



FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR LED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE U.S. SOUTH

REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INQUIRY (LOIs)

OVERVIEW

The Ms. Foundation for Women envisions a world in which Women and Girls of Color (WGOC) leverage their voice, power, and expertise to transform systems to live full and healthy lives. With an unapologetic commitment to a racial and gender equity/justice lens, we are shifting our grantmaking focus to building power and leadership of WGOC – which include Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Middle Eastern, and Asian/Pacific Islander women, girls, or nonbinary folks, both transgender and cisgender.

We are excited to launch our multiyear program strategy with the goals of strengthening the organizational and financial sustainability of an ecosystem of WGOC-led organizations; increasing connectivity between WGOC-led organizations; and positioning WGOC leaders as key experts and decision-makers in shaping policy and culture change. We are also excited to continue our history as a first funder of emerging work as we deepen our investment in the U.S. South. Our initial grantmaking of \$1,000,000 will support WGOC-led groups in the U.S. South across the spectrum of organizing and supporting our communities.

We are living in a historic moment. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated a crisis where one existed already. Our ability to support the leadership of WGOC is critical now more than ever. Our sisters of color represent the future of this country, demographically, and we have an obligation to shine a light on them, their struggle, and their strength. Given the polarization that the nation is experiencing and an extreme, divisive political culture, we believe that using an intersectional framework will wield the full strength of WGOC's knowledge, experience, and networks and lead to transformational change.

Women and Girls of Color are pivotal frontline leaders and organizers in the powerful social change movements that have paved the way for a more equitable and just democracy. They have led nearly every impactful grassroots movement in United States history. They are the primary constituency most impacted by inequity and live at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression including white supremacy, patriarchy, colonization, and unbridled capitalism. And yet, their work is under-resourced.

The Ms. Foundation commissioned a report called "[Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less](#)" and it provided us with a baseline of philanthropic funding and investment in WGOC throughout the United States and territories. We found that total philanthropic giving to WGOC averages out to less than \$6.00 per year for each woman or girl of



color in the United States – and the amount for WGOC in the South is the lowest in the nation at less than half the national average.

Our program team has been in deep learning and listening with southern leaders. While the need for more support of WCOG in the South is great, so too is the opportunity for strategic investment. Southern states have high and fast-growing populations of WGOC. The presence or emergence of regressive legislation in these states has the ability to influence the policy environments in other states. The South is home to current and former Ms. grantees whose expertise we can build upon. It is a place where other existing and potential funders can partner in this work to increase investment in WGOC.

Given these facts and findings, we are pivoting our grantmaking to address these funding disparities and capitalize on opportunities to move forward a WGOC-led agenda in 14 states in the South: **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.** We will seek to assemble a balanced portfolio of rural, urban, emerging, and established organizations. By advocating for greater investment within the philanthropic community, we seek to influence philanthropy to increase giving to WCOG by a significant margin. We will support organizations led by WGOC, track that support, and explicitly name it, and we will encourage other funders to engage in these practices as well. We are grateful for the support of our founders and allies as we pivot to where we *know* the need is the greatest.

ABOUT THE MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN

Our Mission

The Ms. Foundation for Women works to build women’s collective power in the U.S. to advance equity and justice for all. We will achieve our mission by investing in and strengthening the capacity of women-led movements to advance meaningful social, cultural and economic change in the lives of women.

Our Vision

We believe in a just and safe world where power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or age. We believe that equity and inclusion are the cornerstones of a true democracy in which the worth and dignity of every person are valued.

Our Values

- **Integrity:** We believe in holding ourselves responsible and accountable for all that we say in order to build an aligned, principled, and powerful movement for gender equity.



- **Trust and Respect:** We believe in the truth that comes from those we work with and those most impacted by the issues affecting their communities. We believe in honoring their voices and supporting their leadership.
- **Interconnectedness:** We believe that by achieving equity for women of color, we achieve equity for all. Given the complexity of the issues we face, we are committed to addressing issues holistically, understanding that we need to build power and alignment across multiple movements and sectors to win the battles we are facing.
- **Social Justice:** We believe that structural changes are needed in order to increase opportunities for those who are least well off politically, socially and economically.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The Ms. Foundation for Women welcomes **requests for general operating support** from groups working in the United States, Puerto Rico and U.S. territories. Organizations are invited to apply for up to \$50,000 per year for up to two years. Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Those that are funded may not be funded at requested levels. Please be assured that every request will be given full consideration.

*The Letter of Inquiry is the first step of the application process. Please submit a Letter of Inquiry for general operating support to the Ms. Foundation for Women. The deadline for submitting a Letter of Inquiry is **Friday, January 8, 2021 at 5:00 PM ET.***

Below you will find grant application guidelines. Please follow instructions carefully.

Important grant information:

- **Grant Type:** General operating support
- **Grant Range:** \$20,000 - \$50,000 per year
- **Total Funding Available:** \$1,000,000
- **Letter of Inquiry Deadline:** Friday, January 8, 2021 at 5:00 PM ET
- **Notification of Invitation to Submit Full Application:** Friday, February 5, 2021 at 5:00 PM ET.
- **Full Application Deadline:** Friday, February 26, 2021 at 5:00 PM ET.
- **Grant Period:** We anticipate an April 2021 start. We aim to award two-year grants as a best practice.

