

CONANT FAMILY FOUNDATION

2023 Grant Opportunity: Community Organizing for Racial Justice

As in previous years, a diverse and representative group of Chicagoans developed the focus and process for this year's Community Organizing for Racial Justice grants. The Conant Family Foundation has utilized a participatory grantmaking approach for this funding area since 2020, acknowledging that the power to allocate funds should be in the hands of those with lived experience of racial inequity.

This year's Grants Team members bring a broad range of identities, lived experiences and areas of interest. We are five concerned Chicagoans who are Black, Asian, Latine, working class, middle/upper class, queer, nonbinary, neurodivergent and neurotypical. Together, we bring a shared commitment to racial justice as well as a data- and experience-based critique of the carceral system.

Due to our experiences in Chicago and the conversations we've had over the last few months, we want to fund groups that are laying the groundwork for an alternative to the carceral system. We're also interested in groups that build power among currently and formerly incarcerated people.

Many of us know firsthand that seeking grants is not an easy process. As such, we are holding our power as members of this grantmaking committee with care and intention. We commit to:

- **Being transparent** about the grantmaking process and priorities we are holding
- **Being accountable** to applying organizations and the Chicago movement ecosystem by being clear about what our decisions are through this process and our thinking behind it
- **Practicing connection and care** so that moving resources isn't extractive or transactional

An abolitionist approach requires the creation of models today that can represent how we want to live in a non-carceral future, and end outdated institutions that have been resistant to reform. It is focused primarily on the carceral system, with a goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance by creating lasting alternatives that do not recreate carceral logics and practices. Abolitionist organizations are invested in restorative and/or transformative justice and believe that safety requires thinking beyond punitive practices.

This grants cycle is an opportunity to invest in the future of Chicago by resourcing transformational abolitionist organizing that dismantles racial injustice while envisioning – and creating – a more equitable and non-carceral city.

Our intention is to fund organizations that are opposing *and* proposing, addressing racial injustice while creating the beloved community within their own organizations and neighborhoods. Approximately 10 - 12 organizations will be selected for grants that will be at least \$20,000 per year for two years. All grants will be general operating support, with no restrictions.

Process

- The first step in applying for a grant is to submit an introduction letter by July 5, 2023
- The Grants Team will review all introduction letters and select finalists for virtual (Zoom) interviews
- Interviews with finalist organizations will be conducted in August 2023
- Grants will be awarded in early September 2023

Who Can Apply

We are seeking organizations that use community organizing to address the impact of the carceral system. Priority will be given to organizations that:

- Engage in work that is of, by, and for those who are currently or formerly incarcerated or detained and those who are in community with them
- Have budgets under \$600,000
- Engage and amplify the voices of impacted community members
- Are abolitionist in practice and analysis
- Are intentional about organizational sustainability and hold time and space to address internal operations
- Are in relationship with other organizations and see themselves as part of a larger movement ecosystem

Instructions for Submitting an Introduction Letter

Please provide answers to the following questions. Keep in mind that this is a brief letter, not a proposal. You are welcome to use bullet points or whatever writing style feels comfortable. The maximum length is two pages.

1. What does **building community power**, **racial justice** and **abolition** look like in your organization? Please describe all three.
2. What part(s) of the carceral system does your work address?
3. What power dynamic(s) are you trying to shift or transform?
4. What roles do currently or formerly incarcerated or system-impacted people have in your organization? How are you accountable to your community?
5. Describe your leadership demographics. Please also note if leadership includes youth and/or seniors.
6. What is the total amount of your current annual operating budget? How many paid staff do you have? If you've received grants from foundations, how many foundations are currently supporting your work?

Please email your letter as a .pdf attachment by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, July 5, 2023 to Leslie Ramyk, Leslie@ConantFamilyFoundation.org.

We will not be meeting with organizations during the introduction phase, but if you have any questions or need accommodations please contact Leslie at the email above.