

**GRAND VICTORIA
FOUNDATION**

2024-2028

STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





Grand Victoria Foundation: In This Moment and the Future

For over 25 years, Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) has supported work to make Illinois a great place to live and work, funding systems change in the areas of education, economic development, environment, and engagement. We have awarded over \$184 million in grants throughout the state. In Elgin, Illinois, we have granted over \$20 million to organizations providing crucial education, arts, and human services to the community. Our investments during this period have created conditions for positive change in the early childhood education and workforce development systems. It has also helped build strong eco-systems of community foundations and land conservation organizations across Illinois, resulting in these systems and institutions being better prepared to address new challenges.

We are proud of this work.

Despite progress over those two and a half decades, racial inequities persist, and the events of this young decade have shone a brighter light on the long-term effects of systemic racism and injustice in our society. In this context, Grand Victoria Foundation will chart a new course marked by a resolute commitment to establishing a Black-centered focus. This journey signifies a profound dedication to advancing racial justice in Illinois, going well beyond conventional diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations.



Supporting Black Population Centers and Communities of Color

Our racial justice approach will focus on building power in Black communities. We chose this path for several reasons. Black people are the third largest racial group in Illinois, at 14% of the 12.7 million population. There are 81 population centers distributed throughout the state where Black people are 30% or more of the population. This shows an inextricable link between the health of Black communities and improved conditions for the state. And our new direction is a direct response to the racial violence and protests of 2020 and the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on Black communities. The events of that year were a solemn reminder that Black communities remain particularly vulnerable to systemic failures rooted in racial bias. We believe that centering a commitment to build strong Black communities will result in more just and equitable outcomes and a stronger Illinois for all.

We started on this current path in 2017 by structuring a process to get feedback from grantees and partners. We sought to recast our philanthropy to ensure that people affected by ineffective public policies and systems were centered in social change efforts. We learned that our partners were increasingly faced with addressing issues of race and equity. And they encouraged us to be explicit about tackling issues of race and equity through our resource allocations and grant processes. In June 2019, our board of directors agreed to carry out the Foundation's work with a racial equity lens. This meant that the Foundation would: organize and allocate resources in ways that identify and acknowledge social and economic inequities based on race; support efforts to reduce related racial disparities; and seek solutions that intentionally work to create or redesign systems and policies to eliminate adverse racialized outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread racial justice protests in 2020 after the public killing of George Floyd have made this work even more urgent and relevant. In this new environment, the nonprofit sector was forced to accelerate new and existing efforts to pursue racial equity and GVF's commitment to racial equity and justice had increased importance.



In 2021, we engaged grantee partners to understand whether and how they work toward more racially equitable outcomes. Admittedly, these conversations, with us and with partners, occurred in fits and starts. Each party came to the table with diverse definitions of racial equity. GVF did not have an operating framework with which we could have consistent conversations across organizations and sectors. To address this, staff designed and conducted a process to define the elements of racial equity and justice for the Foundation. This work included deep board and staff education, the development of a racial justice strategy, strategic priorities for the organization, and a guiding theory of action.

Beginning in 2022, we partnered with Morten Group to conduct an organizational assessment and collaboratively develop new mission and vision statements to reflect the Foundation's strategic shift to centering racial justice. Following this process, Morten Group guided the Foundation through a strategic planning process centered on racial equity and racial justice. The Foundation has undertaken a thoughtful and collaborative process to engage staff, Board, grantee partners, and other stakeholders in undertaking and operationalizing this focus into our vital work in the coming years.

Grand Victoria Foundation is steadfastly aligning its efforts with the cause of racial justice, channeling its initiatives toward amplifying new and existing efforts in Black communities and shedding light on how these communities are building power and agency for themselves. This visionary evolution seeks to usher in substantive, systemic change to the issues and outcomes that matter most to People of Color throughout Illinois. We hope to be among the pioneering forces reshaping philanthropy in this moment.

MISSION STATEMENT

Grand Victoria Foundation catalyzes racial justice in Illinois by cultivating the voices, power, and aspirations of Black people; and by supporting communities of color for collective liberation.

