



Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation

The Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation was established by the Board of Directors of the former Young Women's Christian Association of Aurora, Illinois, which later became known as the YWCA Aurora.

In 1893, a group of Aurora women interested in forming an organization for women met in the Todd Building, which is located at 44 West Downer Place in Aurora. The YWCA organization officially became an Illinois not-for-profit corporation on October 18, 1894. The YWCA's first outreach program began in 1895 with a "noon rest for working girls". In 1906, the Aurora YWCA became a charter member of the YWCA of the USA. Sponsoring memberships for youth to attend camp and building activities have always been a part of YWCA programming.

In July 2018, the Board of Directors of the YWCA Aurora made a challenging and empowering decision to shift from a program organization to a funding organization, thus the Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation was established. With substantial investment funds generated from greater Aurora businesses and individuals, and in order to avoid duplicating services with other area not-for-profit agencies, The Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation will be able to distribute scholarships and grants to local not-for-profit organizations that offer community based programs meeting the objectives of the mission of the YWCA: eliminating racism and empowering women.

The Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation seeks grant applications from not-for-profit organizations, which have a record of established ongoing programs and initiatives that support elimination of racism and encourage empowerment of women and girls who live in the greater Aurora, Illinois area.

Application Guidelines for Grant Proposals

The Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation (AWEF) is accepting grant proposals from nonprofit organizations for programs that address the following focus areas:

Women's Education – AWEF seeks proposals that educate women and girls about preparation for careers, and leadership development.

Women's Economic Empowerment – AWEF seeks proposals that focus on enabling women to financially support themselves and their children. Consideration will be given to financial literacy programs; programs that create better jobs and better access to jobs for women;

programs that prepare women for better jobs; and programs that enable women with children to work more productively.

Racial Equity for Women of Color – Programs that have a direct impact on racial justice, women impacted by structural and institutional racism, or creates a solution to racial barriers experienced by women of color.

These social issues all significantly impact the quality of life in our community. **The AWEF seeks applications from 501 (c)(3) organizations in the greater Aurora area that have identified projects or programs, specific to the issues listed above, that will facilitate quantitative progress in these specified areas.**

Characteristics of AWEF Grants:

Eligible Organizations – The AWEF will only make grants to qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit public organizations, in good standing with the State of Illinois, providing services in the greater Aurora, Illinois community. The Foundation encourages collaborations between and among organizations working to achieve a common goal. In such collaborations, one organization must be identified as the grantee applicant.

Grant Focus – Grants specifically targeting one of the three identified interest areas, seeking support for program related expenses and program delivery, will receive the greatest consideration. AWEF appreciates the cost of operations and operational staff, but will not fund outside of program delivery.

Size of Grants – The amount of each grant shall be determined by AWEF’s Board of Directors. Proposals that demonstrate the most effective use of grant funds in the context of current programming needs have the greatest chance to receive a grant from AWEF. Partial grants may be issued.

Duration of Grants – AWEF grants are for a period of up to one year, with the expectation that the full amount of the grant will be used within that time. Multiyear applications are not encouraged and will be considered by AWEF at its sole discretion.

Geographic Range of Grants – AWEF grants must benefit women and girls living in the greater Aurora, Illinois community.

Leadership and Fiscal Accountability – AWEF grantee organizations must have the leadership capacity, financial stability, and appropriate procedures in place for fiscal and organizational accountability.

AWEF will NOT fund:

- 501 c 3’s not providing direct service to the Aurora community

- Operations, operational staff, and operational deficits
- Capital campaigns and non-program related capital items
- Religious activities
- Political activities
- Retroactive funding requests
- Fundraising events
- Organizations that may be deemed as discriminatory on the basis of race, age, gender, ability level or sexual orientation
- Requests to reduce an operating deficit or to liquidate existing debt
- Agencies of local, state or federal government, unless they are part of a community collaborative that includes eligible organizations
- Corporate campaigns not associated with a specific non-profit initiative
- Individuals

Grant Proposal Application:

Grant application packets will be consolidated into one PDF. Grant application must include the following, in the order listed below:

- Cover letter – Specifically state which program area your application covers: Women’s Education, Women’s Economic Empowerment or Racial Equity for Women of Color. Introduce project or need and provide requestor’s contact information (name, address, email and phone number)
- Executive Summary and Statement of Need – State your organizations mission, how the fund request meets the mission of AWEF requested amount, clear statement explaining your focus area, grant duration (i.e. one time recurring, annually) how the funds will be used to benefit women and girls in the greater Aurora, Illinois community and goals of your project.
 - Answer the questions as completely, yet briefly, as possible.
 - If you are working with other organizations, foundations or businesses please identify them and describe the intended working relationship with each. You may also attach letters of support.

Required Supporting Documents, in this order:

- 501 c 3 letter from the Secretary of State
- Current organizational budget and detailed project budget with narrative
- Current organizational chart, and current roster of board of directors

- Prior year audit

Grant Proposal Application Deadline

The grant application deadline for each year shall be set by AWEF's Board of Directors.

If you have any questions regarding AWEF Grant Guidelines or grant proposal applications, please contact us at info@awe-foundation.org.

Proposal Review and Grant Approval Process

1. Proposals are reviewed by AWEF's Board of Directors. Applicants may be asked to arrange an on-site visit, or conduct an in person interview with the Board of Directors. Review criteria will include the following:

- Is the applicant a 501 c 3?
- Which focus area does the proposal identify?
- Does the application specifically serve people in the greater Aurora community?
- Does the proposal include all required attachments?
- Are the objectives of the applicant, as stated in the proposal, clear?
- How does the proposal promote collaboration between organizations?
- Does the proposal target the stated funding priorities?
- Is the applicant's budget projection realistic?
- Is applicant financially stable enough to implement the program for which the grant funds will be used?
- Does the applicant's internal management structure provide appropriate levels of leadership and accountability?

2. Award decisions will be determined in part by the capacity of the applicant organization to implement the proposed program and meet AWEF objectives.

3. Each grant recipient must submit one interim written report to AWEF Board of Directors within the first six months after award of the grant. In addition, each grant recipient must submit a final written report and the most current fiscal report within the six month period prior to the end of the grant term. Recipients may be called to provide an in-person debriefing at the conclusion of the grant term. Failure to submit the required initial six month report and the final reports may result in removal of the recipient from future consideration of funding requests from AWEF.

4. Grant awards will be announced not later than June 30th of each year.

5. Note that we ask about the possibility of volunteer activities associated with the programs supported by grants made by AWEF. This is not a required component of the project, but this

information will inform our committee and donors of other ways that AWEF may assist the applicant organization in delivering the program.

Thank you for requesting a grant from the Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation.