

Catherine Donnelly Foundation

GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

What are your grantmaking and/or strategic priorities (in terms of geographic focus, issue, etc.)?

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation (CDF) is committed to promoting positive social change by funding a combination of programs and projects in our priority areas of environment, housing and adult education. Our efforts are intended to promote joint action and networking by enabling key institutional actors to combine their efforts and build on one another's strengths, constituencies, and common experiences in pursuit of social change objectives.

The Foundation provides grants in response to requests from projects in each of its funding areas. Since 2008, the Foundation has had an ambitious program strategy that allocates a significant portion of its grant monies to focused and long-term work intended to address the root causes of many of the key issues in each of its program areas.

Who decides the grantmaking priorities? The overall strategy for the fund?

Our founders, the **Sisters of Service**, determined the funding priorities (environment, housing, and adult education). Subsequent visioning & strategic planning sessions are held every five years and include the participation of board members, advisors, and staff who determine the overall strategy for the Foundation. Each committee, comprising of board members and advisors, determines the specific funding strategies for our three funding priorities. Learnings from the different committees are shared with other committees and inform strategies.

The **Adult Education Committee's** work and priorities reflect a number of years of work with key stakeholders. In the fall of 2015, the Committee launched the **Righting Relations program**, which emphasizes critical adult education and empowering grassroots, bottom-up social change. Righting Relations focuses on working with indigenous peoples, women, newcomers, and those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. This work connects deeply to the CDF's

vision, mission and values. This is a journey that CDF is a part of, rather than leading.

In the spring of 2016, the **Environment Committee** decided to gradually move from a responsive to a more proactive funding strategy, based on their desire to prioritize and support integrated strategies that lead to climate change solutions. The committee is developing new strategic alliances by convening various actors at round tables and through "test" projects that will gradually shape the committee's work within the wider field of climate justice and climate change solutions. The committee is making strategic choices about where to focus, including an intentional focus on Indigenous issues.

The **Housing Committee** has been proactive in selecting streams that will make a real difference in informing policy, advocating for safe and affordable housing, mentoring the next generation of sector champions, and integrating Indigenous issues. Current and past projects have informed the Canadian federal government's emerging housing strategy. The Housing Committee is currently prioritizing youth homelessness through the A Way Home Canada Coalition but is also responsive to other issues and populations that emerge such as women, immigrants, refugees and elders/seniors.

What's the process by which these decisions are made?

Each funding area has a committee comprising of board members and resource people with expertise in the field. The Committees make funding recommendations, and the Board of Directors ultimately makes grant decisions. Staff provide them with support in vetting proposals.

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?

Within the committees, there are one-year, responsive project grants for capacity and/or field building. Grant amounts typically range from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Our longer-term partnerships with community members engaged in the issues that fit within our funding priorities, mission, and mandate are much larger (\$150,000–\$250,000 annually) and are generally five-year, and potentially renewable grants.

Is the participatory decision-making process the same for all grant types and sizes? If not, why?

Through our long-term partnerships, or proactive grantmaking approach, we involve members of the communities of our three grantmaking priority areas. To start, the Foundation typically participates in a consultative process to determine the approach to a community-based, issue. The board determines initial grant support, but community members determine the allocation of funds to best support the scope of work once the CDF board has approved the overall proposal.

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?

Funding is earmarked by granting stream and grant type: roughly 50 percent for one-year project grants and 50 percent for multi-year program grants, annually, divided equally across the three grant priority areas. Grant committees make recommendations to the board in terms of the type and the size of grants. The board reviews and approves the recommendations.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

Grant applicants must be Canadian registered charities or qualified grantees under Canadian Revenue Agency guidelines. Non-profit groups working in partnership with a Canadian charitable organization or a qualified grantee can also apply.

What kind of outreach happens to make potential grant applicants aware of your grantmaking?

We use our website, social media, and peer to peer sharing.

How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?

One-year project grant applications are accepted twice a year (spring and fall). Other initiatives are considered throughout the year.

CDF program staff provide assistance through the grant application process over phone and email. Applicants are encouraged to contact staff prior to submitting applications

to ascertain eligibility. Occasionally, staff will provide feedback on draft applications if these are shared well in advance of the grant deadline.

