

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION *of* NORTHERN ILLINOIS GRANTMAKING PHILOSOPHIES

Co-created by CFNIL staff, Trustees, and Grants Committee, for the purpose of articulating guiding principles for grantmaking.
First drafted Summer 2019 with updates approved by the Grants Committee in May 2023.

OUR GRANTEES ARE OUR PARTNERS.

The grantor-grantee relationship is pivotal for converting community resources into impact. The funder provides resources and the grantee provides services; one cannot function without the other. This document describes CFNIL's philosophies for the most effective grantmaking.

These should be seen as guidelines, not rules.

1. WE RESPECT APPLICANTS AS THE EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELDS.

We allow the grantee to address the current and future needs of the people of Northern Illinois as their expertise suggests and hold them accountable for self-determined results.



2. WE RESPECT OUR ADVISORS.

We consciously cultivate a robust group of volunteers with diverse backgrounds and a wide range of expertise to evaluate grant applications, and we respect their time, wisdom, and experience.



3. PARTIAL FUNDING SHOULD ONLY BE AWARDED WITH CAUTION.

Providing a grant for the full or requested share of the cost of a charitable activity gives it the best chance of success.



4. FUNDING INDIRECT COSTS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Indirect costs are expenses that are necessary to the operation of an organization but cannot be readily attributed to a specific program or activity. Indirect costs are real costs that should be funded just like any other component of a program.



5. COMPETENT, TRAINED, & ADEQUATELY COMPENSATED STAFF ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS & HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONS.

Staffing costs should not be considered differently than any other budget item.



6. NONPROFITS RELY ON GRANT FUNDING FOR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY.

Plans for funding a program beyond the grant timeline should not be the ultimate deciding factor.



7. TRANSPARENCY IS FUNDAMENTAL.

The basis for trust is transparency. Trust is required for a partnership to flourish. As a community partner CFNIL goes to great lengths to ensure that transparency permeates all aspects of our work, especially our grants processes.

