

## Chicago Racial Justice Pooled Fund 2020

### BACKGROUND

Foundation leaders have met every Wednesday morning since late March to share information and learn about the impact of COVID19 locally. The meetings proved indispensable, delivering real-time news and data with speakers from the front lines of the work. Participating funders created multiple sub-groups focusing on specific areas of interest, including the local health care system, education, and neighborhood-level organizing.

By mid-April, we learned that COVID19 was hitting Black and Latinx communities the hardest. The evolving crisis spotlighted the historic and ongoing structural racism in healthcare access. The Wednesday morning meetings immediately pivoted to include speakers addressing the stark inequity.

Even in this fast-moving crisis environment, what happened at the end of May changed everything. The cell-phone video of a police officer murdering George Floyd in Minneapolis sparked outrage nationally as well as in Chicago, a city with its own well-documented police brutality. Thousands of Chicagoans marched for racial justice, demanding an end to police brutality and structural racism.

Once again, the Chicago Philanthropy COVID19 Relief Fund morning meetings shifted: this time, the Neighborhood Organizing Group invited organizers, researchers and community leaders to provide context, analysis, and first-hand experience regarding policing in Chicago and the protests. Funders appreciated the opportunity to learn from practitioners about community organizing and racial justice.

While people taking to the streets garnered media attention, organizers and activists confirmed that what sustains real change is social movements. Chicago's long history of community organizing has evolved considerably, most recently with smaller Black-led organizations of youth and queer people building capacity for racial justice campaigns and connecting to similar organizations across the country.

Longstanding, deeply committed community organizations are amplifying their tenacious racial justice work while newer organizations are developing another generation of leaders ready to transform Chicago. They are all bringing expanded understandings of leadership, a different sense of priorities, new perspectives and new imaginations to create safer neighborhoods, eliminate police brutality and inform equitable policies.

The Neighborhood Organizing Group, having heard the speakers at the Wednesday morning meetings identify what they need, developed the Chicago Racial Justice Fund 2020 to support their work. If we are going to leverage this moment to improve Chicago, the first step is moving resources to the organizations in the racial justice movement.

As our colleagues at the Crossroads Fund say: Let's fund these organizations as if we want them to win.

## **PURPOSE**

The Chicago Racial Justice Pooled Fund's goal is to raise and move \$3M to Chicago organizations building and sustaining movements for justice that center Black lives and address anti-Blackness. The Fund will support organizations addressing structural racism in all its forms, creating an opportunity for philanthropy to act on equity statements generated in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder. A pooled fund reduces the burden on organizations since they won't have to apply to each foundation using different formats; it also reduces the burden on individual foundations to create, expand or staff a new program area.

Organizers, activists, community leaders and researchers have provided clarity and direction through their stated priorities, multiple recent presentations and meetings, and the urgent agendas they share, including:

- Supporting work of young activists of color is critical in terms of what funders can do. The most marginal, vulnerable people are most often young folks of color. From their position, they bring different understandings of leadership and new re-imaginings to our politics and our fight for freedom. They deserve our support. More importantly, we deserve their leadership.
- Reforms and public policy are essential components of movement work. Informing legislation and public policy for comprehensive approaches so communities decide how resources are distributed.
- Need to leverage this unique moment to invest in movement infrastructure including intermediary organizations and communications that provide facts, data and accurate narratives.
- With COVID19, we put people experiencing homelessness in hotels and stopped utility cutoffs. These were radical ideas before April; now, they are common sense. Fund the work of re-imagining our communities, of going beyond what's already been done.
- Reject the idea of U.S. exceptionalism and look at what other countries do. If our system worked, we would be the safest country in the world, but that's only true in communities with the most resources.
- Any changes to the municipal policing system will also require planning and investments in public health, social services, restorative/transformational justice and community programming. The abolitionist demand is about putting humans first, not militarization, police and prisons. It is about transforming the entire society away from punitive logic, to start incorporating rehabilitation, transformational justice, ways to save people. The goal should be how not to have people arrested in the first place.
- State violence must be addressed, but also safety that includes attention to communal and intimate-partner gender violence.
- We need collective impact strategies informed by folks on the ground; there are brilliant activists out there – Black, Brown, LGBTQ, all types of identities including youth and young adults -- spending precious time imagining what Chicago could look like if it were survivable for them. Support them.
- If Chicago's brand is going to change, it's a feeling you get. We want people to be proud of being in Chicago, proud of our diversity, our biggest asset. We need to be more interconnected, working together. Being able to pay our staff would help make that possible.

