

Request for Proposals: State Alliances to Advance Transparency, Equity, and Accountability in the Economic Recovery

Overview

The Open Society Institute requests proposals to support alliances of state-based organizations working to assure transparency, equity, and accountability in the economic recovery at the state level. Many decisions that will influence the impact of the economic recovery on communities of color, women, immigrant groups, LGBTQ individuals, youth, and low-income communities will take place at the state level. Our goal is to provide support to state-based alliances that will work to assure that federal and state economic recovery efforts are transparent and accountable; benefit people most in need; and enhance equity rather than reinforce structures of inequality. Ideally, state-based alliances will seek comprehensive and timely collection and dissemination of recovery-related spending data, advocate for equitable spending, promote a strong social safety net, and assure that the role of decisionmakers in the success or failure of economic recovery programs and policies is spotlighted.

Goals

Specifically, we seek to support alliances that will:

- Advocate for transparency and public participation in the state decision-making process regarding allocation of recovery dollars, and ensure transparent and accessible disclosure of spending data;
- Promote a more equitable distribution of recovery funds, reflecting the particular needs of low-income people, immigrant communities, women, LGBTQ individuals, youth, and people of color;
- Include strong representation of people of color, women, immigrants, youth, and low-income communities, and bring together expertise in grassroots organizing, policy research and analysis, use of innovative technologies, and advocacy; and
- Spotlight the role of decisionmakers in the success or failure of economic recovery programs and policies.

Eligibility

The Fund will accept proposals from states where OSI is currently engaged or where the foundation may consider funding in the future. States that we are currently considering proposals from are: California, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. We are unlikely to fund in every state.

Proposals should:

- Identify the specific opportunities and challenges for transparency and equity advocacy within your state, including information about the timeline for state decisions regarding distribution of federal funds;
- State a clear plan of action to advance all or most of the goals outlined above, identify concrete strategies and a timeline for advancing the goals, and include guidelines for measuring success;
- Include at least two state-based organizations that have a range of capacities – including grassroots organizing, policy research and analysis, use of innovative technologies, and advocacy, among others – needed to achieve the stated goals;

- Specify the role and contribution of each partner, demonstrating a clear allocation of labor and responsibility within the alliance;
- Specify which, if any, national organizations and coalitions working on transparency and equity around the recovery that your state-based alliance is connected to and how. If your alliance is not connected to such efforts but seeks to be in the future, identify which national organizations or coalitions working on transparency and equity in the economic recovery you are interested in partnering with;
- Briefly describe whether co-applicants have existing organizational relationships and, if so, what has been the scope and what are examples of past collaborative efforts. If there is not a history of working together, explain how and why the co-applicants came together;
- Address how the alliance is led by and/ or accountable to people of color, women, immigrant, youth, or low-income communities; and
- Include an itemized budget for the full cost of the proposal, and identify other possible sources of funding.

We are also interested in, but do not require as a condition of funding, proposals that:

- Include organizations that are engaged in advocacy on criminal justice, drug policy, or immigrant’s rights to ensure that economic stimulus dollars reach communities most negatively impacted by these policies;
- Build lasting partnerships between equity, transparency, and “good government” groups in order to strengthen long-term advocacy for a strong social safety net; and
- Build long-term capacity at the state and local level for multi-constituency, multi-issue, and multi-strategy coalitions to participate in state and federal policymaking processes.

Funded organizations must be 501(c)(3) public charities or private foundations *or* have a fiscal sponsor that satisfies this requirement. Ideally one organization in an alliance will serve as the main sponsor for the grant, regranting money to other organizations as laid out in the proposal and budget.

What is the approximate size of the grants?

OSI will consider grants of up to \$500,000 per state to be distributed over two years. The size of a request must state a clear justification for the amount based upon:

- Population, size, and other demographic and economic indicators of the state;
- Size and needs of the alliance seeking support;
- Actual expenditures needed to advance the goals laid out in the proposal.

OSI will consider multiple proposals from a given state, but will not make more than one grant per state and strongly encourages proposals that include multiple organizational partners. Should we receive inquiries from multiple coalitions in a state we reserve the right to connect one inquiring organization with another in order to encourage collaboration.

Activities *not* eligible for support:

- Funds may not be used to support provision of direct services;
- While funds may be used to support existing capacity (i.e. staff), staff time funded through a grant must be dedicated solely to activities related to the grant program;
- Because this is a one-time grant program, OSI cannot commit to provide ongoing support after the end of the grant term;
- OSI funds cannot support either direct or grassroots lobbying as defined in the Internal Revenue Code.

Important Dates

July 20 – July 31	OSI will host conference calls for interested organizations and funders within each state to describe the application process and field questions about the overall effort
August 28 mid-October	Proposals due to OSI electronically by close of business First round of grants announced

Format for submission

Proposals should address the goals identified above in no more than ten pages and should be submitted with an itemized project budget and timeline for proposed activities.

Contact for more information

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Please initiate all contact by email; no phone calls please.

Background information about OSI and its mission

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. OSI's U.S. Programs supports people and organizations that advance a more open society in the United States. We envision a vibrant open society that invites all people to participate fully in civic, economic, and cultural life, encourages diverse opinions and critical debate, and protects fundamental human rights, dignity, and the rule of law. Our work grows out of a strong commitment to supporting the efforts of people and communities to press for change on their own behalf. We are dedicated to addressing the most pressing threats to open society, and we seek bold, integrated solutions that address root causes and advance systemic change.

U.S. Programs supports grantmaking, programming, and policy initiatives that:

- Build an inclusive society that increases opportunity for all while addressing the unique struggles faced by women, people of color, immigrants, poor people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans.
- Promote civic participation and develop new leaders, especially among communities that have been historically underrepresented.
- Ensure fair criminal justice, immigration, and national security policies, and reduce the over-reliance on incarceration and harsh punishment.

- Increase the transparency, integrity, and accountability of institutions vital to open society.

U.S. Programs recently launched a special program for rapid-response grantmaking to help organizations tackle the problems created by the economic crisis and seize the current moment to advance open society in the United States. The current request for proposals will be funded out of this special one-time fund.