

Kahane Foundation Refugee Grants: Process Report

Conception:

After the Board elected to earmark €100,000 for efforts to assist in the European refugee crisis, a group of family members, led by Marie-Rose Kahane began to discuss how to distribute the funds effectively. The group (Marie-Rose Kahane, decided that, rather than funding a single project, or seeking to design projects, it was best to distribute the funds as a series of small emergency grants to individuals and small groups with a track record of working to help refugees, who could use the funds to sustain their projects in the field. The group conceived a simple set of requirements and an application system for the grants, hoping to deliver the money rapidly to projects in need. We decided to focus on projects that would create systems or infrastructure with a lasting impact, rather than those that simply consume money (eg. food, fuel, clothing). We also decided to try to favour projects that had a positive impact on local communities, rather than those that helped refugees with only foreign supplies, labour, or infrastructure that would not have a local impact.

Publication:

The group created an application form and information sheet, which was rapidly designed and posted to a new page on the Foundation web site. The group made efforts, through a press release, to receive media coverage, in an attempt to spread the news as far as possible. Sadly, this took place on the same day the terrorist attacks in Brussels, so media coverage of our grants was very limited, and immediately overshadowed by other news. However, the group was able to make contact with a very widely-read Facebook newsletter that spreads daily news about the refugee crisis throughout Europe ("Are You Syrious?"). The grant announcement was posted to the newsletter, and spread very rapidly through NGO and volunteer communities on Facebook, reaching a large part of the audience we sought to contact.

Applications:

In order to rapidly support needy projects in this emergency, the group decided to have a very short application period, and very simple application. In the 10-day application period, we received a large and varied pool of applications, submitted via the website. Nearly all of the applications were completed to a very high standard and met the requirements indicated.

-Applications: 81

-Total applied for: €647,000

-Project locations: Greece (both Greek and international applicants), United Kingdom, Turkey, Syria, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Serbia, The Netherlands, Croatia, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Slovenia

-Project types: food infrastructure, medical care, psycho-social care, education/literacy, camp construction and improvement, volunteer infrastructure, transportation/aid delivery, integration approaches, web platforms, communications/internet infrastructure, child protection, housing support, cultural exchange, mapping initiatives.

Selection:

To expedite funding, the group committed to a 10-day selection and notification period after the applications closed. A smaller selection team was formed, to make our work faster. We conducted Skype meetings over four days, reducing the 81 applications to 20 winners, and three reserves, in case of any issues with the winners. We sought to achieve a balance between projects large and small, different types of projects, and an interesting spread of locations. We had no shortage of good projects that we would have liked to award, but we were eventually able to reduce the number through a stringent application of the requirements and assessment of which projects could most benefit from our help. For some projects that we believed could access funding from other sources, we awarded less than the requested amount, in order to spread the funds further.

Notification:

Before awarding the successful projects, we conducted a process of due diligence by contacting the applicants and their references, in order to assess the validity of the stated need and the applicant's ability to carry out the project. In this process, we eliminated a small number of projects that were unresponsive, but found no projects to be invalid overall. We made up for the eliminated projects by awarding one of the reserve projects. Nearly all the successful applicants were notified of their decision within the 10-day deadline, as were the unsuccessful applicants. The few remaining applicants were notified within a few extra days.

Award:

Successful projects had their grants transferred on a rolling basis as their bank information was received.

Reporting:

All successful applicants agreed to an appropriate reporting system and schedule before receiving their awards, in order that the Foundation may be assured of appropriate use of the funds in the coming months.