



Request for Proposals: Participatory Research for Within-District School Resource Equity

Overview

Purpose: To fund, support, and report on participatory research (PR) partnerships between formal advocacy or academic organizations and community/youth advocates seeking to improve resource equity within a school district.

Problem Definition: In many school districts, resources are not allocated to best support low-income students, students of color, and/or English Learners. Resources that are distributed inequitably across or within schools may include course offerings; curricular materials; extracurricular programs; qualified, diverse and/or experienced teachers; academic support staff; social/emotional support staff; and physical plant maintenance; as well as other material or human resources.

Scope of Project: The funds are intended to support one to four different PR partnerships dedicated to working with youth to address within-district school resource inequity in a school district in the United States. Each partnership should develop a single PR project involving both research (with a collaboratively chosen research question and method) and action (to be collaboratively determined and to include a communication component). The research should center youth voices.

Appropriate use of funds will fall in any or all of four areas:

- 1) Honoraria for youth and/or other grassroots participants.
- 2) Training or other capacity building.
- 3) Research materials, including meeting costs (space, language interpreters, food, childcare, etc.).
- 4) Communication materials to convey research findings to policymakers, community members, or other stakeholders.

Duration: Project activities to begin upon grant award in March 2024. With technical support from the Education Team at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), the anticipated timeline milestones include:

April 30, 2024:	Research Question submitted
June 14, 2024:	Initial methods submitted
November 22, 2024:	Data Collection Complete (initial phase)
February 14, 2025:	Initial Findings and Action Plan submitted
May 23, 2025:	Final Report on Initial Action submitted

Eligible Organizations: Nonprofit organizations with 501c3 status with expertise in policy advocacy, organizing, or research. Organizations eligible for grants must identify community and/or youth advocate partners. Organizations must also have:

- Minimum liability insurance of \$1M or more;
- Minimum statutorily required worker's comp insurance;
- Minimum professional liability insurance of \$1M;
- If the contract involves working with children under age 18, the contractor must also have \$1M abuse policy;

Award Amount: Up to \$15,000 per project. In addition, NCYL will provide remote research planning support to awardees.

Deliverables: Awardees will be expected to:

- 1) Attend virtual training sessions hosted by NCYL on within district inequity, PR approaches, and advocacy.
- 2) Meet remotely with NCYL staff at least three times for support with PR methods, develop a description of the local resource equity problem and the plan for action that will be included as part of a NCYL report on within-district resource inequity.
- 3) Submit writeup of initial findings and action plan by **February 14, 2025**.
- 4) Participate in a peer-to-peer learning symposium.
- 5) Engage in community action around their findings.
- 6) Submit a final report on their initial action and community by **May 23, 2025**.

To Apply: On or before **March 15, 2024**, please complete the [application](#) online via Google Forms (<https://forms.gle/q1C4ox4U1HjFAtaf6>). The application questions are available for preview on page 6 of this document. Questions about the application may be emailed to Sarah LaCour, Education Law and Policy Research Manager at the National Center for Youth Law: slacour@youthlaw.org. Subject line should read: Application for PR Support.

NCYL will host an [information session](#) for potential applicants on **February 15, 2024**. To register for that information session, please visit: <https://youthlaw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtcuGspz0qHdSEvDZq3pPtRBA361SfFI43>

Detailed Description

The National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) believes in the incredible power, agency, and wisdom of youth. Driven by their voices and experiences, we have worked for more than 50 years to transform government agencies and public systems, so that they Center Youth with equity, dignity, and care. Our work has led to foundational shifts in policy and standards of practice in communities and states nationwide.

NCYL's Education Team envisions a world in which education is a public good that is freely available at the highest quality for all students regardless of their immutable characteristics, including Black and indigenous students in particular, and students of color in general. Students have access to socially, emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy school environments that are culturally affirming, so they can thrive. Students' income, housing, and health care access do not impact their opportunity to learn. Such an education is a vehicle for transformative change and achieving justice in our society and our democracy. The mission of the Education Team is to advance equitable educational opportunity for all students through advocacy, research, and litigation support in collaboration with strategic partners.

