

# WEISSBERG FOUNDATION

## Request for Proposals

### 2017-2018 Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund

The Weissberg Foundation is pleased to announce our new Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund.

#### About the Reframing <Washington> Program Area

The Reframing <Washington> program area will explore and advance efforts to change how the greater Washington region sees and therefore transforms itself, particularly in terms of how power, opportunity, and potential flow and are distributed. It is our belief that this reframing can lead to system-level change to advance racial equity and positive, community-driven outcomes for all the region's residents.

#### 2017-2018 Empowerment Fund

The 2017-2018 Empowerment Fund is the inaugural grantmaking initiative of the Reframing <Washington> program area. The fund will support small, community-based organizations in the DC region engaged in advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement to advance equity for some of our most marginalized and underserved populations. Specifically, the fund will support efforts to redistribute economic, political, and social power to communities of color, those closest to incarceration, immigrants, and refugees.

#### Goals:

We seek the following outcomes in this first round of Empowerment Fund grants:

- For our communities
  - POWER: People of color, those closest to incarceration, immigrants, and refugees are more empowered to advance equitable outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

#### Key Dates

- **August 31, 2017:** Call for Letters of Intent (LOIs)
- **September 11, 2017:** 11:00 a.m. Informational call (optional) for prospective applicants (dial-in: 857-232-0157; code: 731572)
- **September 22, 2017: LOIs due**
- **October 2, 2017:** Invitation for full proposals
- **October 23, 2017: Full proposals due**
- **December 2017:** Applicant site visits
- **January 2018:** Weissberg Foundation Board meeting to approve grants
- **February 15, 2018:** Grant notifications

- For our grantees
  - VISIBILITY: Organizations giving voice and opportunity to historically marginalized populations—particularly those organizations closest to and led by members of the communities they serve—are more visible and attractive to talent, funders, and other potential collaborators
  - STRENGTH: Organizations are better positioned to meet their goals to advance equity because they are better resourced to work effectively.
- For our foundation
  - UNDERSTANDING: The Foundation deepens our knowledge about systems change to advance equity and grows our relationships with organizations and individuals working to advance it.
  - STRATEGY: The Foundation is better positioned to build a longer term, more comprehensive, and more effective strategy to support community-driven efforts to advance equity in the Washington region.

#### Grant awards:

The Weissberg Foundation expects to award 10-12 grants in the amount of \$10,000-20,000 each. The grant period will run from February 2018 – February 2019. Grants will support general operating expenses, unless funding is requested to support advocacy, organizing or civic engagement efforts specifically.

#### Application process

We are using a three-step application process in the hopes of making the best use of time for potential applicants, applicants, the Foundation, and our reviewers.

- **Step 1:** Take the LOI eligibility quiz (Appendix A) – this should only take a few minutes. If you answer “No” to any questions on the quiz, you are not eligible to submit a letter of intent (LOI).
- **Step 2:** If you answer “Yes” to all questions in the LOI eligibility quiz, proceed to completing the online LOI by the September 22, 2017 deadline. Create an account in our online grantmaking platform and complete the LOI at [www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation](http://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation). (A preview of the LOI questions can be found in Appendix B.)
- **Step 3:** If you are invited to submit a full online proposal, please do so by the October 23, 2017 deadline. (The Foundation will individually invite applicants to submit full proposals by October 2, 2017. Those not invited to submit proposals will also be informed of their status on this date.)

#### Review criteria

A panel of Foundation board and staff, along with individuals external to the foundation who have familiarity with issues related to the Empowerment Fund, will review and assess LOIs and full proposals.

Strong proposals will come from organizations that demonstrate:

- Core commitment to advancing racial equity through their programs, operations, and governance
- Key roles for and engagement of those closest to the issue(s) the organization seeks to advance
- Intentional investments in developing the leadership capacity of constituents, staff, and board members
- Deep knowledge of the issues the organization is working to address
- Thoughtful strategies and tactics to advance the organization's cause
- Intentional approach to partnership and collaboration
- Success in achieving goals and commitment to learning from both success and failure
- Organizational health

## Questions & Contact

Appendix C contains frequently asked questions about the Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund. If you have additional questions, please contact Corinne Goudreault at 703-276-7500 ext. 20 or [corinne@weissbergfoundation.org](mailto:corinne@weissbergfoundation.org). More information about the Weissberg Foundation can be found at [www.weissbergfoundation.org](http://www.weissbergfoundation.org).

## Appendix A: LOI Eligibility Quiz

Prospective grant applicants must be able to answer YES to ALL of the questions below in order to submit an LOI. If you answer NO to any of these questions, please do not submit an LOI.

1. Is your organization located in Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County; Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and/or Washington, DC?
2. Does your organization primarily serve residents in Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County; Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and/or Washington, DC?
3. Do you have a specific strategy to address the social, political and economic inequities based on racism that exist in your community?
4. Is your organization actively engaged in community organizing, civic engagement, and/or advocacy as part of your strategy for change?
5. Is your organization's annual budget \$1.5 million or less? OR is the annual budget of your advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement program \$500,000 or less?
6. Does your organization primarily serve people of color, those most impacted by incarceration, immigrants, and/or refugees?

## Appendix B: LOI Questions

LOIs should only be submitted if you answer YES to all of the LOI eligibility quiz questions. Below is a preview of the questions asked for the LOI. LOIs must be submitted through the Weissberg Foundation's online grantmaking portal at [www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation](http://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation).

