Agents of Change Manual

Revised January 2026

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1. <u>Program description</u>

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Agents of Change grants is to encourage Unbound small groups to find ways to positively impact their local communities, embodying the Unbound program characteristic Worldview , which says "Sponsored families are agents of positive change in their local communities."

Unbound Agents of Change grants are intended to be used by Unbound small groups to address the problems that exist in the local community. These funds are NOT intended for livelihood initiatives or other programs to benefit individuals or the members of the group. Rather, the grants create opportunities for small group members to work together to identify and solve the most urgent problems that exist in their communities. These grants are a tangible example of Unbound as a worldwide movement of love.

1.2 Recipients

Established small groups (under 35 members) that have been recognized by an Unbound project are eligible to apply for grant funding. Small groups should typically have at least six months of experience of regular meetings before applying for funding. Applying for Agents of Change funding is optional and participation in work related to Agents of Change initiatives by group members and community members is voluntary. Each group may receive a maximum of one grant per calendar year in order to allow as many groups as possible to receive funding. Unbound project teams are not eligible to apply for Agents of Change grants.

1.3 Financing

1.3.1 Amount per project

Agents of Change funds allocated to projects will be determined on an annual basis and communicated to each project by the regional team. The annual amount will be allocated on a monthly basis to each project. Proposals of up to $2,500 USD are generally funded within two months of being received. Meanwhile, Agents of Change Plus (AC Plus) proposals, which range from $2,500 to $5,000 USD, may require a longer processing time. Funding for these proposals is estimated to take approximately three to four months after submission. Projects will stay within the allocated budget amount for each month. Portal will only allow proposals that add up to the total amount allocated per project to be submitted to the Unbound headquarters . Monthly allocated amounts will not be allowed to be carried over to future months, unless the project notifies the regional team regarding disaster or other contextual challenges and the project receives approval for such a change.

Projects should transfer funds to groups and begin implementation of Agents of Change initiatives only **after** receiving funding from Unbound headquarters as indicated on the monthly Financial Detail. Please do not utilize other funds (such as reserves) to implement Agents of Change initiatives. Please take this into consideration when planning on the timeline to submit proposals.

1.3.2 Amount per group

Beginning in 2026, there will be two participation modalities within Unbound's program: Agents of Change (AC) and Agents of Change Plus (AC Plus).

Agents of Change (AC)

In this modality, each group may request up to **$500 USD**.
Two or more groups may choose to join efforts to submit a single joint proposal. In such cases, the total amount requested will increase depending on the number of participating groups, up to a maximum of **$2,500 USD**, equivalent to five groups working together.

Agents of Change Plus (AC Plus)

This modality is designed for proposals requesting between **$2,500 and $5,000 USD**.
To participate, **at least two groups** must be involved, and **one of them must have prior experience** with Agents of Change initiatives. This requirement allows the team to build on previous learning and strengthen each stage of the process: identifying the community need, preparing the proposal, implementing the initiative, and—when required—submitting the final report.

AC Plus initiatives must be **pre-approved in coordination with the regional team** as part of the annual budget planning. This includes defining the number of proposals allowed, the amount assigned to each, and the month (or months) in which they will be submitted. Only the proposals approved through this agreement may be submitted.

AC Plus is available for **all categories** currently permitted within the Agents of Change program, and proposals are submitted through Portal following the same fields and requirements.

In some cases, groups may choose to complement their Agents of Change grant with local funding from partners or community members to increase the budget for the initiative or to promote local buy-in. In these cases, groups must have a realistic plan for fundraising and document these sources (for review by the selection committee and entered in Portal) to ensure the initiative is not delayed or abandoned if the additional resources cannot be obtained.

1.4 Administrative Funds

Up to 10% of the total grant amount allocated to the Project may be used for administrative costs to support and submit reporting (example: Project B receives 10,000 USD and may use up to 1,000 USD for admin). All other funds should be transferred to the group according to the Financial Detail and executed by the group according to the proposed implementation.

1.4.1 Program Reserve

If a funded Agents of Change initiative cannot be implemented or no longer requires the grant awarded by Unbound, the project must immediately notify the person responsible for the Community Building Pillar by email, with a copy to the Programs Director at Unbound headquarters, in order to receive guidance on how to proceed.

