

The Durfee Foundation

GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

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

We are a family foundation that was founded in Los Angeles in 1960. Our focus is on Los Angeles County. We do not focus on issue areas, but rather, on the “how” of our work.

As stated on our website: “Durfee is a patient grantmaker and seeks to be a trusting partner. We believe that meaningful, lasting change isn’t always easy to measure in a chart and certainly doesn’t happen overnight. We select grantees with great care and attention, we offer them guidance and support, and then we let them get to work. We are deeply committed to the success of our grantees, partners, and Los Angeles.”

This is manifested through our core tenets of peer review, convening, creating and nurturing networks, continuous learning, mentor relationships and being nimble.

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

Our board decides on our big picture grantmaking priorities (note that we have community members on our board in addition to family members). Their decisions are influenced by the community.

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

This is a continuous process of learning. Durfee staff are close to the ground and stay in conversation with our grantees constantly through regular convenings and informal contacts. We try to keep tabs on what is happening in our region and how we might be helpful.

When we are thinking about embarking into a new grantmaking arena, we bring together one or more focus groups to discuss ideas and implementation.

How are these practices socialized within your organization?

This is part of our DNA. We were founded by an inventor and entrepreneur, and we think of ourselves as having a

“tinkering culture.” We’re always looking for the best ideas and recognize that those are most likely to come from the field.

TYPES OF GRANTS

What kinds of grants do you provide (e.g., general, rapid response, capacity building, field-building, etc.)?

We have several grant programs:

- ◆ Our **sabbatical program** is intended for nonprofit leaders is a capacity-building grant.
- ◆ Our **LEAD Residency** is a professional development program for staff at sabbatical recipient organizations who served in the interim leadership role when the awardee took a sabbatical.
- ◆ Our **Springboard Fund** provides general operating support and mentorship to newer organizations.
- ◆ Our **Stanton Fellowship** is a cross-disciplinary leadership program that provides unrestricted funding for big-picture problem solving in a cohort.
- ◆ Our **Ignite LA** program sends high school students to research science stations in the summer to experience hands-on science.

What is the range in amount of the grants you award?

\$50,000–\$100,000

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

Not all function in the same way. Our two fellowship programs, Sabbatical and Stanton, have robust alumni groups. Alumni serve on the selection panels, outnumbering staff, and have a full voice in the decision process. While other programs use staff and board for decision making, but we will often reach out to community for input.

Do you earmark funding for a specific purpose in order to ensure diversity in who/what you’re funding?

We do not earmark funding for diversity, but we are

mindful of diversity, equity, and inclusion when we make grant decisions.

Who determines the type and size of grants, and how?

The staff make these decisions. Most of our grant programs set a specific amount that people are applying for.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

This depends on the program. Each program has specific eligibility criteria depending on its intended impact and this information can be found on our website.

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

This also depends on the program. A lot of outreach happens through the alumni networks. When we have grant deadlines, we will send out emails to the alumni network, other funders, and community networks to ask them for recommendations and spread the word. We also use Facebook and Twitter to get the word out about our applications.

How often do you accept applications/grant proposals?

It depends on the program. Springboard is three times per year, Ignite is once a year, and Sabbatical and Stanton are every other year.

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

We encourage all applicants to call our office and talk about their interest before applying. We are happy to give advice about structuring an application or advising whether Durfee is a good fit.

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

We ask for budget and organizational information and ask specific questions for each program. The selection panel for each program 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?

Yes, staff screen for eligibility. We have spent a lot of time outlining eligibility criteria, which we on our website to ensure that screening is consistent.

If more than one person is involved, how do you ensure that the same criteria has been considered in all cases?

We have eligibility requirements that are screened by staff and which are designed to ensure consistency.

GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

Who comprises your grantmaking selection panel(s)?

For the Sabbatical and Stanton programs, we typically have three alumni, two staff and maybe one trustee. (Note that we have community members on our board who may serve on the selection panel)

How are they selected (e.g., by nomination, application, etc.)?

