



## Announcing YDEKC's Thriving Leaders of Color Fund Grantees!

Our community's response to the Request for Proposals for YDEKC's Thriving Leaders of Color Fund illustrates the value of, and critical need for, intentional activities that support people of color in the youth development field. We received 39 applications, with a total of \$556,011 in funds requested. We were inspired by the affirming and creative ways organizations are seeking to uplift leaders of color. We are excited to share the seven grantees who are being awarded grants for their projects with our initial \$100,000 Fund. We are grateful to the other thirty-two applicants to this fund who shared inspirational hopes and ideas and wish that we were able to fund more projects.

As a coalition of youth-serving organizations working to support young people to thrive, we seek to be led by our members and center Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our programs and activities. We are especially grateful to our Fund Review Committee, which was made up of eleven people with a diverse array of leadership roles and experience in the youth development field, all who identify as people of color. They approached the decision-making process intentionally and with great care.

The grantees that were selected proposed projects that most closely aligned with our Fund criteria - strong alignment and potential for impact with one or more of the Fund purposes (advance, rejuvenate, and/or celebrate a group of leaders of color, and/or an individual leader of color); clearly remove barriers and/or address challenges to retaining and sustaining leaders of color in the field; elevate and center the voices, leadership, and power of leaders of color within the organization (including those named in the proposal); and the project budget is reasonable and aligns with project activities.

We are thrilled to announce our 2022 Thriving Leaders of Color Fund grantees! Grantees expressed excitement about this unique opportunity as well.

- *"This is the first grant that all of our managers co-wrote together, and they will be very excited to hear about the results! Thank you to you and the review committee for your efforts and time on this unique funding process. We're stoked!" - Kandelia*
- *"Thank you so much for this award. We at KCSKC are incredibly grateful for this investment, as we know that this truly will help our leaders of color (including me!) thrive. We appreciate your trust in us and what we've set out to do." - Khmer Community of Seattle King County*
- *"We are grateful to YDEKC, and their supporters, for making this much-needed investment in the wellbeing and advancement of leaders of color in our community." - Y-WE*
- *"Thriving Leaders of Color inspires more Thriving Leaders of Color. Thank you for connecting us with funds to get to our next stepping stone towards a liberating and decolonizing organization rooted in community." - GOKiC*

Read more about each project below - the project descriptions are drawn from each organization's submitted proposal.



## **Kandelina**

**\$10,000**

As an educational nonprofit, Kandelina takes great pride in creating a culture of learning and development among their staff. Each staff member has access to a professional development budget. They have also had a history of creating upward mobility for their staff members to grow into leadership positions. They believe in elevating and centering the voices of the people of color in our organization. This project was created in collaboration with Kandelina managers, drawing from a management meeting where they began a dialogue on everyone's emotional energy. They realized that each staff member started a new position during the pandemic or less than a year prior. Because most people "hit the ground running," staff members were quick to use technology and resources that were either used, makeshift, broken, or borrowed without questioning it. Managers shared that it did not feel right to spend money on their work when funds could go directly to students or families in our programs. This will enable them to create a physically comfortable and safe place for our leaders to share their thoughts and ideas. The team looks forward to working and meeting in a space that is conducive to the high-quality services and programming that they offer to their students and families.

## **Geeking Out Kids of Color (GOKiC)**

**\$14,000**

Geeking Out Kids of Color staff identifies with the same communities they serve, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have historically and systemically been given fewer organizational leadership opportunities. GOKiC's mission is the liberation of BIPOC youth through technology and mentorship by developing decolonized tech education programs to nurture community leaders of change. The mission extends from the team, leadership, and partnerships between the lives of the youth, families, and communities connected to the programs. GOKiC also recognizes that many team members bring natural leadership skills from their life experiences, from attending family needs or organizing in communities and campuses. Staff members develop their skills through various trainings and hands-on work at our organization. GOKiC will further support leaders of change through an all-staff leadership retreat led by a facilitator specializing in organizational leadership through Indigenous and decolonial perspectives. In addition, management training centering on liberation and collectivism for the Leadership team will elevate our not-for-profit organization approach outside the mainstream. As our leaders of color will eventually take on leadership roles at GOKiC or elsewhere, they will have invaluable knowledge from serving at GOKiC and have the opportunity to continue seasoning those skills and influence decolonial and liberation frameworks. There needs to be more leaders who understand or have similar experiences as the BIPOC communities they serve- supporting us towards upward mobility, liberation, and career exploration. Our long-term goal is to decenter the mainstream narrative of what technology education



looks like, leading the youth in building technology through their unique lens that only they can create, bringing new perspectives and new technology for a better world.

### **Khmer Community of Greater Seattle King County**

#### **Award: \$15,500**

Khmer Community of Greater Seattle King County is 100% led and staffed by people of color, specifically Khmer folks, representing the demographic of community members they serve. Their project will focus on rejuvenating and celebrating senior leaders of color, including Board members, who have contributed to growing KCSKC throughout the pandemic. Activities will include professional development (mental health first aid for youth, ancestral healing and indigenous/elder wisdom, etc.), a 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation retreat with community building, facilitated healing circles, storytelling, and visualizing strategies for the Khmer community, and culminating with a storytelling strategy to uplift the leaders' personal journeys to arrive at the organization, their impact being involved, and what they wish to see in the future. A Khmer organization investing in the healing and growth of its Khmer staff aligns with their mission to empower and center well-being. The project will help build a culture of investing in one another and giving value to oneself and one another while inspiring younger folks to see themselves in similar positions one day and engage deeper in the organization.