As part of this mission, NCYL has undertaken a project designed to build a foundation for research, policy, and practice that supports school resource equity *within* school districts. Whereas previous advocacy around school resource equity tends to focus on differences across districts, this project is interested in how resources are allocated across schools or programs within a single district. We use the term “within-district school resource equity” (WDSRE) to describe situations where district officials make intentional decisions to provide resources that support historically minoritized and marginalized students to thrive in their schools. The project focuses primarily on WDSRE for low-income students, students of color, and English Learners – groups that are often affected by segregation across schools or programs within a district. We also recognize that students experience intersecting forms of marginalization in school based on factors such as disability status, LGBTQ+ identity, experiences with the foster system, experiences with homelessness, and experiences with legal systems, among others.

Resources involved in within-district resource equity or inequity may include: course offerings, curricular materials, extracurricular programs, qualified, diverse, and/or experienced teachers, academic support staff, social/emotional support staff, and physical plant maintenance, as well as other material or human resources. We believe that within-district resource equity can only be achieved when district officials include historically marginalized students, families, and communities in resource allocation decisions.

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the WDSRE project is designed to establish approaches that education civil rights advocates can use to document within-district resource inequities, to unpack their root causes, and to develop policy solutions. The project relies on three main research strategies – descriptive statistics, policy-focused case studies, and participatory research – to establish field awareness around

the problem of within-district school resource inequities and to initiate collective action to foster equity.

This Request for Proposals is designed to develop the participatory research component of the WDSRE project. Participatory research (PR) is “an umbrella term for research designs, methods, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in direct collaboration with those affected by the issue being studied for the purpose of action or change.”ⁱ

The PR component of NCYL’s WDSRE project is intended to:

- 1) Identify forms of resource inequity that students, families, or community members experience as a problem;
- 2) Support collaborative relationships between youth and/or community advocates and people with access to organizational resources and training to enhance community action; and
- 3) Build youth and community power to advocate for equity.

We seek to fund partnerships between advocates working in 501c3 nonprofit organizations with expertise in advocacy, organizing, or research and grassroots advocates for students directly impacted by within-district school resource inequity in a school district in the United States. We prefer that grassroots advocates involved in the PR project include youth, but please note that the organization must carry a \$1M abuse policy if working with children and youth under the age of 18. Partnerships may be longstanding or recently formed, but we wish to encourage continued collaboration beyond the funded period. We wish to support partnerships that are aligned with *collaborative* PR models, where organizational researchers and community members work together to make decisions and set the research agenda and where long-term power-building for youth and their communities is the goal of PR activities.ⁱⁱ

Funded PR projects should seek to deepen grassroots actors’ knowledge of within-district school resource inequity in their school district and to enhance their ability to advocate for equity. A preliminary plan for research is required for the funding application. Applicants are encouraged to utilize any research method that supports the goals of knowledge and advocacy, including storytelling, interviews, focus groups, surveys, or analysis of district budgets and documents. A preliminary plan to communicate research findings is also required for the funding application. Applicants are encouraged to select a stakeholder audience that is appropriate to the stage of advocacy with an eye toward building power for the long term. Possible audiences include youth and families, community members, potential coalition partners, or district-level decision-makers. Applicants are also encouraged to utilize any method of communication that effectively conveys the generated knowledge to the stakeholder group, including visual media, digital media, oral testimony, or written fact sheets.

Each selected PR partnership will be funded in the amount of \$15,000. The nonprofit organization will be responsible for receiving and allocating the awarded funds. Appropriate use of funds will fall in any or all of four areas:

- 1) *Honoraria for grassroots participants.* It may be appropriate to compensate grassroots actors for their time. Honoraria should not be less than minimum wage in the state or city (whichever is higher).
- 2) *Training for participants.* Organizational or grassroots participants may require specialized training to support the research or communications.
- 3) *Research materials, including costs related to convening meetings.* Costs related to convening meetings may include rental fees for meeting spaces, language interpreters, food and beverages (no alcohol), and childcare.
- 4) *Communications to convey research findings to relevant decision-makers, community members, or other stakeholders.*

NCYL anticipates funding **up to four** WDSRE PR partnerships, with each partnership receiving \$15,000 to support its activities. In addition to the grant funding, NCYL will provide awardees with support for the research, including:

- 1) An initial training on within-district inequity, a series of up to three trainings providing technical support for PR method, and a training on action and communications planning.
- 2) Two to five additional meetings, depending on need, with NCYL staff, who will provide targeted virtual support to participants as they select and design their PR research methods and action plan.

