

WEISSBERG FOUNDATION

2018-2020 Equitable Justice Fund --Request for Proposals--

Founded in 1988, the Weissberg Foundation is a private family foundation that envisions a just world that recognizes inequities and builds access, opportunity, and power so that all can thrive. Our mission is to advance organizations and efforts that give voice and opportunity to historically marginalized populations through funding, amplification, capacity building, and collaboration. Located in Rosslyn, Virginia, we predominantly fund in the United States in four key program areas: Reframing <Washington>, Diversity in Theater, the Weissberg Program in Human Rights at Beloit College in Wisconsin, and our newest program area, Equitable Justice. Learn more about the Foundation at www.weissbergfoundation.org.

Key Dates

- **May 23, 2018:** Call for Letters of Intent (LOIs)
- **June 6, 2018:** 1:00 p.m. ET Informational call (optional) for prospective applicants (dial-in: 857-232-0157; code: 731572)
- **July 13, 2018: LOIs due**
- **August 9, 2018:** Notification of status and invitation to video site visits
- **August 13-24, 2018: Video site visits**
- **October 2018:** Notification of status
- **November 2018:** Grants disbursed

About the Equitable Justice Program Area

The current U.S. criminal justice system does not accommodate the unique needs and circumstances of women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals, and it disproportionately harms people of color. For the system to be truly just and equitable, the voices of these individuals need to be at the center of conversations about its reform.

Through our Equitable Justice program area, the Foundation will fund, amplify, build capacity, and collaborate to advance organizations and efforts approaching justice reform with an intersectional lens and centering system-impacted women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals of color.

We include in our definition of “criminal justice,” law enforcement, the judicial system, and corrections at all levels of government, in communities, and in schools. By “system-impacted,” we mean those who have themselves been in, have had loved ones involved with, or live in communities disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system.

Goals:

We seek the following outcomes through Equitable Justice:

- **STRENGTH:** Grant partners are better resourced to build the power of system-impacted women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals and advance a truthful narrative about our criminal justice system.
- **VISIBILITY:** Grant partners, their work, and their messages are more visible and compelling to talent, funders, policymakers, the media, and other potential collaborators.
- **PARTNERSHIP:** We and other funders more effectively collaborate to support narratives and work most likely to create transformative change in the justice system.
- **SYSTEMS CHANGE:** Policymakers are more compelled to advance fair and equitable criminal justice laws and practices.
- **POWER:** System-impacted women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals of color have agency to improve their lives and the lives of others, advance policies and practices on issues they deem most critical to them, their families, their communities, and the justice system, and are more valued and respected.

Our ultimate vision for the American justice system is that it is equitable, fair, and rightsized; it values women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals; and it ceases to inflict pain, perpetuate racism, and uphold patriarchy.

About the 2018-2020 Equitable Justice Fund

The 2018-2020 Equitable Justice Fund is the inaugural grantmaking round of this new program area. The fund will support small, community-based organizations in Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Virginia, and Washington, DC that are building the leadership and advocacy capacity of system-impacted women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals of color to advance equity and change the narrative about who they are, what our criminal justice system is, and what it can be.

Grant awards:

The Foundation expects to award 8 grants of \$25,000 a year for two years. The grant period will run November 2018 – November 2020. Grants will be in support of general operating expenses.

Application process

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

- **Step 1:** Take the LOI (letter of intent) 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 an LOI, and doing so would not be a good use of your time. If you are unsure about how best to answer any of the questions on the quiz, please contact Amanda O’Meara at 703-276-7500 ext. 10 or aomeara@weissbergfoundation.org.

- **Step 2:** If you answer “Yes” to all questions in the LOI eligibility quiz, complete the online LOI by the July 13, 2018 deadline. Create an account in our online grantmaking platform at www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation and follow the cues to submit your LOI. (A preview of the LOI questions can be found in Appendix B.)
- **Step 3:** If you are invited for a video site visit, you will be asked to select a 90-minute time slot sometime August 13-24 for a virtual meeting with representatives from our grant review team. (The Foundation will individually invite applicants to video site visits by August 9. Those not invited will also be informed of their status on this date.)

Review criteria

A team of Foundation board and staff, along with additional individuals with proximity to issues related to the Equitable Justice program area, will review and assess LOIs and video site visits.

