

Funding Proposal: Stronger Nonprofit = Stronger Communities

Academy for Grassroots Organizations' (AcademyGO) mission is Strengthening & positively impacting communities by convening, equipping, and guiding nonprofit leaders.

What began in 2000 as a small networking group aimed at providing support to a handful of community-based organizations, quickly expanded to serving the Inland Empire region (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties) as a critical component of community programming infrastructure by establishing a nonprofit capacity-building ecosystem.

We at AcademyGO envision an Inland Empire where leadership is strong, collaboration and innovation are the standard, communities thrive, and opportunity abounds for all. Working with hundreds of organizations on an annual basis, AcademyGO helps nonprofits learn and implement new skills and best practices, develop resources, and expand collaboration efforts to improve quality of life for Inland Empire residents. While the Inland Empire continues to be the epicenter of growth in California, the region is consistently low in nonprofit funding among other metropolitan regions. A continued funding partnership with your foundation will help us in supporting other community-based organizations, ultimately leading to increased supportive services for the community at large.

AcademyGO respectfully requests continued grant funding in the amount of \$150,000 for core operating support to continue to drive capacity efforts and eliminate the ceiling by providing empowering professional development to nonprofit professionals that ultimately strengthens the Inland Empire's nonprofit sector. A renewed partnership with your Foundation will support AcademyGO in accomplishing its mission through the following core grant objectives:

- **GOAL: Empower and strengthen the Inland Empire nonprofit sector.**
 - Objective #1: To train and equip 275 nonprofit professionals annually (with an annual 5% increase during the second and third years of the grant term)
 - Provide a year-round schedule of AcademyGO's signature workshops: The Fundraising Academy for Grassroots Organizations™ (TFA) and The Grantwriting Academy for Grassroots Organizations™ (TGA).
 - TFA is a 5-day course of interactive group workshops, peer learning exercises, assignments, and practical application. TFA is an approved provider for 27 CFRE points towards participant certification as Certified Fundraising Executives.
 - TGA is a 4-day course addressing grant funding challenges of local nonprofits. Participants learn grantsmanship best practices in grant writing, proposal preparation, program planning, logic models, budgeting, grant research, and receive peer and mentor proposal critique. TGA provides 21 CFRE points.

- Provide a 4-session Grant Readiness course to prepare nonprofit organizations in becoming “grant ready”. We know firsthand that grant writing is much more than persuasive writing – a successful grant also requires a strong organizational and financial foundation, relationship building, and key required attachments.
- Objective #2: Re-ignite the AcademyGO Cultural Competency Advisory Council and meet on a bi-annual basis.
 - AcademyGO’s Cultural Competency Advisory Council is led by a diverse group of nonprofit professionals and currently has members from a variety of Inland Empire nonprofit organizations. The Council is charged with examining and analyzing AcademyGO’s program strategies to ensure that practices are culturally sensitive, appropriate, and responsive to the needs of the Inland Empire community. While the pandemic posed challenges in our goals of expanding this council and meeting regularly, we aim to re-ignite the council in 2023 and propose bi-annual strategic sessions meet our goals. Each session will include a conversation about barriers to services and recommendations to improve access for nonprofit professionals.
- Objective #3: Develop and implement a Mentorship Program to compliment the The Grantwriting Academy for Grassroots Organizations™ (TGA) and establish two mentorship cohorts per year.
 - AcademyGO has offered TGA since 2015, and while proven to be successful as evident by post-program completion fundraising success, we recognize that more must be done to increase participant fundraising success. This pilot component would incorporate grant writing professionals to serve as mentors for TGA program participants. We envision these mentors would partner with participants to prepare them in advance of the course, serve as a sounding board during the week-long series, and provide extended guidance and resources post-completion. By incorporating a 1:1 mentorship approach to program follow-up, we anticipate a greater increase in grant success for all program graduates.

We at AcademyGO are incredibly grateful for past support of our mission – especially during such an unprecedented season for all nonprofit organizations. We value your partnership and guidance, and appreciate your consideration of our renewed request to continue to empower the Inland Empire nonprofit community.