



Information and Application Guidelines

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Part 1 – Background and General Information

1. Our Story

Established in 2003, the Catherine Donnelly Foundation is the human and financial legacy of the Sisters of Service, a remarkable group of women religious. The Foundation is a living testament to the Sisters' tradition of response to need in communities across Canada.

The Foundation honours and builds upon the spirit of service and dedication that inspired Catherine Donnelly, the founder of the community. It affirms the inherent dignity of every person and the sacredness of creation. It seeks to extend the Sisters' radical commitment to social change and to empower the marginalized.

The Foundation is a lay-religious alliance that supports projects and programs designed to promote social and ecological justice and to engage those that have been overlooked and excluded.

2. Philosophy

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation is committed to promoting positive social change by funding and financing initiatives related to the environment, housing and homelessness as well as civic engagement. Our efforts are intended to promote joint action and networking by helping organizations work together and build on one another's strengths to pursue radical systems change.

3. Scope & Focus

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation has been established to provide a long-term way to serve specific community needs anywhere in Canada. Generally, The Catherine Donnelly Foundation will use its endowment to fund projects and organizations that address community needs in three primary areas: Civic Engagement for Social Change, Environment, and Housing.

3.1 Civic Engagement for Social Change

The Foundation will consider applications from organizations that use popular education processes to promote a more just, equitable, and democratic society especially for groups systemically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life. (see Appendix 1)

3.2 Environment

The Foundation seeks to foster a diverse and inclusive climate justice movement, where communities and voices that are under-served lead the path forward to a climate-safe, resilient, caring, and socially-just future. (see Appendix 2)

3.3 Housing

The Foundation will consider applications for projects that address homelessness and the scandalous lack of affordable housing through research, policy development, effective communication initiatives, capacity building and advocacy within the sector. (see Appendix 3)

4. Values

4.1 Dignity of the Person

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The Foundation will fund projects that recognize the inherent dignity of the person and human capacity: to take charge of one's own development, to participate in the execution of the project and to contribute to the common good.

4.2 Spirituality of Service

The Foundation will support projects responding to the real needs of people in each of the program areas that demonstrate services with compassion and justice.

4.3 Proactive, Creative, Imaginative

The Foundation will support promising initiatives that demonstrate proactive, creative and imaginative responses to needs in the three granting stream areas.

4.4 Root Causes

The Foundation will support undertakings that address systemic or root causes of needs in each of the three program areas.

4.5 Synergy

The Foundation prefers creative projects and/or initiatives that address more than one of the program areas.

4.6 Earth's Ecological Integrity and Environmental Sustainability

The Foundation is biased toward projects that strive to contribute to the critical need for ecological integrity and environmental sustainability out of a profound conviction that a fundamental shift toward a more holistic, earth-centered value system is imperative.

Part 2 – Application Guidelines

Please read the following information before submitting an application. Potential applicants are strongly advised to contact the Foundation staff prior to submitting a letter of inquiry.

1. General Criteria

The Foundation seeks applicant organizations that:

- Are registered Canadian charities or registered not-for-profit organizations
- Can provide evidence that their operative values are consistent with those of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- Work in areas where the needs are greatest
- Work with persons not served or reached by traditional programs
- Are undertaking projects or programs that have promise as a model for imitation in other Canadian communities and will train others to set up similar programs
- Partner with other like-minded organizations to achieve shared goals

2. General Exclusions

The Foundation will not consider funding the following across all three grant streams:

- Retroactive funding
- Fundraising campaigns and initiatives

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- Operating deficits
- Projects outside of Canada
- Emergency appeals
- Purely commercial recordings or film projects

3. Application Process

Applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) application [via our on-line application process](#). We don't take letters via email or mail, only through the on-line portal system. The on-line letter of inquiry includes:

- A short overview of the project and purpose for which assistance is required;
- A brief description of how the project achieves the goals of the Foundation;
- The organization's history and objectives, and;
- A brief budget and timeline of activities

After the review process for LOI applications is complete, organizations invited to submit a full application will receive notification via phone call and/or email approximately 12 weeks after submitting their LOI application. All other organizations will receive an automated email notification approximately 12 weeks after submitting their LOI application.

4. Application Review Process

A Review Committee will evaluate completed applications for their alignment with CDF objectives and criteria and then make funding recommendations to the Catherine Donnelly Foundation Board. The Foundation Board meets twice annually to determine successful applications based on the recommendations of its committees (in May and November).

5. Application Deadlines

Currently, we have two grant rounds per year: a Spring Round and a Fall Round, with deadlines for LOI applications in February and June, respectively. Typically, each grant stream has one grant round that is open to receiving letters of interest per year and the other grant round is by invitation only. Application deadlines are posted on our website along with information about which streams are accepting applications, so please check there for the most up-to-date information.

