Equity Imperative 2030

Grant Application Guide

the
Indianapolis Foundation
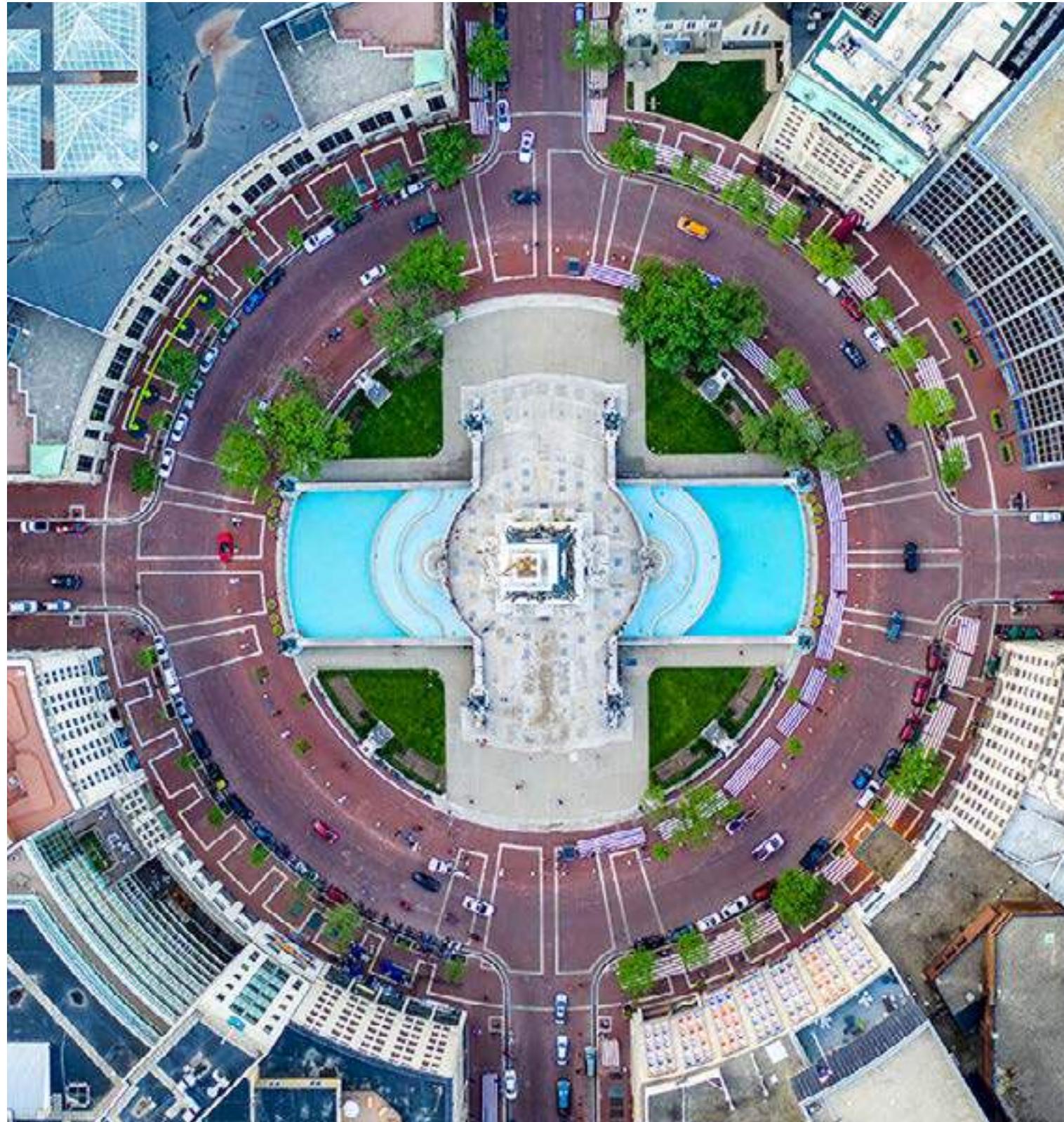
Introduction

The Indianapolis Foundation's [Equity Imperative 2030](#) strategic plan builds upon the foundation's past work to help ensure Indianapolis is a city where ALL thrive — no matter race, place, or identity. To that end, the Indianapolis Foundation (IF) supports nonprofits that help build thriving neighborhoods and deliver measurable, positive outcomes for Indianapolis residents.

