2022 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
October 27, 2021

Funding Opportunity for Advancing Proactive State- and Local-Level Policy and Advocacy Projects

The National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH) is pleased to issue this Request for Proposals (RFP) in support of state- and local-level policy and advocacy projects in the following states: Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin. The opportunities in this RFP are organized under NIRH’s three priority areas for 2022:

- Safe, equitable access to abortion without shame or stigma
- Affordable, convenient access to all methods of contraception and non-coercive, inclusive counseling
- Eliminating racial and economic disparities in reproductive health

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About the National Institute for Reproductive Health

The National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH) works to protect and advance just and equitable access to reproductive health care. Our strategy is to go on the offensive to pass laws that safeguard reproductive freedom. NIRH builds coalitions, launches campaigns, and successfully advocates for policy change in partnership with state and local reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, and allied groups. We work together so that the fabric of reproductive freedom is harder to tear apart. Since 2008, NIRH has worked in 42 states,
including 78 localities, to advance our mission, working side-by-side with more than 180 organizational partners.

NIRH staff and board have committed to racial equity, and as such have been engaged in a multi-year process to adopt a racial equity lens. We recognize the interconnectivity of identities, such as race, socio-economic status, immigration status, ability, gender, sexuality, and gender identity, and how they interact with systems of oppression to shape and impact a person’s freedom and ability to control their reproductive and sexual lives.

**NIRH’s Approach to Partnership**

NIRH is an advocacy organization, not a foundation. We work side-by-side with state and local leaders to advance policy while providing direct technical assistance, expertise, and funding. We are one of the few organizations in the country working in partnership with state-based groups to advance reproductive health, rights, and justice policy, while simultaneously building the skillsets, capacity, and types of organizations leading this work. The types and level of activities we take on in each state is customized based on the unique needs and objectives of that state and our partners.

We work intentionally to support the efforts of reproductive justice organizations and organizations led by people of color so that they may take and/or maintain their rightful space as leaders in the movement.

To provide more context to our partnership approach, NIRH has drafted three case studies that offer examples of how we can collaborate with partner organizations. Please note these are intended to offer insight into how our day-to-day collaboration can work, not to serve as examples of an ideal or preferred project.

*Case Study #1*

In one partnership, NIRH supported two groups that anchor their state’s reproductive health, rights, and justice coalition in a multi-year strategy to advance a broad, bold proactive policy that would expand access to abortion and reproductive health care. Specifically, NIRH supported this work by first helping the partners and their coalition to identify the barriers to accessing reproductive care in the state and then helped draft a bill that addressed those needs. NIRH worked closely with the partners and the coalition as they developed a legislative strategy for introduction and movement of the bill, including development of bill messaging, talking points for legislators and advocates, press releases, and social media campaigns. NIRH also supported the coalition by facilitating public and legislator education opportunities. Another goal of the partnership was to reinforce the long-term sustainability of the statewide coalition, and
to assist with this, NIRH joined the coalition directly and provide similar strategic guidance and technical assistance to the coalition itself on an ongoing basis.

*Case Study #2*

A previous NIRH partner worked with us to build a sustainable, impactful, and culturally responsive sexual and reproductive health education program for young people. The partner developed the concept for the program, and then worked closely with NIRH staff to begin to plan and operationalize it – from putting together a comprehensive agenda for the multi-week program to brainstorming how to navigate complex cultural dynamics with the young people and their families. NIRH staff also trained the young people directly in policy and advocacy, reproductive rights and justice, and social media strategy throughout the course of the program. With this support, the program has become sustainable and graduated several cohorts of young people. Each cohort has created innovative local advocacy and communications campaigns on the issues they cared about most. NIRH staff also worked with the partner to diversify funding, problem solve as new challenges arose, and navigate the impacts of COVID-19 by providing support on shifting to an all-virtual model. As a result, the youth advocacy program is now sustainable and successful, and has expanded into tailored programming for community members.

*Case Study #3*

NIRH partnered with an organization that was relatively new to the reproductive health, rights, and justice movement, but that had deep roots in their community, to advocate for a proactive local abortion policy. NIRH crafted a strategic guidance plan that centered their expertise, while bolstering their areas of greatest need. This included providing guidance on messaging, communications, and lobbying on abortion, while our partner took the lead in translating the messaging to their community and tailoring the lobbying strategy to their political context and specific elected officials. Together, NIRH and the partner organization presented on the strategy at meetings with key stakeholders, including health care providers, elected officials, and members of their broader coalition. As the initiative moved forward, the partner organized their local network of community-based organizations, while NIRH activated our national network to support their initiative. NIRH also brought in issue experts from outside our organization to provide additional technical assistance when needed. After the policy passed, NIRH worked with the partner on effective implementation, including administrative advocacy and negotiations with the local government and partner organizations in the initiative, brainstorming community outreach efforts, and planning for the next cycle of advocacy.
Partnership Opportunity for State and Local-Level Policy and Advocacy

NIRH is seeking partnership proposals for work on the state and/or local level in the following states: Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin. Proposals must align with at least one of NIRH’s 2022 policy priorities, listed below. For proposals that include a broad agenda for a city or state, one or more elements of the agenda must align with NIRH’s policy priorities.

