

WEISSBERG FOUNDATION

Request for Proposals

Disrupt, Move, Voice Power (DMV Power) Fund

The Weissberg Foundation envisions a just world that recognizes inequities and builds access, opportunity, and power so that all can thrive. We fund, amplify, build the capacity of, and collaborate with organizations and efforts working to address what we believe is the root cause of the social, economic, and political disparities that negatively influence systems, perpetuate inequities, and disparage individuals – structural racism.

In 2017, the Foundation launched our Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund to support and explore how power, opportunity, and potential are built and distributed for racial equity in the greater Washington region. As this exploratory fund winds down, we are launching a new program that will:

1. More boldly and explicitly invest in the strengthening of an infrastructure and culture of power building to advance racial equity;
2. Expand beyond the greater Washington region to include the entire commonwealth of Virginia, where state-wide and state-level advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement are critical to change; and
3. Provide larger grants across a longer time period to support grantees in more sustainably building capacity internally and effecting change externally.

Introducing DMV Power

Grounded in our learning from the Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund, DMV Power focuses on three mutually reinforcing means for building the power of those who have historically been under-resourced in and underserved by our social, economic, and political institutions: **disrupting** power, **moving** power, and **voicing** power.

Key Dates

- **Sep 4, 2019:** RFP released
- **Sep 10, 2019:** 2:00 p.m. ET Informational webinar for prospective applicants
- **October 2, 2019: LOIs due**
- **Nov 1, 2019:** Notification of status; video site visit invites
- **Nov 2018: Video site visits**
- **Jan 2020:** Final notifications
- **Jan 2020:** Grants disbursed

- **Disrupting Power.** Through structural inequities such as racism, xenophobia, cis-heterosexism, ageism, classism, and ableism deeply embedded into society’s laws, policies, and values, we perpetuate a “dominant culture” that advantages some, disadvantages many, and decenters equity among systems of power. Disrupting power centers those who have been historically oppressed and leverages individual and collective power to question and dismantle white supremacy.
- **Moving Power.** Power can be built, shared, and wielded to advance social justice through advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement that centers the lived expertise and experiences of those most directly impacted by inequity and calls upon individuals across the power spectrum to collaborate for profound and tangible social change.
- **Voicing Power.** Changing the narrative around race and racism is critical for sustainable systems change. In doing so, it is essential to center and uplift the voices of those most negatively impacted by racism. Though existing power disparities and dominant narratives make these voices difficult to hear, their messages shed light on how structures, systems, and institutions have been designed in direct opposition to racial and ethnic diversity in order to benefit some over others.

DMV Power is dedicated to (1) combatting **systemic oppression** through which racism stays deeply embedded in social systems and institutions; (2) recognizing the **lived experience** that community members of color have in experiencing racism; (3) highlighting that racism is not one-dimensional, but instead that people of color live **multi-issue lives** in which inequity is multi-faceted; (4) understanding that identities are **intersectional** in nature; (5) underscoring the weight of **historical oppression** experienced by communities of color; and (6) promoting an **anti-racist** stance in advancing a more equitable society.

DMV Power Goals

For our communities:

- **POWER:** People of color who are multiply impacted by systems are more empowered to advance equitable outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

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 racial equity because they are better resourced to work effectively.

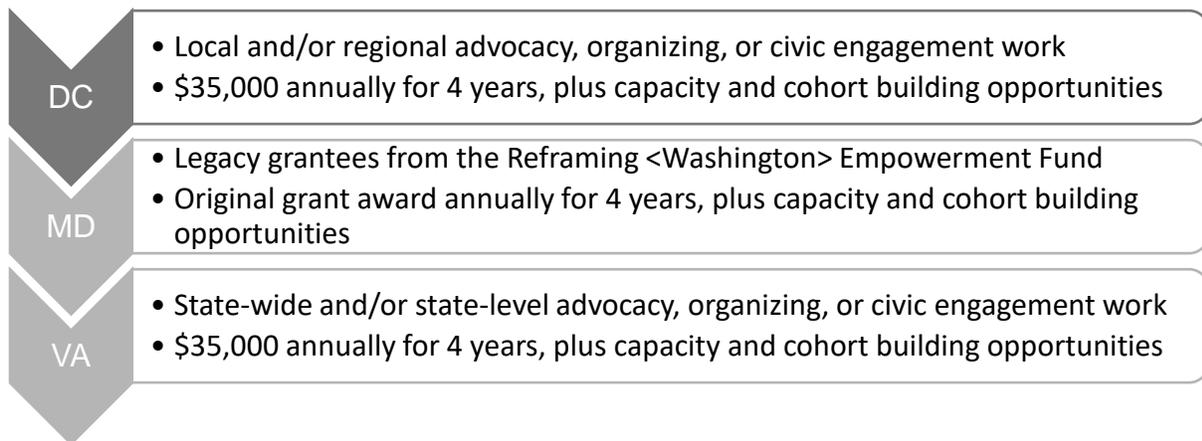
For our foundation:

- **UNDERSTANDING:** The Foundation deepens our knowledge about systems change to advance racial equity and grows our relationship with organizations and individuals working to advance it.