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

Contact information, charitable registration, financial statements, bios of staff and board members, letters of reference. CDF staff & board have access to this information.

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?

Potential applicants are asked to self-assess and determine their eligibility through an online eligibility screening test. Potential applicants are also encouraged to contact the CDF and discuss their proposal with staff prior to submitting an application to confirm eligibility. All staff use an established criterion as determined by the CDF 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? What, if any, is the term limit for members of the selection panel? Why?

Our grantmaking selection committees comprises of board members and non-board, or resource, members who represent community expertise.

The overriding criteria for the appointment of board members is the individual's ability to contribute to the development of the Foundation's goals and objectives, particularly its five-year plan, and his or her preparedness to carry the vision of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation forward.

Several years ago, the Foundation made provision for the appointment of non-board member resource persons to CDF board committees. As individuals with extensive expertise in a particular field of endeavor, resource persons are full voting members of the Committee for which they have been recruited and appointed to one-year terms. While eligible for reappointment, the combined terms of an individual resource person should not exceed six years.

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

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

Staff create a short list of applications for Committee members to review, removing those that do not fit the criteria or eligibility. Committee members review these applications using our online grant portal. If there is disagreement among Committee members, it is resolved through discussion, debate, and, ultimately consensus is reached.

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? What happens if there is disagreement among the decision-making committee? How is this resolved? (e.g., consensus, voting, etc.) How are selection panel members trained and supported?

Applicants cannot be decision-makers on granting selection. From time to time, Committee members do have a conflict of interest with one of the applications under consideration; in that case, they are required to identify the conflict and recuse themselves from the deliberations regarding that proposal.

What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?

Applicants who wish to challenge decisions can contact staff who will explain the reasoning behind the granting decision and offer suggestions for improvement, if applicable. Applicants may choose to apply again in the future.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

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

One of four.

What percentage of board members are peers?

One of 11.

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

Three of nine.

Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers?

The Righting Relations Steering Committee comprises peers that represent the constituencies with whom we

wish to engage e.g., immigrant, low-income, and indigenous communities.

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

Peers participate in committee meetings. Paid staff support the overall grantmaking strategy of the Foundation, prepare grant application materials for review by committee members, manage the online application system, interact with potential grantees on a day-to-day basis, and promote and advance the priorities of CDF.

Do you pay members of your panel/committee?

Committee members are volunteers; however, all expenses incurred while engaging in foundation matters are reimbursed.

REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

What, if any, are your reporting requirements for grantees? Who develops them? Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations? How do you evaluate impact? How do you learn about participants’ experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants? With whom do you share the results of what you learn? Have you made changes to your programs based on feedback? If so, what is an example?

All grantees are required to provide a final report that addresses the following questions (which are developed by staff):

- ◆ What was the impact of your project? (compared to the goals and objectives outlined in your original grant proposal)? What is concretely different (in the world) as a result of your project? How does the impact of your project relate to the mission of the CDF?
- ◆ What were some of the challenges/difficulties that you encountered as you implemented your project?
- ◆ How did these challenges/difficulties impact the project or your organization? How were they addressed?
- ◆ What measures did you use to determine your progress?
- ◆ If you worked collaboratively with another organization(s) on this project/program, describe the impact of that work for the project.
- ◆ Describe how you will sustain your project/program beyond this grant period.

- ◆ Please provide any comments/suggestions regarding our grant making process (including the application, application review process, and/or reporting requirements).

Longer-term program partners are also required to check-in quarterly to review program progress and discuss any challenges. The Foundation participates on the Steering Committees for two of our longer-term partnerships and as such is actively engaged and aware of program successes and difficulties. The Foundation also encourages utilizing a developmental evaluation process in order to assess impact in real time.

Staff reviews final reports and shares them with the board online and through an internal newsletter. From time to time, the Foundation shares “stories of impact” and produces reports that highlight program partners. All of our granting priorities have undergone a deep analysis and evaluation process to aid in the strategic planning process.

For more information about the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, contact Valerie Lemieux at vlemieux@catherinedonnellyfoundation.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.