****Please note that the Foundation cannot offer extensions on the due dates under any circumstances.***

6. Responsibilities of Successful Applicants

Funding Recipients will be required to enter into an agreement with the Foundation laying out the Terms and Conditions of the support, along with communication, accountability and evaluation requirements.

7. Multi-Year Funding Policy

Organizations may apply for one-year or two-year funding in all three grant streams through our open LOI process. The Foundation is committed to funding social change and will seek out longer-term partnerships with social change agents and groups that share its vision and objectives. Often our longer-term multi-year grants (3 years) emerge through relationships the Foundation has built through previous funding or other collaborations.

8. Communication

Inquiries regarding the on-line application process, Letter of Intent, or your project idea should be directed to:

Hamshaa Sivaruban, Grants & Logistics Coordinator

hsivaruban@catherinedonnellyfoundation.org

Inquiries regarding longer-term funding partnership opportunities should be directed to:

Anne Mark, Director of Programs

amark@catherinedonnellyfoundation.org

Appendix 1: Civic Engagement for Social Change

Threats to the movement toward a more just and democratic society in Canada are rising. Social and economic inequalities, political polarization, and a decrease in social connection and cohesion all play a role. We view civic engagement for social change as a way of working that fosters critical consciousness by explicitly naming these factors, then working collectively to address them. This work begins at the personal level, then ripples out to the community and systems level. We often see overlaps here with CDF's Environment and Housing streams, as social, economic, and environmental justice intersect.

As part of our Strategic Plan consultations, we have identified a number of factors that influence our granting: challenging economic circumstances for those who are underserved and for social impact organizations; emerging popular movements for social justice; intensifying climate change impacts; and increasing financialization of housing and an emerging call for human right to housing.

We have also committed to fostering deeper and expanded relationships with organizations led by and serving Black, Indigenous and People of Colour communities. All three granting committees use this lens when reviewing applications. We recognize that BIPOC communities are the source of knowledge and practices need to create a more just society and regenerative economy and that BIPOC communities are historically underserved by philanthropic and investment dollars. Changing this is part of the path to social change.

Our Funding Objectives

Civic engagement for social change fosters active citizenship and personal and community transformation to strengthen democracy and promote a more inclusive, just and sustainable society. We support projects that enhance belonging and connection, augment the protection of engaged democracy, respond to polarization, promote respectful dialogue in public spaces, and strengthen communities and change systems.

This funding stream was previously known as Adult Education. We have renamed it to use language that is more accessible and understood. We continue to support initiatives adopting a popular education process where individuals, as the source of knowledge, voice their experiences and needs to define goals to work as a group toward community action and change.

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Adult education, as a model, builds on collective knowledge and strengths and offers opportunities for more equitable power-sharing, especially for groups systemically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life.

Our Approach

The Foundation supports projects that use adult education or popular education processes to assist equity-seeking groups to collectively name the racism, poverty, violence or other forms of exclusion and oppression they experience.

CDF funds initiatives that engage those underserved groups to develop a critical analysis of the social, political or economic roots of problems they experience and then develop strategies for change by recognizing their group strengths and organizing for systemic change.

We encourage groups that develop leadership, communication, organizational skills and participatory research allowing equity-seeking communities and allies to develop and implement strategies for change, particularly initiatives that amplify voice and strengthen community response and democracy.

Increasingly, we see that more organizations are identifying civic engagement as an important tool to address a decrease in democratic participation and polarization at a societal level, and even loneliness and disconnection at the individual/community level. Indeed, these two things are connected.

What We Look For

We look for participatory processes:

- Where everyone teaches and everyone learns.
- That begin with the experience of the group engaged in the program.
- That involve a high level of participation, critical dialogue and reflection which helps develop new knowledge, consciousness, attitude, leadership and skills.
- That culminates in action for empowerment and social and systemic change.

Some thematic areas include but are not limited to: social justice; human rights; gender justice; poverty/economic justice; Indigenization/decolonization/rematriation; and projects that overlap with our other two funding streams: Environment (Climate Justice) and Housing.

The Foundation also embraces the significant role faith can have in motivating and sustaining social action for change. As a result, we consider multi-faith projects that draw upon religious and spiritual traditions in support of social change, such as work for peace, human rights, equity, and social justice. Such projects could take place within a faith community, multi-faith or secular context.