The 2025 Competitive Round funding priorities are described in our [Equity Imperative 2030](#) strategic plan and are available to fund operational needs, programming, systems change efforts, and direct service initiatives. This guide is designed to support potential applicants in determining if their work aligns with our grantmaking priorities and how to apply for funding.

At least once a year, IF releases a Competitive Round application to support organizations that align with the IF Equity Framework. Competitive Round funds are sourced from private resources and are not combined with government grant funding as with some other IF application rounds.

General Eligibility for Receiving Funds from the Indianapolis Foundation

Indianapolis Foundation maintains minimum organizational requirements for applicants seeking funding. Please review the thresholds as follows:

- IF provides grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. Organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) status may submit an application via a fiscal sponsor partnership. The fiscal sponsor must meet standard nonprofit governance requirements.
- Applicants must both serve communities in Indianapolis and have an established office in Indianapolis.
- In accordance with our non-discrimination statement, an eligible organization must not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected class characteristics.
- An organization may only receive funding from the IF Competitive Round once annually and be in compliance with reporting standards from all other funding received from IF. An organization may apply to other funds at IF within the same calendar year.

- IF prioritizes funding for organizations whose board of directors is made up of at least 25% of individuals from priority populations, as outlined in our strategic plan. These populations include:
  - ◊ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and other historically marginalized groups
  - ◊ Immigrants and refugees
  - ◊ Returning citizens and/or justice-involved residents
  - ◊ Older youth and young adults ages 16 – 24
  - ◊ Residents experiencing or surviving violence and trauma
- An organization's profile must be current in IF's Grants Portal (powered by Smart Simple) to include appropriate financial and governance documentation such as: Form 990, Audits (when relevant), Year-End Statement of Activities, Profit and Loss Statements, Statement of Assets, Board-Approved Budget for Current Fiscal Year/Calendar Year, and Board of Directors roster.

Commitment to Ethical and Inclusive Practices

IF Statement on Proselytization

Residents of Indianapolis have a variety of spiritual practices and religions; some practice no religion at all. We believe all residents deserve support regardless of spiritual belief. Therefore, it is our policy to not fund programs that include prayer, promotion of religion, religious preferences, objectives, education, and/or training. This includes distribution of materials/items that contain religious messages/verses.

If your organization has a religious mission, you must explain how particiation in your program and/or activities are not discriminatory.

IF Statement on Non-discrimination

IF complies with all applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, sex, or other protected class characteristics.

IF Statement on Governance

As a good steward of funder and donor dollars, IF closely examines organizations' financial and governance structures. Applicants should adhere to the state and federal laws governing 501(c)(3) organizations and control conflicts of interest.

Competitive Round Proposal Criteria of the Indianapolis Foundation

Applications for the IF Competitive Round are reviewed at least annually. The maximum request for this round is $75,000. The budget amount requested should not exceed 30% of an organization's board-approved operating budget for the current fiscal year. Due to the large number of applications received each round, IF will not be able to fully or partially fund all proposals.

- Competitive Round applications must align with IF's strategic priorities and strategies in housing, economic, health, and/or environmental equity.
- Proposals must be submitted through the Grants Portal by the designated deadline. Late proposals will not be considered.
- Proposals should include a clear plan for how the organization will allocate sufficient financial and human resources to operate within the proposed budget.
- Applicants must select performance metrics that they will track and report to the foundation if they are awarded funding during the grant period.
- IF will not accept any application for the following:
  ◊ Capital requests, such as building construction, renovations, equipment purchase or major repairs
  ◊ Programs promoting religion, including proselytizing or religious training
  ◊ Fundraising activities (such as golf tournaments or galas)
  ◊ Political campaigns or direct lobbying
  ◊ Organization-sponsored conferences, event sponsorships or post event support
  ◊ Organizational debt-retirement
 ◊ Grants to individuals

IF'S Equity Framework

In addition to the criteria above, IF will give preference to organizations and proposals that align with the IF Equity Framework. Aligned efforts would include:

- A focus on root causes rather than symptoms of systemic inequities
- Efforts that seek to address or eliminate disparities in Indianapolis
- Proven evidence of consistent, meaningful community engagement that informs and improves the organization's programs, services, and overall direction
- A history of providing services to Indianapolis residents using a community asset-based approach