1. **Budget:**
  - a. What is your organization's annual operating budget for the current fiscal year?
  - b. If you are applying for a program grant, what is the budget of your advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement program?
2. **Organization Background:** Please provide a brief history of your organization (e.g., when and why it was founded, what have been some major milestones) and your current vision and mission. (Character Limit: 3500)
3. **Strategy:** What are the major strategies you use in your work and how do they advance equity? (Character Limit: 3000)
4. **Outcomes:** What are the key outcomes you seek through your work? (Character Limit: 2500)
5. **Key Constituencies:** Who are the key constituencies you engage and serve? Please be as specific as possible in terms of demographics, geography, life experiences, etc. If you have members, how many? (Character Limit: 2000)
6. **Representation:** How is the community you serve represented on your staff, on your board, on your membership (if applicable), and/or in other leadership capacities? (Character Limit: 2000)
7. **Impact:** What are 2-3 recent accomplishments of your organization? (Character Limit: 2500)

## Appendix C: FAQs

### **Who is the Weissberg Foundation?**

The Weissberg Foundation is private foundation with a social justice mission to advance organizations and efforts that give voice and opportunity to historically marginalized populations. We do this through funding, amplification, capacity building, and collaboration. Located in Rosslyn, Virginia, we predominantly fund in the United States, with about half of our domestic grantmaking going locally to the Washington Metropolitan area. Learn more about the Foundation at [www.weissbergfoundation.org](http://www.weissbergfoundation.org).

### **What do you mean by advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement?**

There are varying definitions for advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement. The following definitions from our colleagues resonate most with the Weissberg Foundation.

- **Advocacy** -- *any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others. It includes public education, regulatory work, litigation, and work before administrative bodies, lobbying, voter registration, voter education, and more. ([Alliance for Justice](#))*
- **Community organizing** -- *a multi-faceted strategy for social change that relies on the leadership of members from the affected community to bring about change. HSF also states the following goals of community organizing: 1) improve social conditions, outcomes, and the quality of life for marginalized communities through systemic change; 2) build the leadership within marginalized communities; and 3) strengthen democratic participation and accountability of decision makers to marginalized communities. ([Hill-Snowdon Foundation](#))*
- **Civic engagement** -- *the process of helping people be active participants in building and strengthening their communities, whether that community is defined as a physical place, or a shared identity/interest. In other words, civic engagement is a spectrum of ways people can participate in self governance, from interactions with government to voluntary associations, and everything in between. ([Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement](#))*

### **Why does The Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund only support organizations engaged in advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement?**

In *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best: Benchmarks to Assess and Enhance Grantmaker Impact*, the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](#) writes that, “Organizations working on policy advocacy, organizing and civic engagement offer a powerful real-world example of systems thinking and theory in action. This work enhances our pluralistic democracy, provides voice to communities that would otherwise not be heard, demonstrates an understanding of systemic reform and results in tremendous impact. With several notable exceptions, civic engagement, advocacy and organizing are under-funded by foundations, and community groups struggle to raise the resources needed to engage in this important work.” Though this was written in 2009, it still holds true, particularly in the Washington, DC region.

**Why does this fund only support organizations with annual budgets of \$1.5 million or less, or organizations with advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement program budgets of \$500,000 or less?**

The Foundation recognizes that the grants we have to give are relatively small. Therefore, we want to award them to relatively small organizations and/or programs where they have the potential to make an outsized impact.

**What do you mean by “those most impacted by incarceration?”**

By “those most impacted by incarceration” we mean those who are at the greatest risk of being incarcerated, those who are currently incarcerated, those who were formerly incarcerated, and those who are the family and loved ones of any of these individuals.

**What if I am unable to attend the September 11 informational call?**

The call will be recorded and we will provide a link to the recording on our website on the Empowerment Fund page, and upon request. To request the link please email Corinne Goudreault at [corinne@wiessbergfoundation.org](mailto:corinne@wiessbergfoundation.org).

**Who do I contact for assistance in completing and submitting a letter of intent (LOI)?**

Please contact Corinne Goudreault at [corinne@wiessbergfoundation.org](mailto:corinne@wiessbergfoundation.org) for assistance with submitting an LOI through our online grantmaking system or an alternative way, if needed.

**If awarded a grant, what are the grant requirements?**

Grantees will be asked to do an in-person check-in with the foundation 6 months into the grant period; write a story about their current work to be shared through their own, the Foundation’s, and any other appropriate media channels; and submit a final report on grant activities, learnings, outcomes, and feedback at the end of the grant period.

**Why is the Foundation using external grant reviewers?**

The Foundation’s experience with inviting external individuals to join our board and staff in grant review is that it brings different perspectives, expertise, and experience to our review process. Grant decisions are therefore better informed, and we and our guest reviewers learn from each other and strengthen relationships.

**Why does this initiative focus on people of color, those closest to incarceration, immigrants, and refugees?**

The Foundation Center tracks a list of grantmaking beneficiaries. From that list, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy identified twelve populations as “underserved” or “marginalized.” In developing our 5-year strategic framework and this grant program, the Foundation wanted to focus our grantmaking efforts on historically underserved and marginalized populations most impacted by racism. Therefore, we chose to lift up people of color, those closest to incarceration, immigrants, and refugees.

**When will the Foundation issue an RFP for the second round of Empowerment Fund Grants?**

At this time, we anticipate that we will release an RFP for the second round of Empowerment Grants in the summer of 2018. Please note, the parameters of that grant program will likely be different from this inaugural one. Grantees from the first round of funding will be able to apply for the second round if they meet the eligibility requirements of that funding initiative.