

LOHENGRIN
FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary

2024 - 2027



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WHO WE ARE

The Lohengrin Foundation is a Chicago-based family foundation established in 1963. While the organizations supported by the Foundation have evolved over the years, the constant has been to invest in programs and initiatives dedicated to advancing racial, social, and economic justice, as well as the arts, education, and human rights in Chicago and around the globe.

In action, this commitment has led to grants supporting community groups of all sizes. Over the years, the Foundation has also provided critical support that has helped to establish the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and LGBTQ Student Life at the University of Chicago, The National Cambodian Heritage Museum and Killing Fields Memorial, and the co-founding of the Crossroads Fund, a public foundation dedicated to supporting movement building and organizing towards racial, social, and economic justice.

In 2022, the Foundation began a period of growth. The board hired the Foundation's first Executive Director; funded the establishment of the Center for Motor Neuron Disease at the University of Chicago; and launched its first formal strategic planning process. On the heels of a health pandemic, racial unrest, a rising displacement and migration crisis, and existing disparities felt by those historically marginalized for years, the Foundation's updated giving priorities aim to address some of the most urgent needs of our time.

As the Foundation emerges from this period of reflection, listening, and learning, we reaffirm our founding beliefs and remain steadfast in our commitment to equity, opportunity, and justice.

Our Mission

The Lohengrin Foundation’s mission is to advance equity, opportunity, and justice to eradicate systemic barriers and promote vibrant, safe, and thriving communities.

We partner with and invest in organizations that guide transformational programs, advocacy, and policy initiatives to drive social impact and systems change.

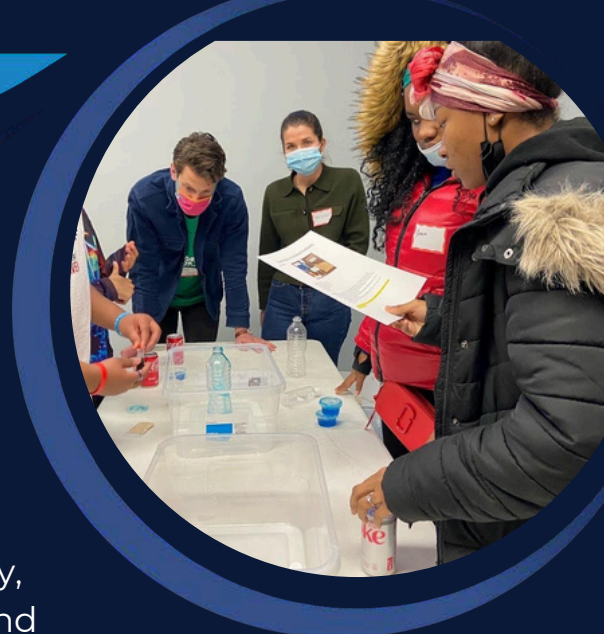


Photo Courtesy of Horizons for Youth, 2023 Grantee

Our Values



EQUITY

We embrace differentiated approaches that activate the voices, power, and full potential of those served by addressing the root causes and impacts of structural and systemic racial, social, and economic disparities.

OPPORTUNITY

We believe that equitable access to educational, economic, and social mobility efforts must exist to be attainable by all.

JUSTICE

We act to achieve fairness, equity, and the removal of systemic barriers in pursuit of a just society.

COLLABORATION

We aim to address the complex challenges facing our society, amplify our impact, and create lasting, positive change through partnerships with community organizations, governmental agencies, policymakers, peer funders and those directly impacted by the changes we are trying to advance.

OUR ROLE



The Lohengrin Foundation is a funder, convener, thought partner, and connector that champions and works alongside and behind leaders and practitioners. We serve as learners, partners, and collaborators who use influence, grantmaking, funding collaboratives, and strategic grantee-centered communications to deliver on our mission.

Photo Courtesy of Midtown-Metro Achievement Centers, 2023 Grantee

Geographic Funding Areas

The Foundation prioritizes organizations and projects in the Chicago and Boston metropolitan areas. We also consider supporting organizations in other regions. Funding provided outside of our prioritized funding geographic areas will be by invitation only.





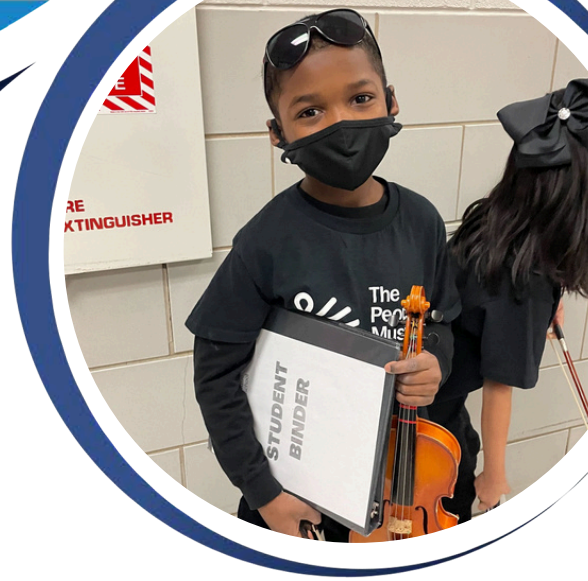
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Board of Directors and Foundation staff launched its strategic planning process by engaging in a series of key activities that helped to inform the plan's design. Over twelve months, we participated in activities that supported the development of a community and data-informed strategy to serve as a guide for the Foundation's grantmaking.

There were four main areas of activity.

