



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Spring 2021 Letter of Inquiry (LOI)

### Who is Tides?

Tides is a philanthropic partner and nonprofit accelerator dedicated to building a world of shared prosperity and social justice. Our mission is to accelerate the pace of social change, working with innovative partners to solve society's toughest problems.

Tides' vision of a world of shared prosperity and social justice is founded on equality and human rights; a sustainable environment; healthy individuals and communities; and quality education. We work at the nexus of funders, changemakers and policy, bringing together a large and diverse coalition of mission aligned actors to amplify our power to scale positive impact.

Tides' impact solutions include philanthropic giving and grantmaking, impact investing, fiscal sponsorship and acceleration services for social ventures, collaborative workspaces, collective initiatives, and advocacy services for policy change. Click [here](#) to learn more about Tides.

### What is WE LEAD (Women's Environmental Leadership Fund)?

WE LEAD is a Tides Foundation grantmaking initiative and impact invested fund (a portion of our assets are invested in [CNote](#)) that launched in 2020 with an explicit focus on addressing historic inequities by directing resources to Black, Indigenous, Women of Color (BIWOC) leaders and BIWOC-led climate justice organizations.

Climate justice demands democratic, community-based solutions, and equitable spaces where impacted communities are at the center of decision-making. By elevating BIWOC leaders, and redistributing resources and power, we can address the root causes of climate change while supporting solutions with the greatest chance of seeing us through to a new era of social justice and climate security.

In alignment with trust-based philanthropic practices and democratizing access to resources, we commit to being accessible, transparent, and responsive, and provide flexible, unrestricted funding to support the sustainability of organizations and women's leadership. We know we have room to grow and have included opportunities for feedback in our processes as we learn more about, and get to know, prospective grantee partners. We also commit to acting on feedback and being held accountable as we continue to refine, evaluate, and adapt our trust-based approach on this learning journey. Click [here](#) to learn more about WE LEAD.

## What does WE LEAD do?

WE LEAD seeks to promote a shift in historical power imbalances from those who have caused - or failed to address - the climate crisis, and lift the vision and self-determination of Black women, women of color, and Indigenous women taking on big polluters with local, community-based action and sustainable solutions.

In addition to grantmaking, and our investment in CNote, WE LEAD strives to mobilize philanthropy to address a chronic lack of investment in organizations led by people of color. In alignment with Tides' long-standing commitment to human rights, environmental protection, and social justice, WE LEAD will leverage our networks to create new partnerships that unlock, expand, and direct new funding to grassroots organizations and impacted communities.

## How will WE LEAD make grantmaking funding decisions?

The WE LEAD Independent Advisory Committee, composed of representatives spanning our leadership, philanthropy and advocacy teams, will review LOIs and make recommendations for which organizations will be asked to submit a proposal. The advisory committee will develop a funding strategy guided by the information we glean from the LOIs, WE LEAD's funding priorities and values, and in alignment with Tides' [vision, mission and approach](#). The advisory committee will review and weigh proposals to make final recommendations to Tides, which holds ultimate discretion over issuing grant awards.

Striving for a more robust participatory grantmaking model, WE LEAD is in the midst of building an external leadership council, composed of movement leaders and funders, who will help guide our grantmaking decisions and the continued development of WE LEAD's strategy.

## What is Tides and WE LEAD's commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Tides and WE LEAD ground our work in our core organizational values of equity, empowerment, respect, accountability, and creativity. These values are the foundation for WE LEAD's grantmaking practices and shape how we organize our work and build relationships with our partners.

Our focus on Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) centers justice as the ultimate goal of our work. We aspire to create a culture and reputation for being an organization grounded in equity that leverages diversity and inclusion in all that we do. We intentionally celebrate the diversity of our staff, board, and partners. As an organization, we are on a collective journey to enhance our J.E.D.I. knowledge for a world of shared prosperity and social justice.

In early 2021, Tides was one of the first funding organizations to take The Donors of Color Network's Climate Funders Justice Pledge to move philanthropy towards racial and economic justice. By taking this pledge, Tides commits to giving at least 30% of our funding related to Tides-led climate initiatives to BIPOC-led powerbuilding groups. Further, WE LEAD anticipates giving 100% of our funding to BIWOC-led organizations. We view this pledge as a concrete opportunity to live out our organizational values and build the collective power of people of color to achieve racial equity. Click [here](#) to learn more about The Climate Funders Justice Pledge.

## What is the goal of WE LEAD's LOI process?

The LOI will give us an opportunity to hear directly from frontline BIWOC leaders about their vision for advancing equity while also democratizing access to WE LEAD funding. By beginning here, we can develop a funding strategy that is responsive to and centered on the expressed needs of BIWOC leaders and BIWOC-led organizations.

## What types of work does WE LEAD support?

Based on current strategic priorities, WE LEAD seeks to fund the following:

- The sustainability and development of BIWOC climate justice leadership
- Intersectional organizing and movement building
- Community-led powerbuilding and resiliency initiatives
- Policy advocacy
- Structural and systems change efforts
- Traditions of resistance, healing, and collective care
- Efforts to stop new fossil fuel infrastructure
- Media campaigns
- Capacity building and strategic planning
- Development of new climate programs

## What will WE LEAD not fund?

- Work based outside of the United States
- Projects inconsistent with a legitimate charitable purpose and applicable law, including any political campaign intervention
- Projects inconsistent with Tides [Vision, Mission and Approach](#), our organizational values, and WE LEAD's funding priorities.

## Who does WE LEAD encourage to submit a Letter of Inquiry?

We encourage submissions from organizations, projects and collaboratives led by queer, trans, non-binary, non-conforming, and cis women, particularly Black women, women of color, and indigenous women climate justice leaders. We also welcome LOIs from groups across the ecosystem of women-led organizations and initiatives outside of the traditional environmental movement, including those who are working at the intersection of gender, racial, and climate justice.

We recognize the different formations at the frontlines of addressing the intersectional and compounding issues of climate change. WE LEAD is able to support tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charities, and the charitable activities of 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations and for-profit social enterprises.

## Can I share this invitation to submit LOIs with other groups?

Yes! This is an open process and we encourage you to share this invitation with your networks. All organizations that meet the eligibility criteria described above are encouraged to submit LOIs.

### What is the grant size and overall funding available?

In 2020, WE LEAD's grantmaking totaled \$1M with a specific geographic focus (Texas, the Southwest, and Appalachia). This spring, WE LEAD will grant an additional \$1M towards the growth and sustainability of women's frontline climate justice leadership as we determine our geographic scope based on responses to our LOI. Grant size will depend on available funds and number of responses. After our spring cycle of grantmaking, WE LEAD intends to grant out an additional \$1M as part of our fall 2021 cycle.

### How do I submit a Letter of Inquiry? What is the timeline for hearing back?

Please submit LOIs by completing our online form [here](#). LOI's may be submitted any time from Friday, March 5th until Friday, March 26th by 5:00PM PDT. Please refer to the LOI form for a more detailed timeline. We commit to communicating next steps for each submission no later than the first week of May, 2021.

### If I have additional questions, who should I contact?

If you have any questions about WE LEAD, the LOI, or need support with your submission, please contact us at [welead@tides.org](mailto:welead@tides.org).