

Amplifying Youth Voice

Request for Proposals

February 2020



Introduction

Through our grant fund focused on Amplifying Youth Voice, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation is proud to make the following funding opportunity available. ***Please note that this grant fund is only available to youth organizing groups that have not received funding from the Foundation in the past.*** Below, you will find details regarding Nellie Mae's new strategic direction and our Amplifying Youth Voice grant fund, including grant fund background and details, selection criteria, application instructions, timeline, and how to request help or ask questions.

About the Nellie Mae Education Foundation

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is committed to championing efforts that prioritize community goals that challenge racial inequities and advance excellent, student-centered public education for all New England youth. We are proud to have been part of efforts over the last ten years to advance personalized, student-centered approaches to learning across the New England region, and we are still committed to advancing these approaches. We learned that for student-centered practices to flourish, the structural inequities present in our education system need to be addressed. By focusing our grantmaking on where the need and opportunity gaps are in the region, we believe that we will be better able to lay the groundwork for those approaches to take root in ways that center those most impacted in conversations, decision-making, and practices. We are committed to using our power and privilege as a philanthropic institution to advance racial equity in public education. To learn more about our new strategic direction, please [read our recent strategy update](#).

Amplifying Youth Voice Grant Fund

Background

Nellie Mae began supporting youth organizing work in 2010. Since that time, we have expanded our support of youth organizing and currently support 21 groups throughout New England. This increased investment reflects the Foundation's commitment to investing in youth organizing groups and creating a regional imprint. We have further supported youth organizing groups by funding the development of the [New England Youth Organizing Network \(NEYON\)](#) and the annual [Youth Leadership Institute \(YLI\)](#), as well as providing ongoing technical assistance through the [Center for Youth & Community Leadership in Education \(CYCLE\)](#). As a part of our new grantmaking strategy, we will continue to support youth organizing work and build on the momentum created over the past ten years.

Funding Opportunity

The funding opportunity outlined in this RFP is for 8 youth groups throughout New England focused on youth organizing **that have not previously received or currently receive Nellie Mae funds**. Selected organizations will receive 3-year general operating grants of \$158,250 (\$52,750 per year).

Last month, we released the first Amplifying Youth Voice RFP, which outlined a funding opportunity for youth organizing groups that have received Nellie Mae funding in the past. From this previous RFP, we will select 12 groups.

In total, Nellie Mae will provide 3-year grants to 20 organizations and, as part of the grant fund, grantees will participate in a learning community and receive technical assistance provided by CYCLE. The Foundation will continue to support NEYON and YLI.

The Foundation is interested in funding a strong youth organizing presence throughout the New England region and will seek to ensure such representation in the selection of the groups.

Please note that organizations can apply for funding from multiple Nellie Mae grant funds, but they can only receive one grant at a time. Please visit [our strategy announcement](#) for information on our [other grant funds](#).

Focus on Youth Organizing

The focus of the Amplifying Youth Voice grant fund is to specifically support youth organizing groups throughout New England. Youth organizing groups are distinct from other types of youth organizations, such as youth development groups, in that they seek to build power, leadership, and self-agency among historically marginalized youth and address root causes of injustice and systemic barriers.

The Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) provides a helpful definition of youth organizing that distinguishes it from other types of youth work:

Youth organizing involves a deep and intentional focus on leadership development, along with a political and structural analysis of community problems. Involvement in organizing equips young people with the tools needed to build collective power and make meaningful changes in their neighborhoods and schools. At the same time, youth organizing is not just about activism. Groups also integrate a powerful blend of culturally and contextually resonant support services, from academic tutoring to mental health interventions.¹

¹ [Transforming Young People and Communities: New Findings on the Impacts of Youth Organizing](#), Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

Additionally, a Nellie Mae-sponsored evaluation found that effective youth organizing groups use the following practices:

- Continuously recruit and maintain a vibrant membership base that is prepared to engage in direct actions and political mobilizing;
- Center youth as leaders internally (by having them take on roles including Lead Organizer, paid staff, and Board Member);
- Organize ongoing multi-pronged and multi-level campaigns that target schools, districts, and the broader community; and
- Engage youth as public representatives of the program or organization (in various networks and partnerships).²

Through our Amplifying Youth Voice Grant Fund, it is our intention to support youth organizing groups located throughout New England as described above.

Outcomes and Learning

Through our Amplifying Youth Voice grant fund, we aspire to ensure that the supports we offer our grantees address their individual and collective needs. We hope that responsive technical assistance coupled with the greater financial freedom and organizational stability afforded through grant funds will help grantees serve their communities in ways they have named for themselves. We also plan to collaborate with our grantee partners on the design and implementation of evaluation and monitoring activities that serve grantees' needs and facilitate our collective learning and improvement as partners.

