



2026 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDE



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO



Grantmaking is an essential component of the work we do at the Indianapolis Foundation. The community leadership team is comprised of dedicated professionals who are committed to leveraging their years of subject-matter expertise to bring the [Equity Imperative 2030](#) to life.

As we uplift and invest in issues connected to accessing affordable housing, creating a sustainable environment, addressing the social determinants of health, and expanding economic opportunity for all, we are excited about intentionally connecting young people to each of these four areas. If we are not intentionally elevating the youth, we are not planning for the future of this community.

As the Indianapolis Foundation celebrates 110 years of service to this community, we must center the voices and experiences of young people. IF's mission is clear: Mobilize people, ideas, and investments to make this a community where all individuals have equitable opportunity to reach their full potential — no matter race, place, or identity. This team is dedicated to partnering with and investing in organizations that are addressing systemic issues that are shaping lives today and tomorrow.

Our future is brighter when we leverage all our assets, human and financial, to effect change. Change that improves lives. Change that inspires action. Change that brings us closer to healing and farther away from despondency. We invite you to join IF on this journey to creating a thriving community, for current and future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ahmed Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Ahmed" and "Young" being capitalized and prominent.

PRESIDENT & CEO
INDIANAPOLIS FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

The Indianapolis Foundation's Equity Imperative 2030 strategic plan works 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 Equity Imperative 2030 describes the mission, priorities, strategies, and tactics of the Indianapolis Foundation. 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, supporting entrepreneurs and high-wage, in-demand workforce initiatives.

Health Equity

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

Environmental Equity

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

Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their work integrates with the housing, economic, health or environmental imperatives. They are also encouraged to highlight whether their projects or programs promote positive youth outcomes or use the arts to advance equity.”

Additional guidance, with examples, may be found below in this guide. Helpful information, including the data behind each goal, is also embedded throughout the IF Equity Imperative 2030 strategic plan.

Proposal submissions must align with at least one priority area for consideration. In addition to selecting an aligned priority area, applicants must select the approach(es), strategy, and one to three aligned metrics. The approach selected should address HOW your organization does your work, while the strategies and metrics enumerate WHO will be served.

Approach = HOW = Qualitative/narrative responses

Strategy Metrics = WHO = Quantitative/number count/percent change

IF'S EQUITY FRAMEWORK

IF will give preference to organizations with proposals that align with the IF Equity Framework. Criteria for aligned efforts 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

Applicants are encouraged to discuss questions with the IF community leadership officer that aligns with the organization's application. For the appropriate contact person, refer to each equity imperative priority area below.



GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR RECEIVING FUNDS FROM THE INDIANAPOLIS FOUNDATION

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

- IF provides grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. We are not accepting applications from fiscal sponsors this round.
- Applicants must demonstrate a strong track record and established presence serving communities 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 must be in full compliance with all other funding received from the Indianapolis Foundation. Current grantees of the Indianapolis Foundation are eligible to apply for a new grant this round, provided the organization has sufficiently completed all reporting requirements within the past three calendar years.
- Organizations that received funding in 2025 are eligible to re-apply; however, IF must receive, at minimum, a satisfactory 6-month report from any prior competitive funding rounds to be able to receive additional funding.
- IF prioritizes funding for organizations whose board of directors is made up of at least 50% of individuals from priority populations, as outlined in the IF Equity Imperative 2030 strategic plan. These populations include:
 - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other historically marginalized groups
 - Immigrants and refugees
 - Returning Citizens or Justice-Involved Residents
 - Residents experiencing or surviving violence, trauma, or eviction, particularly women and youth (ages 11–24)
 - Older youth and young adults (ages 16–24) not engaged in education, employment, credentialing programs and/or training
- An organization's profile must be current in IF's Grants Portal (powered by Smart Simple) to include up-to-date 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 roster.
- Applications must be submitted in the Grants Portal. Late applications are not accepted.

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 participation in your program does not include any of the activities described in this statement.

IF Statement on Non-discrimination

IF complies with all applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate based on 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 501c(3) organizations.

COMPETITIVE ROUND PROPOSAL CRITERIA OF THE INDIANAPOLIS FOUNDATION

- Competitive Round applications must align with IF's strategic priorities and strategies in housing, economic, health, and/or environmental equity.
- The maximum request is \$100,000. The amount requested should not exceed 30% of an organization's board approved budget for the current fiscal year. Funds may not be used for capital projects, endowments, or fundraising campaigns.
- If awarded, applicants must select and track performance metrics to be reported to the Indianapolis Foundation.
- Proposals should include a clear plan for how the organization will allocate sufficient financial and human resources to operate within the proposed budget.
- Funds to support organizational strengthening and capacity building will be available in this round. Up to \$10,000 of each request may be budgeted to procure expert services in the areas of planning, financial management, resource development, governance, and human resources. Applicants must make a clear case for how obtaining technical assistance will contribute to long-term sustainability of the organization. Funds may not be used to underwrite costs associated with capital campaigns or third-party grant writing services.

