

EQUITY PRINCIPLES GUIDE

for BIPOC Community Composter Mini-Grant Program



ILSR INSTITUTE FOR
Local Self-Reliance



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The [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#) (ILSR) is launching a BIPOC Community Composter Mini-Grant Program – funded by [11th Hour Racing](#) of The Schmidt Family Foundation – to support new or existing local community composters in New England coastal states.

Please visit [our website](#) for eligibility requirements, deadlines, and other detailed information on the mini-grant program.

We wrote this document to guide our decision-making and help ensure equity, justice, and inclusion support our mini-grant funding decisions. We commit to undergoing a fair and impartial process. We aim to genuinely support historically excluded communities. We will achieve this by adopting a [capacity-building](#) approach in our collaboration with grantees. This step involves cultivating community and on-farm composters who engage residents, promote social inclusion and empowerment, build healthy soils, improve local food production and food security, sustain local jobs, and strengthen the local workforce's skills. We aim to minimize bias, reduce disparities, and be inclusive. [Frontline organizations](#) serve communities experiencing [environmental racism](#), which includes BIPOC and low-income individuals. We intend to help these organizations without assuming we know what is best for their communities.

This mini-grant program will provide limited resources to compost groups led by and serving BIPOC communities. However, we recognize the need for continuous action and understand that this work is never complete. ILSR is actively engaged in additional projects that support BIPOC groups. For example, we are regranteeing about \$1 million to primarily BIPOC-led economic and social justice groups in the [Athena Coalition](#). We are also doing tangential work as part of a three-year grant from the [Economic Development Administration](#), where ILSR and our partner [Recast City](#) are running cohorts of EDA revolving loan funds to help them better serve underserved entrepreneurs of color and Indigenous populations across the U.S.

For more information on the connection of ILSR's broader work to dismantling systemic racism, read [Our Racial Equity Framework](#).

Equity Principles

This list is informed by the [Soul Fire Farm Equity Guidelines for Donors and Foundations](#) and the Community Wealth Partners [Making Capacity Building More Equitable](#) guide.

Our efforts are grounded in the following equity principles:

1

Listening and Understanding

We will work with frontline organizations to understand the communities they work with, the disparities they face, and how we can assist them in their efforts. In doing so, we will acknowledge the institutions and systems built to aid specific segments of society while intentionally leaving others out. Guided by our [Racial Equity Framework](#) and the [Grantmakers for Effective Organizations equity statement](#), we will choose to be equitable from the top down and the bottom up.

2

Staying In Our Lane

Grantmakers want to help, but when dealing with historically excluded communities, they often get in the way of frontline organizations and their ability to work freely. We will not ask frontline organizations to promote our organizational materials. Instead, we will empower them to take responsibility for their communities and operate their programs with minimal external influence.

3

An Inclusive Application Process

We will prioritize funding for compost groups led by and serving BIPOC communities and commit to doing extensive outreach to ensure frontline organizations are aware of this opportunity. We recognize the value of frontline organizations' deep, lived experience in their communities. Therefore, we will take this into account when evaluating applications. Furthermore, we will create an equitable application process by providing the option to fill out a Google Forms application, submit a video, and by translating the application into Spanish.

4

Investing In What Matters, You

We plan to evaluate the program's success on how the funding beneficially impacts the operation and growth of compost groups led by and serving BIPOC communities. We will help these groups by funding their [Core Mission Support](#). At the same time, we trust that frontline organizations know what is best, and we will support them in deciding how to allocate the funds.

5

A Respectful Relationship

We recognize the privilege we hold and the power dynamic of this relationship. We commit to empowering frontline organizations to do their work without pressure. They are the experts in their communities and deserve the right to conduct their work without being micromanaged or treated with paternalistic attitudes. Throughout this process, we will be transparent by openly sharing information about our organization, the nature of the grant, our interests, and our expectations for our grantees.

6

Streamlined Reporting

We will design an equitable application and evaluation framework for awarding grants. In addition, we will develop a simplified and standardized reporting mechanism, enabling all grantees to submit progress updates. We aim to minimize the burden on frontline organizations, allowing them to prioritize their on-the-ground efforts rather than allocating excessive time to completing reporting forms.

7

Time is Valuable

We recognize that the mission comes first and that frontline organizations should be allowed to carry it out. Therefore, if we schedule any engagements with grantees, we will do so with plenty of forewarning, considering non-Christian holidays and any pre-existing community commitments they may have.

8

Transforming How We Define Success

At ILSR, we have a vision of thriving, equitable communities. In our [Composting for Community Initiative](#), we amplify distributed solutions that encompass composting at home, community gardens, urban and rural farms, schools, and micro facilities operated by non-profits, cooperatives, and social enterprises. As principle number four mentions, we will rely on our grantees to evaluate the success and impact of their projects. To take this further, we recognize the [disparities in funding](#) BIPOC non-profits face versus predominantly white non-profits. Considering this, we embrace a well-rounded approach that allows grantees to focus on how they want to allocate funds to move their composting activities and objectives forward.

9

Going Beyond the Money

Funding is one way to bridge the gap between BIPOC and predominantly white non-profit organizations, but we concede that it represents just the initial steps in this endeavor. Therefore, any grantee who wants virtual hot composting training can sign up for ILSR's [Community Composting 101 Online Certificate Course](#). Additionally, grantees will receive a travel stipend to attend the 8th National Cultivating Community Composter Forum in Cleveland, Ohio, in October 2024 and access to ILSR's [Community Composter Coalition](#), a network of community composters that builds connections, spreads lessons learned, and inspires new operations.

10

Taking the First Step

We recognize that prioritizing funding for compost groups led by and serving BIPOC communities is long overdue. This mini-grant program marks one small step toward procuring capital for these groups. We urge other funders to contemplate comparable or more substantial funding opportunities. We are confident that this program will help address the pressing need to recycle wasted food while creating rich soil for local gardens and farms, providing educational opportunities, and sustaining good jobs. Moreover, we are committed to utilizing our platform to amplify the efforts of BIPOC community composters.

Do not hesitate to [contact us](#) with questions or feedback about this guide.