

The New York Women's Foundation

GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

What are your grantmaking and/or strategic priorities (in terms of geographic focus, issue, etc.)? Who decides the grantmaking priorities? The overall strategy for the fund? What's the process by which these decisions are made? How are these practices socialized within your organization?

The New York Women's Foundation creates an equitable and just future for women and families by uniting a cross-cultural alliance that ignites action and invests in bold, community-led solutions across the city. Since 1987, The New York Women's Foundation has advanced a dynamic philanthropic strategy based on the fundamental reality that, when women thrive, their families and communities also thrive.

We invest in women-led, community-based solutions that promote the economic security, safety, and health of the most vulnerable women in New York City. The New York Women's Foundation fosters women's leadership, creates partnerships that spark catalytic change, exchanges insights with experts across sectors, and empowers women by training them in activism and philanthropy to accelerate and sustain forward progress.

The New York Women's Foundation funds organizations within the five boroughs of New York City working to create long-term economic security for women, girls, and gender fluid individuals. The Foundation prioritizes the needs of under-invested communities of women, girls, and gender-fluid populations of all ages and in any borough of New York City. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Women and girls of color;
- ◆ Native/Indigenous individuals
- ◆ Older adult women;
- ◆ Women and girls involved or formerly involved in the criminal/juvenile justice systems;
- ◆ Girls/gender-fluid youth involved with child welfare and/or family court

- ◆ Pregnant and parenting teens;
- ◆ Immigrant and refugee women and girls;
- ◆ Homeless women/transient women and families;
- ◆ Women and girls who are differently abled;
- ◆ Women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals facing issues related to mental health;
- ◆ LGBTQ women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals
- ◆ Survivors of gender-based violence.

Throughout our 30-year history, the New York Women's Foundation has been a crucial partner to organizations that are implementing local, community-based solutions. The Foundation's early investor strategy deepens this key element of our work by identifying, funding, and supporting small and/or emerging organizations and programs that serve historically underinvested communities of women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals. The Foundation also targets investments to accelerate change for women, families, and gender-fluid individuals in New York City with the highest levels of poverty, violence, unemployment, and related social, educational and economic disparities. This kind of funding leverages the work of our grantee partners and is carried out in partnership with them, as well as donors and other philanthropic organizations. The Foundation also responds to unexpected stressors that affect women and their communities with rapid investment, which is followed by sustained support.

The Foundation also houses and manages The NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color, a collaboration of a diverse and growing group of funders coming together to expand philanthropic investment for this population. The first of its kind in the United States, the Fund envisions a city that offers every opportunity for all girls and young women of color—including two-spirited, transgender and gender non-binary youth—to succeed economically and socially. Ultimately, the Fund seeks to shift philanthropic practices by increasing sustained investments for girls and young women of color and sharing knowledge on effective strategies and approaches to advance their life outcomes.

The Foundation supports direct service programs, as well as systemic change efforts that build community, foster collaboration, enhance leadership skills and knowledge, and move individuals to become engaged members of their communities with a commitment to long-term systemic change.

We value ongoing collaborative, reciprocal partnerships with our grantee partners who are experts about the needs of their community and create effective solutions from within. We also gain insight from other key stakeholders—including the board of directors, donors, and staff—who inform our grantmaking priorities. Every three or four years, the Foundation undertakes a strategic planning process through which we conduct a formal review of our current grantmaking strategy and that is informed by key stakeholders.

TYPES OF GRANTS

What kinds of grants do you provide (e.g., general, rapid response, capacity building, field-building, etc.)? What is the range in amount of the grants you award?

The New York Women's Foundation provides three types of grants:

- 1) General (general operating support and program specific)
- 2) Rapid Response (community support and strategic discretionary)
- 3) Capacity Building

Currently, general grants range in size from \$60,000–100,000. Capacity building grants are typically \$5,000–10,000.

Is the participatory decision-making process the same for all grant types and sizes? If not, why? Do you earmark funding for a specific purpose in order to ensure diversity in who/what you're funding? Who determines the type and size of grants, and how?

The Foundation engages in three participatory grantmaking approaches:

- 1) Grants Advisory Committee (GAC)
- 2) Participatory Review Committee (PRC)
- 3) Girls in Grantmaking (GIG)

GAC provides volunteers with the opportunity to participate in the Foundation's unique grantmaking process. Serving as The Foundation's "eyes and ears" and with staff support, GAC members work in teams to review general grant proposals

from organizations, conduct site visits, and make funding recommendations. This approach allows us to leverage the talents of local women in finding and supporting effective community-driven programs.