At the conclusion of the funded period, NCYL requests:

- 1) A written summary of initial research findings.
- 2) A written plan to communicate research findings to relevant stakeholders
- 3) A description of expenditures made with the approved funds.

The timeline for the funded activities is:

- **March 15, 2024:** Proposals are due.
- **March 2024:** Projects are selected, contracts are awarded, and funds are disbursed to the 501c3 partners. Initial webinar training with NCYL.
- **April - June 2024:** Participants engage in the PR planning process.
- **July - November 2024:** Participants engage in data collection
- **February 14, 2025:** A brief writeup of initial research findings, plan for communication of findings and action are due to NCYL.
- **March 2025:** Peer-to-peer learning symposium. You will be asked to share your process and findings with other grantees.
- **March-April 2025:** Engage in community action around findings. Action may include, but is not limited to, testimony before a local school board or other governmental body, townhall to share and discuss findings with stakeholders, convening a policy workgroup of diverse stakeholders.
- **May 23, 2025:** A final report on initial action and communication are due to NCYL.

While NCYL anticipates - indeed, hopes - that participants efforts in pursuit of WDSRE will continue past this date, all funded work for this project must be completed on or before May 31, 2025.

Application

On or before **March 15, 2024**, please complete the [application](#) online via Google Forms (<https://forms.gle/q1C4ox4U1HjFAtaf6>). Questions about the application may be emailed to Sarah LaCour, Education Law and Policy Research Manager at the National Center for Youth Law: slacour@youthlaw.org. Subject line should read: Application for PR Support.

The application asks you to respond to the following:

- 1) Name and brief description of the 501c3 organization requesting funding.
- 2) Name, title, email address, and phone number of the organizational staff person responsible for managing the Participatory Research (PR) project.
- 3) Name the school district in/with which you will conduct the PR.
- 4) If your district requires IRB approval for research, describe your plan to secure that approval. If not, please indicate that IRB is not required.
- 5) Describe the within-district school resource inequity problem you intend to research and address. Be sure your description addresses the questions below. (500 word max)
 - a. Identify the type(s) of resources at issue.
 - b. Identify the affected student populations and describe how they are affected by this resource inequity.
 - c. Identify the decision-makers responsible for this resource inequity.
 - d. Describe how this work will fit within the broader, ongoing work of your organization.
- 6) Describe how this project will support long-term collaboration between youth advocates and organizational actors (250 word max).
- 7) Outline a preliminary plan and timeline for research, with the awareness that this may change as you collaborate on the PR project. (500 word max).
- 8) Outline a preliminary plan for communication to stakeholders, with the awareness that this may change as you collaborate on the PR. (250 word max).
- 9) Describe existing resources (materials, expertise, relationships) to complete the PR and explain how the funding will help build capacity. (250 word max)
- 10) Provide a tentative budget for the expenditures.

You are also asked to attach copies of the organization's:

- 501c3 letter
- Proof of:
 - Minimum liability insurance of \$1M or more;
 - Minimum statutorily required worker's comp insurance;
 - Minimum professional liability insurance of \$1M;
 - If the contract involves working with children under age 18, a \$1M abuse policy.
- If the organization does not currently have these policies, please attest that you will purchase the required policies before funds are disbursed and provide a contact we can reach to assist with obtaining these policies.

Proposal Rating Criteria

The following is how we will rate the proposals we receive:

Rate the statements below on a scale of 1 to 10 (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

- 1) The proposal clearly describes a problem of WDSRE that negatively impacts historically minoritized and/or marginalized students.
- 2) The proposal shows potential to support long-term collaboration between youth/community advocates and organizational actors.
- 3) The plan for research is clearly oriented toward deepening knowledge about the WDSRE issue.
- 4) The plan for communications is clearly oriented toward appropriate stakeholders.
- 5) The proposed grant activities are feasible with existing resources and NCYL support.
- 6) All budgeted items fall within approved categories for expenditures.
- 7) The proposed grant activities show potential to build local capacity to advocate for WDSRE.
- 8) The proposed grant activities provide insight into a WDSRE issue that should be shared with a broader community of practitioners.

ⁱ Lisa Vaughn and Farrah Jacquez. "Participatory Research Methods – Choice Points in the Research Process," *Journal of Participatory Research Methods* (2020): <https://jprm.scholasticahq.com/article/13244-participatory-research-methods-choice-points-in-the-research-process> at 1.

ⁱⁱ Vaughn and Jacquez (2020) at 6.