



## Request for Proposals

January 2021

### Context

In 2020, our lives were upended by the COVID-19 crisis.

Cleveland's first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on [March 14, 2020](#). By [January 3, 2021](#), Cuyahoga County had amassed the second highest number of cases and the highest death toll in the state.

While many expected that the impact of this virus would cut across all social lines, we now know that this is not the case. ["There is an old saying in the black community, 'When white America gets the flu, black America gets pneumonia,'" said the Rev. Aaron Phillips, the pastor of Sure House Baptist Church on Miles Avenue, near East 116<sup>th</sup> Street.](#) And, unfortunately but perhaps not surprisingly, COVID-19 has been disproportionately devastating to the Black community:

- ["In Cleveland, one of the most segregated cities in America, the numbers are haunting: At least 70% of the total cases in the city in which race is known involve African Americans. Black residents make up slightly more than 45% of the city's population."](#)
- ["Though Black Ohioans comprise 14% of the state's population, they make up 27% of the COVID-19 hospitalization load, state data shows."](#)

These effects overlay and compound longstanding racial inequity and disparity. In 2019, Cleveland was [the 9<sup>th</sup> most segregated city in the country](#). In January 2020, Cleveland was named [the worst city in the country for Black women](#), after measuring several factors related to education, income, and health. Protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd struck a deep nerve due to our area's own history of death at the hands of police.

Well before any of this, Black community leaders and activists had been working hard for years for justice and equity. But now, the work takes on a new dimension due to this pandemic. In order for the Black community to recover from this crisis, we will need strong, community-oriented organizations with clear understanding of the decades-long need for racial justice, the effects of the pandemic, and a hopeful vision for the future.

## The Cleveland Black Futures Fund

The Cleveland Black Futures Fund (CBFF) was established in 2020 to support the capacity of **Cleveland-based nonprofit organizations that are BOTH Black-led and Black serving**. This purpose raises some questions.

*Why organizational capacity?*

[Candid.org](#) states: “Capacity building can help make an organization more focused, efficient, and productive” and this “makes it easier to attract the money, leadership and visibility that nonprofits need to thrive.”

*What are some examples of organizational capacity activities and components?*

[The Free Management Library](#) describes a host of capacity building activities, including:

- Board development
- Business planning
- Evaluation
- Facilities planning
- Financial management
- Fundraising
- Information technology
- Leadership development
- Legal services
- Management development
- Marketing
- Program design
- Quality management
- Staffing
- Strategic planning

This is not an exhaustive list, but is meant to provide some insight into the types of activities the CBFF welcomes in proposals.

*What do you mean by Black-led and Black serving?*

For the purposes of this grant, we seek to support organizations that have Black chief executive leadership and that serve the Black community. Unfortunately, national data show us that the race of an organization’s executive leadership has historically been correlated with likelihood of obtaining grant funding. Therefore, this grant opportunity is designed to be intentional about providing grant funding to organizations with Black leaders. Organizations that serve Black communities but do not have Black executive leaders will not be eligible for this particular grant opportunity.

*What kinds of organizations may apply?*

Applicant organizations may operate in a range of issue areas, but grants can only be made to organizations currently holding 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. Organizations that do not currently have 501(c)3 tax-exempt status are eligible to apply in partnership with a tax-exempt organization serving as a fiscal agent.

## Current Fund Priorities

In light of the acute crisis we face, the CBFF asks fund applicants to reflect on the effects of the pandemic in the community.

Please note: this framing is not intended to limit the applicant pool to strictly health, public health, or social services work. We believe strongly that work across sectors will be important to the health and resilience of the community during this pandemic, including environmental work, technology, arts, policy and advocacy, and much more.

## Application Process

This application differs from the standard Cleveland Foundation application process. Please be sure to use the Cleveland Black Futures Fund application.

Rather than asking for an open-ended narrative, this application asks direct and specific questions of applicants. We are asking a series of questions to ensure that we receive certain types of information from every single applicant. This information will help us understand the depth of need for support across the community, and help us plan for this and subsequent rounds of grantmaking, this year and in years to come. Answers to these questions need not be lengthy; therefore, many of the question boxes on the application will have word limits.

Applications must be submitted online. Hard copy applications will not be accepted. To apply:

1. Access the Grants Gateway: <https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/grants/apply-for-a-grant/>.
2. If you do not have login information, complete the Grantee Login Request Form.
3. Login to the portal and establish or update your organization profile. The profile asks for information about:
  - Staff
  - Consultants
  - Organization mission
  - Programs and services
  - Organizational history
4. From the Grants Gateway landing page after logging in, click on the Apply for Grants link to find the Cleveland Black Futures Fund application. Complete the application questions:
  - Who does your organization serve? This can include neighborhoods, age groups, specific communities, and/or other identifiers.
  - Where does your organization operate? Please include neighborhoods, programming sites, buildings, and offices. Does your organization own or lease space?
  - Are your organization's staff full time or part time? Paid or volunteer?
  - When does your organization's typical programming or work take place?
  - What are your guiding values?
  - What are your organization's greatest strengths and challenges at this time?
  - Please describe the activities you would undertake with grant funding in as much detail as necessary. How would these activities strengthen your organization's capacity? For examples of what constitutes organizational capacity, please see the Request for Proposals. Why is this work urgent right now? What outcomes do you hope to achieve?
  - If awarded a grant, when would your organization begin proposed activities?
  - Please describe any partnerships that are important to your work.
  - Based on your experience, please explain how COVID-19 has affected the community you serve and your organization.

- If you could look into the future 5-10 years, what would you want news headlines and stories to say about your organization and the work you have accomplished?
  - Additional Information: Please tell us anything else you believe we should know to evaluate your proposal well.
5. Upload the Required Attachments, which include:
- Line item project budget in the **provided Excel template**.
  - Board information: list of members with affiliations, term lengths of Board members, and committees.
  - Organization budget for the current fiscal year.
  - Complete audit (if available, include auditors notes and management letter, if issued). If no audit is available, please provide: Statement of Revenue/Support and Expenses for your organization's most recently completed fiscal/calendar year, Current Balance Sheet and Statement of Activities for most recently completed fiscal/calendar year.

## Timeline

- January 25, 2021: Online application process begins at noon
- January 28, 2021: Webinar (click [here](#) to register)
- February 1-12, 2021: Virtual office hours (click [here](#) to schedule a time)
- February 11, 2021: Virtual town hall with Radio One Cleveland
- February 26, 2021: Application deadline
- End of March: Applicants informed of funding decisions

A second round of grantmaking will be announced to take place in late summer-fall 2021.

## Questions

For programmatic questions or information, contact: [ClevelandBlackFuturesFund@clevelandn.org](mailto:ClevelandBlackFuturesFund@clevelandn.org).

For application or technical questions, contact: [grantsmgmt@clevelandn.org](mailto:grantsmgmt@clevelandn.org).