



Ms. FOUNDATION  
FOR WOMEN

## Activist Collaboration & Care Fund Request for Proposals - Summer 2023

**IN A NUTSHELL:** The Ms. Foundation for Women is launching a third round of the Activist Collaboration & Care Fund, which provides one-year unrestricted grant opportunities to movement building organizations. **The Fund will provide one-year unrestricted grants of \$15,000-\$25,000 to organizations with budgets under \$2 million that are led by and for trans and cis women and girls of color, and/or nonbinary people of color.** Organizations who apply for funding must be led by trans women, cis women, and/or non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and seek funding for one of the Fund's four funding areas: (1) collaboration, (2) healing, rest and restoration, (3) rapid response, and (4) digital infrastructure and digital safety. **All applications are due by 11:59 pm ET on August 25, 2023.** Details about eligibility criteria, assessment criteria, and application timeline can be found below. We strongly encourage all applicants to read the full Request for Proposals (RFP) before beginning your application.

### I. About the Ms. Foundation and the Activist Collaboration & Care Fund

The mission of the Ms. Foundation for Women is to build women's collective power in the U.S. to advance equity and justice for all. We 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. Ms. has six grantmaking initiatives, one of which is the Activist Collaboration & Care Fund. Launched in 2020, the Activist Collaboration & Care Fund (ACF) seeks to deepen collaboration within and across movement building organizations, affirm organizations' need for healing and rest, and catalyze increased investment in social justice movements across the country. ACF seeks to correct the often difficult experiences of women and nonbinary people of color-led organizations in accessing philanthropic funds that more mainstream, well-resourced, and white-led organizations often obtain.

This funding opportunity comes in direct response to the continuing and escalating crisis we are finding ourselves in. Throughout the U.S. and globally, we continue to see intensifying attacks on human and civil rights, bodily autonomy, and a growing rise of authoritarian populist forces. These threats build on a history of white supremacy, patriarchy, extractive capitalism, and state violence that produced patterns of abuse to control women, trans people, gender non-conforming, and BIPOC bodies. While we know our funding cannot itself reverse this alarming trend, we are committed to moving as many resources as we can to social and gender justice.

**The Activist Collaboration & Care Fund provides responsive, one-year, unrestricted grants to organizations led by and for trans and cis women and girls of color and nonbinary people of color to support their collaboration and/or healing efforts. It is important to note that, while unrestricted, these funds are one-time grants and are not intended to be relied upon for ongoing general operating expenses (such as staff salaries or office rent), but rather, to support short-term expenses related to an emerging or pressing need for your organization. While as an institution Ms. is dedicated to supporting organizations and movements in the**

**long-term, this fund is set up to provide flexible and quick turnaround funds for movement building organizations.**

During its first two cycles, ACF supported a wide range of organizations and funding requests. Information on past partners supported through the Activist Collaboration & Care Fund can be found [here](#). We encourage you to review this link to get a better understanding of how we have allocated ACF funding in the past.

## **II. Funding Areas**

**This summer, ACF will invest approximately \$1,000,000 in organizations and networks of, by, and for trans and cis women and girls of color and nonbinary people of color. Grants will range from \$15,000 to \$25,000.** This funding opportunity comes in direct response to what we continue to hear from movement leaders: greater resources are needed for fostering collaboration, responding to alarming and/or unexpected shifts in the environment, and healing. Areas of funding we will consider for this round of ACF funding include:

- **Collaboration:** Efforts to deepen relationships, build trust, or strategize across organizations; including activities focused on building shared understanding, repairing relationships, working through challenges that stall collaboration, and developing plans for acting collectively. Of note, if applying for a collaboration effort, only one organization needs to apply on behalf of a group of organizations.
- **Healing, rest, and restoration:** Efforts to heal from intergenerational trauma and/or violence (as well as from movement- and organizing-related trauma and violence) or invest in the restoration and rest of staff. This might include (but is not limited to) investments in training, convenings, or spaces that enable individuals or organizations to heal, rest, and restore; as well as investments in meditation, mindfulness, somatic practices, conflict resolution support, and/or child and elder care.
- **Rapid response:** Efforts to respond to immediate threats, such as an unexpected/evolving policy change that place community members in harm's way, or responding to unanticipated opportunities that emerge to set new legal or policy precedents.
- **Digital infrastructure and digital safety:** Efforts to improve an organization's digital infrastructure and/or increase digital or physical safety.

