

# EJF Granting Framework August 2022

## Purpose of this Granting Framework

The Environmental Justice Fund (EJF) has developed this Granting Framework for two reasons.

1. It is intended to guide the Grants Committee when it decides which organisations should get support from EJF.
2. It is available as a public resource as part of EJF's commitment to transparency, and with the aim of demystifying the process that EJF uses to process proposals, and how the Grants Committee selects grantees.

## EJF's commitment to participatory grant-making

EJF is a fund 'by activists, for activists'. We live out this principle by implementing a form of participatory grant-making in which decisions on who gets support are made by activists from the environmental justice sector. This is because we believe that EJF should be guided by people on the ground with a good understanding of the context in which applicants are operating, and the challenges that they face. It is also part of EJF's commitment to putting real decision-making power into the hands of community-based activists.

## The appointment and operation of the Grants Committee

EJF has therefore established a Grants Committee (GC) which is tasked with processing proposals and selecting which organisations should get support from EJF. The GC was appointed through an open recruitment process which took place in June – July 2022. An open advertisement was issued and a subcommittee of the EJF Board served as the recruitment panel. According to the Terms of Reference which govern the GC, the GC can be between 3 and 7 people in size.

The considerations which were taken into account when constituting the GC included:<sup>1</sup>

- The need to ensure that all members of the GC are activists with experience working on environmental justice issues and with communities;
- A commitment to ensuring that the majority of GC members are community-based;
- A commitment to prioritising the voices of women and youth;
- The value of a GC with experience in a range of different areas of environmental justice (e.g. mining, water, food security etc);
- The value of a GC comprised of people from across South Africa and not concentrated in a particular province;
- The value of having people with some experience of running a small grants mechanism on the GC; and
- The need for EJF's Executive Director to sit on the GC as the connection between the staff, GC and Board.

Members of the GC serve a two year term, with the possibility of limited extension. Their work is voluntary i.e. they are not paid for their service on the GC (although their expenses, such as expenses involved in attending meetings, are covered by EJF).

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<sup>1</sup> These were not the only considerations but hopefully provide some sense of how the selection decisions were made.

EJF is committed to good governance and the Grants Committee operates in the context of authority delegated to it by the EJF Board.

The current GC, appointed in July 2022, is as follows:

1. Bulelwa Klaasen (Chairperson)
2. Taryn Pereira (Deputy Chairperson)
3. Lizeka Ntsikeni
4. Elton Thobejane
5. Samson Mokoena
6. Nolundi Luwaya
7. Lisa Chamberlain

More information on the background of GC members can be found at [www.ejfundsa.org.za](http://www.ejfundsa.org.za).

### Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for support from EJF, applicants must be:

1. An organisation or network;<sup>2</sup>
2. Based in, and part of, the community it serves;
3. Working on environmental justice; and
4. In South Africa.

### What EJF funds

#### **Understanding of environmental justice**

EJF supports environmental justice activism. We adopt an expansive and generous interpretation to the term ‘environmental justice’. This approach is informed by a recognition of the interconnectedness of different struggles, and forms part of EJF’s commitment to inclusivity. We are also adopting an inclusive approach as part of a diagnostic exercise in order to allow ourselves to be led by the needs expressed by activists on the ground.

EJF may therefore support work on, amongst other things and in no particular order:

- Mining;
- Energy and the just transition;
- Food sovereignty<sup>3</sup> and agriculture;
- Water;
- Defence of Ocean and Coastal commons;
- Waste;
- Air pollution;
- Climate justice;
- Ecofeminism (projects that are about the relationship between gender equality and the environment);

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<sup>2</sup> EJF does not typically fund individuals – we make an exception in emergency grants (see more on this below).

<sup>3</sup> Food sovereignty is about having a democratic food system where the people that eat the food play a role in shaping how it is produced, and which prioritises food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods.

- Eco socialism (projects merging aspects of socialism with green politics, ecology and anti-globalisation);
- Land reform;
- Promotion of indigenous knowledge;
- Alternative sustainable livelihoods;
- Environmental health;
- Access to environmental information; and
- Community participation in decision-making around natural resources.

This is by no means a closed list and we may entertain applications to do with issues outside of these areas if they still fall within the ambit of environmental justice.

### **Activities which could be supported**

The activities which EJJ might support include:

- A specific event (like a protest, meeting or workshop)
- Organising, campaigns and advocacy work;
- Community-led research;
- Litigation by Community-Based Organisations;
- Community environmental education; and
- Organisational strengthening initiatives.

### **Emergency grants**

We understand that sometimes it is not possible to predict things in advance and can therefore provide emergency grants to support responses to urgent and unforeseen crisis. EJJ is particularly mindful of the risks that activists face which sometimes mean the need for urgent action to keep someone safe. Applications for emergency grants are decided on by a sub-committee of 3 members of the GC, who aim to provide a response to an application within 48 hours.

### Size and length of grants

Shorter grants from EJJ last 3 months, longer grants could last up to 2 years. This is a case by case assessment informed by, among other things, the nature of the grantee and the nature of the grant. Emergency grants have a duration of 3 – 6 months.

EJJ grants tend to be in the range of R15 000 – R120 000. The size of the grant is related to the length of the grant, and what the grantee wants to use the funds for. Grant funds will usually be released in tranches – how this works will be discussed with a grantee at the beginning of a grant.

### Application process for support from EJJ

The application process is as follows:

#### **STEP ONE: EJJ ISSUES A CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

Typically EJJ will issue an open call for proposals. This may happen once or twice a year. Calls for proposals are widely circulated and will be available at least on EJJ's website and social media.