Each case will be reviewed individually. In most situations, the project will be asked to submit a replacement proposal and record the corresponding comments in the Portal's comments field, both on the original proposal and the replacement proposal, as applicable, to ensure proper traceability of the change process.

In some cases, it may be determined that the funds should remain in reserve. If advised to retain the fund, the project may accumulate a program reserve designated for Agents of Change. This should be accounted for and tracked on the Cash Reserve Report. These funds may be utilized as needed to supplement funds of other Agents of Change initiatives that due to inflation, cost of materials/labor changes, or failed local fundraising, are facing financial barriers to completing an already approved initiative. These funds are not to be used for other programs. Finally, Agents of Change Program reserve shall not be used to pre-fund initiatives submitted to Unbound headquarters , or to fund additional initiatives without authorization of the selection committee and Program director.

1.5 Selection

The Agents of Change grants are intended to be competitive grants. Grant funds should be provided to the groups with the best proposals and implementation plans. Proposals for initiatives such as bridges, infrastructure, buildings, water etc. should be consulted with a technical expert for quality assurance and safety. Proposing groups must seek approvals and permits from local authorities in advance to ensure the viability of an initiative. A selection committee of elected parent (group member) representatives should review the proposals and select the grantee groups. Project teams may assist and facilitate the committee, but final decisions should be left to the selection committee. Groups that do not receive Agents of Change funding are encouraged to consider other methods of securing funding for their proposals. Each group should receive funding only once per calendar year to allow different groups the opportunity to participate in Agents of Change.

Within the proposal selection process, we also encourage the selection committees and project teams to assess the coherence and realism of the budgets submitted, ensuring that they are truly aligned with what the group or groups intend to carry out. This will help reduce the risk that, once the initiative is funded, it cannot be implemented because the actual cost is significantly higher than originally anticipated.

2.   <u>Proposals</u>

Agents of Change Initiatives must be entered in Portal after receiving approval from the selection committee. Please refer to Portal User Guide on instructions to access the screens to enter initiatives and ensure they progress through the workflow to receive funding.

Information to include in AC Initiatives

Project – will be pre-populated

Zone, Subproject – will be available on dropdown

Community group:

Enter the name of the community group requesting funds. If more than one group has combined to request funds, please enter the names of all groups involved.

Title:

Identify a title that briefly and clearly describes what the proposal is about. When reading it, the reader should immediately understand what the group or groups plan to carry out.

Overly elaborate titles or those using "inspirational" wording can be confusing when the initiative is uploaded to the web. Keep in mind that we use automated processes for proposal processing, so clarity and precision in the title are essential.

2.1 Categories

Below are the categories that will be used to indicate the type of initiative:

- <u>Roads & Bridges</u> - Includes sidewalks
- <u>Education</u> - Anything to do with schools
- <u>Water</u> - Clean water access (plumbing, wells, water tanks)
- <u>Hygiene</u> - Toilets/latrines (outside of schools and churches), handwashing stations, sewage
- <u>Health</u> - Medical supplies, construction or repairs to a clinic/hospital, including installation of electricity or solar lighting
- <u>Church</u> - Any improvements/construction or supplies for a place of worship
- <u>Community progress</u> - It includes initiatives that strengthen community spaces and capacities, such as improving or constructing community buildings and structures, installing bus stops or other public infrastructure, providing shared-use materials, creating community gardens or green spaces, and offering trainings. It is a broad category that may also encompass other activities related to community well-being and development that do not fit into more specific categories.
- <u>Electricity</u> - Installation or repair of electricity or solar lighting in any community and to any building other than schools, churches or healthcare facilities

2.2 Grant amount requested:

Please select the requested funding amount from the dropdown list. Keep in mind that this value is expressed in U.S. dollars (USD) and consider the current exchange rate. Grant amounts requested should be based on real estimates and careful planning. However, please encourage groups to consider budgeting for rising costs of supplies or labor.

2.3 Estimated number of families affected

Please enter an estimate of the number of families that the proposal will impact. Note that the system only accepts numbers without commas or periods.