Staff consult alumni for recommendations.

How do you think about representation of specific population groups or geographies?

When we compose a panel, we are mindful of ensuring representation from diverse communities in terms of race, types and sizes of organizations, and geography within L.A. County.

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

We usually ask people to serve once. It's an honor that we want to distribute around the community, and we want to access a variety of viewpoints.

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

We have lots of discussion to reach a consensus.

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

We're more focused on inclusivity than streamlining, which we believe comes in when the foundation is defining its grantmaking goals and eligibility criteria. For inclusivity we just try to walk the talk. We listen, we maintain open minds, and we show that all voices matter in the process. Foundation staff and trustee votes do not weigh more heavily than community votes on panels.

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?

No.

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

We do straw polls and then talk through our differences. We strive to reach agreement by the end and do. Everyone might not get their first choice, but we want them to at least feel that they can express their opinions and come to a place of supporting the final decisions.

How are selection panel members trained and supported?

We orient them in advance and reach out during the process to see if they have questions.

What recourse do grants applicants have to challenge the decisions?

We don't accept challenges to decisions, but we invite declined applicants to call and receive feedback on their applications.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

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

At least 50 percent, sometimes more.

Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers?

Yes, when we are thinking about entering new areas of work we bring together focus groups to sound out ideas.

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

Staff do more of the background work. Selection committee members read applications and participate in interviews and the decision process. Staff also do site visits, answer questions from applicants, call references, and fill in the rest of the panel on that part of the work.

Do you pay members of your panel/committee?

Yes, we pay Stanton and Sabbatical selection committee members \$2,500 for their service. We feel very strongly that they should be paid because we are asking them for three full days of meetings, plus many hours reading applications.

REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

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

It depends on the program. Staff develop them.

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

Rarely. We did a 20-year retrospective evaluation of the Sabbatical program for which we hired an evaluator who did interviews and surveys of grantees.

How do you evaluate impact?

This is a big question that is also determined by on each program. However, across all of Durfee's grantmaking this tenant stands true: "Durfee is a patient grantmaker. We are willing to make grants where the outcome may be hard to measure or not measurable for many years." We trust in innovation and accept outcomes that may not be what was originally intended.

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

We talk to all stakeholders all the time, so we know what they are experiencing.

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

We post a lot of information on our website, and we are getting better about learning how to "push out" that information. We also present at conferences and meet with other funders through infrastructure groups and informal funder/nonprofit groups.

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

Yes, all the time. This is part of our tinkering culture.

For example, we started our Stanton Fellowship in 2006 as a project-based grant of \$50,000 over two years to six prominent leaders who had a deep inquiry they wanted to work on. We brought the group together periodically and discovered that what they really wanted was to learn from one another, which wasn't an initial focus of the program. We then restructured the program to focus much more on the cohort learning together.

Now, quarterly fellows' meetings are hosted by one fellow who provides a deep dive into his or her issue. Recently, one of these Stanton Day meetings was focused on the extremely mentally ill homeless population. It included a visit to the county jail and lunch with the judge who oversees mental health cases, followed by brainstorming and problem-solving by the full cohort.

We have also included a retreat at the beginning and the end of the fellowship program and increased our grant amount

to \$100,000 over two years. We have a **10-year study** about the Stanton Fellowship with more information.

Similarly, our Sabbatical Program initially focused solely on the experience of the leader taking a sabbatical, seeking to provide her/him with rest and rejuvenation. We learned from talking to the staff who filled in for the sabbatical organization that the program had the potential for broader organizational development, so we widened our focus to include the overall health of the organization and the secondary staff. We also added a stipend for the interim staff in addition to the sabbatical award, more time with a consultant to prepare for and process the changes that occur because of the sabbatical, and an interim orientation and post-sabbatical debrief. We also created the LEAD Residency to support secondary staff.

These changes didn't all happen at once but took place incrementally after talking to the people who were affected by the program.

For more information about the Durfee Foundation, contact Carrie Avery at carrie@durfee.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.