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

APPLICATION AND GRANTMAKING OVERVIEW

Prior to applying, IF recommends you speak with a Community Leadership Officer to discuss your organization’s programs and alignment. See [below](#) for the appropriate contact person assigned to each equity priority area.

- Review the [IF Application](#) prior to applying.
- During the review period, IF Community Leadership Officers will gather more information and may reach out for a site visit or phone call.
- If awarded, reports are submitted in the [Grants Portal](#) at the mid- and endpoint mark of a 12-month grant performance period

IF COMPETITIVE ROUND TIMELINE

Activity	Date
2026 competitive application round opens	April 1, 2026
2026 competitive application round closes	May 15, 2026
Application review, due diligence, scoring	May-August 2026
IF Board approves final grantee slate	September 2026
Grantees are notified, submit requested materials, and execute agreements. A 12-month grant period begins. Funds are distributed.	September 2026
Grantees submit mid-point report	6 months after start date of the grant period
Grantees submit final report	15th of the month following the end date of the grant period

ALIGNMENT EXAMPLES

While not directive in any way, the examples on the following pages demonstrate how programs, projects, and organizations might align with the IF [Equity Imperative 2030](#) strategic plan. IF team members will also be responsive to questions about alignment.

IF Housing Equity Priority: 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.

IF Housing 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 to nonprofit developers to facilitate expansion of affordable housing

Sample Project

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

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 can remain in their current homes
- Increase access to affordable housing for diverse populations and historically marginalized communities

IF Economic Equity Priority: Promote economic equity by closing the wealth gap, empowering entrepreneurs, and supporting high-wage, in-demand workforce initiatives. Contact [Fabio Yataco](#), the 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	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
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Sample Project

Program helping returning citizens develop business plans, expand procurement processes, and acquire start-up funding	Nonprofit 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 building local collaboratives to advocate for changes in pay-day lending policies
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Sample Outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthier, more sustainable Entrepreneurial Support Organizations supporting diverse entrepreneurs • Increased access to technical assistance for diverse entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close opportunity gaps for residents to access higher-wage, in-demand employment experiences • A greater percentage of Marion County residents earn a livable wage of \$22/hour or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of historically marginalized individuals with a bank account • End or limit payday lending • Educate policymakers on the burdens of payday lending and the need for accessible pathways to living wage
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IF Health Equity Priority: Advance health equity through community-led violence reduction strategies, address [social impediments to health](#), and improve mental health support services for youth. Contact [Joy Usigbe](#), Director of Impact and Evaluation.

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 Project

Nonprofit provides access to critical support services like mental health, substance use treatment, and counseling for residents surviving or experiencing trauma

Program led by culturally competent navigators offers education, resources, and support for preventing/managing chronic diseases

Project led by practitioners with lived experience provides trauma-informed support services to engage and train young people impacted by community violence

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

IF Environmental Equity Priority: 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.
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Sample Project

Nonprofit program that engages neighbors around the benefits of solar energy and offering 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 and enroll BIPOC, immigrant, opportunity youth, and/or returning citizens as students with career placement support.
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Sample Outcomes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in utility costs. • Increased access to renewable energy for diverse residents and IF priority populations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of resident-led environmental justice projects that address neighborhood priorities. • Technical assistance support for organizations leading environmental justice community-driven solutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
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ADVANCING YOUTH IN IF PRIORITIES

IF looks forward to innovative approaches to support the needs, potential, and aspirations of youth. Youth-focused strategies exemplifying alignment across the IF equity priorities might include:

Housing Equity: Reduce housing insecurities, particularly for single-parent households, by implementing evidence-based strategies that ensure housing stability and eradicate evictions.

Economic Equity: Advance innovative workforce initiatives, with an emphasis on youth, that generate high-wage, in-demand employment and credentialing.

Health Equity: Improve youth mental health outcomes by expanding access to high-quality, culturally competent, coordinated mental health and trauma support services.

Environmental Equity: Expand youth access to environmental justice learning opportunities, activities, and career pathways.

ADVANCING THE ARTS IN IF PRIORITIES

IF invests in arts-focused applications that align with IF's goals and specialized funds. Examples of how the arts play a role in producing equitable outcomes include:

- Arts-based services that advance positive mental wellness outcomes for youth and promote social connection.
- Arts-based efforts that align with IF priorities that promote awareness, advocacy, and creative placemaking.
- Advancement of accessible, arts-based wealth building opportunities.
- Support for artists and creative entrepreneurs who uplift and/or highlight diverse communities in Indianapolis.



Thank you to all the nonprofit organizations whose commitment and compassion strengthen our city every day. Together, we are moving closer to our shared vision of a thriving Indianapolis — a community where everyone can reach their full potential, no matter race, place, or identity.