PRC is a leadership opportunity for young women of color wanting to expand their understanding of philanthropy and participate in the grantmaking process for The NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color. PRC members work in teams under the oversight of the Foundation's staff to review funding proposals and conduct site visits to applicant organizations. At the end of their visits, they make funding recommendations to the foundation members of The New York City Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color. This committee allows New York City to have a voice in identifying solutions that may be most effective for girls and young women of color in the city.

The New York Women's Foundation partners with a local community organization – currently the YWCA of New York -- to implement Girls IGNITE! Grantmaking, a unique fellowship designed to empower the next generation through philanthropic education and giving. Every year, 15 racially and culturally diverse teenage girls and gender-fluid youth are selected as fellows and explore social justice issues, leadership, advocacy, peer group dynamics, consensus building, community engagement, and financial decision making. The nine-month program offers participants the opportunity to work as a team to distribute the Foundation's youth grantmaking funds to local youth-led nonprofit organizations or projects that the group selects. Before the participants begin their grantmaking, the fellows complete an 11-session curriculum to learn how nonprofits work; trends in philanthropy; and the grantmaking process, including designing a request for proposals, evaluating proposals, making site visits, and creating recommendations for funding. The participants have \$30,000 to distribute each year.

The Foundation also engages in staff-led grantmaking for general, rapid response, and capacity building grants, when appropriate.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for a grant? What kind of outreach happens to make potential grant applicants aware of your grantmaking?

Any organization that meets the following criteria can apply for a grant:

- ◆ Registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization or have a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)3
- ◆ Located within and serve the five boroughs of New York City
- ◆ Have been in existence for at least six months

The Foundation utilizes the following outreach strategies:

- ◆ Website: The Foundation posts open requests for funding on the homepage of the website
- ◆ Mailing list: The Foundation encourages organizations via the website to join the Foundation's mailing list, so they can receive notification of the most recent funding opportunities.
- ◆ Partner websites and listservs
- ◆ Industry websites, e.g. Foundation Center, Philanthropy New York

How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?

The Foundation holds one to four open grantmaking cycles for per year. Invitation-only grantmaking happens simultaneously with open grantmaking cycles. Rapid response grantmaking happens throughout the year on a rolling basis.

Can applicants get assistance in applying? If so, what kind?

Yes, assistance in applying is provided in the following ways:

- ◆ Webinars: The Foundation provides webinars for each open funding opportunity. Participants can ask questions during the webinar, and a recorded version of the webinar is made available on the Foundation's website.
- ◆ Phone calls: The Foundation takes phone calls and in-person meetings from interested organizations that want to learn more about the Foundation's grantmaking strategy and their potential fit.
- ◆ FAQs: The Foundation posts answers to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) associated with each funding opportunity.

What type of information is collected from applicants, and who has access to this information?

The following information is collected from applicant organizations:

- ◆ Funding request narrative
- ◆ Organization description
- ◆ Leadership and staffing patterns

- ◆ Gender breakdown of board, staff and volunteers
- ◆ Demographics of the target population
- ◆ Data collection and evaluation practices
- ◆ Organization and program budgets
- ◆ Organization funding sources
- ◆ Grant budget and narrative
- ◆ Financial statements
- ◆ Key staff biographies
- ◆ Board of directors
- ◆ Organizational chart
- ◆ Proof of tax-exempt status (501c3 Letter, W-9)

The following staff have access to this information: the CEO; vice president of programs; program directors; program officers; grants managers; and finance staff (access to 501c3 and W-9 only).

INITIAL VETTING/SCREENING/ DUE DILIGENCE

Are applications initially screened or vetted to ensure eligibility? How and by whom is this done? If more than one person is involved, how do you ensure that the same criteria has been considered in all cases?

Applications are initially screened by Foundation staff who assess their alignment with the Foundation's mission, values, focus areas, and grantmaking priorities. Proposals with the strongest alignment are moved forward for review by the Grants Advisory Committee (GAC). The GAC reviews proposals and conducts site visits for this smaller pool of applicants and subsequently makes funding recommendations to the program committee of the board.

GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

Who comprises your grantmaking selection panel(s)? How are they selected (e.g., by nomination, application, etc.)? How do you think about representation of specific population groups or geographies?