## **III. Eligibility Criteria**

To be considered for funding, **applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:**

- At least 50% of your organization's leadership must include trans women, cis women, and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). An organization's leadership includes people with significant influence or decision-making power (i.e. the executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members or governing boards).
- A majority of the organization's work should focus on issues impacting trans women, cis women, and non-binary people, with a strong emphasis on those who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).
- Organizations must have 501(c)(3) status or be a project of a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. Ms.

Foundation cannot fund 501(c)(4) organizations through this fund.

- Organizations that have an annual budget of \$2M or less.
- Organizations that are operating in the U.S. or U.S. territories, with a particular emphasis on state and local movements and campaigns.
- Organizations who have received funding from the Ms foundation are eligible to apply for funding, **though organizations who have never received funding from the foundation will be prioritized.**

#### IV. What We Do Not Fund

- Organizations with a 501(c)(4) legal status
- Individuals
- Ongoing general operating expenses (such as staff salaries or office rent)
- Organizations that do not have a gender analysis as part of their work (we define “gender analysis” as the ability to understand the relationship between gender and access resources, safety, and rights)
- Organizations whose leadership is not comprised by a majority (>50%) of trans women, cis women, and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

#### V. Assessment Criteria

The Ms. grantmaking team will assess applications based on the following assessment criteria:

- **Working for social and gender justice.** The team will look for organizations who can describe the underlying causes of injustice affecting their communities, and seek to change the conditions, institutions and policies that create or maintain inequality and oppression. We will also pay close attention to the organization’s ability to articulate a “gender analysis” as part of its work, meaning we will pay attention to how the organization describes how gender influences access to resources, safety, and rights, how gender intersects with its area(s) of focus (e.g., health, economic mobility, education, criminal justice reform), and what can be done to rectify those injustices.
- **Constituency.** The team will look for organizations who can articulate how and why they serve trans women, cis women, and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).
- **Alignment with areas of funding.** The team will look for alignment with one or multiple areas of funding listed in Section II (collaboration, healing, rapid response, digital infrastructure and digital/physical safety).
- **Solid plan.** The team will look for organizations who have a long-term vision for change which clearly links to current plans.
- **Scale of work.** The team will look for organizations who work at the local and/or state levels, which includes organizations who work in multiple localities and states. Organizations who

mostly work at the national level will be considered but not prioritized.

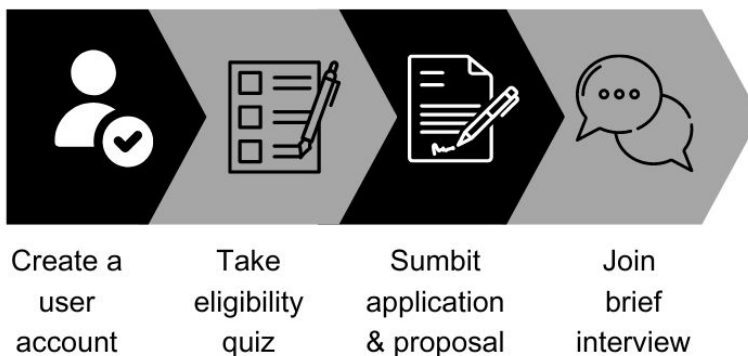
- **Geography served.** The team will strive to support a geographically diverse portfolio, with an emphasis on under-resourced regions—including rural areas, the South, the Midwest, Great Plains, Alaska & Hawaii, and U.S. territories. If your organization is located in (or does work in) one of these regions we strongly encourage you to apply.
- **Broadening the Ms. network.** The team will strive to make this funding accessible to both existing grantees of Ms. and to new grantees. We will prioritize funding for first-time grantee partners.

Not all projects will be funded. However, with applicant permission, Ms. may share submitted proposals and/or proposal summaries with members of its network to help generate greater interest in and visibility of proposed projects.

#### IV. Application Process

In keeping with this fund's focus on responsive funding, the application is designed to be mindful of organizations' time and effort. The application process has four steps: **1) Create a user account, 2) Take an eligibility quiz, 3) Submit application and proposal, 4) Join a brief interview.** Details about each step in the process is included below.

*Ms. will make its best effort to offer accommodations for language and other accessibility needs during the process. Please reach out to Ms. Foundation's Grants Management Team if you need accommodations: [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).*



##### 1. Create a user account (5 mins)

Please use the link below 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 login information.

<https://us.grantrequest.com/application.aspx?sid=829&fid=35153>

To log back into the system once the application has been saved or submitted, please use this link.