The Equity Framework serves as the IF guide for overall funding alignment. See page 12 to review sample project proposals that meet these expectations and fit into our strategic plan. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the framework with IF staff if there are any questions.
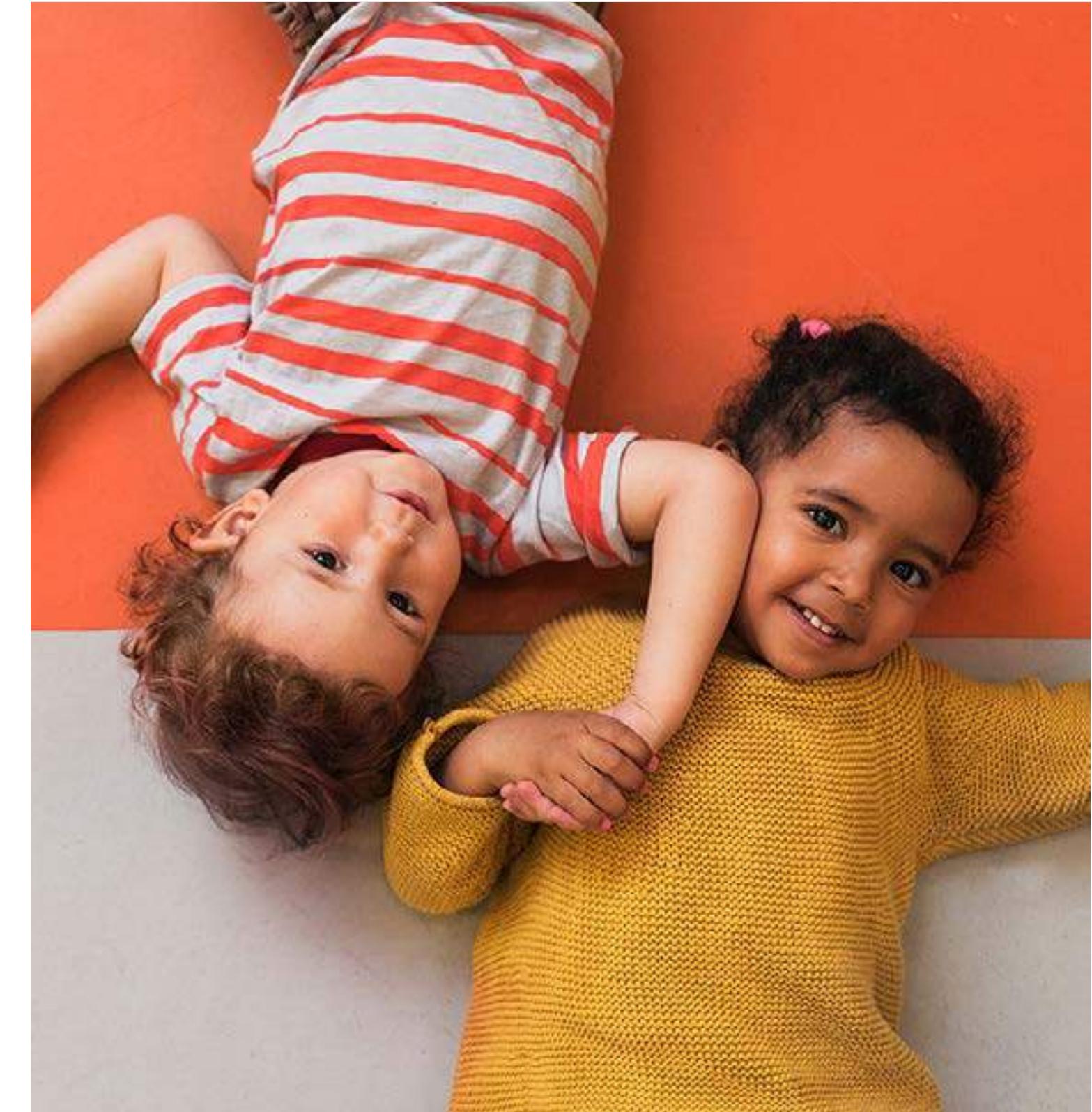
Four Priority Areas

The IF Equity Imperative 2030 describes the priorities, goals, strategies, and tactics of our organization. Applicants must select at least one priority area and provide information about how their application supports aligned efforts with the plan. Our strategic plan priority areas and goals are as follows:

Housing Equity

IF Goal: Ensure housing equity by providing safe, stable, and affordable housing, eradicating homelessness, and minimizing evictions.

