



Leslie Ramyk

Professional Grantor Award | 2025 Annual Philanthropy Awards

Leslie Ramyk has led private, corporate, healthcare conversion, and family foundations over the course of her 29 years in Chicago philanthropy. A granddaughter of Ukrainian immigrants and daughter of a proud union member, Leslie was the first in her family to earn a college degree. She has focused on the dynamics of inequality, immigrants rights, and racial justice throughout her career.

Ever since her experience leading the Chicago Capacity Building Initiative (2000-2007), Leslie has maintained a personal and professional commitment to resourcing grassroots community organizing. During CCBI, organizers organized Leslie by inviting her to community leadership development trainings, strategy meetings and actions. They challenged her to act on her values and engage others through their self-interests. Leslie has utilized the access and privilege of her roles in philanthropy to advocate for systems change work, particularly that which is led by those who are directly impacted.

Leslie has served as the executive director of the Conant Family Foundation since 2015. The Conant Family Foundation initiated participatory grantmaking in 2020 and has continually improved and expanded this practice. In addition to facilitating, Leslie also shares the process and results with other family foundations, encouraging them to shift decision-making power to people with lived experience of injustice and greater proximity to the issues.

In 2020, Leslie was one of the founders of the Chicago Racial Justice Pooled Fund and continues to co-chair the Steering Committee. The Fund has moved \$10M to Black- and ally-led community organizing for racial justice, with a goal of moving another \$15M by 2030.

Both of her degrees are from Northwestern University: BA in English and American Literature and MA in Interdisciplinary Humanities. Leslie also studied Russian language and literature, culminating with travel to the former USSR during perestroika.

Leslie was a 2019 Chicago United for Equity Fellow and currently serves on the board of the Lighthouse Foundation. When she's not at work, Leslie creates art quilts from reclaimed fabric and lives in a West Rogers Park bungalow with her teenage twins.