



Disability Inclusion Fund Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Disability Inclusion Fund (DIF)?

Housed at [Borealis Philanthropy](#), the Disability Inclusion Fund (DIF) supports U.S. groups run by and for people with disabilities leading transformational change. The Fund is supported by donors including the [President's Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy](#), comprised of foundation presidents who are committed to disability inclusion as part of improving diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What are the DIF objectives?

- Strengthen the disability justice community and movement by building the power of representative organizations and elevating the voices of people with disabilities within public life
- Boost the capacity of disability justice groups to fundraise, communicate a more unified narrative, and other priorities as determined by the group's advisors
- Build bridges between disability justice groups to learn from one another while complementing and strengthening advocacy and mobilization approaches
- Promote collaboration and partnership between disability-led organizations and organizations that have not traditionally focused on disability rights and justice.
- Support disability inclusion in philanthropy with collaborative learning around programmatic and operational inclusion

What are the DIF guiding values?

- **Participation:** Movement funding is accountable to the disability justice movement. Those most impacted by injustice and exclusion should be involved in strategies to advance justice and inclusion.
- **Intersectionality:** Acknowledging that disabled people have multiple and intersecting social and political identities that can influence their ability to have access and inclusion including race, gender identity, class, and sexual orientation.
- **Radical inclusion:** Deeply committed to removing barriers and ensuring access so that those most affected by intersecting identities can participate, valuing lived experience.



- **Leadership by those most impacted:** Emphasis is given to organizations led by disabled people of color, queer and gender-nonconforming disabled people, and women with disabilities.
- **Cross-movement solidarity:** Intentional focus on collaboration and bridge-building amongst disability justice activists and across movements.

Who are the foundations that support the DIF?

Current DIF donors include: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF), the Ford Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, the Kresge Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The New York Women's Foundation, Open Society Foundations, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, WITH Foundation, and anonymous donors.

What type of grant support does the DIF provide?

The DIF provides general operating support, and capacity-building grants.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for a DIF grant, your organization must:

- Have a budget of \$1.5 million or below
- Be a U.S.-based or U.S. territory-based 501(c)(3) organization, fiscally sponsored, or an LLC.
- Be led by people with disabilities, which we define as: the leadership in your organization are people with disabilities. The executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members/governing boards should be majority persons with a disability.

What we cannot support:

- Organizations that are non-U.S. based or not based in a U.S. Territory
- Individuals
- Universities



- Hospitals
- Organizations or projects that only provide direct service (i.e., Personal Care Attendants, durable medical equipment, behavioral or medical care, employment supportive programs, adaptive sports, etc.) - Organizations or projects that provide direct services are eligible *only if they also* engage in community organizing, advocacy, and/or policy work.
- Organizations or projects that only provide research - Organizations or projects that provide research are eligible *only if they also* engage in community organizing, advocacy, and/or policy work

What are the DIF funding priorities?

We prioritize organizations that meet the following criteria:

- Organizations that are disability-led with priority towards Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), queer and gender non-conforming, and women disability-led organizations.
- Work that engages with other social movements and across issues, including racial justice, climate change, immigrant rights, labor rights, and other efforts for a more just world.
- Work that brings other groups, leaders, movements and communities together to build relationships, coalitions, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Work that celebrates, creates and uplifts the representation of people with disabilities in the arts, media, education, literature, and popular culture.
- Work that moves ideas and practices of disability inclusion and disability justice forward. Examples of this work include community organizing, advocacy, and/or policy work.

How do you define “disability”?

Our Fund understands that there are many definitions of disabilities including the [legal definition set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act](#). But many of the definitions in our laws and public policies can be limiting to our full understanding of disability as part of human diversity, happening across the lifespan, and can be a powerful identity that mobilizes disabled people to organize, advocate, and create. Disabilities can be apparent or non-apparent, a cause and consequence of poverty, and an identity that a person can acquire at any point in their life.



The DIF believes that our disability movement is made powerful because of the lived-experiences of our leaders and advocates we support. This movement includes but is not limited to people with developmental, mental illness, intellectual, hearing and vision, and chronic illness disabilities. When we say the DIF supports disability movement work, we mean the many ways that the disability movement builds greater access to political, social, cultural, and economic power, joy, and pride for the collective liberation of all people with disabilities.

How do you define “disability-led”?

The Disability Inclusion Fund defines disability-led as: the leadership in your organization are people with disabilities. The executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members/governing boards should be majority persons with a disability.

How do you define the Leadership of an Organization?

We define leadership as at least 50% of your organization’s leadership are people with disabilities i.e. the executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members or governing boards should be represented by a majority of people with disabilities.

What is the difference between a 501(c)3 organization and a fiscally sponsored organization?

A 501(c)(3) is an organization that does charitable work and is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States tax code.

A fiscal sponsorship is when a nonprofit organization extends its tax-exempt status to an organization, individual, or group that is doing charitable work related to its mission.

Can I apply as an individual?

The Disability Inclusion Fund does not provide grants to individuals.

My organization is international, can I apply for a grant?



This grant does not support organizations outside of the U.S. and U.S. territories. Grant funds can only be used for work done within the U.S. and U.S. territories.

Will the DIF have other grantmaking opportunities this year?

The Disability Inclusion Fund will not be releasing an open call for proposals in 2023. Instead, we will be taking this year to evaluate the effectiveness of the Fund in hopes of improving how we support our community, and commitment to disability justice, rights, and inclusion. We will release our next RFP in 2024.