2.4 Estimated time needed to complete:

This should be entered in days. For example, 90 days, 180 days and so forth. The maximum time allowed for Agents of Change Initiatives to be completed is 300. Be sure your estimate includes all necessary activities to complete the initiative. For example:

- Time needed for the project to distribute funds to groups
- Time needed for groups to meet and mobilize plans
- Time needed to obtain permits
- Time needed to raise additional funds
- Other activities necessary to complete the initiative

2.5 What needs or challenges does the community face that this initiative will solve?

In this field, answer the question "What needs to change?" The purpose of this question is to describe the problem the Agents of Change initiative is intended to address. Briefly describe the problem in a way that accurately communicates the importance or urgency of the problem to someone who isn't familiar with the community. The better the problem is explained, the more likely a donor will choose to fund it.

2.6 Summary

This is a description of the initiative, and should answer the question "What is the group going to do?" Describe the solution the group proposes to solve the problem. Provide as much detail as possible to explain the group's plan of action.

2.7 Funding obtained from other sources:

Use this field to report any additional funding the group plans to raise from other sources – whether it is through local fundraising efforts, local government grants, or otherwise. Include the amount and describe each of the sources of income (local government, community fundraising etc.) Remember to submit this information in **USD, at the prevailing exchange rate.** Please enter the figure with numbers only – no letters, commas, or periods (full stops).

This field is not required for all proposals; it should only be completed when the group or groups plan to obtain supplemental funding. Quality and Clarity in Proposal Content

For an Agents of Change proposal to be effective and to be transformed into clear information for donors, it is essential that the information entered in each field of the Portal be precise, concise, and well-structured.

The content provided by each project team serves as the foundation used by automated processes and by the Unbound headquarters team to create the texts and materials that will later be shared with donors and published on the web. Therefore, the quality of the writing has a direct impact on how the initiative is presented and communicated externally.

A description that is too short may prevent the Unbound headquarters team from fully understanding the need, context, or solution proposed by the group. Conversely, an overly lengthy description may dilute the main idea and make it harder to identify the central purpose of the initiative.

We encourage teams to find an appropriate balance: provide enough information to convey the idea clearly and accurately, without adding unnecessary details. Good writing enables the headquarters team to fully understand the proposal and later transform it into content that is clear, engaging, and aligned with institutional policies.

3. Photo Requirements

Photos of Agents of Change initiatives and participants are critical for donors to understand the impact that Agents of Change groups are making in their communities.

At least one before photo is required, but up to 3 are allowed.

- A photograph of the group submitting the proposal is required. If more than one group joins to participate in the initiative, photos of all groups must be included. They may appear together in a single photograph, distinguishing each group in a creative way, for example by using different clothing colors or they may submit separate photographs for each group.
- The before photos of the initiative and group help a donor select which initiative to fund, while the after photos demonstrate the difference the donor helped make possible with his or her contribution and the Agents of Change group made possible with their work.
- Each Agents of Change record submitted through the Portal must include **at least one (1) and up to three (3) photographs** representing the initiative to be funded.

Regarding the results report, **not all proposals need to submit one**. This report should only be prepared when the Portal requests it. Teams can verify whether it is required by checking the top section of each proposal, in the **"Results Required"** field.

- If this field indicates **"Yes,"** the results report must be prepared and submitted.
- If it indicates **"No,"** it is not necessary.

When a results report is required, it must include **at least one (1) and up to three (3) photographs** that show the achievements and implementation of the initiative.

3.1 Consent

It is important to ensure that participants in Agents of Change initiatives have given consent for Unbound to share their images on Unbound's website and with donors who choose to fund their Agents of Change initiatives.

If Agents of Change participants have given consent at the time they joined Unbound's sponsorship program, no additional consent is required. We will be able to include their photographs and information about their Agents of Change initiative(s) on Unbound's website and with the donor who funded their initiative.

However, please do not submit any Agents of Change photographs that include any individuals who have not given consent through Unbound's sponsorship program or who are not participants in Unbound's sponsorship program.

When taking photographs for Agents of Change initiatives, ensure there is no one who has not already granted Unbound consent to use their image visible and identifiable anywhere in the photograph, including in the background.

