



Request for Qualifications

Researcher/Research Team

To Partner with a Set of Arts Intermediaries to Study a Regranting Program to Support the BIPOC Arts Ecosystem

Due: August 7, 2023

ArtsResearch@wallacefoundation.org

The Wallace Foundation seeks a researcher/research team with deep knowledge of and relationships with arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color to work with a national group of arts service organizations on a study that will document and draw insights from the development and implementation of a new grantmaking program designed to support the well-being of small to mid-sized arts organizations founded by, for, and with communities of color.

The Wallace Foundation is working with the six regional arts organizations (Arts Midwest, Mid-America Arts Alliance, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, SouthArts, Western States Arts Federation) to re-grant ~\$12 million dollars to ~100 or more arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color located across the US and its territories. These organizations are expected to be in the small to mid-size range, with annual budgets of \$0- \$500,000. Funds are expected to be used for general operating support.

Working with the network of regional arts organizations (RAOs), Wallace seeks to commission a researcher/research team who will explore, analyze, and document how the network of RAOs applies, adopts, and adapts equitable grant-making processes and practices, including how they learn from one another, within their network and possibly across other networks of art-making intermediaries. The selected research team is expected to produce evidence-based research briefs or reports for stakeholders (organizational leaders, policymakers, funders) interested in supporting and strengthening the ecosystem of arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color through support to intermediaries as key agents of change. The researcher will also be asked to analyze the applications and progress reports of grant recipients to better characterize the field of small and mid-sized arts organizations.

Timeline

We seek to commission a research partner before Fall 2023, and expect the study to last up to 3 years. We anticipate planning activities to occur through winter 2024, and regranting to begin by fall 2024.

Research Questions and Activities

We seek a researcher/research team to answer the following research questions:

1. How do intermediaries define and employ equitable grant-making within their practices and processes? What new equitable grant-making practices are being learned and adopted for this project? Why and in which contexts? What kinds of supports or processes are key to the successful implementation of these strategies? How does this vary by site/region?
 - a. What does the group conceptualize how funding organizations act as gatekeepers, and to what end?
 - b. How does the group conceptualize, interpret, and share power in arts and community funding programs? In community?
 - c. Whose standards of excellence – from aesthetics to business operations – are the intermediaries centering?
 - d. What art forms or types of organizations are not being funded, which could contribute to a strengthened notion of artful lives?
 - e. What definitions of “success” are intermediaries using, and what assumptions are included?
 - f. What are intermediaries standard metrics of accountability, and what shifts are needed for arts and cultural funders? Arts and cultural organizations?
2. How does a network of intermediaries support collaborative learning and uptake of new and existing grant-making practices in serving the arts organizations?
3. What kinds of challenges to equitable grant-making do intermediaries encounter and how do they navigate these challenges? How does this vary by site/region?
4. How can the arts organizations who receive the awards be characterized (e.g., who they are, who and how they serve, what challenges they face to their well-being and what assets and resources do they leverage, etc.), and how does this vary by region?

The researcher/research team will engage with the intermediary networks as they design and implement their re-granting programs including application and reporting requirements. We seek a highly collaborative researcher who takes a strengths-based approach to understanding why and how organizations make decisions. The intermediary network meets at least monthly, and more frequently during certain cycles of the year. Additionally the network will be planning and providing technical assistance and/or learning communities for the grantees, which are expected to meet approximately twice a year, probably virtually.

We anticipate the study’s primary informants being the intermediaries themselves, along with document analysis and meeting observations. In terms of characterizing the grantees, we propose to limit data collection to grant applications, progress reports, and observations of learning community activities and the like, in order to minimally burden grantees.

Qualifications

1. History of working with community-based arts organizations
2. Demonstrated deep knowledge of, and relational trust with, BIPOC-serving organizations
3. Demonstrated knowledge of the U.S. arts ecosystem, including the roles and functions of intermediary arts organizations, and of grantmaking practices within this ecosystem
4. Demonstrated history of using highly collaborative and reciprocal, asset-based approaches to research
5. Demonstrated history of working in complex collaborations
6. History of publishing research relevant to this call

Application

To respond to this RFQ, please submit, by August 7, 2023, the following materials:

- A < 3-page letter describing:
 - Why you are interested in the project
 - How you see the research being of use to the arts and culture field, including naming different or additional research questions than those in this RFQ
 - Your research team members and their qualifications to lead this particular project
 - How you envision working with the intermediary networks described in this RFQ.
 - The kinds of internal and external deliverables you would expect to produce and who would use them and for what purposes
- As an attachment to your letter, a list of relevant research projects/past experience, including (for each entry) who from your team worked on the project, location, dates, and a 2-3 sentence description of the work.
- Resumes of key members of your team
- Two sample research publications, produced by you/your team, relevant to the subject matter

We will respond to qualified applicants to set up an interview to discuss the project further.

Equity at Wallace

Wallace views equity as embedding fairness in the formal and informal systems, structures, and practices of our society, giving all people the opportunities and supports necessary to reach their full potential as human beings. The principles that guide us in our equity journey include:

- Our work foregrounds racial equity but is not limited to it. We are concerned with the marginalization of people based on any element of their identity or circumstance.
- We believe achieving equity requires constructively addressing historical, structural, and systemic causes of racial and other forms of inequity and why they exist.
- Specific definitions of equity will vary from one context to another. As a funder, we are careful to avoid imposing a single definition on grantees.

Wallace is committed to supporting research that is designed and conducted with and for equity. To inform strategies for change, researchers should use strength-based approaches and account for structures, systems, processes, or practices that produce or reproduce inequities or overcome them. Research itself should be equity-centered—including partnerships, processes, and methods that center the voices and perspectives of communities that would stand to use or benefit from the research. Research teams should include principal investigators and other senior intellectual contributors with relevant lived experiences. Questions should be sent to artsresearch@wallacefoundation.org.