The Grants Advisory Committee (GAC) comprises volunteers who have been selected via an online application process. After reviewing the applications, the Foundation conducts phone interviews with a select number of volunteers. The final selections are then presented to the programs team for review.

	Grant advisory committee (GAC)	Participatory Review Committee (PRC)	Girls IGNITE! Grantmaking (GIG)
Who is served	Local programs receiving early investments for community-based solutions that serve historically underinvested groups of women, girls and gender-fluid individuals	Grantees of the NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color to transform lives by breaking generational cycles of poverty, abuse, and disinvestment	High school students (14-18)
Who are participants	NYC Women	NYC young women of color (many 18-24)	NYC teenage girls and gender-fluid youth
Participant education	An overview of non-profit organizations, foundations, gender	An overview of non-profit organizations, foundations, gender, and guidance on evaluating proposals, conducting site visits, and making recommendations	How non-profits work, trends in philanthropy, process of grantmaking
Stages of participation	Review proposals, conduct site visits, and make recommendations for funding	Review proposals, conduct site visits, and make recommendations for funding	Design a request for proposal, evaluate proposals, make site visits, decide on funding

The Participatory Review Committee (PRC) has a similar process.

Girls IGNITE Grantmaking (GIG) fellows are selected by the partner organization, with the goal of having a diverse group of young women represented. The community partner recruits candidates from public and private schools, foster-care agencies, religious institutions, health centers, and LGBTQ organizations. It also reaches out to groups in public housing communities to make sure that population is represented.

GAC is made up entirely of women, but we also aim for diversity and inclusion by race/ethnicity, age, and professional background. Every grantmaking cycle, we try to have mostly women of color, as well as representatives from all five boroughs, serve on GAC. (We also accept members from outside of NYC, mainly New Jersey; Westchester County; and Fairfield County, CT).

What, if any, is the term limit for members of the selection panel? Why?

There is no term limit for service on GAC or PRC. GAC/ PRC members can serve for multiple cycles in a row, take a break during certain cycles, and then come back when their schedules permit. Or, they can only serve one cycle, if they choose. GIG fellows participate for a nine-month period.

What is the process by which the selection panel determines grant decisions?

GAC, PRC and GIG members read proposals submitted by applicants, conduct site visits as a team, and then make recommendations for funding to key stakeholders of the

Foundation. Each GAC and PRC team is typically made up of four members, including one team leader who is a veteran of the process and helps to coordinate logistics, coach GAC members during the review process, and serve as the point person for communication with Foundation staff. Each team member is tasked with serving as the point person for one of the three organizations assigned to the team for review. In the case of GIG, young women are put into teams of three, with a staff person from the partner organization who helps with logistics and mentoring the young women in the program.

GAC panel members make recommendations directly to the programs committee of the board of directors. The PRC makes recommendations to fund members of the NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color. In both cases, these recommendations are then reviewed by the board's programs committee before being passed on to the full Board to be approved at quarterly meetings.

GIG's partner organizations make recommendations to the Foundation's programs staff, who then have the grants approved by the President/CEO (due to their size of \$2,500 - \$5,000, they do not need individual Board approval).

What considerations are taken into account to ensure inclusive and streamlined decision making processes?

GAC, PRC, and GIG members use a standardized approach to review and analyze proposals that assesses the applicant organization's program design and evaluation; support for the leadership of women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals within the organization and program; financial health; and alignment with NYWF grantmaking strategies.

They also use a standardized recommendation form to guide their written recommendations. All receive coaching from Foundation staff to ensure that funding recommendations are aligned with the Foundation's mission, values, and funding priorities.

Can decision-makers on grantmaking selection panels be applicants? If so, are there any special processes or a conflict of interest policy tied to this occurrence?

GAC members are not allowed to be grant applicants. However, some GAC members are staff, board members or volunteers of former grantees, and some GAC members go on to become applicants to the Foundation.

What happens if there is disagreement among the decision-making committee? How is this resolved? (e.g., consensus, voting, etc.)

The vast majority of GAC members are able to come to a consensus with their teams regarding their ultimate recommendation for funding.

How are selection panel members trained and supported?

GAC members attend a three-hour, in-person training and are required to watch three webinars prior to the in-person orientation. These trainings provide an overview of the funding and nonprofit landscape; the mission, history, values, and grantmaking strategies of the Foundation; GAC roles and responsibilities (including use of our online grants management system, Fluxx), and application criteria, including detailed instructions on reviewing budgets and other financial aspects of the proposals. PRC has a similar process.

