



## **Associated Students of Western Washington University**

Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund Committee

Rules of Operation

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **Mission Statement:**

The Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund (SEJF) Grant Program promotes sustainability by providing grants to support innovative student-centered project proposals that seek to protect the environment, uphold social equity, create economic vitality, and maintain human health on Western Washington University's (WWU) campus and community.

#### **SEJF Committee:**

The Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund Committee works in collaboration with the SEJF Program Staff, provides budgetary direction and approval, and determines the outcome of SEJF project proposals. The SEJF Committee upholds the SEJF Mission to support social, environmental, human health, and economic sustainability on our campus and community, as well as to provide student engagement and development opportunities.

The SEJF Committee acts in accordance with the SEJF Committee Charge & Charter and with this Rules of Operation document.

### **PROGRAM OVERSIGHT**

#### **Program Advisement:**

The SEJF Committee shall offer program direction and decision-making feedback and advisement to the SEJF Program Staff, who are employed and managed within the Sustainability Engagement Institute (SEI).

The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs serves as the ultimate financial fund manager for the SEJF Grant Program and is the final authority on allocations from the SEJF. In collaboration with the Sustainability Engagement Institute staff, this position can also help advise the SEJF program on fund management.

#### **Sets and Interprets Fee Language:**

When the SEJF fee needs reaffirmation or reauthorization, or changes are sought to the fee amount or purpose, an approval by student referendum is required. When the SEJF Fee is up for reauthorization, the referendum language and fee amount will be developed and approved for the ballot under the advisement of the SEJF Committee.

Final approval of ballot language will be by the AS Executive Board, through the advisement of the AS VP for Sustainability.

### **Ensures Appropriate Use of Student Funds:**

The SEJF Committee works to ensure the fair and equitable use of student funds, prioritizing grants that encompass more equitable and transformative sustainability initiatives that strive for a just local and global environment, and continuing to resist the historically exclusionary and marginalizing movements of environmentalism while improving the student experience. It also prioritizes grants that furthermore support environmental protection, uphold social equity, support economic vitality, and maintain human health.

### **SEJF BUDGET**

#### **Budget Overview:**

The SEJF Program budget is created by the SEJF Program Staff and subject to the consent of the SEJF Committee during each spring quarter. The SEJF budget consists of the Operational budget and the Project Granting budget. The SEJF Program will provide at least quarterly updates to the Committee. The Committee has the authority to review and redistribute the allocation of reserves based on a majority vote.

#### **Operational Budget:**

- Investments in Renewable Energy:
  - A portion of the collected funds (\$50,000) will be allocated towards investments in renewable energy, such as partnering with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) on its Green Direct Renewable Energy Program, or by other methods to support Western Washington University moving towards its net-zero emissions goals.
  
- Personnel Budget and Other Operational Expenditures:
  - A portion of the collected funds will be allocated towards funding the operations and maintenance of the SEJF grant program. This includes, but is not limited to, the salaries of SEJF program staff, education & training for SEJF program staff, and limited discretionary funding for supplies (i.e. promotional posters, outreach materials, etc.). The personnel budget is listed in the overall SEJF budget that is approved by the SEJF program and the SEJF Committee on a yearly basis.

#### **Project Granting Budget:**

All funds not allocated to the operational budget or committed to existing projects are available for funding new grants. The Program categorizes proposals into three differently sized grant levels:

- Small grants: \$500-\$5,000
- Medium grants: \$5,000-\$35,000
- Large grants: \$35,000+

## **APPROVAL AND FUND GRANTING**

### **Overview:**

The SEI and SEJF staff are to provide outreach, engagement, and support for individuals and teams that seek funding through the Program Coordinator and student staff. The program and the SEI Associate Director vet all potential projects for alignment with the university's Sustainable Action Plan (SAP) and the mission of the SEJF.

### **Grant Levels:**

- **Small Grants**
  - Small grants are reviewed and approved by the SEJF Program Staff. Once the program and the SEI Director approve the proposals, they are considered funded and brought as a consent item to the committee.
- **Medium Grants**
  - After reviewing and approving medium-sized grants, the SEJF Program Staff and the SEI Director bring grants to the SEJF Committee to be presented, and then they are voted on in a subsequent meeting. Approval is based on available funds and alignment with the SEJF mission. Approval happens at the motion of a committee member and a majority vote of the seated membership.
- **Large Grants**
  - Large grants will be brought to the SEJF Committee for decision in a two-step review process:
  - **Abstract:**
    - The committee will review the abstract and provide written feedback, questions, and recommendations to the project team.
    - Approval is based on available funds and alignment with the SEJF mission as detailed in the fee language.
    - Approval happens at the motion of a committee member and a majority vote of the seated membership.
    - Upon approval, funding for the proposal is encumbered.

- Final Application and Presentation:
  - After approval of the abstract, project teams are eligible to submit a final application. Following the final presentation and final application, the committee will vote on approval.
  - Approval is based on alignment with the SEJF mission as detailed in the fee language. Approval happens at the motion of a committee member and a majority vote of the seated membership.