<https://us.grantrequest.com/accountmanager.aspx?sid=829>

In order to view your account page, your internet browser must accept cookies. To ensure ease of use, we recommend using Google Chrome to complete the application.

*If you need assistance with the online application process please contact the Grants Management Team at Ms. Foundation: [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).*

2. **Take an eligibility quiz** (5 mins)

Once you have created a user account, please begin the online application process by completing the eligibility quiz. This section seeks to validate that applicants meet the eligibility criteria laid out in section III. If the quiz is successful, you will be directed to continue the online application and be able to submit your proposal.

*If the eligibility quiz is not successful and you have questions, please contact the Grants Management Team at Ms. Foundation: [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).*

3. **Submit application and proposal** (3-5 hours)

Applicants whose work meets the eligibility criteria (section III) and have a request for funding aligned funding areas (section II) are encouraged to submit a proposal. The proposal consists of an online application form, a brief written narrative, and financial documentation. Details about each element are below.

1. **Online Application Form:** This section will ask several multiple choice questions about your organization and the work you do. It also includes a few open-ended questions regarding your organization's vision and mission, key constituencies, their engagement, and the primary strategies your organization uses to influence change. We recommend one to two paragraph responses for these questions.
2. **Brief Written Narrative:** This section will ask you to submit a written narrative that responds to each of the open-ended questions listed below. **We recommend one to two paragraphs per question. Applicants will have to upload this portion to the portal as a PDF document.**
  1. **Organization summary** - Please briefly describe the work of your organization (mission, history, constituency centered and supported)
  2. **Context** - Please briefly describe the political, historical, and/or socio-economic context in your locality, state, or region that creates the injustices you are fighting against.
  3. **Project description** - Please provide a brief description of the project, initiative or effort you are seeking funding for.
  4. **Funding request** - Please provide a brief description of what the funds will be used for.
  5. **Plan** - What major activities do you have planned for the next 12 months, and how do these contribute to your long-term vision?

*Optional:* Does the Ms. Foundation have your permission to share your proposal with Ms. staff that oversee other funds, as well as members of our network to help generate great interest in and visibility of your work? (Yes, No)

3. **Supporting Financial Documentation:** In addition to the completed application form and written responses to the questions listed above, applicants are required to upload the following:
  - a. **Most Recent Operating Budget:** The budget must show total income and expenses for the fiscal year. NOTE: We accept existing organizational budgets; you are not required to use the Ms. budget template. If you do not have an existing budget that clearly delineates income and expenses, we encourage you to use the [Ms. budget template](#).
  - b. **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. If your organization is not legally required to file a Form 990, please submit the financials you share with your board in lieu of the 990. If you are unsure, please click [here](#) for additional information.
  - c. **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, such as your balance sheet or P&L statements. If you are unsure, please click [here](#) for additional information.

*If you need assistance with the online application process, please contact the Grants Management Team at Ms. Foundation: [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).*

**Proposal submissions are due on Wednesday, August 25th by 8:59pm PT or 11:59pm ET.**

4. **Join applicant Interviews** (30 minutes)

Ms. will notify finalists that have been selected to interview. The primary purpose of these conversations is relationship building: Ms. seeks to understand applicants' context, aspirations, and way of being and offers the same to partners about the Ms. Foundation. As needed, we will discuss clarifying questions regarding applicant's proposals and leave space for any questions for Ms. staff. Interviews will likely be scheduled for 30 minutes, and will take place between October 9th and 27th.
5. **Final Selection and Funding Notice**

Ms. staff will select approximately 40 awardees and will notify the awardees by October 27th. Awardees will receive funding roughly 2-4 weeks after notification.

**REMINDER:** The Ms. Foundation is committed to supporting movement-building organizations in under-resourced regions who face barriers to accessing traditional philanthropy, to respond to the needs of the moment. If you are an organization led by trans women, cis women, and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and are located in a rural area, the South, the Midwest, Great Plains, Alaska & Hawaii, and U.S. territories, we strongly encourage you to apply!

## V. Key Dates

RFP Released	July 17, 2023
Proposal Due	August 25, by 8:59pm PT or 11:59pm ET
Invitations to Interview	Sent by October 4, 2023
Interview Period	October 9 - 27, 2023
Award Notification	By October 27, 2023
Funding Distribution	2-4 weeks after award notification

## V. Contact Information and FAQ

More details about the process and the context of the ACF can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

If you have questions about the process, please contact [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).