Over a period of nine months, GIG fellows complete an 11-session curriculum to learn how nonprofits work; trends in philanthropy; and the process of grantmaking, including designing an RFP, evaluating proposals, making site visits, and creating recommendations for funding.

What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?

Grant applicants do not have recourse to challenge the decisions. However, all unfunded applicants are offered the chance to have a phone call with a Programs team member to discuss the strengths and challenges of the proposal and reasons for why it was declined. Many applicants apply again in future cycles and could be funded at a later date.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

What percentage of staff members are “peers”, i.e. of the population the foundation seeks to benefit? What percentage of board members are peers?

All staff:

96% of staff are women.

64% of staff are women of color.

Programs & Fund staff:

100% are women.

78% are women of color.

Board of directors:

100% of the board are women.

41% are women of color.

What percentage of the grantmaking decision-making committee(s) are peers?

Our Board are the ultimate grant decision-makers. Among the volunteer participatory grantmaking committees:

100% of GAC are women.

70% of GAC are women of color.

100% of GIG fellows are young women.

87% of GIG fellows are young women of color.

How does the role of paid staff differ from that of peers?

The Foundation's paid programs staff develop grantmaking strategies; release grant guidelines; hold webinars; and have preliminary calls with potential applicants to inform them of our grantmaking process and criteria and learn more about applicants' work. Staff also conduct due diligence on applications and select those to be moved forward for a site visit from a GAC, PRC or GIG team; recruit train and coach GAC, PRC and GIG members to conduct these site visits and make recommendations to the Programs Committee of the Board; work with members of the Board's programs committee to create a recommended grants docket; and help prepare grant presentations for quarterly board meetings. Once grant award decisions are made at Board meeting, staff finalize the grant award paperwork and payment and serve as relationship managers with grantees over the course of the grant period.

GAC, PRC and GIG members review proposals for those applicants selected to receive a site visit, conduct these site visits, and make both written and verbal funding recommendations to key stakeholders of the Foundation.

Do you pay members of your panel/committee?

Participatory review members for the NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color are paid a stipend of \$550 for their participation upon request.

REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

What, if any, are your reporting requirements for grantees? Who develops them?

Through our structured relationship management process, program officers support grantee partners in sharing their successes and challenges throughout the grant period. This includes an initial baseline conversation to identify changes that have occurred prior to the grant period, discuss capacity building needs, and an interim report. All grantee partners submit a narrative and quantitative (where appropriate) annual report on their organizational and programmatic successes at the end of the grant period. Finally, any grantee partners who receive additional capacity building grants report on the impact of that funding following the completion of their project.

Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations?

We do not conduct a formal evaluation of our grantmaking, but we ask grantee partners to submit an annual impact report to the evaluation and strategic learning manager and evaluate specific strategies to understand the collective impact of our grantee partners' work.

How do you evaluate impact?

We evaluate impact on several levels:

- 1) Our grantee partner's stability and continued ability to engage over time. Over 80% of grantee partners funded by the Foundation over the past 30 years continue to engage their communities.
- 2) Systemic changes our grantee partners achieve, such as advocating for legislative and regulatory change that supports women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals.
- 3) Publicly available population data to view long term impacts of policies and programs (such as the census) to track progress on economic, health, and safety indicators.

How do you learn about participants' experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants?

Following their participation in GAC, participants complete an online survey asking about their experience with the grant making process. The anonymous survey includes multiple choice and open-ended questions.

With whom do you share the results of what you learn?

Results from the survey are shared with the programs team.

Have you made changes to your programs based on feedback? If so, what is an example?

Several changes have been made to the GAC process based upon participant feedback. Specifically, GAC members requested more in-depth information about grantmaking and nonprofit organizations. In response, the Foundation developed several webinars for members to complete prior to attending the GAC orientation that cover the following topics: "The New York Women's Foundation's Approach to Grantmaking," "Nonprofit and Grantmaking 101," and "A Deeper Dive into Nonprofit Financials."

For more information about The New York Women's Foundation, visit nywf.org.

This resource was developed as a companion piece to the GrantCraft guide on participatory grantmaking. This resource is part of a suite of resources that showcase the rich and varied practices of participatory grantmaking across various organizations, reducing the burden on each funder to repeatedly outline their model. The guide and companion resources give insight to the philanthropy landscape about the what, how, and why of participatory grantmaking.

Visit grantcraft.org/participatorygrantmaking to explore further.