Examples of types of projects funded

- Workshops, learning circles, trainings, gatherings, network-building, as well as arts-based and other types of collective learning activities that aim explicitly to address issues such as racism, sexism/violence against women, gender justice, poverty, social exclusion and marginalization
- Activities including participatory action research that promote active citizenship, mobilization or address polarization

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- Projects that seek change at the systems level through collaboration, collective action, advocacy or policy at the local, regional or national level
- Training programs and capacity-building for social movement activists/leaders and cohorts, including leadership and mentorship

Please note that the Civic Engagement for Social Change stream does not fund:

- Children and youth programming (under age 18)
- Life skills, numeracy, literacy and writing skills
- Group or individual counseling or therapy
- Job skills training, employment or vocational training (including on the job learning)
- Conferences or symposiums
- School-based learning projects or those tied solely to traditional classroom curriculum
- Fellowships, internships, or scholarships
- Service for individuals, emergency assistance
- Projects related to provision of direct services in health care, mental health, addiction recovery or health support
- Requests solely for internal organizational planning
- University/post-secondary-focused projects
- Fundraising initiatives and campaigns
- Requests primarily for capital expenses such as buildings, construction, renovations, vehicles, equipment
- Library-focused projects in large urban centres

Appendix 2: Environment

Social, economic, and environmental justice are intimately connected and integral to our collective wellbeing and survival.

We recognize many challenges such as: climate impacts that are borne unequally by different communities including those who are racialized, low-income, Indigenous, youth, and who are unhoused; the need to address inequity and polarization in ways that promote dialogue, mutual understanding and shared action; and the importance of building reciprocal connections between people, communities, and with the land and waters from coast to coast. This moment is a reminder that the status quo must be disrupted.

We see an opportunity to support and catalyze climate justice to build the future we need by being bold, imaginative, collaborative, and inclusive.

Our Funding Objectives

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation seeks to foster a diverse and inclusive climate justice movement, where communities and voices that are underserved lead the path forward to a climate-safe, resilient, caring, and socially-just future.

Our Environment funding strategy is aimed at promoting climate justice and supporting initiatives that accelerate the transition to a post-carbon world. Our approach recognizes an inseparable bond between

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nature and intersections with other social movements and a desire to address the root causes of climate change. We are committed to building an inclusive society where no one is left behind, upholding UNDRIP, respecting inherent Indigenous rights, and to reconciliation with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people.

Our Approach

We support initiatives that address climate change and climate justice through a wide range of approaches and disciplines, including: community ways and knowledge, civic engagement, law/policy reform, finance/economics, ecosystem health, communications, and working alongside labour and other social movements to build power.

What We Look For

- Support for climate justice leaders and innovative initiatives that build a diverse and inclusive movement
- Projects that demonstrate to people in positions of decision-making power that there is an appetite for fast action on climate solutions
- Projects that inform and seed public opinion and/or support public engagement and mobilization, including grassroots or organizing work
- Creation and sharing of positive, empowering narratives that offer hope and a vision for how we want to live together in a post-carbon world
- Broadening a collective power base through collaboration and mutual learning across diverse communities, sectors, disciplines, geographies, and messengers

We have particular interest in projects that:

- Arise from or engage communities and voices that are under-represented and excluded such as racialized, low-income, Indigenous, and youth in building greater climate stability and resilience.
- Are Indigenous-led – to better sustain the health of the land, waters, climate and community, to advance climate and environmental justice in ways determined by Indigenous leaders and communities.
- Support capacity within First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities sharing their worldview of an interconnected relationship with nature as a foundation or model for building a sustainable future.

(read more about CDF's commitment [here](#))

Please note that the Environment stream does not fund:

- Travel to and/or attendance at conferences, competitions, symposia, or annual events (unless part of a broader project proposal)
- Event sponsorship (unless part of a broader project proposal)
- Bursaries, scholarships, and/or awards (unless part of a broader project proposal)

Appendix 3: Housing

The Foundation supports projects that address homelessness and the scandalous lack of affordable housing through research, policy development, effective and independent communication initiatives,

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capacity building and advocacy within the sector. We want to hear from groups engaged in collective efforts to examine and craft solutions for the root causes of Canada's housing crisis.

We particularly want to support projects that advance the cause of affordable and appropriate housing in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, and that advance the cause of affordable and appropriate housing for newcomer, refugee and immigrant communities.

Our Funding Objectives

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation seeks to collaborate with organizations whose initiatives target the prevention and elimination of homelessness, as well as those advancing the cause of safe and affordable housing. We also wish to partner with groups seeking to move from an emergency response model to a systems-based approach to housing in order to affect real change in the housing situation of marginalized and low-income populations.

Our Approach

Projects that the Foundation will consider supporting may include projects that:

- Mobilize public engagement/education, animate action through information dissemination and that advocate for sustainable solutions to Canada's homelessness and affordable housing crisis
- Advance public policy development in the housing sector
- Strengthen networks and collective strategies among non-profit housing groups and organizations.

Priority will be given to projects that involve partnerships across organizational and sector lines (non-profit, public and private) and that value collaboration in pursuit of collective impact and sustainable change in the housing sector. Where possible, projects should be replicable.

Please note that the Housing stream does not fund:

- Capital campaigns (construction/renovation)
- Purely emergency response or support service provision by transitional housing organizations