## **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The current Neighborhood Organizing Group members will serve as an Oversight Committee, providing guidance and recommendations for fundraising, decision making, and the development of any necessary policies for the pooled Fund.

The members are: Michelle Morales, Woods Fund of Chicago; Leslie Ramyk, Conant Family Foundation; Jane Kimondo, Crossroads Fund; Daniel Ash, Chicago Community Trust; Angelica Chavez, Field Foundation of Illinois; Ryan Priester, MacArthur Foundation; Caroline McCoy and David Pesqueira, McCormick Foundation; Deborah Bennett, Polk Bros. Foundation; Regina McGraw and Carmen Prieto, Wieboldt Foundation; Heather Parish and Marianne Philbin, Pierce Family Foundation; Iris Krieg, Albert Pick Jr. Fund; Jacquelyn Rosa, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago; Mary Pounder, Comer Family Foundation.

Six members of the Oversight Committee have volunteered to serve as the Fund's Allocations Committee. The Allocations Committee will develop the application process, review funding requests and select grantees. Due to the urgency of the situation and the stretched capacity of potential grantee organizations, the intention is to keep the application minimal while making sure we receive the information necessary to make informed decisions and process grant payments.

Crossroads Fund will manage and administer all financial transactions, including receiving grants from funders, dispersing funds to grantees, and maintaining an ongoing budget reflecting income and expenses. As a purpose-specific collaborative fund housed at Crossroads Fund, this Fund would be subject to Crossroad's standard policies and practices.

## **FUNDRAISING**

We will raise and grant \$3M, with at least \$1M of that distributed by December 2020 and the remaining funds granted in calendar year 2021. This would allow for immediate rapid-response funding as well as ongoing support for longer-term organizing.

Donors contributing to the Fund would do so in support of the Fund's stated purpose and with the understanding that the Allocations Committee will make grants decisions.

We are projecting a minimum budget of \$1.15M for calendar year 2020. This includes \$1M for grants and \$150,000 for the Crossroads Fund to serve as the Fund's fiscal agent. The administrative fee covers the expenses of all financial management including receiving and disbursing funds.

## **GRANTMAKING**

Through existing relationships between members of the Neighborhood Organizing Subgroup and grassroots organizations, we will share this plan with organizers and community members to confirm that we are accurately conveying what they advised. We also see this step as a component of funder transparency and co-accountability. If they have additional or different suggestions, the Allocations Committee will integrate that information.

All grants will be unrestricted general operating support, generally in the range of \$25,000 - \$50,000 per organization. The Fund will allocate grants to organizations building and sustaining movements for justice that center Black lives, including:

- Grassroots organizing to build power for the transformation and liberation of communities of color
- Organizations that are of, by, and for those most directly impacted by racial injustice
- Leadership development and tactics that are innovative, intersectional, collaborative, risk-taking, and acknowledge trauma and community healing
- Narrative development, communications, research, and data analysis

Organizations that meet the following criteria are eligible:

- Are located in Cook County, Illinois
- Have an annual organizational budget less than \$750,000
- Are designated 501c3 by the IRS or have a Fiscal Sponsor; the Fund will also consider organizations without 501c3 designation that have an organizational bank account

As soon as the Allocations Committee is ready to implement the grantmaking process and the Fund has raised at least \$600,000, the Fund will begin distributing grants.

## **TIMELINE**

### **July 2020**

- Approve concept and plan; Finalize fiscal management arrangement with Crossroads Fund
- Create Allocations Committee; Committee creates application process
- Finalize informational materials for funder solicitation & applicants
- Cultivate donors (all) and provide additional information as needed (Leslie & Jane)

### **August 2020**

- Allocations Committee finalizes application process and announces Fund to potential grantees
- Cultivate donors (all) and provide additional information as needed (Leslie & Jane)

### **September through December 2020**

- Begin grantmaking when Allocations Committee is ready and we've raised at least \$300,000
- Continue to fundraise

## **STAFFING**

Leslie Ramyk, ED of the Conant Family Foundation, has volunteered to help with fundraising, scheduling, potential grantee inquiries, communications and other start-up work as needed through calendar year 2020. Leslie will be accountable to the Oversight Committee.

**On behalf of the Chicago Racial Justice Pooled Fund, we welcome your questions, suggestions and contributions. You can reach us at:**

**Leslie Ramyk:** [Leslie@ConantFamilyFoundation.org](mailto:Leslie@ConantFamilyFoundation.org)

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