### **Young Women Empowered (Y-WE)**

#### **\$18,500**

This grant will be used to provide individual coaching and a BIPOC leadership retreat for Y-WE's staff of color (10 members of their team), which are specific requests from their BIPOC staff. Y-WE intentionally included all of their staff of color in this project – they are all doing frontline work that centers the voices and wellbeing of young women of color and are all strong leaders within the organization. Leaders will work with consultants of their choosing to advance their skills and receive rejuvenating personal and professional mentorship. Separating the personal from the professional is nearly impossible when the systemic and racialized trauma of their youth so closely mirrors the life experiences of their staff. Having external support from coaches of color outside the organization provides a much-needed source of reflection, solace, and guidance. In addition to receiving coaching, the leaders will engage in a 2-3 day retreat where they can reflect, nourish themselves, and integrate their learnings. Y-WE will celebrate their tremendous perseverance during such a difficult time and provide them with the resources to tend to their physical, mental, and emotional health. The coaches will support the leaders in setting goals for their retreat and reflecting on their experiences post-retreat. Building power requires building relationships with one another and having the time and resources to heal. Y-WE believes strongly in creating company policies that align with the values of their organization and caring for their staff in the



same ways they care for their youth. Funding for this project will enable Y-WE to live into their values at a deeper level.

## **CHOOSE 180**

**\$18,500**

CHOOSE 180 has grown rapidly, from one full-time staff and one program in 2017 to nine programs and a team of 25 today. While growth reflects both an increased impact on the youth they serve and on the systems they work to transform, a significant gap remains in their funding for staff development. By investing in the leadership capacity of their team, CHOOSE 180 will be able to live into existence the same belief they extend to their participants —that with adequate resources and community support, all of us can thrive. CHOOSE 180 will invest in the following activities:

- Become an institutional member of the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ), which will give their team access to a variety of trainings, resource-sharing, research, policy development, and networking/collaboration with restorative justice organizations across the country;
- Bring their team to the NACRJ Conference in Chicago, IL, in July 2022, in which they will together build a vision for the future of restorative justice locally and nationally; and
- Organize a post-training debrief to apply what they've learned to their own programming.

Too commonly, nonprofits unintentionally reinforce hierarchical approaches to organization structures, keeping individuals who excel in direct service in low-wage roles with little opportunity for growth or leadership development. CHOOSE 180 sees their entire team as leaders and intends to dismantle hierarchical understandings of leadership by encouraging their collective growth and commitment to learning. These activities will provide opportunities for individual and collective learning, collaboration, and team building. They will complement CHOOSE 180's current staff development priorities of management tools and asset mapping while empowering their team as thought leaders in the movement to transform the criminal legal system. This investment will improve not only the organization, but the local juvenile legal system reform movement as a whole.

## **FEEST**

**Award: \$10,000**

FEEST will hold a virtual retreat for their staff and board focused on art, collective healing, rest, and connection. The organization has been in the midst of an intensive strategic planning process, necessitated both by shifts brought on by the pandemic and their desire to more deeply engage youth as effective and powerful movement leaders. An art facilitator will lead them in activities to celebrate and honor the work they have done and set a collective vision for the next phase of their strategic



planning process. The retreat will include a meal, art supplies, and personal thank you gifts for staff and board to open and utilize during the event. FEEST emphasizes the importance of building in space to pause and celebrate at regular intervals during their long-term movement building, and how critical it is for the staff who are so skilled and in whom they've deeply invested remain with the organization for the continuity in their organization efforts and institutional knowledge.

### **City Year Seattle King County**

**\$13,500**

This project originated from 15 staff members on the Race and Equity Committee for City Year Seattle King County. BIPOC leaders identified two activities for this grant: A retreat for BIPOC staff and providing a stipend for race and equity leadership. The project combines a few of the common themes heard from BIPOC leaders: additional compensation for leading equity work, time for rest and rejuvenation, and opportunities to have authentic conversations about issues encountered at work and dream up new ideas. The BIPOC Retreat will be an intentional space to gather and build a reaffirmed community, do healing work, and do intentional repairing work to process staff experiences in their roles. City Year Seattle King County will also provide a stipend to race and equity leaders. Staff know their own material and personal needs and a stipend will allow leaders to spend time and money to prepare themselves best to succeed in their roles. Listening to staff and implementing concrete improvements are the most effective way to work toward a more equitable team and a culture that honors and celebrates BIPOC staff and will fuel their positive work with AmeriCorps members and students. When staff witness an example of leadership seeing, hearing, and acting on their perspectives and feedback, it is one small but important step toward building accountability and trust. Given that their organization is historically white-led and still on a journey toward anti-racism, this is especially true in the case of BIPOC staff deserving to feel heard and empowered by organizational leadership. Efforts like this one are opportunities to center the voice and leadership of BIPOC staff in the immediate term as the entire organization continues to work toward a culture of anti-racism that permeates all levels of leadership and decision making.