

RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE: POWERBUILDING GRANTS

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund



RESJF FUND DOCUMENT

“Our plan is to co-create a process with our local communities of color that incorporates participatory grantmaking, convening and community-based decision making. The model, goals and evaluation plan will be co-designed and co-led.”

DISCOVERY PROCESS: Identifying the gaps



Coalition Meetings

Met with previously established coalitions and social good partners to identify how a funder could help keep people at the table.



Individual Interviews

Met with nonprofit leaders and professionals across different sectors to identify areas of need connected to racial equity work. Primary focus on what a funder can bring to the table.



Working Sessions

Worked with nonprofits and social good partners to build understanding about the functions of a community foundation.



RESJI Objectives Identified

1

Foundation Led Education

What are the resources that we already have at our disposal and how do we grant access to community. If we want true participation, we must address knowledge gap.

2

Community Led Grantmaking

Utilize advisors with lived and professional experience to codesign and lead grantmaking from the fund in a responsive way.

3

Not just a convener, an anchor

Social good partners (coalitions, movements, self governed initiatives) often suffer from lack of resources to keep members at the table over time.

4

An advocate

“We commit to utilizing all forms of capital to advance equity”-CFWM Commitment to Advancing DEI. This must include financial, reputational and political capital.



Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund Grants

Power-Building & Advocacy

Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

Our Commitment:

We invest in equity-driven, community-led efforts to challenge systemic injustice and build lasting change across Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin County

Why This Matters:

Historical disinvestment and discrimination have denied Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities the power to influence systems that impact their lives.

This Grant Supports:

- Community organizing and advocacy
- Leadership by those most affected
- Bold, systemic change efforts
- Groups with limited yet high-impact capacity

Our Approach:

Beyond funding—we listen, collaborate, and work alongside communities to scale transformative solutions.



RESJ Eligibility

All funded work must be:

- Rooted in Hampden, Hampshire, and/or Franklin County.
- Led by or meaningfully guided by communities most impacted by racial, economic, or social inequality.
- Grounded in racial justice and committed to systemic change.
- Eligible organizations must have IRS designated 501(c)(3) status or an existing fiscal sponsorship.
- An organization with an operating budget less than \$5 million. Organizations with operating budgets larger than \$5 million are not eligible. There is a strong preference for organizations with an operating budget of less than \$1 million.

Funding cannot support the following:

- Endowments or capital campaigns
- Sectarian or religious organizations unless as a fiscal sponsor for a broad community benefit
- Institutions of higher education—including for scholarships
- Academic research
- K-12 schools—public, private, or charter schools
- Organizations whose mission is to support municipalities/government agencies such as friends of libraries or school districts



GRANT TRACKS

Learning Grants: Up to \$15,000 | 12-month period

For organizations early in their systems change or power-building journey. Supports leadership development, racial equity learning, and capacity building. Includes participation in no more than two CFWM-led learning sessions. Eligible organizations have limited prior experience but demonstrate commitment to equity and collective learning. May qualify for Emerging Grants after one year.

Emerging Grants: Up to \$30,000 | 12-month period

For organizations already engaged in systems change or power-building work. Supports growth, deeper strategy, and advocacy rooted in racial and economic justice. Requires participation in no more than two CFWM-led learning sessions and RESJI peer convenings.



RESJ Timeline

June 11 – Application Opens

June 16 – Information Session (Virtual)

June 25 & July 8 – Virtual Office Hours

July 14 – Application Deadline

July 15–17 – Application Preparation & Reviewer Assignments

July 18 – Application Review Begins

August 11 – Application Review Closes

August 12–30 – Review Debrief & Decision Prep

September 9 – Decision Meeting(at the DC meeting)

September 10–13 – Award Processing & Notification Prep

September 15 – Grantee Notifications Sent

By September 30 – Grant Funds Disbursed



RESJ Application

All Applicants

1. What does community accountability look like for your organization?
2. What key event, long-standing issue or recent moment are you responding to, and how does it create an opportunity to build collective power?
3. How will this grant help expand leadership opportunities for directly impacted people?

EMERGING - Up to \$30,000

1. Describe your organization's existing systems change or power-building efforts. Include specific campaigns, strategies, or programs you've undertaken in the past 1-3 years.
2. How are directly impacted individuals involved in designing and leading this work?
3. What specific goals or outcomes do you hope to achieve during the grant period?

LEARNING - Up to \$15,000

1. Why is this the right time for your organization to explore power-building and systems change?
2. What do you hope to learn or build internally through this grant?
3. Describe your organization's current capacity for racial equity and organizing work. Where do you see the greatest opportunity for growth?



FAQs

Can organizations not based in Hamden, Hampshire or Franklin County receive a grant?

We do fund organizations that work at the state or regional level. That said, as a place-based funder, it's important to us that organizations have a meaningful presence in our three-county region. In our view, that looks like dedicated staff spending significant time serving residents of our region. If you're wondering whether it's "enough" time—it probably isn't.

What kind of reporting is required?

Instead of written progress reports, we hold check-in calls with grantees. Each grantee will meet with their assigned program officer at least twice during the grant period. A brief final report will be required at the end of the award. Additionally, we hope to bring this cohort of grantees together for a convening.

Can you receive a RESJ grant if you have already received another competitive grant from CFWM?

Yes

Our organizational budget is over \$5 million, can we apply?

Our initial response is no. However, we do make exceptions for programs operating under the umbrella of a larger organization, provided they have their own budget and an independent governing or advisory body. If you're unsure whether your program qualifies, feel free to contact Jeffery Markham Jr. for clarification.

Is funding unrestricted?

Yes. While these grants are intended to support community power-building, we recognize that operational needs are a part of sustaining that work. During check-ins and in the final report, organizations should be prepared to share how the funding has supported their power-building efforts.



Thank You!

Questions?

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