- **STRATEGY:** The Foundation is better positioned to leverage a longer term, more comprehensive, and more effective strategy to support community-driven efforts to advance racial equity across the District, Maryland, and Virginia.

Grant Awards

The Weissberg Foundation expects to make 8 new awards to organizations doing state-wide and/or state-level work in Virginia or local and/or regional work in the District. Each award will amount to \$35,000 a year for four years, January 2020-January 2024. In addition to these new awards, the Foundation will sustain two Maryland legacy grants from the original Reframing <Washington> Empowerment Fund cohort. All grants will support general operating expenses, unless funding is explicitly requested to support specific programs.



Application Process

We use a three-step application process in the hopes of creating an efficient, streamlined, and less burdensome experience for both applicants and reviewers.

- **STEP 1:** Take the **Eligibility Quiz** (Appendix A), which will determine if your organization should apply for this grant. The quiz should only take a few minutes. *If you answer “No” to any of the questions, you are not eligible to submit an application.*
- **STEP 2:** If you answer “Yes” to all the questions in the Eligibility Quiz, proceed to completing the online **Letter of Intent (LOI)** *by October 2, 2019*. A preview of the LOI questions can be found in Appendix B.

Submit your LOI via our online application platform:

- **Create an account or log in:** Go to <http://bit.ly/WFGrantPortal> and set up an account with information about your organization and a username and password. If you already have an account, use your existing username and password to login.
- **Complete the required questions:** Required questions are marked with an asterisk. There are no word limits when answering questions; the provided numbers are suggestions.

- **Submit your LOI:** Follow the prompts to formally submit your LOI. You will receive an email confirming your submission.
- **STEP 3:** All decisions around the next step for applicants will be communicated via email by November 1, 2019. If you are invited for a **Video Site Visit**, you will be asked to select a 90-minute time slot in November for a virtual meeting with representatives from our grant review team.

Review Criteria

A panel of individuals with proximity to issues related to the DMV Power Fund, alongside with Foundation board and staff, will review and assess LOIs and participate in video site visits.

Strong proposals will come from organizations that demonstrate:

- A core commitment to advancing **racial equity** through their programs, operations, and governance.
- A dedication to **building power** for constituents and creating space for their voices, experiences, and stories to directly impact the work, progress, and future agenda of the organization.
- An emphasis on inclusion for those with **intersectional** and multi-layered identities to participate in and contribute to the work of the organization.
- Application of a framework of **anti-black racism** that acknowledges the depth of the history of oppression, discrimination, and violence that has impacted Black people specifically, while also acknowledging that structures and systems have been designed in direct opposition to blackness and how all individuals suffer as a result.
- **Key leadership 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.
- An intentional approach to **partnership and collaboration**.
- **Success in achieving goals and commitment to learning** from both success and failure.
- **Organizational health** as demonstrated through financial management, organizational development, and talent recruitment and management.

Questions & Contact

Appendix C contains frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the DMV Power Fund. If you have any additional questions, please contact our program manager Leni Dworkis at

ldworkis@weissbergfoundation.org or 703-276-7500 x29.

Appendix A: 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 located in Washington, DC or the state of Virginia?		
2. Does your organization primarily serve communities in Washington, DC or the state of Virginia?		
3. Does your organization explicitly use anti-racism strategies – those that intentionally oppose racism and promote racial justice – in addressing social, political, and economic inequities?		
4. Is your organization actively engaged in community organizing, civic engagement, advocacy, and/or other tactics to build power as part of your strategy for change?		
5. Is power-building of and by people of color integral to your work?		
6. Is your board committed to your work around racial equity?		
7. For Virginia-based organizations, do you undertake at least part of your systems change work at the state level and/or state-wide?		
8. Will your organization commit to engaging in at least one in-person grantee convening and two other capacity-building activities in each year of the grant program?		

Appendix B: LOI Questions

LOIs should only be submitted if you answered YES to all of the Eligibility Quiz questions. Below is a preview of the questions asked for the LOI. LOIs must be submitted through the Weissberg Foundation's online grant making portal: <http://bit.ly/WFGrantPortal>.