Economic Equity

IF Goal: Promote economic equity by closing the wealth gap, empowering entrepreneurs, and supporting high-wage, in-demand workforce initiatives.

Health Equity

IF Goal: Advance health equity through community-led violence reduction strategies, addressing social impediments to health, improving mental health supports and access.

Environmental Equity

IF Goal: Champion environmental equity by powering renewable energy, empowering community justice, and growing a green workforce.

Application and Grantmaking Overview

For the 2025 Competitive Round, the IF Community Leadership team updated the application, scoring rubric, and reporting materials to align with our Equity Imperative 2030 strategic plan. IF engaged community partners to review the new materials and incorporated their feedback into the final versions.

Submissions

The application and materials can only be submitted through the IF Grants Portal. Information on using the portal is available in this guide. Only applications completed and submitted into the system by the deadline will be considered.

Prior to Submitting an Application

Please contact IF staff regarding funding opportunities before submitting a proposal. We would like the opportunity to learn about the organization and discuss alignment. Email TIFrequests@cicf.org or reach out to Community Leadership staff by priority area (See page 7).

Prepare an account profile in the IF Grants Portal. If the organization already has an account, proceed by updating the board, financial, and other organizational information to ensure the account profile represents the most updated status of the organization.

If the organization needs training, additional resources, or has concerns about meeting the qualifications for the IF Competitive Grant Round, we are here. To learn more about capacity building, infrastructure support, or other funding opportunities, contact us at TIFrequests@cicf.org.

Reports and Timelines for IF Competitive Round

2025 Grantmaking Process

During the review period, IF Community Leadership officers will gather more information and may reach out for a site visit or phone call.

Once an application is fully approved, grant agreements and payments for the IF Competitive Round are typically disbursed shortly thereafter.
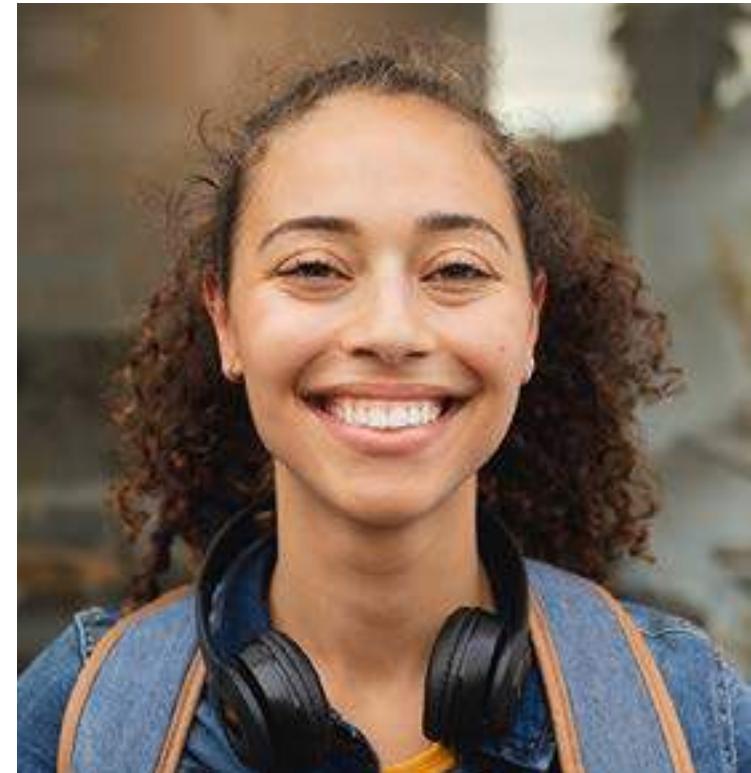
Activity	Timeline
IF opens 2025 competitive application round	July 15, 2025
2025 competitive application round closes	August 29, 2025 at 4 p.m.
Application review, due diligence, and scoring	September-November 2025
Board approves the final grantee slate. Grantees are notified	December 2025
Selected organizations submit requested materials, execute agreement, and receive disbursements	December 2025-January 2026
Grantees submit 6-month report	6 months after start
Grantees submit final report	15th of the month after grant ends

2025 Competitive Round Application, Evaluation, and Reporting

Scoring Rubric

Please find the 2025 IF Competitive Round evaluation rubric on page 17. This rubric is used by IF to assess applications. Applicants must submit all materials to be eligible to advance to an award of funding.