As a funder, we commit to our grantees that we will strive to accomplish the following:

1. Deepen our understanding of their communities– particularly efforts to dismantle racial inequities and advance excellent, student-centered public K-12 education for all youth;
2. Cultivate transparent, trusting relationships with our grantees; and
3. Build our own capacities and mindsets related to racial equity. Additionally, we aspire to build relationships where our grantees feel comfortable offering candid feedback; feel comfortable sharing their own goals, progress, and hurdles with us; and are able to learn from one another.

² [Youth Organizing: A Model for Change](#), Prepared by Algorithm for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

Selection Criteria

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP will be reviewed using the following criteria:

1. Work is designed to put youth at the forefront and significantly supports and serves youth of color and/or youth from underserved and under-resourced communities; work explicitly and clearly challenges racial inequities; and is devoted to increasing access to equitable public education for New England youth.
2. Consistently utilizes key features of youth organizing, such as those documented in the [FCYO Youth Engagement Continuum](#) (see page 7 of the linked document);
3. Intentionally and significantly led by youth (i.e., youth play leadership roles and have a strong say in the work the organization elects to undertake);
4. Serves mostly low-income youth and/or youth of color;
5. Is located in and serves young people in one of the New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut);
6. History of working on campaigns related to public education issues that connect closely to young people's lives and to racial equity;
7. Values and is willing to be part of a learning community and demonstrates a commitment to both [YLI](#) and [NEYON](#) during the grant. **Able to attend YLI in Wellesley MA (August 3-5, 2020)**;
8. An education organization or an organization that supports educational activities and is able to receive grants from Nellie Mae. An organization meets this requirement if it complies with the following:
 - Is an education organization as exhibited in its Articles of Incorporation, or has evidence that they provide and/or support K-12 educational activities (note: organizations can be multi-service agencies and providers); and
 - Is a 501(c)(3) or has a fiscal agent that is a 501(c)(3) that falls under the tax designation 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2). Due to Nellie Mae's tax status, private foundations (described in section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code) and supporting organizations (described in section 509(a)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code) are NOT eligible grantees.

Application

Step 1: Register on our online application portal

We will accept applications through our [online portal](#). Because the portal is new, we ask that everyone register as a new user even if you have applied previously. Click "new user" and follow the prompts. Once you are logged in, navigate to the "Grants Opportunities" tab and select the

“Amplifying Youth Voice - Open” opportunity to start your application. By taking these steps, we will know you are interested in applying and we will send you updates related to the application process.

Step 2: Complete the online application fields

Please complete all fields on the following tabs by following the directions at the top of each tab:

- Request;
- Organization Profile;
- Organization Goals;
- Community(-ies);
- Organization Race/Ethnicity Demographics; and
- Organization Budget.

Please upload the following items on the Attachments Tab:

- Narrative (see further instructions in Step 3);
- Current year budget;
- Fiscal statements for previous two years; and
- Optional - Any additional materials you would like to share about your organization.

Step 3: Upload a narrative that demonstrates how your organization’s work aligns with the selection criteria

We are interested in learning more about your youth group’s work. Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how your work aligns with the above selection criteria. Feel free to provide links to materials (e.g., videos, infographics, charts, news articles, reports, etc.) that help us get a sense of your youth group’s work and demonstrates how it aligns with the selection criteria.

Also, if you have created a proposal for another funder that you think speaks to the selection criteria above, please feel free to submit that proposal as part of your application. Our goal is to make this section manageable for you and limit the amount of extra work you need to do to apply. Our hope is that you can reuse many of the documents you create in the regular course of doing your work as opposed to creating new materials for us.

Step 4: Submit your application for review

Once you have completed the online fields of the application and uploaded the requested documents, click the Review/Submit button and follow the prompts.

Step 5: Complete a short survey on the application process

After you submit your application, you will receive an e-mail message confirming your application has been submitted. The email will contain a request for you to complete a short, anonymous survey about your interactions with the Foundation and our application process.

We are committed to continually improving our process for applicants and would appreciate any feedback you might have for us.

Timeline

- Application process opens: Monday, February 24
- Virtual webinar: Monday, March 2nd at 2 pm ([Register Here](#))
- Submit email indicating interest in applying to Alexis Harewood, aharewood@nmefoundation.org: Friday, March 27th at 5 pm
- Application deadline: Thursday, April 16th at 5 pm
- Follow-up interviews and visits (as needed): May 4-8, 2020
- Applicants notified of funding decisions: Week of June 22nd

Questions

If you have questions regarding this grant opportunity or the application process, please email Alexis Harewood at aharewood@nmefoundation.org or schedule a call with her using [Calendly](#). You can [register for an optional webinar about this grant opportunity here](#). We will also be updating the FAQ for this grant fund as questions are received.

For technical questions related to the application portal, please reach out to Stephanie Cheney at scheney@nmefoundation.org or (781) 348-4240.