

## **Southland Economic Transformation (SET) Grants**

### *Announcement of Funding Opportunity*

#### About the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative

The South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative (SSEGI) brings together community, industry and government to reestablish the Southland<sup>1</sup> as an economic powerhouse. SSEGI is a wide-reaching and ambitious convening of leading partners and resources from across the region whose goal is to achieve transformative economic development — from growing advanced manufacturing to supporting entrepreneurship, workforce development, housing finance and more. For further information, please see <https://www.ssegi.com/>.

SSEGI seeks to broadly engage and provide resources to partners that enable them to join in SSEGI's overall management, strategy development, program design and implementation. Organizations and individuals primarily participate through three Civic Working Groups (CWG) — focusing on Human Capital, Business Development, and Housing and Neighborhood Development. These groups are broadly open to responsible membership, and applicants for the SET grants are encouraged, but not required, to join CWGs relevant to their work and proposals.

#### Overview of SET Grants

SSEGI has undertaken extensive market analysis and strategy development as a foundation for comprehensive asset- and market-based inclusive economic development of the Southland. (See [Phase 1 Report](#).) SSEGI is now turning to implementation, and seeks to identify, develop and support coordinated projects which implement the strategies. SSEGI does this through working with current and new partners — the people and organizations on the ground driving critical work to restore the Southland to economic prosperity.

The newly established SET fund, generously supported by the MacArthur Foundation, will provide modest grants for predevelopment, project planning and in some cases early implementation efforts for SSEGI's partners. These grants will help to advance the products, tools and programs that collectively have the most potential for transformative economic change in the Southland. Grants will be awarded through a highly interactive and curated process, in which the Civic Working Groups and SSEGI staff will work with partners to develop their proposals.

A total of \$400,000 is available to support this phase of grants. Grant sizes may vary considerably, with the average grant anticipated to be approximately \$40,000 - 50,000. Additional in-kind support from SSEGI staff and Civic Working Groups will help refine the most promising proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> Southland, or the South Suburbs, is broadly defined as the suburban region south and southwest of Chicago, encompassing over 40 municipalities and 600,000 residents.

South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), a lead partner of SSEGI, is overall manager of the SET grant program, and its Board will make final determinations of grants.

### Application Eligibility, Criteria and Process

#### *Application Eligibility*

SSEGI seeks broad participation from community members and other stakeholders in the Southland, in general and for this grant opportunity. Any person or organization proposing a project which furthers the strategies of SSEGI may apply for SET grants. The proposed project must serve SSEGI's charitable purposes of inclusive economic growth in the Southland, and the applicant must be a 501(c)(3) organization or eligible for fiscal sponsorship.

Collaborative applications are encouraged, and the curation process may result in additional suggested collaborations. Applicants need not be exclusively located in the Southland, but preferably will include partners located in the Southland, and the focus and impact of the project must be within the Southland. Applicants with a proven track record in the work they propose, demonstrating expertise and capacity to carry out the proposed initiative, will be preferred. Applicants can submit multiple applications for different projects.

#### *Selection Criteria*

Broadly speaking, proposals will be evaluated based on: (1) their alignment with SSEGI's market analyses and strategies; (2) the quality of the proposal; (3) feasibility and readiness, including the likelihood an award will jumpstart products, tools, and programs; and 4) the scope and scale of likely impact, including the leveraging of other resources and activities.

Any proposal that furthers inclusive economic growth and quality of life (as directly driving economic development) in the Southland is encouraged. Preference will be given to proposals which identify and develop the assets of the Southland towards increasing their productivity and prosperity as part of realizing the overall strategies of SSEGI to create vital and prosperous communities of opportunity and choice (as described in the [Phase 1 Report](#)). Market analysis and CWG work to date indicate that the following strategies and target populations (organized by CWG) are priorities.

### Business Development

- Priority strategies:
  - o **Supporting industry and cluster-based development** – Of particular interest are interventions that support food manufacturing; metals, machinery & equipment; and transportation, distribution and logistics (TD&L) firms.
  - o **Increasing entrepreneurship, particularly in the targeted clusters.**

- **Increasing ownership by people of color of small but potentially high growth firms** (established firms which have substantial growth opportunities and often are underperforming due to technology modernization, product development, succession or other issues).
- Priority populations/groups:
  - Minority and women entrepreneurs
  - High growth small firms
  - Established, mid-size firms which are underperforming or have growth opportunities.

