

Vancouver Foundation's Systems Change Grants

Systems Change Guidelines Addendum, September 2020

Hello Applicants!

We're testing a handful of revisions to our Develop grant and Test and Scale (Stage 1) grants, and we wanted to share what's changed and why.

Earlier this year, we began a project to deepen systems change grantmaking, first by recognizing entrenched power imbalances, and then by reimagining our relationships and practices. The pandemic and the groundswell of the anti-racism movement has only amplified the urgency of dismantling oppressive structures and building just, equitable systems.

We started by reaching out to community groups and organizations to listen to their experiences applying for grants, especially those from equity-denied communities. Conversations with over 50 organizations -- about half of whom had either never applied to Vancouver Foundation or not been successful -- surfaced important insights. The application is one small piece of the equity puzzle. Still, much of the feedback suggested incremental tweaks to the application could be a signal of more substantive work to come. Systems change is complex and emergent work, and yet, we heard that the stage one application seemed to require a high level of certainty over the project plan, partnerships and outcomes -- and felt too focused on Western ideas of research and evidence.

So, we've made some revisions to the application to embrace systems change as learning, and open up ways of knowing beyond formal research. We've also removed the budget template for Develop grants. We were unable to make changes to the word counts and the written format in this round, but are exploring changes for future cycles. As we move forward, we will be seeking out more feedback and publicly sharing how we're approaching the many other pieces of equity at Vancouver Foundation.

Please note:

- The scope of work is for Systems Change grants only, the below changes are not applicable to Participatory Action Research grants.
- The below changes are only applicable for the Develop grant and Stage 1 Test and Scale grant applications. No changes have been made to Stage 2 Test and Scale grant applications at this time.
- The application questions have been automatically updated, including pending drafts in our online system. If you started an application prior to September 21, 2020, please review your draft before submitting to ensure you have answered the new questions outlined below.

Changes to **Develop** Grant Application Questions:

Additional Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Where you're at Tell us about where your project team is at in its systems change journey. Vancouver Foundation embraces <i>all</i> levels of experiences and wants to support teams where they are at. If your team has varying degrees of experience, tell us about the most experienced core team member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We're pretty new to the language and concepts of systems change● We're pretty new to Vancouver Foundation's language of systems change, but not to systemic work● We've been using similar systems change language & concepts for a while● None of these statements quite fit where we're at	<p>Knowing where you are on the systems change journey informs an understanding of your work and how we might be able to support you. Vancouver Foundation sees value in supporting the development of newer systems change teams, as well as more experienced teams.</p>

Old Question	New Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Project Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the title/name of your project • Indicate the anticipated start and end dates for your project 	<p>No change.</p>	
<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address? What systemic behaviours, attitudes, resource flows, and/or policies have you identified that are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address, and in doing so, what are the system(s) you are coming into contact with? What are your early hunches about what parts of the system(s) — e.g beliefs & mindsets, relationships & power dynamics; structures, policies & resource flows — are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>We want to know the systems you are seeking to influence, while making the language we use more accessible. We also want to emphasize that a full understanding of the system is not required at this stage and that gaining such an understanding is one of the goals of the grant.</p>
<p>Systemic change Why will developing a plan to address this issue be meaningful? How do you foresee the community being able to influence or change the systemic behaviours behind the issue? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Systemic change Why is further exploration & inquiry into this issue important? Who in the community do you see as being able to challenge or disrupt the ways things are now? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>We wanted to frame questions in terms of learning and inquiry to help project teams understand the intended purpose of Develop grants.</p> <p>We recognize that “community” is not a homogenous entity and want to hear from you which voices in the community you perceive as having influence.</p>

<p>Process Where are you currently in the design and development process? What have you done to move your ideas forward, and what activities do you still need to do? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Process What have you done to move your ideas forward? What are some of the questions you hope to answer with this Develop grant, and what are you seeking to better understand about how to influence or change the system? Tell us about your project activities and how they will help you to explore these things. (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>We recognize that organizations considering a Develop grant are doing so to further their understanding of how to approach a systemic issue. We want to give you the space to share your questions, rather than your answers. This question is also intended to help you link your project activities to the things you've identified you want to learn.</p>
<p>Collaboration Who are you currently partnering with? Who else do you intend to include in the development process? How are people affected by the issue involved? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Participation Share with us your approach to working with others. Who are you engaging in your development process, who do you hope to engage, and in what ways? How are the people most affected by the issue participating and what power(s) do they have in your project? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Based on feedback, we understand that applicants want to share their approach to building partnerships and engaging community in ways that are meaningful. We recognize that community engagement takes time and will evolve over time. Asking about power in the process is one way to reflect on the kinds of relationships you hope to establish. Project partners and people most affected by the issue may be distinct groups, or they may overlap.</p>
<p>Project Description What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will your Develop process lead to a fully formed and viable project plan? (700 characters)</p>	<p>Project Description What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will you learn about the parts of the system keeping the issue in place? (700 characters)</p>	<p>The re-wording of this question puts the focus on learning and inquiry at the Develop stage, rather than certainty and solutions.</p>