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 specifically for your advocacy, organizing, and/or civic engagement, what is the budget for that work?
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.
3. **Geography:** What wards or neighborhoods in Washington, DC and/or what areas of Virginia does your organization reach and/or serve?
4. **Strategy:** What are the major strategies you use in your work and how do they advance racial equity?
5. **Outcomes:** What are the key outcomes you seek through your work?
6. **Power-Building:** In what ways does your work build power of directly impacted individuals, and what are some achievements that highlight these efforts?
7. **Centering Key Constituencies:** Who are the key constituencies you engage and in what ways are their lived experiences centered in your work? Please be as specific as possible in terms of demographics, geography, lived experience, etc.
8. **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?
9. **Impact:** What are 2-3 recent accomplishments of your organization?

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 the 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 DMV Power 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.

Can you elaborate on the core principles of the DMV Power program?

1. **Systemic Oppression** – when social systems and institutions perpetuate racism because they are structurally inequitable (i.e., they are intentionally structured to deny access, opportunity, and power to certain groups).

2. **Lived Experience** – the understanding that only individuals who experience oppression can speak first-hand to the ways that their experiences have shaped their perspectives on racism or intersect with racial justice.
3. **Multi-Issue Lives** – an acknowledgement that those who experience oppression most often do not experience it on only one front or through only one facet of life; racial inequity is perpetuated through overlapping and compounded issues such as housing inequity, food scarcity, educational inopportunity, involvement in the criminal justice system, and a lack of/under-employment, among others.
4. **Intersectionality** – a recognition that identity is dynamic and multi-layered and that each of these components independently and when taken together reflect a spectrum of power and oppression that exist among a long list of social strata such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, etc.
5. **Historical Oppression** – the experience of injustice that is both ubiquitous and chronic, which holds weight intergenerationally; this structural exclusion and inequity has been over time normalized into the lives of those experiencing it and internalized into those perpetuating it.
6. **Anti-Racism** – the practice of intentionally opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance through actions and belief systems.

What are some examples of disrupting, moving and voicing power?

- **Disrupting power** might include offering political educational opportunities to the community and/or challenging governmental systems through mobilizing and engaging constituents to push forward policy change, propose alternative legislation, and testify at hearings.
- **Moving power** might include creating strategic, issue-based campaigns and/or engaging community members in on the ground efforts, such as door knocking, resource distribution, and local forums and talks.
- **Voicing power** might include focusing on building, shaping, and changing narratives and/or engaging community members in conversations to address and advance issues that are central to their lives.

What are the details for the September 10, 2019 informational webinar?

The webinar will take place on September 10, 2019 from 2:00-2:45pm via Zoom. Please use the following link to access the webinar: http://bit.ly/Register_DMVPower. Join via phone at 646-876-9923 and enter the meeting ID 252 201 746. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

What if I am unable to make the September 10, 2019 informational webinar?

The call will be recorded, and we will provide a link to the recording on our website on the DMV Power page. Or, request the link directly from Leni Dworkis at ldworkis@weissbergfoundation.org or 703-276-7500 x29.

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

Please contact Leni Dworkis at ldworkis@weissbergfoundaation.org or 703-276-7500 x29 for assistance with submitting an LOI through our online grant making system, or through alternative methods if needed.

If awarded a grant, what are the grant requirements?

Grantees will be asked to do 6-month check-ins with the Foundation; share a story about their current work to be disseminated through their own, the Foundation's, and other appropriate social media channels; submit interim reports yearly and a final report at the end of the grant period on key learning activities, outcomes, and feedback; and participate in capacity building and cohort-building activities.

Why does the Foundation use external grant reviewers?

The Foundation's experience with inviting external individuals to join our board and staff in the grant review process 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 one another and strengthen relationships across the field.

Why does this initiative focus on people of color, specifically those who are multiply impacted by systems?

When thinking about race equity across the Washington metropolitan region and within the entire commonwealth of Virginia, it is essential to center those who are most directly impacted by racism. Historically, people of color in the region have been under-resourced and underserved through social, political, and economic systems that perpetuate inequity. Additionally, we recognize that those who are most impacted by these systems will likely experience inequity in more than one region of their lived experience be in housing, education, etc., and as such we believe that those living multi-issue lives should be at the core of the work. Further, identity is multi-faceted, and as such we recognize that people's identities extend beyond just race to include other factors such as sexual orientation, gender, age religion, ability, etc., which further shape their experiences as people of color.

When will the Foundation issue an RFP for the next round of the DMV Power Fund?

The inaugural DMV Power Fund grants will run from January 2020 through January 2024. Though we anticipate releasing an RFP for another round of funding in the fall of 2023, this is still to be determined.