

# Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color

*Request for Proposals*

January 2020



# Introduction

Through our grant fund focused on Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation is proud to make the following funding opportunity available. Below, you will find details regarding Nellie Mae's new strategic direction and the Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color 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 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 needed to be addressed. By focusing our grantmaking strategically 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 centers 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](#).

## Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color Grant Fund

### *Background*

Nellie Mae created the Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color Grant Fund to support community-based organizations that are led by people of color and are working with communities of color to transform barriers to racial equity in public K-12 education.

Community-based organizations led by people of color are at the forefront of providing crucial supports and resources for communities of color, serving as lighthouses for essential services, offering training and education, and acting as advocates for individual and community voices. These organizations possess the deep community knowledge and trust needed to promote and sustain community well-being and survival. However, these organizations also face persistent barriers to accessing philanthropic resources, as well as sustaining and growing their organizations.

By providing multi-year, general operating support to organizations led by and serving people of color, focused on addressing racial inequities in education, we believe we will support the increased financial freedom and organizational stability needed to advance their missions over the long term. We are specifically interested in supporting organizations that work with youth, parents, and educators to understand and dismantle root causes of inequities in public K-12 education.

By amplifying the work and experiences of those who have been historically marginalized, we can help decenter whiteness and dismantle the dominant [white supremacist culture](#) that perpetuates systems of oppression and inequity.

### ***Funding Opportunity***

Through its Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color Grant Fund, Nellie Mae will support a cohort of 15 community-based organizations led by people of color who are working with communities of color to transform barriers to racial equity in public K-12 education. The grant fund will consist of the following components:

- **General Operating Support:** Grantees will receive three-year grants of up to \$300,000 (approximately \$100,000 per year) for general operating costs.
- **Leadership Development Program:** Leaders in our grantee cohort will co-create and participate in a leadership development program specifically designed to meet their capacity building and leadership development needs. In September of 2020, with feedback from our grantees, we will begin the process of selecting a technical assistance provider that will help with the design and implementation of the yearlong program. We anticipate starting the program in January of 2021. The content, format, and meeting frequency will all be informed by the grantee cohort. All travel and lodging costs associated with the leadership program will be covered by Nellie Mae.
- **Network Movement Building:** Based on specific grantee interests and needs, we will offer a variety of convenings and learning communities that bring together educator-, youth-, and parent-serving grantees across all of our grant funds. These convenings and learning communities will provide opportunities for organizations to build relationships with one another, expand knowledge through shared learning, and look for ways to support collective work and action.

To be eligible for this grant opportunity, your group must be a person of color-led and -serving organization located in one of the [following communities](#) OR an Indigenous-led and -serving organization located anywhere in New England.

Organizations can apply for funding from multiple Nellie Mae grant funds *but can only receive one grant*. Please [visit our strategy announcement](#) for information on other Foundation grant funds.

### ***Outcomes and Learning***

We hope that the greater financial freedom and organizational stability afforded through the Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color Grant Fund will help our grantee partners serve their communities in ways they have named for themselves. We aspire to support the leadership development and capacity building needs of our grantee partners through a learning community. 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 grantee partners 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 grantee partners; and 3) build our own capacities and

mindsets related to racial equity. Additionally, we aspire to build relationships where our grantee partners feel comfortable offering candid feedback; feel comfortable sharing their own goals, progress, and hurdles with us; and are able to learn from one another.

## Selection Criteria

Reviewers will use the following general criteria to determine which proposals will be eligible for funding:

- 1. People of color-led and -serving** – The organization must meet two or more of the following requirements:
  - Led (e.g., executive director, CEO) by a person of color;
  - Governed by a board composed of a majority (51%+) of people of color; and
  - Serves populations/communities of color.
- 2. Located in one of Nellie Mae's target communities** – The organization must be a person of color-led and -serving organization located in one of the [following communities](#) OR an Indigenous-led and -serving organization located anywhere in New England.
- 3. Community-rooted** – An organization is community-rooted if it meets the following requirements:
  - Defines its role and history in communities of color;
  - Has a history of working in a locality (i.e., working for the community as part of the community);
  - Has roots and relationships in the community; and
  - Is recognized as doing important work in support of racial equity in education in the community.
- 4. Serves youth, parents, or educators** – For this grant opportunity, Nellie Mae will privilege organizations that serve educators and/or parents. We have a separate grant fund focused on supporting youth organizing groups and we want to ensure that we make funds available to parent and educator organizations as well.
- 5. Works to advance racial equity in education in their community** – An organization must demonstrate that its work consists of some or all of the following:
  - Aligned with Nellie Mae's [mission, vision, and values](#);
  - Has a history of addressing racial inequities in education in the community (i.e., racial equity work is not new work for the organization);
  - Has an expressed and demonstrated commitment to racial equity and/or communities of color as reflected in its mission and program strategy;
  - Engages in community-building such as creating opportunities for broad community participation;
  - Engages in leadership development;
  - Plays a lead role in collaborations, alliances, and coalitions that will change policy in public education; and

- Has a reputation and experience working in communities and school districts with high concentrations of need, students of color, English Language Learners, and/or New Americans.

6. **Is 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

Applications will be accepted [using our online application portal](#).

Signup for an account if you are a new user or log-in if you have used our system in the past. Once you are logged in, navigate to the “Grants Opportunities” tab and select the “Supporting Organizations Led by People of Color Grant Fund” 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.

Note that you can fill the application out at your own pace, logging in and out as needed.

### Step 2: Complete the online application fields

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

- Request Name;
- 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;
- Community contacts - Please provide two to three contacts of people that can speak to your group's work and the needs of youth in your community. Please include their name, organization, contact information, and relation to organization (e.g., board member, client, volunteer, etc.); 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 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 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.

## In-Person Visits

After reviewing your proposal, we will notify you if your organization has been selected to move on in the process, which consists of an in-person meeting. Through our in-person meeting, we hope to develop a deeper understanding of your organization's work and the community you serve.

## Timeline

- Application process opens: January 21, 2020
- Application deadline: 5:00pm on February 27, 2020
- Selected applicants notified of request for in-person meeting: April 1, 2020
- In-person visits: April 6-30, 2020
- Applicants notified of funding decisions: May 18, 2020

## Questions

If you have questions regarding this grant opportunity or the application process, please e-mail Ellen Wang at [ewang@nmefoundation.org](mailto:ewang@nmefoundation.org) or schedule a call with her using [Calendly](#). Also note, by taking Step 1 above, we will send you updates related to the application process, including possible virtual meeting opportunities, in-person pop-ups in your community, and responses to frequently asked questions. For technical questions related to the application portal, please reach out to Stephanie Cheney at [scheney@nmefoundation.org](mailto:scheney@nmefoundation.org) or (781) 348-4240.