Budget Requirement for Systems Change Grants:

- At this time no changes have been made to the budget requirement for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Test & Scale grants.
- We are prototyping the below changes to our Develop grants only and will continue to have consultations and discussions around how we can make the budget simpler and more accessible for all applicants.

Changes to **Develop** Grant Budget:

Old Budget	New Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A fillable budget table is no longer required.	<p><u>Replaced with:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What's your estimated project budget?2. How much are you requesting from Vancouver Foundation? <p>Revenue:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Who else is financially supporting this project, and how much?4. What in-kind and cash contributions have you <i>confirmed</i>?5. What in-kind and cash contributions are you in the <i>process</i> of securing?

Changes to Stage 1 **Test** Grant Application Questions:

Additional Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Where you're at</p> <p>Tell us about where your project team is at in its systems change journey. Vancouver Foundation embraces <i>all</i> levels of experiences and wants to support teams where they are at. If your team has varying degrees of experience, tell us about the most experienced core team member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We're pretty new to the language and concepts of systems change ● We're pretty new to Vancouver Foundation's language of systems change, but not to systemic work ● We've been using similar systems change language & concepts for a while ● None of these statements quite fit where we're at 	<p>Knowing where you are on the systems change journey informs an understanding of your work and how we might be able to support you. Vancouver Foundation sees value in supporting the development of newer systems change teams, as well as more experienced teams.</p>

Old Question	New Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Project Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the title/name of your project • Indicate the anticipated start and end dates for your project 	<p>No change.</p>	
<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address? What systemic behaviours, attitudes, resource flows, and/or policies have you identified that are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address, and in doing so, what are the system(s) you are coming into contact with? What parts of the system(s) — e.g beliefs & mindsets, relationships & power dynamics; structures, policies & resource flows — are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>We want to know the systems you are seeking to influence, while making the language we use more accessible. We also want to emphasize that a full understanding of the system is not required at this stage and that gaining such an understanding is one of the goals of the grant.</p>
<p>Research and Evidence What research or other evidence are you using to inform your plan to influence systems change? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Research and Evidence What is shaping your knowledge and understanding of the systems you're seeking to influence? What and whose stories, experiences, research, evidence and ways of knowing is your approach grounded in? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>The language of research and evidence comes from a Western, colonial lens. "Evidence-based" interventions and policy making has had the effect of elevating certain evidence above others, often rooted in an empirical world view. We also want you to be able to share the stories, insights and lived experiences that are driving your work. It's also important to recognize that <i>what</i> information is cited is also a question of <i>whose</i> information.</p>

<p>Anticipated Outcomes What are your anticipated outcomes for the project (short, medium, and long term)? How will this change be transformative and meaningful? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Anticipated Outcomes What is your guiding star* for the change you'd like to see? What are the near star(s)* you're hoping to reach with this project, over the next one to three years? (3,000 characters)</p> <p>*These could be signals along the way that show your learning journey and where you hope to end up.</p>	<p>The guiding star metaphor is intended to shift the language away from the traditional use of short, medium, and long-term outcomes. A guiding start may be interpreted more flexibly as a sign you are headed in the right direction. Our intent is to recognize the long-term and non-linear nature of systems change.</p>
<p>Process How do you plan to influence or change the system? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Process How do you plan to influence or shift the system: what will be your core strategies and key activities? Share with us your assumptions: why do you think those strategies and activities might help to challenge or disrupt the way things are today? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>We recognize that the old question was quite broad and that applicants may have struggled to link their analysis of the systemic issue with their proposed activities. By asking you to share the thinking behind what you want to do, we hope to better understand how you see your project shifting the status quo.</p>
<p>Collaboration Who are you currently partnering with? Who else do you intend to include in the development process? How are people affected by the issue involved? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Participation Tell us about your approach to working with others. Who are you engaging, and who do you hope to engage, in what ways? How are the people most affected by the issue participating and what power(s) do they have in the project? Where does decision-making lie? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Based on feedback, we understand that applicants want to share their approach to building partnerships and engaging community in ways that are meaningful. We recognize that partnership building and community engagement takes time, and will evolve over time. Asking about power in the process is one way to reflect on the kinds of relationships you hope to establish. Project partners and people most affected by the issue may be distinct groups, or they may overlap.</p>