VISION STATEMENT

Grand Victoria Foundation envisions a just and vibrant Illinois rooted in abundant health, wealth, and joy, where Black people and all communities can flourish.

VALUES

Abundance: We acknowledge the richness of existing Black-led efforts and seek opportunities to support those efforts in a way that leads to freedom and joy for all.

Participatory Engagement: We believe stakeholders should have a voice, influence, and agency in shaping outcomes and policies related to issues that impact their lives.

Walking the Talk: We recognize that actions speak louder than words. We are dedicated to leading by example, demonstrating the highest standards of collaboration and strategic support in all that we do.

Synopsis of the Plan

Strategic Planning Objective

To lead the way in advancing racial justice in Illinois by crafting and executing a dynamic strategic plan that places building community power at the forefront of our grantmaking initiatives. Our plan will harmonize our mission, vision, and values with clear, measurable objectives, while fostering innovation, inclusivity, and adaptability across all dimensions of our operations. Through this transformation, we aspire to catalyze lasting change, support Black communities and other communities of color for collective liberation, and promote a truly inclusive vision of peace, dignity, and freedom for all.

Opportunity Statement

In the philanthropic landscape, a shift is underway that goes beyond the surface-level adoption of diversity principles. This evolution marks a pivotal moment where the field is transitioning to a more focused and impactful approach, centered on racial equity and justice. While many foundations and philanthropic organizations have begun to acknowledge and incorporate racial equity concepts into their work, few have taken a bold and targeted stance to shift their missions and structures to actualize it.

Grand Victoria Foundation recognizes the need to be at the forefront of this movement. Our evolution builds on past lessons and reflects a commitment to going beyond token gestures and commitments, instead striving for substantive, systemic change that addresses the unique injustices faced by Black individuals and communities.

Strategic Priorities

At the core of our new mission is our commitment to establish a “Black-centered” focus in philanthropy. We understand that this endeavor requires a structured approach to chart our course, and we have defined six pillars to organize our effort. These pillars embody the fundamental areas of concentration that will enable us to shape a more equitable and just philanthropic landscape. Together, these pillars serve as the cornerstone on which we will construct a future where the well-being of Black communities and other communities of color stand as our central mission.



Strategic Pillars

2024 - 2028

01	02	03	04	05	06
Build Power in Black Communities Through Grantmaking	Strengthen the Illinois Racial Justice Ecosystem	Financial Asset Management	Think Statewide with Focus on Local Impact	Shift Black Narratives	Operate in Abundance
<p>We will strategically direct resources to Black-led and centered organizations, promoting their influence, and enhancing their agency. We will prioritize investments that strengthen leadership and grassroots movements within these communities, recognizing the pivotal role they play in advancing racial justice.</p>	<p>We will catalyze a robust statewide racial justice ecosystem by nurturing community power and strong collaborative relationships with partners. We understand that by seeding power within communities, they collectively gain strength and influence in the pursuit of equity.</p>	<p>We recognize the need to have a strong financial foundation to support our work to invest in racial equity and racial justice. Our strategy within this pillar focuses on developing a sustainable financial future with steady revenue streams while forming partnerships with financial partners that reflect our mission and vision.</p>	<p>We recognize that change often originates at the local level, and its impact can extend beyond local borders. Our approach involves deep placed-based support of organizations and initiatives driving local change that informs interconnected and coordinated racial justice efforts throughout Illinois.</p>	<p>We are committed to challenging stereotypes and harmful narratives about Black individuals and communities. Through our grantmaking and storytelling, we aim to change the conversation and highlight the strength, resilience, and agency within these communities.</p>	<p>GVF will cultivate an organizational culture that upholds our vision and the value of abundance. This culture will foster a healthy, sustainable, and respectful workplace that ensures the board, staff and organization can flourish, while also positioning GVF as an excellent workplace and collaborative partner, deeply respectful of the essential work of our employees and our grantee partners.</p>

Tracking Our Progress

This plan for our future requires a deep commitment on the part of the board, staff, and leadership of the organization, as well as strong engagement with grantees, community members, and other partners in the philanthropic, racial, and social justice sectors. The plan includes key performance indicators for measurement and lead staff assignments for accountability to ensure GVF has a guide for keeping progress on track. Through collaboration between GVF's President, dedicated staff, and supportive Board, as well as feedback from grantee and community partners, careful consideration has been taken in the drafting of this plan to ensure success, forward movement, and transparency.