In some Agents of Change initiatives, educational institutions or other community entities, such as schools, community centers, or religious temples, may be involved. In these cases, project teams must ensure that these institutions grant their authorization before sharing any photographs that include their facilities or infrastructure, even when no individuals appear in the images. For example, if the initiative involves repairing the roof of a school or making improvements to a temple, the team must confirm that the institution agrees to the submission of photographs in which their buildings are visible. The images shared will not include the names of institutions, addresses, or any personal information.

3.2 Photo Guidelines

Please do not include any signs, text, or any other elements in the background or in any part of the photographs that could indicate the exact location where they were taken, nor the names of institutions or entities.

None of the photos—whether "before" or "after"—should contain this type of information. It is important to carefully examine the surroundings before taking each picture to ensure compliance with Unbound's protection policies.

Please note that including information that reveals the location or identifies institutions may result in the rejection of a proposal or of the results report.

If you have any questions, it is best to consult with the leader of the Community Building pillar or with the Programs Director at your Unbound office to ensure that the photograph complies with the current protection policies.

Photos should not have borders. Digitally modified photos will not be accepted. If it is necessary to crop a photo, be sure to maintain the original dimensions or the photo may appear altered.

All photos must be taken in a landscape (horizontal) orientation, not portrait (vertical) orientation.

3.2.1 "Before" photo guidelines

Photos taken and submitted to Unbound headquarters before an Agents of Change initiative is funded help donors to understand the challenge that the group is trying to solve. These photos should clearly illustrate the need where possible. For example, in proposals to repair a road, bridge or building, photos of the road, bridge or building may show cracks or holes to be repaired.

In this example, the current poor state of the bridge is clearly shown.

For proposals to purchase items for a community or build something that doesn't yet exist, get creative to show the effects of the problem in the community. For example, a group proposing to install solar lighting may include a photograph of a dark alley to demonstrate the need for lights, or a group proposing to install a water filter may submit a close-up photo of someone's hand holding a glass of murky water.

In some cases, a photo showing the location of the proposed initiative may be the best way to indicate the current state of the community, such as in this "before" example showing where a pit latrine will be constructed.

3.2.1.1 Group photo guidelines

All Agents of Change records must include a photo of the group of participants associated with that initiative. When possible, try to include all participants in the photo, but if all participants are not available when the photo is taken, simply include as many group participants as possible. Backgrounds that show the area where the Agents of Change initiative will take place are preferred.

Group photographs may include the Agents of Change participants' entire body OR can be from the waist-up (head, shoulders and torso): whichever is more natural and shows the individuals' personality.

Encourage Agents of Change participants to smile whenever possible. In the United States, it is common to smile in photos. Agents of Change participants should be modestly dressed without offensive words, pictures, signs or gestures in the photo.

Participants' faces should be clearly visible. When taking photos, please be sure their faces are not covered by shadows. Try to arrange the group so the sun is not directly behind the group because this will cause shadows.

The individuals in the photos should have their eyes open and should not wear sunglasses (except for individuals who are blind).

Participants should not hold certificates/diplomas or wear clothing/nametags that include identifying information such as an individual's full name, the name of their hometown or the name of a school or institution.

Remember that if two or more groups join together to submit the proposal, you must include all participating groups in the photographs. This can be done in a single photo or in several.

If you choose to use just one image, try to distinguish the groups in a creative way, for example, by using different clothing colors, so each group can be clearly identified.

Below are examples of good group photos:

3.2.2 "After" photo guidelines

Photos taken and submitted to Unbound headquarters after an Agents of Change initiative is completed help donors to understand the solution the group provided to the community and the impact it will have. Seeing a dramatic difference between the "before" and "after" photos can encourage donors to give again.

When taking photos after an initiative is completed, think about the previous photos that were submitted in the proposal. If a "before" photo of a dilapidated bridge was submitted, try to take a photo from the same spot showing the bridge repaired. Here is an example of an "after" photo of the same bridge from above:

Where possible, show examples of the completed initiative in use. For example, you may photograph Agents of Change participants walking on a repaired road or pumping water out of a newly constructed well, such as in these examples:

Alternatively, showing the completed initiative working, such as water flowing from a well or electric lights on, such as in this example:

Agents of Change participants may be included in the "after" photos, either individually or as a group, but it is not required. Here are examples of Agents of Change participants included in the "after" photos:

3.3 Photo Submission

All Agents of Change initiative photos must be submitted according to the following parameters so the photos can be uploaded successfully to Portal. Only photos submitted through Portal will be accepted.

