About Chicago Foundation for Women

Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) is a public foundation working to advance gender equity, which we believe to be inherently interconnected with racial, economic, and health equity. CFW envisions a world in which all women and girls, transgender, and gender non-binary people have the opportunity to thrive in safe, just and healthy communities. We celebrate the spectrum of identities and experiences of women and girls, uplift their leadership and center the voices of community to achieve true equity.

CFW looks at the broad spectrum of needs of all women. We support the areas of freedom from violence, economic security, and access to health, which we see as integrally related and are paths forward toward an equitable society.

Grantmaking Approach

Impact of Pandemic

Closing the Women’s Wealth Gap (CWWG) published “On the Margins” in April 2020. The report highlights inequities faced by women of color and immigrants. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, “Women of color—Black, Latinx, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Asian American and Pacific Islander women, non-European immigrant women, and non-white lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) women—with low-incomes will suffer severely as a result of this crisis. Women of color are currently working on the frontlines of the coronavirus crisis as child care workers, home health and personal care aides, grocery store clerks, and registered nurses, low-paid positions that put them at risk of exposure. They are also overrepresented in occupations in industries such as restaurants, retail stores, and hotels that are being forced to eliminate workers.”

The impact of the pandemic has not only seen large numbers of women leaving the workforce because of job loss but also as a result of increases in caregiving responsibilities that disproportionately fall to women. New York Times reported, “Women in all types of jobs are feeling this squeeze. According to a study by the Census Bureau, women were three times more likely than men to have left their jobs because of child-care issues during the pandemic (As Schools Begins, Mothers Working in Retail Feel Extra Burden, September 2020).”

Envisioning Recovery

The Caring Across Generations report, “Building Our Care Infrastructure” says, “A robust and sustainable economic recovery must center Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and disabled women’s experiences to ensure it effectively serves all families. Investing in the care infrastructure also requires expanding and building upon existing systems while also exploring new ways to ensure care serves at any stage of life.”

“The Build(ing) the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender-Equitable Recovery” report from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research talks about a gender equitable recovery, “that is not only about meeting the immediate economic needs of women and families, but lays out a
long-term strategy for creating stronger systems and institutions that reflect the experiences and contributions of women in the workforce, in society, and in their families”.

CFW centers our interventions, advocacy, and grantmaking on the needs of these individuals and families. Economic security, access to quality and comprehensive healthcare, and freedom from gender-based violence are CFW’s three key priority areas, which we view to be inherently interconnected.

For over 30 years, CFW has learned about the systemic issues blocking women’s ability to thrive. It takes comprehensive support to give women the skills they need and remove any roadblocks that may stand in her way. It takes education, job training, and entrepreneurship. It also takes legal assistance, credit clean up, domestic violence services, and childcare as well as centering women's leadership, giving space for healing, and building their social capital.

CFW understands that all of these issues are interconnected; we thus frame our work to also encompass the broader systemic issues of gender, race, and economic inequities.

2021 Spring Primary Cycle Process

- CFW will be accepting applications for:
  - General grants: program or operating support in any of CFW three issue areas
  - Grants to specifically address the epidemic of violence against women: women, girls, transgender and gender non-binary people of color; many have experienced harm, gone missing or been murdered across the United States and in the Chicago region
- Applications will be due Wednesday February 17
- Grants will range between $10K-$30K
- Organizations must be a 501c3 or have a fiscal agent with a 501c3
- Organization must meet CFW’s diversity metrics/goals for board and staff leadership
- Applicant orientations are scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 11am and Wednesday January 20, 3pm. To RSVP to attend an orientation session, click here.
- You can find the application on CFW’s grant platform here.

Priority Populations

Women, girls, transgender, and gender non-binary people of color, frontline workers, single-parent headed households, immigrants, and domestic workers.

Priority areas include Chicago South and West Side communities that are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, job loss, poverty, and community violence.

COVID-19: Understanding Where Chicago’s Most At-Risk Workers Live, University of Chicago, Urban Labs Poverty Labs

Priority Areas/Strategies

Because CFW’s three issue areas are interconnected and we believe it requires a holistic approach. Women and their families experience disparities simultaneously and often need to address them all at once for them to be able to stabilize and advance their health, safety, and
economic security. As a result, we will be accepting applications from all three of CFW's issue areas.

CFW will be prioritizing strategies and interventions that address on-going needs and impact of community disinvestment that has been exacerbated by COVID-19 as well as gender responsive approaches to recovery and rebuilding after job loss, health inequities and increased violence that has disproportionately affected women of color and their families.

Priority will be given to applicants that demonstrate an understanding and ability to shift their approach to program and operations to address the needs/recovery of the community in crisis (COVID-19, State budget crisis). This includes organizations that are innovative, nimble, and willing to propose solutions that communities believe will best improve their neighborhoods and lives.

For applications requesting support to address the epidemic of violence against women, girls, transgender and gender non-binary people of color we are interested in:

1. Grassroots and community-based approaches, for example: restorative practices, community- and survivor-centered initiatives, and community organizing.
2. Interventions across the prevention continuum, particularly "upstream" ideas that look at shifting social cultures and norms not only of individuals and communities, but also practices of institutions and systems in ways that are more equitable across gender and race. These can include strategies that involve men and boys.
3. An intersectional approach which reframes gender-based violence not as an issue in isolation, but as one that integrates social, health, economic, and community forces and assets as integral to defining solutions.
4. Approaches to innovatively elevate and spotlight the on-going epidemic of gender-based violence in our communities. These approaches can include research, communications/media strategies, and community organizing.

For advocacy applications, priority will be given to applications that demonstrate that women, transgender, and gender non-binary people of color are a part of the work, sharing their lived experiences, making decisions, or informing the creation of priorities and strategies of your policy/advocacy agenda.

CFW will be prioritizing community-based and led organizations. CFW believes that these organizations will understand the needs of women, girls, transgender, and gender non-binary people of color and their families because they have deep relationships within the community. Community organizations, particularly those that include leadership from the community or are women of color-led are best positioned to identify current needs but also to shift as needs change and to demonstrate a commitment to racial and gender equity.

All organizations are required to consider CFW's Guiding Principles and how their programs and organization support and affirm these values.

Chicago Foundation for Women is committed to supporting basic rights and equity of women, girls, transgender, and gender non-binary people. We consider our work both in terms of the outcome as well as the process. It is not just what we are doing, but how we are doing it. The Guiding Principles provide a framework for sharing CFW's values with the wider community, connecting its work across all issue areas and change strategies.
● How is the organization and/or program intentionally designed to benefit women and/or girls?
● How does the organization support a woman’s right to reproductive justice?
● How do the organization’s board and staff members, particularly executive staff, reflect the diversity of the communities served?
● How is the organization increasing accessibility to persons with disabilities?
● How does the organization provide a respectful environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender expansive, and queer (LGBTQ+) people?

For more information about CFW’s Guiding Principles click here

To review CFW’s Gender Equity Framework please click here