

Southern Poverty Law Center Screener FAQ

The following talking points are to address any questions we receive about the decision to use the Southern Poverty Law Center's Hate Map as a screener for our grantmaking.

What's happening?

In November 2019, the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation deployed a new screening tool that will flag any grant recommendations from our fundholders that are directed to groups that are deemed hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. The Foundation will not grant to hate groups going forward.

Why are you doing this?

At the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, we believe in a just, vibrant and equitable Minnesota where all can thrive. Donor advised funds are a tool for generating good in communities. In rare situations they can and have been used to fund hate groups. Without a process in place the Foundation could inadvertently grant to a hate group. We are committed to advocating for equity as part of our core strategies, and directing funds to any hate group is in direct conflict with our core values.

How are you identifying hate groups?

We are using the Southern Poverty Law Center's extensive and well-executed Hate Map, which tracks more than 1,600 extremist groups across the country. We are using this list to assure that we don't grant to organizations that are in direct conflict with our core values.

Do other Foundations do this?

Yes, other foundations use lists such as this one to avoid association with nonprofits whose views promote hate. Two examples of foundations include East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) and Amalgamated Foundation who have both signed on the Hate is Not Charitable Campaign.

What is the Southern Poverty Law Center?

Based in Montgomery, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a collective of civil rights lawyers and professionals dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, while seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society. Through litigation, education and other forms of advocacy, SPLC strives to dismantle violence, discrimination, racism, sexism, abuse and exploitation of minority communities.

Why are you using the Southern Poverty Law Center? What about other lists?

The SPLC currently tracks over 1,600 extremist groups operating across the country. Of those groups listed, 1,020 are currently operating in the United States. In addition, SPLC publishes

investigative reports, houses an extensive catalog of extremist files on groups of all forms including white nationalists, anti-gay zealots, black separatists, Racist skinheads, neo-Confederates and more. While there are other lists out there including Mapping Militants by the Center for Internal Security and Cooperation (CISAC), the RAND Database and SMART, SPLC has the strongest US extremist group list.

Isn't the Southern Poverty Law Center a partisan group?

While the SPLC does deal with issues and cases that can be viewed as biased or political, our work with them will only be in connection with their Hate Map list. As a nonpartisan organization, we do not align ourselves with any political views and or biases that exclude any community and/or group.

How does the SPLC define hate?

Taken directly from SPLC's website (<https://www.splcenter.org/20171004/frequently-asked-questions-about-hate-groups#hate%20group>):

"The Southern Poverty Law Center defines a hate group as an organization that – based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities – has beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics. We do not list individuals as hate groups, only organizations.

The organizations on our hate group list vilify others because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity – prejudices that strike at the heart of our democratic values and fracture society along its most fragile fault lines.

The FBI uses similar criteria in its definition of a hate crime:

[A] criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.

We define a "group" as an entity that has a process through which followers identify themselves as being part of the group. This may involve donating, paying membership dues or participating in activities such as meetings and rallies. Individual chapters of a larger organization are each counted separately, because the number indicates reach and organizing activity."