AWEF Application Guidelines for Grant Proposals

The Aurora Women's Empowerment Foundation (AWEF) mission is to elevate and empower Aurora-area women and future women by making grants to tax-exempt nonprofits engaged in meaningful, measurable work that helps women over the hurdles of inequity and exclusion, propelling them forward with life-changing programs and services.

AWEF seeks applications from tax-exempt 501 (c)(3) organizations in the greater Aurora area that have identified projects or programs that will facilitate quantitative progress in these areas:

Education – AWEF seeks proposals that educate women and girls about preparation for careers, leadership development, and emotional/social development.

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 programs that create a solution to racial barriers experienced by women of color will also be considered.

Other – AWEF is open to other proposals not listed above that fit within its mission. Submitting a Letter of Intent (LOI) prior to completing a grant application is strongly encouraged.

Letter of Intent

AWEF recommends that before a nonprofit submits an online grant proposal, they provide a one- to two-page Letter of Intent (LOI) for our board to review. The LOI can be emailed to rachaelmpaul@gmail.com.

Elements to consider in your LOI:

- Your nonprofit's name and logo at the top
- The grant amount you are seeking and the name of your project (program/service) for which you are seeking funds
- A sentence or two describing how your project fits AWEF's mission and vision
- A brief history of your nonprofit and its programs, including your target population and geographical area
- Two or three sentences describing the problem you hope to solve with your project and how you will use the grant funding to solve this problem (describe what you will do—include major activities along with the names and titles of key project staff)
- If you are requesting funding from other sources, mention that
- If you are interested in seeking a multi-year grant to bring the project out into the community beyond the first year, mention that as well
- If desired, you can also email AWEF materials, videos and links which are helpful to present your information

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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 where it makes sense. 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 expenses 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. AWEF is open to funding programs more than once.

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
- Organizations without at least three years of active operations as a 501(c)(3)
- 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 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, Racial Equity for Women of Color; or other.

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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. Please 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.

Additional require 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***
- ***Completed W9--form can be downloaded at: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf***

Grant Proposal Application Deadline

The grant application deadline for each year shall be set by AWEF's Board of Directors. Currently applications are accepted throughout the year.

Contact

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 throughout the year. 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)?
   - When was the applicant founded, and when did they begin operations in Aurora?
   - 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?
   - If applicable, 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?

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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) Grants will be awarded throughout the year.

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

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