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 highlighted inequities faced by women of color and immigrants. It made clear that already disinvested communities largely made up of women of color and their families would as a result of the pandemic face increased risk in frontline work or loss of wages/jobs in industries that saw huge layoffs resulting in what we now understand is a “She-Cession”.

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.

This fall CFW is interested in funding organizations that are envisioning a recovery that centers women, in particular women of color. We are looking for innovative ways of creating a gender responsive recovery, addressing the disparate impact of the pandemic that has led to the “She-Cession”. Some of the areas we are interested in include, workforce development strategies that not only get women back into the workforce but consider their long-term economic security, innovative plans to address the crisis in childcare and unpaid care work, approaches to increase access to care (mental, physical and reproductive services) and improve black maternal health, or defenses against the attacks on the array of reproductive health services particularly abortion access.

2021 Fall Primary Cycle Process

- CFW will be accepting applications for: program or operating support in any of CFW three issue areas
- Applications will be due August 9
- Grants will range between $10K-$30K
- Organizations must be a 501c3 or have a fiscal agent with a 501c3
- Organization must meet CFW’s Staff and Board Leadership Diversity Guidelines

At least:

50% of Staff Leadership identify as a woman, transgender or gender non-binary person

40% of Board Members identify as a woman, transgender or gender non-binary person

33% of Staff Leadership identify as a person of color

25% of Board Members identify as a person of color

- Applicant orientations are scheduled for Wednesday July 7 at 9am and July 27 at 2pm. 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 and encourage applicants to talk holistically about their work.

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.

CFW will be prioritizing strategies and interventions that address both 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.

Relatedly, 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 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.

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