

WEISSBERG FOUNDATION

Request for Proposals JustVA 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.

Introducing JustVA Fund

The Weissberg Foundation is launching a new fund to support efforts at the intersection of criminal and racial justice in Virginia. Virginia’s history of colonization and slavery have resulted in a longstanding legacy of racism that surfaces in the criminalization of Virginia residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Through this fund, the Foundation seeks to support organizations advancing critical systems change to Virginia’s criminal legal systems, ones that actively dismantle structural racism within the Commonwealth to create a more equitable and just world for Virginians.

Eligible organizations supported by the fund would:

- Be dedicated criminal justice organizations or have specific criminal justice campaigns or agendas dedicated to change-making in Virginia;
- Centralize racial justice in their mission, vision, operations, and programming;
- Be Black, Indigenous, and/or person of color led and centered as outlined below;
- Use advocacy and/or community organizing as key engagement and power building strategies; and

Key Dates

- **June 28:** RFP released
- **July 13:** 12:00 p.m. ET Informational webinar for prospective applicants
- **August 6:** LOIs due
- **September 17:** Notification of status; video site visit invites
- **September & October:** Video site visits
- **November:** Final notifications
- **December:** Grants disbursed

- Reach jurisdictions, counties, regions, or areas in Virginia, with some work being done at the state-level.

Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color Led and Centered

The Weissberg Foundation is committed to supporting groups and efforts that are led by and centered on Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. Eligible organizations will have senior leadership, staff, and boards that include significant representation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Organizations advancing to the site visit stage will be asked to share this demographic information, which will be taken into consideration as final decisions are made about funding.

Beyond just representation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color on staff and boards, it is important that the following values are reflected in organizations supported through this fund:

- They take a strong and active anti-racist stance in their work;
- They are committed to uplifting truthful narratives that amplify voices from Black, Indigenous, or people of color communities;
- They center and celebrate the value and dignity of lived experience;
- They are committed to strategically and intentionally building the power of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities; and
- They take a holistic approach to their work around criminal justice that is intersectional, responsive to historical and present-day traumas, and allows for collective imagination in this work.

JustVA Fund Goals

For our communities:

- Power: System-impacted Black, Indigenous, and people of color are empowered to advance fair and equitable outcomes on criminal legal and racial justice issues they deem most critical for themselves, their families, and their communities.
- Community Building: Individuals have the connections and relationships they need with people and organizations to work in partnership with others to create transformative changes in the criminal legal system.

For our grantee partners:

- Systems Change: Organizations engage in community-centered and -led change making strategies that advance fair and equitable laws and practices for Black, Indigenous, and people of color who are system involved.
- Strength: Organizations are better positioned to build the power and bolster the visibility of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities who are system involved because they are better resourced to advance their efforts.

For our foundation:

- **Understanding:** The foundation deepens our knowledge about systems change at the intersection of criminal and racial justice, and partners with organizations and individuals working to advance it.

Grant Awards

The Weissberg Foundation expects to make 8 new awards to organizations working on criminal and racial justice in Virginia. Each award will amount to \$50,000 a year for three years, starting in December 2021.

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 August 6, 2021 at 6:00pm*. 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.
- **Upload a document of the required questions:** Required questions are laid out in Appendix B. Organizations submitting on their own should cap LOIs between 3-5 pages, while organizations applying in partnership with others should cap their LOIs between 5-8 pages.
- **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 September 17, 2021. If you are invited for a **Video Site Visit**, you will be asked to select a 90-minute time slot in September or October for a virtual meeting with representatives from our grant review team.

Review Criteria

A panel of individuals with proximity to issues related to the JustVA Fund, alongside with Foundation staff, will review and assess LOIs and participate in video site visits. Strong proposals will come from organizations that demonstrate:

- Deep knowledge of key criminal justice issues impacting Black, Indigenous, and people of color in Virginia;
- Comprehensive strategy to address a multitude of compounding issues in the criminal legal system;
- Improved outcomes, conditions, and/or systems for Black, Indigenous, and people of color in Virginia;
- Implementable long-term visioning, resulting in advancement of changes to the current criminal legal system in Virginia;
- Equitable engagement of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities in directing campaigns, policy agendas, narrative change strategies, and/or other efforts around criminal justice;
- Active and intentional power building of system involved Black, Indigenous, and people of color;
- Centering of racial justice in criminal justice approaches and strategies; and
- Meaningful impact in advancing criminal justice with a racial justice lens at the state-level.