Metrics and Reporting

IF has identified baseline metrics to assist in tracking grantee progress. Selected metrics align with the Equity Imperative 2030 areas of health, housing, economic, and environment. Applicants are required to select or identify unique metrics to demonstrate the impact of their organization's work. Each applicant submits metrics in the application that, if awarded, are utilized in the reporting process. Metrics, reporting, and storytelling are valuable components to understanding progress and garnering lessons learned.

Submission of Reports

If awarded, reports are submitted in the Grants Portal at the six- and twelve-month mark of the grant performance period. Example metrics are listed in the application by priority area.

Grants Portal (Powered by Smart Simple)

The Grants Portal allows for the submission of an organization's supporting materials, applications, financials, organizational docs, and reporting. This centralized hub provides a single platform for both IF staff and applicants, helping to streamline the grantmaking process and minimize duplicate information. If your organization has not applied for funds before, sign up for Grants Portal here.

Applicants must submit all application and reporting materials using the CICF Grants Portal (powered by Smart Simple). First-time applicants create a user profile for the organization. Organizations already registered in the CICF Grants Portal must update the organizational profile prior to submitting a new proposal.

Organizations that need assistance in accessing and utilizing Smart Simple can contact grantsupport@cicf.org to receive technical support at no cost. Questions about the details of your application can be directed to TIFrequests@cicf.org or the respective IF Community Leadership officer listed in this guide.

For guidance on setting up an account and navigating an applicant profile, please refer to the Grants Portal 101 resource for guidance or send a request for support to GrantSupport@cicf.org.

Grant Example Alignment

Here are some examples that demonstrate how programs, projects, and organizations might align with the **IF Equity Imperative 2030** strategic plan. IF team members will also directly respond to questions about alignment.

IF Housing Equity Goal:

Ensure housing equity by providing safe, stable, and affordable housing, eradicating homelessness, and minimizing evictions.

Contact Rachael Sample, Senior Community Leadership Officer for Housing Equity.

Strategies:		
Eradicate homelessness through the comprehensive adoption and implementation of the Housing First model, ensuring immediate access to stable housing	Reduce evictions, particularly for single-parent households, by enhancing tenant advocacy and implementing systemic housing solutions to ensure long-term housing stability	Expand the supply of affordable housing and improve access through technical assistance and financial incentives for nonprofit developers to facilitate expansion of affordable housing

Sample Outcomes		
• Individuals provided emergency shelter • Individuals permanently housed	• Parent with children provided support to prevent eviction • Education programs on tenant rights targeted to neighborhoods with high instability rates	• Residents are able to remain in their current homes • Increase access to affordable housing for diverse populations and historically marginalized communities

Sample Proposal		
Shelter program that provides overnight services, with an emphasis on navigating housing barriers to ensure residents have equal access to permanent housing	Nonprofit organization that provides legal representation for low-income households in an eviction court and hosts community sessions on tenants' legal rights	Housing repair program supporting affordable homeownership opportunities Provide education and resources to residents seeking to purchase a home

IF Economic Equity Goal:

Promote economic equity by closing the wealth gap, empowering entrepreneurs, and supporting high-wage, in-demand workforce initiatives.

Contact Fabio Yataco, Senior Community Leadership Officer for Economic Equity.

IF Economic Strategies		
Empower entrepreneurs by expanding capacity and strategic capital for grassroots organizations. Increase business lending opportunities for diverse businesses and amplify their impact	Advance innovative workforce initiatives that generate high-wage, in-demand employment opportunities and scalable support	Narrow the wealth gap by providing residents with access to wealth-building opportunities, banking services, and credit-building resources to enhance economic inclusion
Sample Outcomes		
• Healthier, more sustainable Entrepreneurial Support Organizations assisting diverse entrepreneurs • Increased access to technical assistance for diverse entrepreneurs	• Closing opportunity gaps for residents to access higher-wage, in-demand employment experiences • A greater percentage of Marion County IF priority populations earn a livable wage	• Increasing the number of historically marginalized individuals with a bank account • Ending or limiting payday lending • Educating policymakers on the burdens of payday lending and the need for accessible pathways to living wages
Sample Proposal		
Program helping returning citizens develop business plans, expand procurement process, and acquire start-up funding.	Nonprofit organization that provides workforce development programs including English proficiency and barrier-free, earn-while-you-learn certifications and credentials for high-wage industries.	Project that supports access to a variety of financial products tailored to the needs of historically marginalized communities and builds local collaboratives to advocate for changes in pay-day lending policies

