review portal. We encourage you to prioritize those proposals with 2 or less reviews before adding additional reviews to a proposal which already has 3 reviews.
- When you submit your review, it will show your name in the portal. Scores and comments now go directly to TPP only as the Slack discussion provides a forum for asking questions of and sharing opinions with other reviewers. You may still delete and replace your reviews within the portal.

## STAGE 2: TPP Decisions (4 working days from the 15th of the month)

- Once all reviews are submitted, TPP will begin the finalization process for all applications. This will take about 4 working days and we will then share the list of tentative recipients with you (see stage 3 below). The process for finalizing decisions is as follows:
  - When reviewers submit their scores, each reviewer's score for an individual applicant will be totaled to give that reviewer's total score for the applicant. The

applicant's overall final score will then be determined by taking the average of the individual reviewer's total scores for that applicant.

- TPP will review all reviewer comments and flags on apps and ensure any app that is not a fit will not continue as a finalist for funding.
- TPP will then produce a list of all remaining applications, which are ranked by the applicants' overall final scores. Applicants who meet or exceed the minimum threshold score will then be considered for funding
- At this point, the highest scoring application from each review panel will be awarded funding so long as the score is higher than our minimum threshold. If no application is ranked above that threshold, then funds will be carried over to the step below.
- Once the highest scoring qualified application from each review panel is funded and removed from our ranked list, we will then use the remainder of our monthly budget to fund the remaining top applications on the ranked list that meet or exceed our threshold score, regardless of what panel they were reviewed under.

### STAGE 3: Review of Decisions

1. As soon as TPP has the tentative final decisions based on your scores, we will share those back out with you via Slack for an optional second review.
2. As soon as we share this information with you, a 5-day review period will commence. During this time, applications will still be accessible from within our review portal and reviewers can discuss them on Slack. The goals of this review are twofold:
  - 1: To look for opportunities to share info with applicants, connect them to others doing this work, etc.
  - 2: Reviewers may also find significant concerns with proposals during this secondary review and can flag those cases to TPP when they occur so we may re-review them.
3. This is a fully optional period which is designed to give reviewers a chance to look at our decisions as a whole each month and thus to think about the funding outcomes as a group.

### STAGE 4: TPP Sends Decisions

- 5-days after that second review begins, TPP will close the decision making process on all applications and will send decisions to all applicants who were under consideration.

## BENEFITS

We sincerely appreciate the time and effort of our review teams and recognize them as essential members in our grantmaking process. To reduce any financial barrier, we are willing to pay data costs incurred during review for those who buy bundles and are charged per megabyte. If this is something you incur, kindly reach out to Tara to discuss what this includes.

We also offer a \$1,000 flow fund to advisors who complete over 75% of the applications on 10 unique docket. This fund is held by TPP, however once released, can be awarded to any qualified project that the advisor designates through a nomination form. This is your chance to support people in your network with a grant that does not have to be reviewed by our advisory team, and does not require the recipient to submit an application. Please note that this flow fund must go to a new individual/group who has not already received support from TPP.