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.

Informational Webinar

Join us on July 13, 2021 to learn more about the JustVA grant opportunity. This webinar will serve as an informational session to orient prospective grantees to the program, application process, and review process. Interested applicants will have an opportunity to pose additional questions about the JustVA Fund to Weissberg Foundation staff.

Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET.

Register in advance for this meeting: http://bit.ly/Register_JustVA

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, or doing significant work in the state of Virginia?		
2. Does your organization primarily work on criminal justice in Virginia, or have specific campaigns, actions, or agendas focused on criminal justice in Virginia?		
3. Is your organizational advocacy or organizing budget \$1 million or less?		
4. Does your organization work on issues related to Virginia’s criminal legal system through a lens of racial justice?		
5. Is your organization led by and centered on Black, Indigenous, and people of color as outlined in the RFP?		
6. Is your organization actively engaged in community organizing and/or advocacy as your primary strategy for change related to your work around the criminal legal system?		
7. Do you undertake at least part of your systems change work at the state-level in Virginia?		

Appendix B: LOI Questions

LOIs should only be submitted if you answered YES to all of the Eligibility Quiz questions. Below are the LOI questions. LOIs must be submitted by answering all questions and uploading them in one document (exceeding no more than 5 pages for individual organizations and 8 pages for collaborations between organizations) to 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. What is your budget for advocacy and/or organizing work for the current fiscal year?
2. **Organization Background:** Please provide a brief history of your organization (e.g., when and why it was founded) and your current vision and mission.
3. **Geography:** What jurisdictions, counties, regions, or areas of Virginia does your organization reach and/or serve?
4. **Strategy:** What are the major systems change strategies you use in your work and how do they advance your work around criminal and racial justice?
5. **Power Building:** In what ways does your work build the power of Black, Indigenous, and people of color who are system involved, and what are some recent achievements in the criminal justice space in Virginia that highlights these efforts?
6. **Centering Lived Experience:** In what ways do you center the voices and experiences of system involved Black, Indigenous, and people of color in your organizing and/or advocacy around criminal justice in Virginia?
7. **Successes and Challenges:** What have been your biggest successes and challenges related to making change to the criminal legal system in Virginia?
8. **Outcomes:** What are the key outcomes you seek related to criminal justice in Virginia?
9. **Partnership:** If you are applying in partnership with another organization(s), please discuss the work or roles of each organization and how you plan to work equitably together through this fund.

Appendix C: FAQs

What types of organizations will you support through this fund?

Through the JustVA Fund, the Weissberg Foundation will support organizations that:

- Maintain 501c3 status or are fiscally sponsored;
- Have a budget supporting advocacy or organizing work that is \$1 million or less;
- Are dedicated criminal justice organizations or have specific criminal justice campaigns or agendas dedicated to change-making in Virginia;
- Centralize racial justice in their mission, vision, operations, and programming;
- Are Black, Indigenous, and/or person of color led and centered as outlined in the RFP;
- Use advocacy and/or community organizing as key engagement and power building strategies; and
- Reach jurisdictions, counties, or regions in Virginia, with some work being done at the state-level.

What do you mean by advocacy and organizing?

There are varying definitions for advocacy and organizing. 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](#))*

What are the details for the July 13, 2021 informational webinar?

The webinar will take place on July 13, 2021 from 12:00-1:00pm via Zoom. Please use the following link to access the webinar: http://bit.ly/Register_JustVA. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

What if I am unable to make the July 13, 2021 informational webinar?

The call will be recorded, and we will provide a link to the recording on our website on the JustVA page. You can also request the link directly from Leni Dworkis at ldworkis@weissbergfoundation.org.

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

Please contact Leni Dworkis at ldworkis@weissbergfoundation.org for assistance with submitting an LOI through our online grant making system, or through alternative methods if needed.

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 Black, Indigenous, and people of color led and centered organizations?

When thinking about criminal justice within the entire commonwealth of Virginia, it is essential to center those who are most directly impacted by racism. Historically, Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the state have been under-resourced and underserved through social, political, and economic systems that perpetuate inequity. The criminal legal system is no different – it disproportionately creates disadvantages for Black, Indigenous, and people of color whose lives are touched by it. Additionally, we recognize the ways in which racism is codified through the criminal legal system and that sweeping change needs a racial justice lens to improve these outcomes.