Grantee partners of the Ms. Foundation for Women may have the opportunity to participate in capacity building and learning activities that may include grantee trainings, convenings, strategy sessions, and webinars. These activities would not involve additional costs to the grantee, with the exception of grantee convening travel incidentals.



The Ms. Foundation for Women may also request grantees' participation in activities such as events, media outreach, and others to build national visibility around key issues and further support your advocacy.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered for this funding opportunity.

1. Applicant organizations should be led by Women and Girls of Color (i.e. 75-100% of the financial decision-makers for the organization must be Women and Girls of Color).
2. Applicant must be doing work focused in one or more of the 14 states listed in the "Overview" section of this RFP.
3. We seek applicants that use movement building and organizing strategies to improve the lived experience of Women and Girls of Color.
4. Applicant must be a 501(c)(3) organization or fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) organization.
5. The Budget cap for organizations is \$10 million.

GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

An overview of the stages of the application process follows:

	Phase	Deadlines/Time frames
1	Information Sessions	<i>December 10, 2020 (3:30 PM ET)</i> <i>December 17, 2020 (3:30 PM ET)</i>
2	Letters of Inquiry Phase	<i>Due January 8, 2021</i>
3	Application Phase	<i>Full Applications invited February 5, 2021</i> <i>Full Applications due February 26, 2021</i>
4	Notification of Awards	<i>Final award notifications will be sent by mid-April</i>



1. **Information Sessions:** Ms. will hold two optional 45-minute webinars on **Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 3:30 PM ET and Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 3:30 PM ET** to answer general questions about the RFP, proposal materials, and submission procedure. Webinar information will be available on the [website](#).
2. **Letters of Inquiry:** Organizations may submit a Letter of Inquiry, **by January 8, 2021**, not to exceed 3 pages. Please see the “Letter of Inquiry Guidelines” section for details.
3. **Full application invited:** Organizations that are selected to continue the application process will be invited **by February 5, 2021** to submit a full application, which may include a phone interview to address follow-up questions regarding the application narrative. Organizations that are not selected to continue the application process will be notified **by February 5, 2021**.
4. **Full application due:** Selected organizations will be invited to submit a full application, **due Friday, February 26, 2021**. Please see the “Full Application Guidelines” section for guidelines.
5. **Notification of awards:** Final notifications will be sent out by mid-April.

Letter of Inquiry Guidelines

As the first step of the application process, organizations are invited to submit a Letter of Inquiry (not to exceed 3 pages). The Letter of Inquiry and the following attachments are due **Friday, January 8, 2021, at 5:00 PM ET** through our online grant submission portal. Please see the link in the “Online Application Procedure” section of the RFP.

The letter of inquiry should include the following:

- Description of your organization’s work, including primary activities
- Measurable outcomes of your work to date
- Funding amount requested (as stated in online application)

Required Attachments:

1. **Organization Budget:** Most recent Organizational Budget. The total budget amount must equal the amount listed in the online application form.

NOTE: We accept existing organizational budgets; you are not required to use the Ms. budget template. **Please include a list of foundation donors with amounts.** If you do not have an existing



budget that clearly delineates income and expenses, we strongly encourage you to use the [Ms.-specific budget template](#).

2. Selected Pages from Form 990 (Page 1 and Schedule A): Please submit a copy of Page 1 and Schedule A from Form 990; you do not need to send the full document.

3. Audited Financial Statements: A complete copy of your organization or fiscal sponsor's most recent audited financial statements. If your organization is not legally required to get an audit, please submit the financials you share with your board in lieu of audited financials.

4. Board of Directors list: A list of your board of directors, including affiliations.

5. IRS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter: A copy of the IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter for your organization or your organization's fiscal sponsor.

Full Application Guidelines

Following the LOI stage, selected organizations will submit a full application, due ***Friday, February 26, 2021 at 5:00 PM ET***. The application should contain the following:

1. **A narrative proposal** (no more than 7 pages) that includes:
 - a. Your organization's credentials for carrying out the work;
 - b. A brief statement of the problem(s) you seek to address, including challenges and opportunities specific to your context;
 - c. A description of your plans to address the problem(s), including:
 - i. goals and objectives;
 - ii. planned activities, including who will be served;
 - iii. approximate timeline; and
 - iv. expected outcomes and plan for measuring results within the approximate timeline provided.
 - d. A description of the types of support, other than grant funding, that would be helpful to you in carrying out your work.



ONLINE APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Starting your application: Please use this link to access the online application form and create a user account. Please retain your username and password. The Ms. Foundation for Women does not have access to your account login information.

https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_829?SA=SNA&FID=35127

Continuing your application: To log back in to the system once an application has been saved or submitted, please use this link.

https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_829?SA=AM

In order to view your account page, your internet browser must accept cookies.

Contact Us

Troubleshooting: For technical difficulties with your online application, please send an email to Interim Grants Administrator Tsiry Rakoto (trakoto@ms.foundation.org)

Questions on Letter of Inquiry: For questions or discussion of your Letter of Inquiry submission, please do not hesitate to contact program officers: Coya White Hat-Artichoker (cwhitehat-artichoker@ms.foundation.org) or Samantha Franklin (sfranklin@ms.foundation.org). You will receive a response to your email within 1-2 business days. We can also try to accommodate different language needs as we are able.

Thank You!

The Ms. Foundation for Women looks forward to learning more about your work.