Required Parameters

File Format:	.jpg
Image size/dimensions:	1200 X 800 (width of 1200 pixels; height of 800 pixels)
File size:	The maximum photo file is 12 MB
Orientation:	Photos must be taken using a landscape (horizontal) orientation, not portrait (vertical)
File name:	For photos uploaded directly to Portal, the file name must not include last names of participants, specific location of the initiative or special characters
Number of photos	At least one (1) and up to three (3) photos must be submitted before the initiative is funded, and at least one (1) and up to three (3) photos must be submitted after each initiative is completed.

Remember that you also have the option to resize the photos so they meet the required dimensions. You can do this directly through the portal by using the "Resize Images" tool.

PLEASE NOTE:

If using a camera, please pre-set the image size/dimension of the camera to 1200 x 800 pixels before taking photos (some cameras may refer to the image size as dimensions or resolution). Presetting the camera's image size before taking photos prevents the need to resize and/or crop photos manually using computer software Each camera is different, so please refer to the camera's user manual or contact your Unbound headquarters regional team if you have questions.

Test the settings by taking 10-20 test photos per camera. After downloading these test photos to your computer, review the image size/dimensions and file size of these test photos in Windows Explorer. Adjust the settings on the digital camera(s) to ensure they meet the required parameters above.

Make sure the "Date and/or time stamp" feature is turned OFF before taking photos.

3.4 Attachments

This is not a required field. However, the group can choose to use this field to upload any relevant attachments. An example of an attachment could be a proposal that was received in a local language that can be attached to the initiative if the project chooses to do so.

3.5 Comments

The **Comments** section should be used to record any relevant information both at the time of submitting the proposal and throughout its implementation. This space allows you to document updates, unexpected situations, or important details that contribute to proper proposal traceability.

It is important to note that these comments are **for internal use within the Portal**. They are not visible to donors; however, they serve as a helpful reference for Unbound staff at the local office who communicate directly with donors, allowing them to better understand the context of each proposal.

Examples of comments that should be recorded include:

- **Delays in implementation**, especially when they may affect the completion date and, consequently, the expected timeline for submitting results.
- **Situations that make a proposal impossible to execute**, for any reason. In these cases, the comment must be added in the Portal, and the corresponding notification must also be sent via email.
- When a proposal replaces another that could not be carried out, briefly explaining the reason for the replacement.
- **Notes added by the Unbound office**, such as the reasons for rejecting a proposal or any other significant update that needs to be documented.

Using this field properly is essential for maintaining continuity and transparency in the process, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders can access updated and meaningful information about the proposal.

3.6 Submit

Submit the initiative created by the subproject to the project. Project staff can then approve the initiative and then submit to Unbound headquarters. Photos can and should be added at the subproject level. A project level user could also add photos if necessary. Initiatives cannot be reviewed or approved by Unbound headquarters until they have been submitted by the project by clicking the submit button.

3.7 Possible reasons for rejection of AC Initiatives

Proposals may be rejected when they do not comply with the guidelines established in this manual or with Unbound's policies. Below are the most common reasons for rejection:

- The proposal is submitted under a category that does not correspond to the type of initiative.
- The images do not appear to match the proposal or do not meet the specifications described in this manual, whether due to low quality, failure to clearly show the initial situation, or inclusion of information that violates Unbound's protection policies (such as exact locations, names of institutions, personal data, etc.).
  - If more than one group submits a proposal and the photos and names of all participating groups are not included.
- The proposal description does not provide enough information to understand the problem being addressed, the actions that will be carried out, or the expected impact on the community.
- Proposals that seek to benefit only one person or a single family, rather than a community or group, are not eligible for Agents of Change.
- Description doesn't match proposal

4. <u>Outcome Reporting</u>

Reporting on outcomes will be done on the Outcome Reporting page on Portal.

4.1 Timeline

Outcome reporting will **only** be requested on initiatives that were funded directly by individual or group donors. Portal will indicate which initiatives will require outcome reporting. When an initiative is marked as funded, an estimated end date for reporting is calculated based on the estimated time needed to complete it provided in the Basic Info section.