### Human Capital

- Priority strategies:
  - **Creating and expanding pathways to higher paying jobs, particularly through deeper employer engagement and employer-driven programs, including sector-based programs** – Potential projects include apprenticeship programs and tailored training for priority industries.
  - **Improving coordination of existing and new workforce development programs** – For example, establishing a platform and clearinghouse enabling jobseekers to more easily identify and navigate the right resources for them.
  - **Supporting evidence-based approaches to youth and young adult workforce development.**
- Priority populations:
  - Opportunity Youth (ages 16-24)
  - Un- or under-employed middle skill workers.

### Housing and Neighborhood Development

- Priority strategies:
  - **Bolstering existing rental and owner-occupied housing stock** – Illustrative interventions include rehabilitating abandoned or distressed properties and subsidies for owner-occupied home repairs, among others.
  - **Creating new opportunities for homeownership** – For example, predevelopment financing for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) housing properties, employer-assisted housing programs, new housing finance products, etc.
- Priority populations:
  - Existing renters and homeowners
  - New residents, especially middle-income homeowners.

Additional criteria that will be considered include organizational history, stability and financial strength. Preference will be given to proposals which reflect or plan for community input in the design and execution of the project. As mentioned, within reasonable limits, support will be available from the CWGs and SSEGI staff to help address capacity limitations, refine and enhance proposals and partnerships, and so forth.

### *Selection Process*

The SET grant selection process will be organic and iterative, encouraging dialogue between project teams and reviewers. It will occur in two phases:

- 1) Letters of Interest. Applicants are asked to submit brief (no more than three-page) Letters of Interest (LOIs) summarizing their project idea. Guidelines for the LOI are provided below. The LOIs will be reviewed by members of the relevant CWG (e.g., a human capital LOI will be reviewed by members of the human capital Civic Working Group; but note that LOIs may propose cross-cutting programs, in which case they may be reviewed by more than one CWG). CWG members or SSEGI staff may reach out to proposers to explore enhancing, combining or otherwise curating proposals. After this process (which may result in amended LOIs), the co-chairs of each CWG will recommend the top proposals within their subject domain to a Committee of all of the CWG co-chairs. This Committee will review LOIs and determine which of them should be developed into full proposals for the second stage.
- 2) Full Proposals. In the second stage, selected LOI project ideas will be developed into full proposal applications, again with the support of CWGs and SSEGI staff. Guidelines for the full applications will be provided at a later date. These proposals will be reviewed by the Committee of CWG co-chairs, which will select the most competitive to recommend to the SET Grant Committee. The SET Grant Committee will then make final recommendations of proposals for funding, along with amounts to be granted, to the SSMMA Board.

### *Timeline*

- February 10, 2020 – Release of RFP
- March 9, 2020 – LOIs due (not to exceed three (3) pages)
- March 2020 – LOI curation and review process
- April 6, 2020 – Finalists selected by CWG co-chairs to be invited to full proposal stage
- May 4, 2020 – Full proposals due
- June 1, 2020 – Grantee Selection Announcement

## Terms of Funding

Please refer to the separate “Rules and Regulations” document for full details. Note in particular that grantee selection and grant amounts are completely within the discretion of SSMMA and its SSEGI project partners. SSMMA and its project partners also reserve the right to change the terms and process governing the SET grants.

Letter of Interest Guidelines (not to exceed three (3) pages, single spaced, 12-point font)

### *Organizational Background*

- **Organization details:** history, mission, populations and geographic areas served, accomplishments, and current programs.
- **Key personnel:** List 1-3 staff who would work on this grant, and a brief description of their role and qualifications.

### *Proposal Details*

- **Needs addressed:** Describe the need(s) that your proposal would fulfill in the Southland.
- **Executive summary of project:** Describe your project, how it will respond to the need(s) outlined above and how it specifically addresses one or more of the key strategies outlined in the Phase I SSEGI Report.

### *Project Feasibility*

- **Activities to be undertaken:** Briefly describe activities and outputs anticipated for the project overall, including beyond the grant period, as this pilot initiative is intended as a springboard to larger implementation grants down the line.
- **Feasibility analysis:** Provide high-level summary of challenges, project risks and plans to address them.

### *Use of SET Grant Funds*

- **Project development status:** describe the next set of work needed to further plan, develop or implement the project, i.e., what the SET grant will be used to accomplish.
- **Provide a preliminary budget:** Detail use of the SET grant funds.

## Submission Instructions

Please submit applications to [grants@ssegi.com](mailto:grants@ssegi.com) by March 9, 2020. Applications must meet the Application Requirements outlined in the “Rules and Regulations” document that accompanies this announcement.