Strong proposals will come from organizations that demonstrate:

- ✓ Informed strategies for advancing systems-level change in the justice system through advocacy, organizing and/or civic engagement
- ✓ Use of an intersectional analysis accounting for structural racism and gender inequities
- ✓ 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

Grant partner agreements

Grantees will be asked to do a check-in with the foundation 6 months into each grant year; write a story about their current work to be shared through their own, the Foundation’s, and other appropriate media channels; and submit a report at the end of the first year and at the end of the grant period on key activities, learnings, outcomes, and feedback. The Foundation is open to supporting convening(s) of the grantee cohort either through video or in person to nurture networking and/or capacity building needs expressed by grantees.

Questions & Contact

Appendix C contains frequently asked questions about the Equitable Justice Fund. If you have additional questions, please contact Amanda O’Meara at 703-276-7500 ext. 10 or aomeara@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.

	YES	NO
1. Is your organization based in and doing work in Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Virginia, or Washington, DC?		
2. Is your organization's annual budget \$2.5 million or less?		
3. Is your organization advancing systems-level change in criminal justice by strategically engaging in advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement as part of your strategy for change?		
4. Is your organization intentionally building the leadership and advocacy capacity of system-impacted women, girls, trans, and/or gender non-conforming individuals of color?		
5. Are your organization's board and staff representative of the women, girls, trans, and/or gender non-conforming individuals of color you serve?		
6. Is your organization applying an intersectional analysis to your work, accounting for structural racism and gender inequities in society and the justice system?		

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 our online grantmaking portal: www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=weissbergfoundation.

1. **Budget:** What is your organization's annual operating budget for the current fiscal year?
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. **Key Constituencies:** Who are the key constituencies you engage and serve? Please be as specific as possible in terms of demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender), geography, life experiences, etc. If you have members, how many? (Character Limit: 2000)
4. **Strategy:** What are the major strategies you use in your work and how do they advance equitable justice reform? (Character Limit: 3000)
5. **Outcomes:** What are the key overall outcomes you seek through your work? (Character Limit: 2500)
6. **Goals:** What are your major goals for the upcoming year? How will you assess progress against those goals? (Character Limit: 2500)
7. **Representation:** How is the community you serve represented on your staff, on your board, in your membership (if applicable), and/or in other leadership capacities? (Character Limit: 2000)
8. **Impact:** What are 2-3 recent accomplishments of your organization? (Character Limit: 2500)

Appendix C: FAQs

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. These are representative of the types of activities we seek in strong applicants, though we are not expecting any one applicant to be doing all of them.

- **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 Equitable Justice Fund only support organizations engaged in some form of 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.”

Would the Equitable Justice Fund support organizations engaged in advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement AND also direct service or other program delivery models?

Yes. Our intention is not to exclude organizations engaged in direct service or other program delivery methods, but a minimum requirement is engagement in some form of advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement.

Would the Equitable Justice Fund support organizations that also serve men?

Though we will not rule out organizations that also serve men, the Equitable Justice Fund is intended to support organizations or initiatives that explicitly center their work on and predominantly serve women, girls, trans, and/or gender non-conforming individuals.

Are there specific issues in justice reform you want applicants/grantees working to advance?

We believe that the women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming individuals of color who have been impacted by our criminal justice system are best positioned to identify the issues that need to be addressed; therefore, we are interested in supporting the issues that they lift up.

Why does this fund only support organizations with annual budgets of \$2.5 million 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.

Why is the foundation only funding organizations in Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Virginia, and Washington, DC, and will the grant program expand to other states in the future?

The foundation has staff and/or board presence in all of these states, which we feel is important in building strong grantee relationships. At this time, we are focusing the grant program in states where we have a board and/or staff presence. That may change in the future.

What if I am unable to attend the June 6 informational call?

The call will be recorded, and we will provide a link to the recording on our website at www.weissbergfoundation.org/justice and upon request. To request the link please email Amanda O'Meara at aomeara@weissbergfoundation.org.

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

Please contact Amanda O'Meara at 703-276-7500 ext. 10 or aomeara@weissbergfoundation.org for assistance with submitting an LOI through our online grantmaking system or an alternative way, if needed.

Why is the Foundation using external grant reviewers?

The Foundation's experience with inviting community members 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 our relationships.

What is a video site visit?

In lieu of requesting a full proposal from applicants that advance past the LOI stage, we will arrange video site visits. The video site visits will take place via Zoom video conference and last about 90-minutes. Invited applicants will receive in advance an agenda for the visit, a list of the questions we plan to cover, and guidance on who should participate in the video visits.

When will the Foundation issue an RFP for the second round of Equitable Justice Fund Grants?

This is still to be determined, but anyone who applies to this grant round will be informed when a new RFP will be issued. If you are not applying for a grant in this term and would like to be included in that announcement, please inform Amanda O'Meara at 703-276-7500 ext. 10 or aomeara@weissbergfoundation.org.