### **Contingency Funding:**

Contingency funding is available for approved projects that face unexpected changes in expenditures due to price fluxes or other unanticipated events. Contingency funding is granted by the program and presented to the committee as a consent item for all grants. Small grants can be given an additional 25% of their total budget, medium and large grants can be given 10% of their total budget. If a project team requests contingency funding that would exceed their project cap, the Committee Co-Chairs will decide whether the request must be brought to the Committee for a vote.

### **Out of Session Process:**

When the committee is not in session, the committee's responsibilities fall to the AS VP for Sustainability (Co-Chair of SEJF Committee), Assistant Director for Student Activities and Media, and the Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute to consider and determine approval of projects for medium to large sized grants that are facing schedule constraints. Grant proposal approval will require the support of all involved parties and will be based on the project's alignment with the values of the SEJF mission and Western's Sustainability Action Plan, in addition to the proposal's viability. Approval of a project via this process will facilitate funding and implementation that will fall under the standard SEJF grant program guidelines and expectations.

### **Project Completion and Follow-up:**

Project teams, working with support from the SEJF Program Staff, will have identified a specific timeline for the duration of their project. All allocated funds must be spent within that timeframe, unless an extension has been approved by the SEJF Program Staff. Any unspent funds at the end of the grant period will be released back into the SEJF grant fund. At the recommendation of the SEJF Program Staff, the committee can vote to pull funds from a project that has not spent its funding in the appropriate timeline.

### **Conflicts of Interest:**

In the event of any grant proposal where an individual committee member is a project owner and/or directly benefits individual committee members (both voting and non-voting), the application will be automatically brought to the committee for approval, regardless of grant size.

Small grants, typically approved by SEJF/SEI Program Staff, must be voted on by the committee if they experience a conflict of interest. The committee member(s) involved will be asked to abstain from voting.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND OPERATIONS**

The SEJF Committee is comprised of students, faculty, and staff from different campus entities, representing a variety of stakeholders in the SEJF Program. The committee makeup is as follows:

Voting members:

- AS Vice President for Sustainability (Co-Chair)
- Environmental Justice Programming Coordinator
- AS Vice President for Student Services
- 3 Students at large, appointed by the AS Executive Board
- 1 AS Senator
- 1 Faculty Representative, appointed by the Faculty Senate
- 1 Representative from Business and Financial Affairs

Non-voting members:

- Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund Grant Program Coordinator (Co-Chair)
- Assistant Director for Student Activities and Media (Advisor)
- Sustainability Engagement Institute Associate Director
- Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund Grant Program Ambassador
- Student Governance Assistant Secretary

*Note: this committee may, at any time, solicit expert or guest feedback.*

### **Co-chair responsibility:**

The responsibilities of the chair position are allocated to the AS VP for Sustainability and the Grant Program Coordinator for the Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Act as liaisons between the AS Executive Board and the SEJF Committee
- Communicate with the Student Governance Assistant between meetings to ensure that agendas are constructed, regular meetings are scheduled, and required meeting information is uploaded in a timely manner
- Act as the primary point of contact between the SEJF Program and the SEJF Committee
- Ensure necessary work, such as updating governance documents, review of proposals, and committee related planning, happens between committee meetings
- Share and communicate related updates and discussions about governing documents, referendums, and other similar topics

Co-chairs will facilitate the committee meetings based on an understanding of the following:

- AS Committee structures
- Roberts Rules
- Meeting facilitation and conflict management strategies
- Legality surrounding AS Committee decisions and actions
- An understanding of the “Voluntary fees of students” Revised Code of Washington ([RCW 28B.15.610](#))

### **Member responsibility:**

Committee members are expected to attend committee meetings and review relevant documents before meetings. All voting members are expected to vote based on the proposal’s alignment with the SEJF mission.

When voting for large grant proposals, a two-step process shall be considered in the review and voting process. Project teams, when submitting a large grant abstract, focus primarily on the value proposition. Abstracts should answer questions such as “will this project be valuable for the campus community?” Therefore, in reviewing a large grant abstract, committee members should focus primarily on value.

Project teams, when submitting a final application for a large grant, focus on viability. Final applications should answer questions like “can this project be feasibly implemented?” Therefore, in reviewing a final large grant application, committee members should focus primarily on viability. The value alignment has already been approved during the abstract phase and should remain present and unchanged from the approved abstract. This is a core element that carries over from the abstract and must be consistent across both submissions.

### **RECORDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The SEJF Program and the SEJF Committee shall be accountable to the student body, the state of Washington, Western Washington University, and the law, policy, and ethics standards required of all programs at this university. This will be supported by making all meeting agendas, minutes, and documents available to the public.

The SEJF Program Staff also creates an annual report on the operations of the SEJF program and budget, which will be shared with the AS Executive Board on a regular basis.

### **AMENDMENTS**

This Rules of Operation document may be amended by a majority vote of the AS Executive Board, with input and insight from the SEJF Committee and any Sustainability Engagement Institute staff positions.