

Stoneleigh Foundation Request for Letters

Reimagining Public Systems: Centering Racial Equity to Serve Youth, Families, and Communities

Background

The Stoneleigh Foundation was founded in 2006 by John and Chara Haas to improve the life outcomes of our community's youth. We meet our mission by awarding Fellowships to exceptional leaders who have traditionally worked within or alongside the systems that serve these young people—including youth justice, child welfare, education, and health—to catalyze and champion change.

We believe youth-serving systems are most effective when they:

- are responsive to the unique needs of each young person
- collaborate and coordinate their activities
- adopt culturally competent, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate approaches
- incorporate best practices and recommendations from evidence-based research
- recognize structural inequalities and design policies and practices to dismantle them
- value and use data to inform decision-making.
- provide pathways to diminish further system-involvement while appropriately linking youth to robust community and other supports.

Spurred by activists' call to defund the police, only in the past few years have policymakers and the public begun an earnest debate about a broad reimagining of public safety and a reinvestment in prevention and community supports. At the same time, other public systems—including child welfare, youth justice, housing, education, health, and immigration—have begun to examine whether, despite their charge to care for youth, families, and communities, they may be doing more harm than good.

Increasingly, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and the public at large are scrutinizing the assumptions, structures, and practices that have resulted in disproportionate and often harmful interventions in the lives of Black and brown families and communities. Once considered impractical, or even radical, a new way of thinking has emerged, which posits that large public systems are too slow to reform and are plagued by antiquated approaches to societal challenges. In addition, there is evidence that, in some cases, system-involvement in and of itself can be harmful to young people's developmental trajectory. Accordingly, these systems must be reimagined, redesigned, or even abolished, in large part because of their harmful and racist policies and practices.

Request for Letters of Inquiry

At this pivotal moment, the Stoneleigh Foundation is pleased to announce a Request for Letters (RFL) for ***Reimagining Public Systems: Centering Racial Equity to Serve Youth, Families, and Communities***. We invite individuals to submit new ideas to improve or redefine the policies, practices, norms, and systems that will impact youth, families, and communities for decades to come.

The Stoneleigh Foundation is soliciting Letters of Inquiry for Fellowship projects 1-3 years in duration that offer a broad reimagining of how public systems might better serve youth, families, and communities. Typically, our Fellows work in Philadelphia; however, we also consider projects that seek to effect change at the state level in Pennsylvania, bring a promising national model to our region, or work on a national policy that affects young people in Philadelphia.

Guidelines for Submissions

Letters of Inquiry should be no more than 1-3 pages in length and include the following sections clearly identified:

1. **Problem Statement**—Indicate the public system upon which the project seeks to have an impact, the perceived deficiencies in that system, and the impact of those deficiencies on communities of color and/or underserved communities. (*Limit: ½ - 1 page only*)
2. **Approach**—Explain the proposed goals, the project idea or research question, and how the project addresses the problem statement. Include the timeline, project duration, strategies, activities, and necessary partners. This section should also explain how your activities will accomplish your overall project goals.
3. **Racial Equity Focus and Impact**—Describe how the project’s approach is focused on addressing racism and/or racial inequity. It would be insufficient, for example, to simply state that your project will have a collateral effect of benefiting communities of color or youth of color (e.g., *‘This project will improve the child welfare system, which disproportionately affects youth and families of color.’*) Your project should execute a strategy and tactics that meaningfully include, or are led by, people of color and/or stakeholders who are members of the demographic and/or communities where you seek to have an impact.
4. **Outcomes & Evaluation**—Define your concrete project outcomes (e.g., impacts on the public system *itself*, on the discourse *about* the public system, or on the way in which *youth and communities can participate in - or have an impact on -* the system). Briefly describe how you will determine whether you are achieving these outcomes during the project.
5. **CV or Statement of Qualifications**—There is no degree requirement to respond to this solicitation. However, if you have relevant academic experience, please submit your curriculum vitae. Non-degree applicants may submit a statement of qualifications

attached to your letter of inquiry. Your qualification statement should describe your suitability and capacity to execute the proposed Fellowship project, by reason of relevant lived experience and a track record of having successfully executed similar or related work in the past. The Foundation will prioritize candidates who are members of the demographic and/or communities where they seek to have an impact, or who have lived experience relevant to their project goals.

6. **Host Organization**—Identify a host organization or fiscal sponsor for your project. Stoneleigh Fellowship host organizations or their fiscal sponsors must be registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits. Host organizations or fiscal sponsors for the project should have some capacity to provide technical or subject matter assistance for some or all elements of the proposed project. Please contact the Foundation if you have specific or technical questions about appropriate host organizations or fiscal sponsors.

Your complete submission, including letter of inquiry (limited to 1-3 pages) and supporting CV/statement, should total no more than 6 pages in length.

How to Apply & Deadlines

- Letters and supporting materials should be submitted through [this application portal](#) by **Wednesday, December 15, 2021**. All applicants will receive a confirmation of receipt, and some may hear from a member of Stoneleigh’s staff or review committee with questions for clarification.
- Successful candidates will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal by **February 1, 2022**.
 - *If you are invited to submit a full proposal, it will be due on March 1, 2022.*
 - *If you are not invited to submit a full proposal, you will hear back as soon as that decision is made.*

Equity Statement

The Stoneleigh Foundation is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive Fellowship application process. We strongly encourage a diverse pool of candidates to apply, including women, people of color, people who identify as LGBTQ, and people with disabilities, as well as those who have lived experience or experiences that are underrepresented in the disciplines that impact youth-serving systems.

If you have questions about this solicitation, or need clarification as you prepare your application, please email Marie Williams (mwilliams@stoneleighfoundation.org).