



Ohio Transformation Fund Rapid Response Grant Program

The Ohio Transformation Fund is a collaborative fund developed by national and local funders to advocate for safe, healthy communities and an equitable democracy across Ohio. Through a collaborative funding approach, the OTF aims to strengthen practitioners working in the field, address key capacity gaps, and engage other Ohio-based and national funders and donors. As an initial strategy, the OTF is focused on transforming the criminal justice system, supporting efforts to address the negative impact of the current system on families and communities. See the OTF Strategy Statement for a detailed description of the goals and strategies of the OTF.

The Ohio Transformation Fund provides a limited number of Rapid Response grants outside the traditional grantmaking timeline. The purpose of the Rapid Response program is to provide flexible and responsive support when windows of opportunity emerge to take immediate action.

Eligibility

Requests for OTF Rapid Response grants must meet the following criteria:

1. Strategic – The action promotes the advancement of criminal justice reform in Ohio and is aligned with the theory of change of the OTF.
2. Unanticipated and/or time urgent – The specific event or situation your organization is responding to was unanticipated and/or the action must happen quickly to be effective.

Timeline

The OTF accepts Rapid Response grant requests at any time. Once a grant has been approved, funds can usually be delivered within two weeks. Rapid Response recipients do not need to be current grantees of the OTF.

Guidelines

Rapid Response grant requests may be up to \$25,000. Prospective Rapid Response grant recipients are required to provide a two-page request and a simple project budget.

Please include the following information in your Rapid Response request:

1. Organization Name
2. Contact Name, Address, Email, and Phone Number
3. Brief organization description
4. Project Name
5. Project Description
6. Potential project impact as it relates to the goals of the Ohio Transformation Fund
7. Amount Requested (*Up to \$25,000*)
8. Project Budget
9. Supporting Information
 - Description of the diversity of your staff and board.
 - Copy of the organization's most recently-filed **Form 990**
 - IRS issued **501c(3) tax-status determination** letter of requesting organization or, if applicable, fiscal sponsor.

Your request, including all items from the checklist above, must be submitted by email to Judy Wright, OTF Director, at otf@ohtransformationfund.org. Please be in touch by email or phone at 216-346-8046 with questions about the Rapid Response grant process.



Ohio Transformation Fund - Phase One Strategy Statement

The Ohio Transformation Fund is a collaborative fund developed by national and local funders to advocate for safe, healthy communities and an equitable democracy across Ohio. Through a collaborative funding approach, the OTF aims to strengthen practitioners working in the field, address key capacity gaps, and engage other Ohio-based and national funders. As an initial strategy, the OTF is focused on transforming the justice system, supporting efforts to address the negative impact of the current system on youth, families and communities. Although intended to enable safe communities and opportunities for rehabilitation, OTF members believe the existing system often reinforces systemic racism; criminalizes poverty, normal adolescent behavior, and mental illness; and is in need of significant reform.

The theory of change supporting the OTF is that on its own, policy reform will not dismantle the deeply embedded systemic inequities in our state. Similarly, neither community organizing nor civic engagement can independently leverage the lasting changes needed without highly capable policy advocacy structures to promote and monitor statutory, policy, programmatic, and funding reforms. Systemic change is possible when policy changes are driven and supported by a base of critically conscious community members who have experienced the impact of these inequities and who are actively engaged in the electoral process. Based upon this theory of change, the OTF supports three core approaches:

- **Community organizing:** Direct grassroots organizing that engages individuals, families, youth, community members, and allied institutions in movement building, mobilization, and direct action campaigns, and that supports the development of leaders who drive the strategic vision of systematic change. The focus of organizing must be driven by the voices of people directly impacted by the existing justice system in efforts to replace the current inequitable approach with one of fairness, redemption, and recovery.
- **Public Policy Reform:** The development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of policy changes that address the systemic inequities within Ohio for adults and youth. Approaches of interest to the OTF include community lawyering, impact litigation, and policy analysis and advocacy.
- **Electoral Engagement and Mobilization:** The engagement and mobilization of low propensity voters in the electoral and legislative process. The OTF supports non-partisan integrated voter engagement models that focus not only on short-term, transactional goals related to an election, but also on long-term transformational goals related to leadership development (of staff, volunteers, and the people contacted through voter engagement activities), and building long-term civic capacity within a community. A particular focus is on engaging juvenile court-involved youth, returning citizens, their families, and their communities.