IF Health Equity Goal

Advance health equity through community-led violence reduction strategies, address social impediments to health, and improve mental health support services.

Contact Joy Usigbe, Senior Community Leadership Officer for Health Equity.

IF Health Strategies:		
Address the root causes of violent crime and recidivism	Enhance health outcomes by eliminating social impediments to health and promoting social connection	Improve the mental health of youth through expanding access to high-quality, culturally competent, coordinated mental health and trauma support services
Sample Outcomes		
• Increased number of returning citizens who remain outside of the criminal justice system • Enhancement of feelings of safety among community members	• Reduction of chronic diseases through education, navigation, and/or health care • Increased utilization of preventative services, preventing or detecting health issues early	• Decreased mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues among participating youth • Increased social connection, reduction in feelings of isolation, and promoting a sense of belonging among youth
Sample Proposal		
A nonprofit that provides access to critical support services like mental health, substance use treatment, and counseling for those surviving or experiencing trauma	Program led by culturally competent navigators that offers education, resources, and support for preventing/managing chronic diseases	Project led by practitioners with lived experience that provides trauma-informed support services to engage and train young people impacted by community violence in prevention strategies.

IF Environmental Equity Goal

Champion environmental equity by powering renewable energy, empowering community justice, and growing a green workforce.

Contact Jamie Valentine, Senior Community Leadership Officer for Environmental Equity.

IF Environmental Strategies		
Advance renewable energy facility upgrades and improvements	Community-driven solutions to local environmental justice issues	Green workforce development through training, upskilling, certification programs, and/or degree pathways

Sample Outcomes		
• Reduction in utility costs • Increased access to renewable energy for diverse residents and IF priority population	• Development of resident led environmental justice projects that address neighborhood priorities • Technical assistance support for organizations leading environmental justice community-driven solutions	• Increase programmatic opportunities for diverse youth to engage in environmental justice education, hands-on projects, and advocacy • Increase opportunities for credentials, degrees, and career opportunities for high-paying green jobs

Sample Proposal		
Nonprofit program that engages neighbors around the benefits of solar energy and offers no-cost weatherization or home upgrades to reduce utility bills	Nonprofit organization that provides information on air quality and health impacts emphasizing resident-led actions and/or solutions and engages community in advocacy efforts to support the removal of environmental hazards	Project developing solar credentialing program that enrolls BIPOC, immigrant, opportunity youth, and/or returning citizens as students with career placement support

Equity Framework Scoring Rubic

Criteria	Not Competitive (0)	Unsatisfactory (1)	Satisfactory (2)	Outstanding (3)
Alignment with the Indianapolis Foundation's Mission and Priorities	Applicant has no alignment with the IF mission and priorities. No focus on equity and/or closing/eliminating disparities. The work does not connect to any component of the IF strategies.	Applicant has limited alignment with the IF mission and priorities and has limited focus on equity or closing/eliminating, disparities. The work slightly connects to one of the IF strategies, but is not strongly aligned.	Applicant has significant alignment to the IF mission and priorities and has significant focus on equity and/or closing/eliminating disparities. The work utilizes one or more IF strategies and is mostly aligned.	Applicant is strongly aligned to the IF mission and priorities with a clear focus on equity and/or closing/eliminating disparities. The work utilizes one or more IF strategies and is in strong alignment.
Scope of Work: Direct Service - System Change	Applicant does not address solutions to close systemic gaps, dismantle inequitable systems, nor edistribute power.	Applicant's work is direct service but does not dismantle inequitable systems nor redistribute power.	Applicant's work is direct service, but is not done in a way that shifts power to communities directly impacted by systemic gaps.	Applicant's work effectively addresses systems change by dismantling inequitable systems and/or redistributing power.
Metrics & Measuring Performance	Applicant has proposed no clear method, whether quantitative or qualitative, nor technical infrastructure or expertise to measure progress toward its stated goals.	Applicant's proposed performance measures are insufficient or irrelevant for measuring progress toward their stated goals. Applicant is vague on their capacity to implement the proposed measures.	Applicant's proposed performance measures are clear and aligned with their stated goals, but some questions may remain on infrastructure or expertise needed to implement proposed measures.	Applicant's proposed performance measures are strong and clearly defined. Applicant has demonstrated that it has or can obtain the necessary resources, expertise, and/or infrastructure to implement these measures.
Authentic Stakeholder Engagement	Applicant has provided no evidence of stakeholder engagement; or the stated level of engagement is transactional and/or performative.	Applicant has provided minimal evidence of stakeholder engagement. Little to none of this engagement is targeted at individuals who have been historically marginalized.	Applicant has provided adequate evidence of stakeholder engagement, especially to historically marginalized persons, but organization could benefit from greater intentionality or using new approaches.	Applicant has provided strong evidence that it is responsive to historically marginalized persons, and is deeply and frequently engaged in the delivery of community-centered programs and services.