- 1. We conducted listening and learning sessions with more than 70 leaders from the philanthropic community, public and civic sectors, and the Foundation's grantee and organizational partners.**
- 2. We reviewed public data on community needs and emerging funding needs.**
- 3. We analyzed and incorporated community, grantee, and organizational partner input and feedback into the strategic framework.**
- 4. We collaborated with our community, grantee, and organizational partners to review and adapt the framework to solidify its relevancy and strengthen the final strategic plan.**

CORE PRIORITIES 2024 - 2027



The Foundation selected the following key strategic priorities to guide its organizational development and grantmaking over the next three years.

Strengthen Internal Operations and Governance to Fortify Grantmaking and Impact

- Expand the Foundation's staff and Board of Directors to build its capacity to achieve its goals and desired impact.
- Develop mission- and values-aligned internal and grantmaking practices and policies.
- Develop standardized grantmaking timelines and grant management systems.
- Build efficient back-end systems and processes that support grantmaking operations.

Deepen, Streamline, and Expand Grantmaking Impact

- Integrate the principles of Trust-Based Philanthropy across the Foundation and our grantmaking processes.
- Center our partners' impact through a variety of communication outlets (website, social media, and other communication vehicles).
- Identify a base-level standardization from which to adopt learning practices and conduct due diligence, taking into account the partner's organizational size and grant amount.
- Adopt an impact measurement and learning framework.

Connect, Collaborate, and Convene for Greater Impact

- Center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the focus areas prioritized by the Foundation.
- Co-invest in initiatives and funder collaboratives that tackle emerging issues that align with our mission, values, and grantmaking program areas.
- Continue convening grantee partners around selected program areas to facilitate deeper collaboration, knowledge sharing, and impact.

GRANTMAKING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through more than 200 hours of conversations and listening sessions involving community leaders, grantee partners, philanthropic partners, and practitioners, several shared themes arose which formed the basis of our grantmaking guiding principles. While many are practiced and aligned with existing Foundation approaches, we felt that uplifting them into our developing grantmaking guiding principles formalizes their importance and our commitment to act on what we learned.

- We embed Trust-Based Philanthropy principles into our culture, structures, and practices.
- We apply a racial and intersectional justice lens to our practices and grantmaking.
- We prioritize general operating grants over program-specific grants, especially for emerging organizations.
- We recognize the impact that multi-year grants can have on an organization's ability to advance long-term planning, program innovation, and sustainability. Therefore, we will consider renewable annual and multi-year grants.
- We look for partners who center the voices of those directly impacted by the issues they seek to address.
- We pursue long-term grantee partnerships and community-embedded relationships.
- We serve as a partner who listens and learns alongside community-based leaders with lived experiences.



GRANTMAKING PROGRAM AREAS

Historically, the Foundation provided funding to support a variety of areas including international development, medical research, education, immigrant and refugee rights, and racial, social, and economic justice.

As an outcome of the local funding landscape analysis and community input, we uncovered that educational equity and social justice need deeper support. During the 2024/25 grantmaking years, existing grantee partners whose work fits within our updated educational equity or social justice grantmaking foci will be transitioned to the practices and procedures within the corresponding area. Other existing “legacy” grantee partners outside of these areas will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be considered for ongoing support.

New grantmaking guidelines with funding timelines will be phased in beginning with fall 2024.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

ARTS EDUCATION

We partner with organizations that work to ensure all youth have access to quality arts experiences through long-term engagements. We prioritize direct programming and systemic efforts that offer high-quality in-school and out-of-school arts education experiences to young people who have limited or no access to arts education opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We partner with organizations that help close the access and opportunity gap for Black, Latine, and other historically marginalized communities.

We seek out data-driven educational recovery and civic educational initiatives serving under-resourced communities.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

We support principal and teacher leadership initiatives that help prepare, strengthen, and retain the next generation of school leaders. Programs and systemic initiatives that help leaders foster a school culture and learning environment that enhances student learning outcomes, civic engagement, and educational equity in under-resourced communities will be prioritized.

Photo Courtesy of Carole Robertson Center for Learning, 2023 Grantee



GRANTMAKING PROGRAM AREAS

SOCIAL JUSTICE

IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE, AND MIGRANT JUSTICE

We partner with organizations and collaboratives that advance policy and systems change efforts to address the long-term needs of immigrants, refugees, and migrants.

Additional funding consideration is provided to groups working on intersectional and racial solidarity efforts.

MOVEMENT BUILDING AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

We support organizations that engage and are led by those who are most impacted by the racial, social, and economic inequities they seek to address. We seek out organizations that transform systems of power and resource distribution in order to increase activism to drive policy, systems change, and justice.

Additional funding consideration is provided to groups working on intersectional and racial solidarity efforts.

SAFETY AND JUSTICE

We believe safe communities are a human right, and we partner with community and systems-level organizations to provide safety and violence interventions and/or comprehensive support services for those who are justice-informed and involved. Our aim is to prevent and reduce encounters that may lead to recidivism or individual and community violence.

We prioritize collaborative efforts that measure engagement, impact, and outcomes to reduce gun violence, and advance community safety and well-being.



Strategic Collaborations for Emergent Issues & Systems Change

The Foundation seeks out and accepts inquiries from coalitions, collaboratives, and organizations working to address emergent issues and key policy opportunities that may present themselves on an ongoing basis.

Priority is given to areas of work that are aligned with the Foundation's mission and current program areas of focus.

LOHENGRIN FOUNDATION

