



Request for Proposals (RFP) Transformative Care Agendas in the Global Majority

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The SAGE Fund, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation Future of Work(ers) program, invites concept notes from Global Majority¹ organizations, movements, unions, and cooperatives to develop care strategies, agendas, and movement building that are grounded in local, national, or regional opportunities. Projects should leverage those openings to contribute to the development of transformative policies, laws, models, narratives, and norms that advance a fair social organization of care that includes paid and unpaid care work and centers the dignity, rights, and agency of those providing and receiving care. Projects should be focused on and take place in Africa, Asia, Latin America and/or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Proposals must be received by 29 January 2024.

If you have any questions about the RFP focus or the application process, please contact sagefundgrants@newventurefund.org

OVERVIEW

The issue of care is receiving heightened attention on public agendas, due in part to its systemic role in reproducing inequality, and at the same time, its potential to fuel more inclusive and just societies if targeted by transformative policies and investment. Care is critical to supporting life, sustaining communities, and ensuring the essential functioning of the social and economic systems within which they are embedded. Notably, the care economy is increasingly central to the global economy and our economic systems, elevating the importance of addressing care as integral to transformative change. At the same time, care systems and economies are defined by racial, ethnic, gender and class hierarchies, requiring a focus on the full range of drivers and impacts to redress inequality and envision alternatives. There is a need and a timely opportunity to invest in transformative support and care systems and economies through organizing and movement-building coupled with feminist, intersectional, human rights, and value-based social and economic policies, including care policies.

¹ Global Majority refers to people who are Black, Brown, Asian, dual-heritage, Indigenous, and/or have been referred to as “ethnic minorities”, and who collectively represent over 80% of the world’s population.

For more information, please see the [Background Note](#) below.

OBJECTIVES

Over the long term, there is an aim to build a historically-situated knowledge base and diverse range of support and care systems in order to strengthen the capacity of policy-makers to respond in more targeted ways to care demands. The RFP seeks to contribute to advancing three key objectives in the field:

- Promoting the importance and value of care through public investment, support and provision, with primary responsibility held by the state and co-sharing of responsibility by third sector/community care and market institutions;
- Shifting care systems, policies, regulations, and models to center the wellbeing of all care workers (irrespective of their work status), including increasing economic security, protections, and worker voice in shaping labor laws and regulations and achieving economic justice; and
- Strengthening coalitions within care sectors and alliances across labor, feminist, migrant, disability, social, environmental, and economic justice movements, among others to build and advance a collective support and care agenda at the local, national, regional and global levels.

PROPOSAL CRITERIA

The SAGE Fund will make 8-12 grants of US \$100,000 - \$150,000 each, for 12-18 months, to Global Majority organizations, movements, coalitions, cooperatives, and unions to develop care strategies, agendas, and movement building. The focus of the proposals and the strategies they advance should be grounded in and leverage local, national, or regional opportunities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and/or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Projects will be designed to achieve at least one of the following:

- Advance new models or systems-change approaches to support and care systems and economies that reconstruct and bolster the primary role of the state, recognize and invest in the role of community care systems (third sector, CSO, informal networks, family supports), and/or regulate the role of market actors, and if successful, projects will demonstrate alternative strategies and solutions to inform efforts elsewhere;
- Address structural barriers to care worker protections, with a focus on improving the working conditions, economic security, social protection, and recognition of paid and unpaid care work at the local and national level, across regions, and globally; and/or
- Identify, engage and/or support aligned social movements *across* the feminist, labor, migrant, disability, environmental justice and economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights fields, among others, to develop or strengthen a support and care agenda and advance opportunities for impact, laying the groundwork for more uptake, engagement, and advocacy by allied movements.

Geographical scope: Projects should be focused on and take place in or across the Global Majority regions – Africa, Asia, Latin America and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – with a focus at the local, national, or regional level. Projects should demonstrate awareness of global

and regional conversations, agreements, movements, and opportunities, and may include activities and strategies that target strategic global processes but are not the primary focus.

Language: Due to current staffing constraints, concept notes must be submitted in English. Grantee organizations or partnerships are welcome to work in any language but must have one partner or someone within the partnership that can communicate with the Fund in English. The Fund will provide interpretation for any calls or engagement with the full set of partners as needed if the proposal advances.

ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

Civil society organizations, movements, unions, and cooperatives from and/or with leadership in the Global Majority with a mission and programs strongly aligned with human rights, labor rights and gender and disability justice are invited to apply, including:

- Movements (including social movements, worker/labor movements, feminist movements, movements of affected communities including Persons with Disabilities, youth and older people);
- Civil society organizations (including NGOs);
- Community-based organizations;
- Worker organizations (Labor unions, Federations, Member-Based Organizations);
- Organizations and movements that are migrant-led or founded by migrants in Global Majority countries;
- Networks, coalitions, and partnerships (preference will be given to those with strong participation and leadership from the Global Majority); and/or
- Research centers or think tanks in the Global Majority with strong links to activist practice.

