

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Purpose:** Over the coming three years, the Fund for Louisville will offer direct multi-year renewable investment to nonprofit institutions led by and serving Black people with the goal of dismantling systems preventing racial and economic equity while constructing new systems promoting justice.

**Why are we addressing racial and economic equity?** The Greater Louisville Project's 2019 report, *15 Years Beyond Merger*, highlighted longstanding and persistent gaps in educational, wage and employment, and health outcomes based on race. In fact, report after report show that the status quo in Louisville, KY is racial inequality. We have systems that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and populations while disproportionately advantaging other individuals and communities. Transformative approaches aim to bring about lasting change by altering underlying structures and dismantling mechanisms which create systems that support inequality. These can include policies, processes, routines, relationships, resources, power structures and values.

Like many others, CFL defines racial equity as both an outcome and a process<sup>1</sup>. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one's socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive. As a process, we operationalize racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the co-creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives and livelihoods.

**Why Black-Led Organizations?** Studies confirm that social change is most effective when led by the communities most impacted. Black people in Louisville, KY are the single-most likely demographic most affected by barriers to racial and economic equity. And, when racism intersects with other systems of power, including queerphobia, ableism, classism and more, we know the impact is even more adverse. Additionally, in national analysis, Foundation grant making consistently underfunds organizations led by Black people.

Over the past 3 years, the Community Foundation of Louisville has granted more Fund for Louisville dollars to Black-led organizations; however, much work remains to address the inequities in our own funding practices. We must acknowledge and enhance existing assets within Black communities with intentional coordinated capital investments of all forms to institutions led by and serving Black people. CFL seeks to invest in organizations whose decision makers' reflect the lived experience of the communities they serve. Our intent is to invest in institutions and practices designed by and for those who are most harmed by racial and economic oppression. Furthermore,

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Center for Social Inclusion

we will apply the lessons learned from this intentional focus to advancing the needs of all racially oppressed people.

**How do we define a Black led and Black serving organization?** In a Black led organization the leadership positions (Executive director or equivalent, supervisory staff) and governance structures (Board, Trustees) positions are primarily occupied by people who self-identify as Black or African-American. A Black serving organization has a mission to improve the lives of Black communities.

**How will those most impacted by racial and economic oppression co-create and lead systems-level change for racial and economic justice?** Paternalism is a characteristic of White Supremacy culture which supports the belief that organizations led by the dominant culture know what is most beneficial for Black communities. This is often demonstrated in philanthropy when grant processes are developed without the input of organizations intended to receive the philanthropic support. The Community Foundation of Louisville will use data and resources from the work of the Louisville Coordinated Community Investment Project to identify Black voices who can collaborate with CFL to navigate the many decisions necessary for a successful initiative.

In addition, the Louisville Urban League (LUL) has convened a regular meeting of Black leaders to improve communication and coordinate responses related to the Covid-19 pandemic and community calls for system-level changes in Louisville's policing, criminal justice, and economic systems. The primary participants of this weekly convening are nonprofit social service agencies dedicated to improving the lives of Black communities. This group initiated a document titled, A Path Forward (<https://apathforward4lou.org/>) describing key issues for the Black community with suggested action steps.

Expertise from both the LCCI advisors and the LUL sponsored Black leaders convening will help CFL design a strategy to engage Black voices in the co-creation of a new Fund for Louisville strategy - including eligibility requirements, selection criteria, selection process, desired outcomes and measures of impact. The FFL 2021-2023 is a transformative practice requiring a shift in the foundation's established operating procedures. We want to develop a process which allows space for Black leaders and philanthropy to discover transformational processes and practices which begin to correct the power imbalance between philanthropy and Black communities. This means CFL will begin the process by getting proximate, asking, listening, learning, and responding to Black leaders instead of our traditional practice of starting with solutions.

Consequently, CFL is seeking the expertise of successful Black voices with ample lived experience addressing the most urgent issues facing Black communities. Our society often compensates consultants for their time and knowledge. It is necessary to demonstrate our respect for participating Black leaders' time and expertise by providing them with compensation.

**Why are we taking the time to work with Black leaders to co-create a FFL systems-level change strategy?** Power imbalances have existed for decades between philanthropy and Black-led organizations. This imbalance has resulted in underfunding of Black led and Black serving organizations as well as intense mistrust of philanthropy. It is important that we take the time to work on correcting the power imbalance while building trust between all partners focused on improving the lives of Black communities. Philanthropy can take the time to demonstrate our respect and confidence in local Black leaders to shape the strategy. Simultaneously Black communities can learn to trust philanthropy as active, yet unobstructive, partners.

It is true that many Black-led and Black serving organizations are experiencing financial challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this is a challenge that Black leaders have adeptly navigated for numerous years. However, Louisville's Black leaders have yet to be offered the opportunity to work directly with philanthropy to co-create a systems-level change strategy intended specifically for Black communities. Slowing down our traditional processes to co-create a new system is in direct opposition to the sense of urgency characteristic of White Supremacy culture, which believes action must be taken swiftly without considering other perspectives or options.

**Will there be a framework from which Black-led organizations and philanthropy partner to co-create the FFL 2021-2023 strategy?** Yes. In order to manage budgets and provide adequate staff support, the Community Foundation of Louisville will provide basic elements that must be a part of the current strategy. Specifics such as schedules, workshop topics, presenters, and others will be identified by the cohort with support from a CFL staff member. The required framework items include:

- Creation of a cohort of 8 – 16 Black led organizations serving Black communities
- Three year unrestricted, renewable grant funding for each cohort organization
- Monthly cohort meetings (peer support)
- Quarterly cohort workshops (capacity building)
- Annual cohort presentation to leaders of Black led organizations (cross-sector learning)

**Will people participating in the Design Workgroup be eligible for future CFL funding?**

Participating in the design group will in no way advantage or disadvantage a nonprofit organization when it comes to receiving future funding from CFL. In fact, the Design Group will help establish processes that ensures that this possible.

**How will the Fund For Louisville: Systems Change for Racial Justice support other calls to direct more funding to nonprofit organizations led by and serving Black people?**

The [Path Forward](#) and the [Black L.O.V.E Philanthropy Project](#) have both called for greater investment in nonprofit and for-profit organizations led by and serving Black people. CFL intends to share our learnings from this new process with the leaders of both these initiatives. In addition, the recommendations received from the Call for Nominations for the Design Workgroup will be shared with both of these initiatives as a way of possibly engaging Black voices interested in reshaping and leading in Louisville's philanthropy sector.