## **STEP TWO: APPLICANTS PREPARE AND SUBMIT PROPOSALS**

Once applicants have read through a call for proposals and are satisfied that they are eligible to apply, they can start working on their proposals. If anyone has any questions at this stage, or needs assistance of any kind regarding the application process, the EJF Activist Support Coordinator (Vuyoethu Mntonintshi) is available to assist. Proposals can be completed online on our website, or filled out offline and emailed / Whatsapped to us.

## **STEP THREE: EJF STAFF CONDUCT SCREENING**

Once the deadline for submission of proposals has passed, the EJF staff screen all proposals. They check that everyone that has applied is eligible for support (using the eligibility criteria set out above). They also verify that an organisation is who they say they are. This might involve speaking to people that the organisation has worked with in the past and/or visiting the organisation in person. The bigger the proposal, the more detailed the screening process is. The EJF staff then pass the proposals on to the GC, together with the findings of the screening process.

## **STEP FOUR: GRANTS COMMITTEE ASSESSES PROPOSALS AND SELECTS GRANTEES**

The GC then considers all the proposals and selects which organisations will receive support from EJF.

## **STEP FIVE: EJF STAFF COMMUNICATE THE OUTCOME TO ALL APPLICANTS**

The outcome is communicated to all applicants by the EJF staff. Where possible we will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, but it might not always be possible to do this (depending on how many proposals are received).

## **STEP SIX: EJF STAFF AND GRANTEES DISCUSS SUPPORT NEEDS AND SIGN AGREEMENT**

The EJF staff then sit down with the selected organisations to discuss how EJF can best support their work, how the grant will work and what is expected. An agreement is drawn up and signed by EJF and the grantee. The grantee can then continue their activism, supported by EJF.

### Decision-making criteria

Proposals are assessed both on their own merit but also in relation to each other. This is because EJF has particular objectives which relate to our overall collection of grantees. Please note that proposals that do not meet one or another of these criteria are not disqualified from consideration as we take a wholistic approach.

Each proposal is assessed using the following criteria:

1. How do the organisation's proposed activities advance environmental justice and what impact will the activities have on the community?
2. Does the proposal demonstrate any innovation or creativity?
3. What degree of organisation and democratic accountability is present in the organisation? (How is the organisation structured, how does it take decisions, how does it report back to the community?)
4. Do women hold meaningful positions of power in the organisation?
5. Is the proposed project/event/campaign intended to benefit women specifically? If so, how?
6. Do young people<sup>4</sup> hold meaningful positions of power in the organisation?
7. Is the proposed project/event/campaign intended to benefit young people specifically? If so, how?

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<sup>4</sup> Defined as <35 years old.

8. How is the organisation linked in to other parts of the environmental justice sector ecosystem (if at all)? What do partner organisations or previous funders have to say about the organisation?

In addition, the GC will take the following considerations into account in its decision-making when it considers the proposals as a collective:

9. EJF seeks to support a combination of established and new CBOs. We aim to spend the bulk of our grant-making budget on organisations that already have some organisation/structure and which have at least some track record. The rationale for this is that such organisations have the best chance of successfully implementing their ideas and thereby moving the needle of environmental justice. This approach also enables EJF to use a reference mechanism by asking existing players in the environmental justice sector to confirm a potential grantee's credibility. At the same time, EJF is conscious that existing networks can be elitist and sometimes operate to exclude valuable contributions from new organisations, or from existing organisations that are not well networked. We therefore aim to spend a portion of our grant-making budget on new and/or isolated organisations. This enables EJF to create opportunities for those 'most left behind' to 'break in' to the environmental justice sector.
10. EJF would like to support organisations working on a range of different environmental justice issues, rather than concentrating on just one area e.g. mining.
11. We try to ensure that our grants are not concentrated in any one geographic area in South Africa.
12. EJF's grants at any one time will vary in length. This is because we consider applications for anything from events (which need a shorter grant) to campaigns and organisational-strengthening (which need a longer grant), and because we are trying to provide as much meaningful support as we can with a limited budget.
13. Because we believe in providing accompaniment beyond money, our model of grant-making is resource-intensive for EJF as an organisation. When we commit to supporting an organisation, we want to make sure that we are able to properly fulfil that commitment. This means that we cannot stretch our small team of staff too thin, and we need to be mindful of the total number of grants that we make.

### Managing conflict of interest

It is critical that EJF operates with integrity and is perceived as a credible organisation. We are committed to avoiding any conflicts of interest where we can, and to working hard to mitigate and responsibly manage any potential conflict where it can't be avoided. One of the circumstances in which a conflict of interest might arise is if an organisation to which a GC member belongs, submits a proposal to EJF.

Before the GC was established, we debated whether we would need to prevent any organisation to which a GC member belonged from being able to submit a proposal. However, we acknowledged that this would be such a big disincentive, that very few community-based activists would ever want to sit on the GC if it came at that price for their own community or organisation. We didn't want to compromise on having activists in positions of real decision-making power at EJF. Being an activist-driven organisation is at the heart of who we are, and it is why we have adopted this model of participatory grant-making.

For this reason, any organisation is free to apply for a grant, notwithstanding the participation of one of their members on the GC. However, that member of the GC must recuse themselves from all GC deliberations on that particular application.

We recognise that this approach does not entirely eliminate the potential conflict of interest, as the applicant organisation concerned could still have an insight into decision-making by the GC in general, and therefore

an advantage over other applicants. To combat this, we have committed to running an accessible and transparent application process. This is part of why we are open about the decision-making criteria used by the GC, and why this Granting Framework is publicly available.

### Review of Granting Framework

EJF is committed to constant reflection on our activities and ways of working. This Granting Framework is a living document which will be regularly reviewed by the Board, at least every two years, and in conjunction with EJF's Strategy, and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.