Partnerships: Proposals may be submitted by an individual organization or movement or by two or more groups as project partners. International organizations or anchor NGOs from the Global North may participate as part of the project, but are not intended to receive the majority of the funds nor lead the project strategy. Prioritization will be given to proposals from organizations working closely with, or led by, affected communities, workers, and movements in the Global Majority.

Eligibility to receive funds:

- A. Eligible organizations must either
 - Be a legally registered charity in the local country and have a bank account that is capable of receiving international wire transfers; or
 - Designate a legally registered charity (or entity eligible to receive charitable funds) in the country and has a local bank account capable of receiving international wire transfers to serve as the project's fiscal agent.
- B. Given the size of the grants offered, all applicants must have the ability to absorb and manage a US \$100,000 project grant. Therefore, if an organization is applying alone, it would need to have an annual budget of US \$200,000 or greater. If applying in

partnership, the size and the annual budgets of the partners may vary, but at least one of the partners must meet the minimum annual budget of US \$200,000. The grantee partner must have the financial infrastructure and capacity to receive and manage a US \$100,000 on behalf of the other partners.

- C. We are unable to provide grant funding to organizations that are based in any of the following countries, nor can we support projects that are conducting activities directly in these countries: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, India, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Ukraine (Russian-Occupied Territories), Yemen.

Grant support:

Organizations may apply for a grant from US \$100,000 - \$150,000 for a term up to 18 months and for project activities with a clear start and end date. Recognizing that the timeline for strategies is often longer than one and a half years, please think of the project funding period as a phase in a longer-term process and design it with feasible outcomes at the end of a 12–18-month period. At this time, one grant round will be funded out of this RFP, with the aim to inform other funders’ grantmaking on care, who can take up and continue to support the work seeded through this RFP. There is no dedicated renewal funding for this initiative at this time. Therefore, please be aware that this is a one-time grant from the SAGE Fund, and the proposal should therefore be designed as a stand-alone phase of work.

Grant funds are not intended as core support, although SAGE understands the need and is flexible in covering staffing and other core costs as part of a sustainable project. Grant funds may not be used to support lobbying or political activities.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The SAGE Fund uses a two-stage application process with the intent of lessening the burden on groups applying. Stage 1 is an open call for proposals, whereby interested applicants submit a brief concept note and application form. In Stage 2, the SAGE Fund will work in an interactive way with a small number of selected organizations to submit a full proposal. If approved, we anticipate grant funds would be available for a project start in August 2024.

Stage 1: Application Submission

The SAGE Fund uses an online portal to collect RFP applications. A completed application form and a concept note (two to three pages in length) are to be submitted through the online application portal by 29 January 2024.

Application Form

The application form can be accessed and submitted through SAGE’s online portal. The form will collect information about the primary contact for the project, the applicant organization(s), and the project itself. To see the full list of application questions, please visit our website at www.sagefundrights.org/rfp

Concept Note

Concept Notes are also submitted using the SAGE online portal. The online portal will provide a text box with a 15,000-character limit (including spaces) where the concept note text can be copy and pasted (and may include tables, images, and other formatting). Brief narratives of 2-3 pages should include the following (with suggested weighting of emphasis):

- (50%) Description of the project, including:
 - goal(s)
 - proposed strategy
 - activities and timeline
 - outcomes
- (25%) Brief statement of need or focus, (the issue, problem, and opportunity the project addresses), and
 - what your organization(s) expect to advance, build, or change as a result of the proposed work
 - how advancing work on care helps address inequality in the context of your organization's work
- (25%) Brief description of how your organization or movement defines or frames care, and what your experience and approach is to working on care
 - how this proposal would continue that work or open new pathways
 - how would your proposed strategy or project impact or create change for different groups and people (migrants, workers, women, people with disabilities, etc.)?

Accessibility: The SAGE Fund is committed to making the RFP application process accessible. If you are unable to submit the RFP application and concept note through the application portal, you may submit them in Word document (or other text format) via email. **Please do not submit your application or concept note as a PDF.** If you have any additional accommodation needs in the application process, please contact us at sagefundgrants@newventurefund.org

Next Steps:

- Visit our website at <http://www.sagefundrights.org/rfp> to view full application instructions, including the list of application questions.
- Follow the instructions on the website to submit an application and concept note to our online application portal by 29 January 2024. If you cannot use the online application portal, submit via email a completed application and concept note in Word (or other text format) by 29 January 2024.
- If you have any questions about the RFP focus or the application process, please contact sagefundgrants@newventurefund.org

Stage 2: Review Process

The SAGE Fund undertakes an in-depth review process, with input from the field to understand more fully the proposals received. This process takes several months to complete, depending upon the volume of applications received. The SAGE Fund will inform those organizations with applications that are shortlisted. SAGE will work in an interactive way with a small number of

selected organizations to submit a full proposal. Organizations that were not shortlisted will be notified by email at the conclusion of the review process. We anticipate that all applicants will be notified no later than July 2024 about the status of their application.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The issue of care is receiving heightened attention on public agendas, due in part to its systemic role in reproducing inequality, and at the same time, its potential to fuel more inclusive and just societies if targeted by transformative policies and investment. Care is critical to supporting life, sustaining communities, and ensuring the essential functioning of the social and economic systems within which they are embedded. Notably, the care economy is increasingly central to the global economy and our economic systems, elevating the importance of addressing care as integral to transformative change. At the same time, care systems and economies are defined by racial, ethnic, gender and class hierarchies, requiring a focus on the full range of drivers and impacts to redress inequality and envision alternatives.

