

FIELD FOUNDATION STATEMENT FUNDING WITH REGARDS TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Throughout its more than fifty year history, the Field Foundation of Illinois has amassed an impressive history of grant making starting with the founder's, Marshall Field III notion that "*there ought to be a least a few of them (foundations) prepared to do what the more respectable would not: work directly in the areas of tension and controversy*", to its current mission to "*provide support for community, civic and cultural organizations in the Chicago area, enabling both new and established programs to test innovations, to expand proven strengths or to address specific, time-limited operational needs.*" In this regard, the Field Foundation's grant making process attempts to be both responsive to identified needs, as well as transparent in its decision making.

Traditionally, the Field Foundation's biggest asset has been its human capital. Even though limited, the Field Foundation staff is a group of dedicated and highly skilled individuals, who willingly provide guidance and technical assistance to nonprofits across the Chicago region.

The Field Foundation considers itself to be a solution driven foundation that is not adverse to risks when it comes to innovative projects or complicated societal problems. For many years, the Field Foundation has served as convener of broad-based stakeholders on issues ranging from public housing transformation to community violence. In doing so, Foundation staff has worked tirelessly to enhance the dialogue between major policy decision-makers and authentic community voices. In that process, the Field Foundation has garnered the trust of organizations in challenged communities, as well as the respect of city-wide and national organizations. This respect has positioned the Foundation to better understand the complexities and inner workings of particular communities.

It was in this vein, that in response to community outcry, the Foundation increased its focus on the issue of community violence and particularly its impact on the lives of school children. In 2008, the Foundation created its first Safe Kids/Safe Schools initiative; which was recreated again in 2011 in conjunction with the One Summer Chicago effort supported by Mayor Emanuel and County President Preckwinkle. However, the Field Foundation believes that this seemingly intractable issue must be tackled on all fronts; from public policy to community activities. As such, the funding on this pressing issue permeates throughout all six of the Foundation's core funding areas: Urban and Community Affairs, Health, Education, Community Welfare, Culture, and Environment.

In the past three and half years, despite our limited financial resources, the Field Foundation has awarded over 1.25 million dollars (approximately 15% of our total grant making) to programs and organizations specifically tackling the issue of *Community Violence*. From these grants we have learned several guiding principles that influence our decision-making:

- Regardless of size or scope of the organization addressing community violence it must have significant buy-in by community leaders;
- Violence has no geographic boundaries and often spreads from the home;
- Organizations must have the proper infrastructure that promotes programmatic, as well as financial accountability;
- One strategy does not necessarily fit all; there must be receptivity to throwing out what doesn't work and trying something new;
- There are valuable lessons to be learned from failure; and,
- The importance the impact of race and class has on the viability and effectiveness of any policy or strategy cannot be ignored.

It is from these six guiding principles that the Field Foundation makes its decisions with regards to all community-based issues. As such, with limited financial, as well as staff resources, the Field Foundation is committed to efforts and initiatives that are solution driven and that acknowledge and respect the principles form the basis of our work.