The OTF supports public education about the root causes and significance of the impacts of our justice system and effective communication strategies are core components of each approach. Within each area, attention will be paid to the disproportionate impact of the system based on race, class, and gender. Projects with a focus on multi-racial, multi-class engagement are of particular interest to the OTF.

Vision and Goals

The OTF believes that stable families, economic security, and access to health care and education are the basis for safe and healthy communities. Based on those beliefs, ***the OTF's vision is a transformation in our justice system from criminalization and incarceration of individuals, particularly young people and people of color, to a system based in fairness, equity and dignity. Such a system will be based in policies that support racial justice, healing, and growth for youth, individuals, families, and communities.***

The leading goal of the OTF is the reduction of the number and racial disparity of youth and adults incarcerated in Ohio. From decriminalizing school discipline and policing reform on the front end, to deep sentencing reform for all types of offenses, to removing barriers to successful

reentry for adults and young people, the OTF recognizes that a broad spectrum of law and policy changes will be required to make major cuts in incarceration rates. We are attentive to all forms of incarceration: state and local incarceration of both youth and adults. We seek reforms that drive down all these forms and that do not simply shift incarcerated people from one form to another. We believe focusing on this high level metric is a powerful way to focus funders, advocates, policymakers, and, ultimately, the public on whether the multi-tactic, multi-issue campaign of the OTF is achieving significant results. Moreover, the system changes required to drive down these numbers should have numerous ancillary effects that make the justice system more fair, humane, and effective at producing safety at every stage.

The OTF recognizes that while mass incarceration is one of the most destructive ways that the justice system harms low-income and minority communities, it is not the only way and therefore maintain the following additional goals:

- Increase opportunity and reduce criminalization of young people, by activities such as improving local and state policies and practices for school discipline, investing in positive youth development, and shifting correctional resources to community-based, outcomes based alternatives including restorative justice initiatives.
- Reduce practices that criminalize poverty by promoting economic justice and addressing policies that establish a tiered system of justice dependent on peoples' economic means.
- Increase opportunities for formerly incarcerated or convicted youth and adults through improved access to housing, employment, education, and health care in order to keep families and communities together and help youth thrive.

Strategy

In pursuit of this goal, the OTF supports work with people most affected by the justice system at the center, seeking to build local and statewide networks of youth, families, communities, and allied institutions serving in leadership roles to form and drive the statewide strategy. Therefore, *the OTF prioritizes work that organizes, trains, and mobilizes key impacted constituencies.*

In addition to organizing, the OTF recognizes that informed, representative participation in the electoral system is necessary to achieve key policy changes and ensure their implementation and enforcement. Therefore, *the OTF supports efforts to engage communities in the electoral process, including voter registration, mobilization, and non-partisan education related to local and state public offices.*

The OTF has a three-part strategy:

- Identify and support anchor organizations that will work as an integrated network to develop and implement a statewide justice reform strategy. Anchor institutions are defined by a demonstrated history of effective justice system work that is aligned with the OTF's values and theory of change and current or emerging participation in statewide strategy, including the commitment to partnership within the network of anchor institutions.
- Identify and support new or emerging projects that engage strategic constituencies or geographies within the state. Strategic constituencies include, but are not limited to, young people, people of color, family members, victims of crime, women, and faith communities. Strategic geographies include both urban centers and rural areas experiencing a disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system.
- Invest in building the strategic capacities of the statewide network of partners working collaboratively in pursuit of the goals aligned with the OTF's vision.

The OTF plans to utilize evaluation metrics for effective social justice advocacy and organizing as developed by the Alliance for Justice Bolder Advocacy initiative.

By supporting effective work and catalyzing statewide, collaborative strategic thinking, the OTF seeks to play a role in the movement to create a more fair and just Ohio and to be a model for philanthropic participation in social change.

For more information about the OTF, please contact Judy Wright, OTF Director, at off@ohtransformationfund.org or 216-346-8046.