
FAST GRANTS

The Fast Grants program is intended for active citizens who take a stand on issues such as mismanagement in local government, wasteful use of public resources, land use plan manipulations for personal gain, new construction projects of dubious public merit and other issues which threaten the public interest and/or citizens' rights.

Fast Grants program donors include the Bader Philanthropies, the Anti Corruption Endowment Fund, Nadace blízkosobě Foundation and individual donors.

Grants

We award Fast Grants of up to CZK 40,000 (\$1,918). To ensure a quick turnaround and year-round funding accessibility, we have monthly application deadlines and disburse funding to projects within four weeks from the given deadline. Fast Grants are unique in the Czech environment in terms of applicant eligibility: aside from registered NGOs, informal groups of at least three people can apply. This allows people to respond to an urgent situation without having to wait to register as a NGO.

Community leader/activist club



The Community leader/activist club was borne out of grantees' requests for opportunities to connect and learn with their peers. It brings together people who share the goal of protecting public interests on the local level. We hold three to four club meetings per year and focus on a different issue at each meeting. Issues addressed in the club's first three years include e.g. building permitting processes, investigative information gathering, information campaigns, etc.

'Rescue Rangers'



We added 'Rescue Rangers' in response to grantee requests for help with planning outreach. When a local citizen initiative lacks the expertise to manage public communication, engage key stakeholders and plan outreach, it can apply for help from our 'Rescue Rangers' – i.e. our consultant team. Over the course of a two-day consultancy visit, the 'Rangers' lead the initiative through the process. The work may result in e.g. community debates, a working group, a brochure about a local referendum, etc.

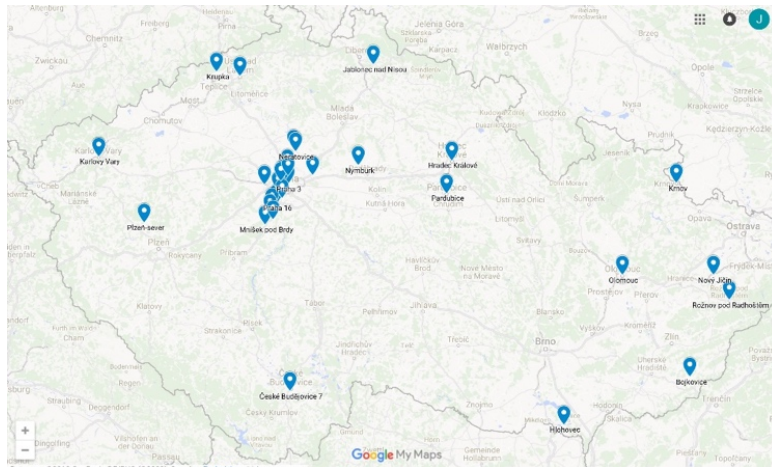
What difference does the program make?

In 2017 the Fast Grants program:

- supported 40 community groups addressing pressing issues with grants
- distributed a total of CZK 850,000 (\$40,876, EUR 33,430) through 12 grant calls
- supported two projects with in-depth consultations through Rescue Rangers
- held 3 club meetings where community leaders exchanged their experiences
- provided staff consultations and advice to another 80 leaders

Projects supported in 2017

We supported 40 Fast Grants projects in 2017 in various parts of the Czech Republic:



Through the 40 Fast Grants projects in 2017, community groups addressed a diverse range of pressing community issues. Here is a closer look at three of them.

České Budějovice

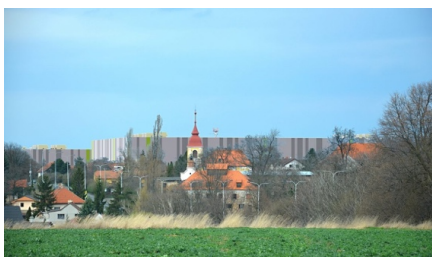
A civic association in the city of České Budějovice drew attention to a proposed change to the city's land use plan which would allow transit transportation in areas that are recreational now and which also encompass a hospital with a maternity ward.



The association's efforts started with a petition against the proposed land use plan amendment. The members of the association then held several community meetings and events and assiduously convinced politicians that the proposal was unsound. Based partially on their efforts, the city council rejected the proposal. It is a success for the association and looking forward the group remains wary lest the proposal make a comeback.

Zdiby

In the town of Zdiby near Prague, a company's proposal to build a huge logistics center led to a wave of objections. Local civic associations, fearing that the project would impact quality of life in the town, created a petition that was signed by a majority of local residents.



The proposal then went through an environmental impact assessment (EIA) process. A Fast Grant gave the association the resources they needed to hire an expert to help draft EIA comments to the proposal. Based on these comments, the regional authority sent the proposal back to the company for reworking and the project has been suspended for the time being.

Černošice

When residents of Černošice who live near the 5. května square learned that someone had bought up properties on the square with the intention of building homes there, they began meeting and discussing the proposal.



With the help of a Fast Grant, they held community meetings, wrote articles in the local paper and engaged an architect who developed an alternative site design envisioning the square as a public park (shown on the left). Thanks to their efforts, the town leadership is preparing to negotiate with the owner to purchase the properties.

Program background

Twenty-nine years after the Velvet Revolution, community engagement in the Czech Republic is still fraught with fragility. Lacking the solid 200-year foundation of public engagement enjoyed by western countries, Czechs do not take their right and responsibility to engage in the public sphere as a given. The post-revolution elation in 1991-92 about the potential for citizen-initiated change was quickly drowned out by economic and political realities and disappointments in the 1990s and 2000s. Today, more often than not, Czechs are disheartened by what they see in both national and local public affairs – and they disengage.

This citizen passivity is compounded by the fact that local governments often make it difficult for citizens and non-profit organizations to engage in public processes. In some cases, officials hamper public access to information and many politicians continue to label civil society organizations as self-appointed enemies of elected representatives. Corruption is still present at every level of society.

However, this bleak landscape of engagement paralysis is dotted by bright oases where individuals and groups are standing up to defend public interests in their communities. Many of these viable grassroots community groups work on short-term projects in a rapidly changing political environment that necessitate immediate action and funding.

In this environment, the Fast Grants program is a valued source of support. Fast Grants have proven that they encourage and empower local people to make their voices heard in local politics and community issues, participate in decision making processes and advocate for community interests and more equitable local government. Often, single-issue organizations grow into broader community development initiatives and encourage local government to take an inclusive approach.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!