<p>Project Description What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will you influence or change the systemic behaviours behind this issue? (700 characters)</p>	<p>Project Description What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will you influence or change the parts of the system holding the issue in place? (700 characters)</p>	<p>Minor changes to wording of question.</p>
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Changes to Stage 1 **Scale** Grant Application Questions:

Additional Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Where you're at Tell us about where your project team is at in its systems change journey. Vancouver Foundation embraces <i>all</i> levels of experiences and wants to support teams where they are at. If your team has varying degrees of experience, tell us about the most experienced core team member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We're pretty new to the language and concepts of systems change ● We're pretty new to Vancouver Foundation's language of systems change, but not to systemic work ● We've been using similar systems change language & concepts for a while ● None of these statements quite fit where we're at 	<p>Knowing where you are on the systems change journey informs an understanding of your work and how we might be able to support you. Vancouver Foundation sees value in supporting the development of newer systems change teams, as well as more experienced teams.</p>

Old Question	New Question	Why did we make this change?
<p>Project Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the title/name of your project • Indicate the anticipated start and end dates for your project 	No change.	
<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address? What systemic behaviours, attitudes, resource flows, and/or policies have you identified that are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Systemic Issues and Root Causes What is the pressing issue you're trying to address, and in doing so, what are the system(s) you are coming into contact with? What elements of the system(s) — e.g beliefs & mindsets, relationships & power dynamics; structures, policies & resource flows — have you found are holding the issue in place? (3,000 characters)</p>	We want to know the systems you are seeking to influence, while making the language we use more accessible.
<p>Systemic Change Summarize your current social innovation. How long has this project been running? What impact has this project already had on the pressing issue(s) you described above? (1,500 characters)</p>	No change.	
<p>Scaling the Social Innovation At what scale has the current social innovation been operating? To what new level do you intend to scale this work (to new locations, to new institutional levels, more deeply within the current system) ? (1,500 characters)</p>	No change.	

<p>Research and Evidence What formal evaluation have you conducted to prove your current social innovation's effectiveness? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Research and Evidence What learning and evaluation have you done already, and whose voices were included? What key data, insights and lessons have emerged, and how is this informing your scaling strategy? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>This question was adapted to embrace a more holistic view of learning and evaluation. The focus has shifted towards gaining insight rather than proving a hypothesis.</p>
<p>Anticipated Outcomes What are your anticipated outcomes for the project (short, medium, and long term)? How will scaling create a greater response to the pressing issue you've identified? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Anticipated Outcomes What is your guiding star for the change you'd like to see? What are the near star(s) you're hoping to reach with <i>this</i> project, over the next one to three years? How will scaling move you closer to your guiding star? (3,000 characters)</p> <p>*These could be signals along the way that show your learning journey and where you hope to end up.</p>	<p>The guiding star metaphor is intended to shift the language away from the traditional use of short, medium, and long-term outcomes. A guiding start may be interpreted more flexibly as a sign you are headed in the right direction. This recognizes the long term, complex, and non-linear nature of systems change.</p>
<p>Process How do you plan to scale your influence to a new level within the system? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>Process How do you plan to scale your influence to a next level within the system: what will be your core strategies and key activities? Share with us your assumptions: why do you think those strategies and activities might propel deeper or wider systems change? (3,000 characters)</p>	<p>We recognize that the old question was quite broad and that applicants may have struggled to link their analysis of the systemic issue with their proposed activities. By asking you to share the thinking behind what you want to do, we hope to better understand how you see your project shifting the status quo.</p>

<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Who are you currently partnering with? Who else do you intend to include in the development process? How are people affected by the issue involved? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Participation</p> <p>Tell us about your approach to working with others. Who are you engaging, and who do you hope to engage, in what ways? How are the people most affected by the issue participating and what power(s) do they have in the project? Where does decision-making lie? (1,500 characters)</p>	<p>Based on feedback, we understand that applicants want to share their approach to building partnerships and engaging community in ways that are meaningful. We recognize that partnership building and community engagement takes time and will evolve over time. Asking about power in the process is one way to reflect on the kinds of relationships you hope to establish. Project partners and people most affected by the issue may be distinct groups, or they may overlap.</p>
<p>Project Description</p> <p>What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will you influence or change the systemic behaviours behind this issue? (700 characters)</p>	<p>Project Description</p> <p>What is the pressing issue that your project is trying to address? Why is addressing this meaningful? How will you influence or change the parts of the system holding this issue in place? (700 characters)</p>	<p>Minor changes to wording of question.</p>