Conclusion

Following the murder of George Floyd, philanthropic pledges reached an estimated \$8.8 billion for racial equity initiatives, yet as of the summer of 2021, only \$3.4 billion in racial equity grants, and \$1 billion in racial justice grants has been made; much lower amounts than were reported in the media. At the dawn of 2024, there are reports that philanthropy is ceasing support of racial equity and racial justice efforts. That nearly \$9 billion pledge amount will likely not be reached. We believe that support of Black communities must be meaningful, long-term, and built on trust. Racial justice will only occur with accelerated investments in Black-led and Black-centered organizations.

Grand Victoria Foundation is ready. We are ready to show up as our full selves. We are ready to show up for our partners with abundance, joy, and radical imagination to build towards a collective vision for racial justice, and we invite you on this journey of joy and struggle that will get our communities closer to being the equitable, healthy, and thriving places they were always meant to be. We will make the time and space to allow our vision to flourish—for trauma to heal, for relationships to deepen, for failure, and for learning and growth. With each grant to an organization, each relationship with a leader, and with each communication, we will contribute to bringing the world as it should be into sharper focus.

The work will be hard and the path forward will not always be clear, but this is work and a journey we are committed to. We continue to learn from our philanthropic colleagues who were early leaders in this work and adapt their lessons learned to our endeavors. Similarly, we hope to inspire and entice those in the field who are still unsure and wary of how to shift their work, paradigms, and power to achieve racial equity and racial justice. To that end, we offer you a willing hand to join us on the journey.





Definitions/Glossary of Terms

BLACK-CENTERED

Deliberately design policies, programs and practices in direct response to the experiences of Black communities.

COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

Collective liberation means recognizing that all our struggles are intimately connected, and that we must work together to create the kind of world we know is possible. Collective Liberation is not just a value, but an action. When we work together across the barriers kept in place to divide us, we strengthen our organizing. When combined, our diverse identities and experiences give us the tools to dismantle unjust systems, and to create a world in which all people are seen as fully human.

POWER-BUILDING

A set of strategies used by communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain, and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance equity and justice.

RACIAL EQUITY

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus, we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

RACIAL JUSTICE

Racial justice is the systemic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice, or racial equity, goes beyond "anti-racism." It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. Racial Justice is defined as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

Additional Materials and Sources

THEORY OF ACTION

The strategic plan represents a commitment to invest in building and strengthening Black-led organizations, leadership, influence, power, and agency. We believe social and economic justice for Black people and communities is instrumental to how we reimagine and redesign a place where all lives thrive. Our commitment will be guided by the theory of action outlined below.

Practice Abundance	Acknowledge the value of long-standing work of Black-led and centered organizations by prioritizing foundation resources on these organizations	Celebrate and promote Black-led and centered organizations	Remedy historic disinvestment in Black-led and centered organizations by philanthropy	Shift stereotypes and harmful narratives about Black people and Black communities
Acknowledge and Repair Harm	Use a regenerative approach to grantmaking that ensures Black-led and centered organizations are fiscally, structurally, and culturally happy.	Allow grantee partners to identify sustainability supports they want and need (e.g., improving fundraising strategies or building financial adaptability)	Support professional and leadership development opportunities for Black-led grantee partners and for White ally organizations to strengthen solidarity on shared ideals for racial justice	
Build and Strengthen the Field	Support strong collaborative relationships among BIPOC led organizations to create optimal conditions for building power	Support white organizations to reimagine racial equity and racial injustice alliance opportunities by centering the goals of Black organizations and leaders	Support learning that builds coalitions focused on racial justice	Support grantee partners that reverse harmful narratives by highlighting the stories, experiences, and intentions of people of color that challenge anti-Blackness

GRAND VICTORIA

FOUNDATION



**Supporting Black Population Centers
and Communities of Color**

CHICAGO

200 West Madison Chicago, IL 60606 • (312) 609-0200 • (312) 658-0738 FAX
info@grandvictoriafdn.org