The Covid-19 pandemic revealed longstanding structural inequalities underpinning the care economy and the labor that fuels it. The crisis triggered by the pandemic led to widespread declines in women's employment and working conditions around the world, especially in the Global Majority and acutely for women migrant workers who constitute a large portion of care workers. The crisis intensified women's unpaid care work, which in turn, has deepened existing inequalities. While care work is recognized as essential work, it is also characterized by low wages or no compensation, a lack of benefits and social protection, informality, exploitative working conditions, gender-based violence, and gaps in legal protection and regulation.

Care institutions and services have historically not been well developed in the Global Majority regions where histories of colonialism, neoliberalism, and structural adjustment programs have shaped the role of the state and stripped resources for public expenditure. Nevertheless, governments and other state actors have not prioritized care or gender equality in public spending. To fill the gap, care systems are subsidized by women, adolescents, and girls in all their diversity and gender-nonconforming people in unpaid, low paid, and undervalued labor in households, society, the public sphere and the market. The reduction in the role of the state and in public expenditure have curtailed the development of care services, undermined access, and shifted the provision of care to community-based systems operated by civil society, informal networks, and family support. It has also led to a dependence on unpaid and unrecognized work by community care networks which we may call "reproductive labor". This is closely linked to questions of land, resources, food systems and rural livelihood supports that are essential to sustaining people, economy, and planet.

Equally, those that receive care are impacted by the lack of public provision in support and care systems. For far too many, access, affordability, quality of care supports and services, and community inclusion have been denied. For people with disabilities, traditional models of care have denied agency, autonomy, and independence. The distinction between provider and receiver often overlaps in lived reality, elevating the need for transformative care to be rights-based and gender and disability inclusive, and to take a life-cycle approach.

Feminists and workers have insisted on recognizing the importance of care for the functioning of markets, and the need to place life at the center of a new development model. Nevertheless, the private sector continues to advance approaches centered on economic profitability. Insufficient public investment in care coupled with the projected growth of care sectors has led to increased interest by private investors and a growing role of markets in care systems. But there is concern, and evidence suggests, that rising debt, austerity measures, and increased privatization of care will undermine access to and provision of care supports and services and erode the protection of human rights and dignity that are essential to those providing and receiving care. This underscores a major fault line in the push for market systems approaches to solve the care crisis and the failed lens through which governments view investment in care infrastructure as an expense. Investment in care is not only good for inclusive growth and job creation but also fundamentally as a matter of human dignity, gender equality and human rights.

There is a need – and a timely opportunity to revitalize momentum on a just recovery that centers care – to invest in transformative support and care systems and economies through organizing and movement-building coupled with feminist, intersectional, human rights and value-based social and economic policies, including care policies. Investing in care policies, models and regulations holds the potential to: generate decent work and reward in care sectors and global care chains; strengthen social protection systems; close gender gaps at work and home; advance alternative economic models and macroeconomic and fiscal policies that center people and planet over profit; and improve the quality and dignity of support and care available to people of all ages, across gender, race, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic and migration status.

Key elements of care are present in the current work and focus of different fields and sectors. For example, there has been wide uptake of the 5 “R’s” framework - Recognition, Reduction, Redistribution, Reward and Representation - as the pillars of systems change needed to advance a rights-based organization of care. These provide a range of starting points for developing more robust care agendas (within a movement or across movements), piloting new approaches, and collective strategizing. Given the varied definitions and priorities of different fields and movements connected to care, it is important to recognize that collaboration in building cross-movement solidarities will take time and come with challenges to be addressed. Nevertheless, the role of organizations, networks, movements, unions, and their allies working across fields will be pivotal in driving the scale of systems, policy and narrative change forward that is needed.

The SAGE Fund

The SAGE Fund – *Strengthening Accountability in the Global Economy* – is a collaborative fund that cultivates breakthroughs in human rights accountability for economic actors: spurring innovation in approaches and building greater field capacity in the human rights movement. The Fund works interactively with groups to pilot new tools and strategies that require more upfront design to increase their likelihood of success. We support multi-tiered partnerships between civil

society organizations and affected communities to bring an array of skills, knowledge, and leverage points.

The SAGE Fund (<http://www.sagefundrights.org/>) is a project of New Venture Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization based in the United States.