Equity Framework Scoring Rubic (continued)

Organizational Sustainability	Applicant is not financially stable with or only one funding source. Organization lacks the human and capital resources necessary to implement its proposed project.	Applicant has limited financial stability with two or less funding sources Organization lacks most of the human and capital resources necessary to implement the project.	Applicant's finances are relatively stable, with several different funding sources and some cash reserves. Organization has most of the resources needed to implement proposed project.	Applicant is financially stable with diversified funding sources and ample cash reserves. Organization has sufficient resources to implement project effectively.
Demographics of Staff are Reflective of Community Served and IF Priority Populations	Less than 25 percent of the applicant's staff are reflective of community served and represent IF priority populations.	Between 25 and 50 percent of the applicant's staff are reflective of community served, represent IF priority neighborhoods, or IF priority populations.	Between 50 percent and 75 percent of the applicant's staff are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.	At least 75 percent or more of the applicant's staff are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.
Demographics of Board are Reflective of Community Served and IF Priority Populations	Less than 25 percent of the applicant's board of directors are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.	Between 25 and 50 percent of the applicant's board of directors are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.	Between 50 percent and 75 percent of the applicant's board of directors are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.	At least 75 percent or more of the applicant's board of directors are reflective of community served and IF priority populations.
Demographics of Population Served Align with IF Priority Populations	Less than 25 percent of the applicant's population served align with IF priority populations.	Between 25 and 50 percent of the applicant's population served align with IF priority populations.	Between 50 percent and 75 percent of the applicant's population served align with IF priority populations.	At least 75 percent or more of the applicant's population served align with IF priority populations.

Funding Opportunities

IF, CICF, and Hamilton County Community Foundation (HCCF) provide many opportunities to apply for funding. In addition to the Competitive Round, we offer grant programs that are affiliated with specific funding sources, programming, and key interest areas like women/girls, youth, seniors, and the arts.

Visit these websites for more information:

CICF Grant Opportunities
IF Grant Opportunities
HCCF Grant Opportunities

Resources for Nonprofit Organizations

There are many free, publicly available resources online to support nonprofit organizations. Be sure to research carefully so you don't end up paying for services that you can access at no cost. This information may be helpful to organizations seeking support and technical assistance:

- IF and the Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF) operate various initiatives to provide local nonprofits with technical assistance.
- The IRS issues guidelines for nonprofit organizations to ensure compliance with federal regulations. The IRS guide can be found here.
- IF can only provide grants to organizations in good standing with the state of Indiana. Operating within legal requirements and filing all appropriate tax and financial documents is necessary. The state office, Serve Indiana, provides training and resources to nonprofit organizations.

- Register with the Secretary of State
- Indiana Department of Revenue resources
- SERVE Indiana resources

- Indianapolis offers strong support for nonprofit organizations, serving as a central hub for both local and statewide initiatives. Partners can access a wide range of technical assistance and resources to help strengthen their work help strengthen this work, including the following:

- Central Indiana Community Foundation Not-For-Profit Toolkit
- United Way Nonprofit Learning Center
- Indianapolis Public Library nonprofit programs
- Charitable Advisors
- Indiana Philanthropy Alliance

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