For example, if an initiative is funded on 1 April and the estimated time needed to complete in days is 60, the estimated end date is 1 June, or 60 days after 1 April. On the estimated end date, if the initiative is in Funded or Initiative in Progress status and the initiative was funded by an individual grantor (not from the general Agents of Change Fund in Unbound headquarters , which is funded from smaller AC donations), it will automatically change to Final Outcomes Requested to indicate that the final outcomes are due. Outcomes Report Estimated Due Date should be used as a guide that allows 60 days after estimated completion of the initiative. Prompt reporting will help to make sure that group accomplishments are captured and donors receive timely feedback. Final outcomes are not required for initiatives funded from the general AC fund, but they can be managed locally if the project would like to complete them for their own records or project level reporting.

4.2 Information to include

Estimated Start Date: this is automatically set by the system as the date on which the initiative is funded.

Estimated End Date: this is calculated by the system by adding the estimated time to complete in days to the estimated start date. If an initiative is funded on 1 April and is estimated to take 60 days to complete, the Estimated End Date is 1 June.

Estimated time Frame: this is the number of days entered in the Basic Info section in the Estimated time needed to complete in days field.

Actual Start Date: the date on which work actually began on the initiative, which could be different from the estimated start date.

Actual End Date: the date on which the initiative was completed, which could be different from the estimated end date.

Actual Time Frame: the difference in days between the Actual Start Date and Actual End Date. This is calculated by the system.

Approximately how many families benefited when the initiative was completed?: Please enter the number of families that benefited from the initiative.

If the number of families is different than the original proposal, please explain why: If the number of families benefited is different than the estimated number of families impacted in the Basic Info section, please explain the difference. If the number is the same, there is no need to complete this field. If there was a difference between the number of families expected to benefit and who actually benefited, any explanation provided will help to tell the story of the initiative to the donor and future donors.

Briefly describe the needs or challenges that the initiative solved. The information in this response should be consistent with the response to the similar question in the proposal but may include both the original goal and adjustments to the goal. Please explain any differences between the information in this response and the proposal to resolve potential confusions. Starting in 2026, when completing this section, include a brief message of appreciation addressed to the donor. This message is important because it acknowledges their support, strengthens the relationship with the donor, and helps convey the human and community impact made possible through their contribution.

What challenges did you encounter while working on the initiative? How did you solve these challenges? Please provide as much information as possible. These two questions are a perfect opportunity to tell the story of the abilities, resiliency, and persistence of the group to overcome challenges to reach their goal.

What lessons were learned from implementing this initiative? Please describe whether you would do anything differently if you implemented this initiative again in the future.

This section also provides you the opportunity to tell the story about the group's culture of learning. Some information you might choose to include in this section are:

What did the group learn about the problem they were trying to solve?

What did they learn about working together?

What did they learn about the community?

What did they learn about themselves as individuals?

Importance of Clarity and Consistency in the Results Report Section

Each section of the results report must be clear, concise, and accurately describe the impact that the initiative had on the community. The quality of this information is essential, as the final reports for donors are generated using the text provided by the groups and through automated processes. For this reason, reports with poor, ambiguous, or insufficient content do not allow the Unbound office team to create meaningful and representative messages about the work carried out.

On the other hand, excessively long reports with details that are not always relevant can make it difficult to prepare content that is appropriate for donors. They may also require significant time from both the project teams who draft them and the Program Record Services staff who must review, adjust, and edit the information. Providing clear, high-quality reports makes the process more efficient. This allows the team to review a greater number of reports in the same amount of time, which in turn speeds up the delivery of reports to donors.

A lack of consistency across reports can also create an uneven donor experience. Some donors, especially those who have funded more than one initiative, may receive a very long and detailed report, while others receive one that is too brief. Maintaining a balanced and consistent length in the responses helps meet donor expectations and ensures a positive and coherent experience.

In summary, clear, concise, and well-balanced reports not only facilitate internal processes but also help strengthen the donor experience and accurately reflect the impact of Agents of Change.

Outcome Photos: it is required to upload at least 1 photo of the completed initiative, and it is possible to upload up to 3. The photo(s) must follow the guidelines outlined in the Photo Requirements section above and in the Portal User Guide.