NIRH’s 2022 Policy Priorities

*Safe, equitable access to abortion without shame or stigma.*

Access to safe and legal abortion is critical to an individual’s ability to maintain their health and dignity, as well as independence, freedom, and social and economic equality. NIRH’s 2022 policy priorities in this issue area are:

- Legislation and ordinances that protect and/or expand access to abortion, whether clinic-based or self-managed, including the repeal of criminal abortion laws, mandatory delays, physician-only requirements, restrictions on medication abortion, and parental involvement
- Insurance coverage and funding for abortion care
- Ensuring access to abortion through clinic safety initiatives

*Affordable, convenient access to all methods of contraception and non-coercive, inclusive counseling.*

The ability to control whether and when to have a child can determine the course of a person’s life. NIRH believes that all people should have access to the full range of contraceptive options, be empowered to choose the method that is right for them, and have the ability to stop or change that method at any time. NIRH’s 2022 policy priorities in this issue area are:

- Expanded contraception coverage
- Access to family planning and referrals in school-based health centers
- Policy and/or budgetary initiatives to support training in non-coercive, patient-centered contraceptive counseling

*Eliminating racial and economic disparities in reproductive health.*

For more than two decades, the reproductive justice movement, led by Black women and gender-expansive people, has pushed our nation to recognize the basic human rights we all share, including the right of all people to live their healthiest lives, people who can become pregnant to choose when and whether to become parents, and the right of every person to parent their children with dignity and in safety. NIRH’s 2022 policy priorities in this issue area are:

- Policies and initiatives to address racial disparities in maternal mortality
• Protections for pregnant people at risk of being, or who are, criminalized
• Mandated comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive K-12 sexuality education, including funding and training to ensure implementation

Up to $40,000 in funding is available to be allocated per state, with the potential for NIRH to invest in more than one project and in multiple organizations per state. Organizations should submit their ideal budget for their proposal, but ultimately the amount of funding allocated per project will depend on the number of organizations engaged in the work and NIRH’s assessment of the project’s scope and impact. Joint proposals involving two or more organizations are welcome. The partnership cycle is January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, with the potential to renew for 2023.

We strongly encourage proposals from and are prioritizing Reproductive Justice organizations, organizations that serve and center Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and other communities of color, and/or organizations with an operational budget below $500,000 per year.

Please note that because NIRH is seeking to support projects that provide sustainable and long-term solutions, funding cannot be used to pay for direct service or costs associated with direct service projects, such as supplies.

Proposal Guidelines
For joint proposals, which are proposals in which more than one organization is a co-author and will receive funding from NIRH, each organization is required to complete its own submission form, but we ask that you submit one single, jointly authored proposal. For proposals that include other organizations as close collaborators but who are not co-authors of the proposal and will not directly receive funding, please submit a Letter of Support from each organization as described in #8.

We recognize that this is still a difficult and overwhelming time for many, and that people may have limited capacity to draft a proposal due to personal or professional reasons – or both. If you are interested in applying but are not able to complete a proposal by the deadline, please consider repurposing a proposal you have already written, or contact us at partnerships@nirhealth.org. We will do our best to work with you.

Proposals should include the following:
1. **Organization Name and Proposal Title**
   • For joint proposals, please include the names of all organizations included
2. **Executive Summary** (no more than half a page)
   • Brief summary of the initiative, including a description of its key goals, the need(s) or problem(s) it addresses, and its intended impact
3. **Organizational Background** (no more than one page)
   - Brief summary of the organization, its mission and activities, available staff demographic data, and constituencies served
   - Description of your organization’s values around racial equity and how this lens will be applied to the development and implementation of your proposed project
   - Name, title, and brief bios of staff who will be involved in the initiative

4. **Description and Goals of Initiative** (no more than three pages)
   Throughout this section, where and as relevant, please clearly lay out the role that you envision NIRH playing in the partnership, and how our capacity building resources (see Strategic Guidance and Technical Assistance Menu at the end of this document) will impact the project’s likelihood of success.
   - Description of your overall goal(s), including the community or communities the initiative centers and its potential impact on those communities; interim objectives: and your anticipated activities to achieve these objectives and goals
     - If relevant, please describe the role your state or city plays in access to care for your broader region, such as whether it is an access point for services or whether you anticipate rollbacks in access in your state or city in the near-term.
     - If relevant, please also include information on how this initiative will build capacity of your organization, supporters, coalition partners, and/or elected officials.
   - Anticipated timeline for completion or success of the initiative.
     - If you are proposing a longer-term campaign that is unlikely to include the passage of policy during the partnership period, indicate any interim goals or benchmarks you anticipate achieving at the completion of the partnership period. This could include both benchmarks for the project’s success, and/or for building the organization’s power and capacity.
   - Political and Policy Analysis: Description of the current political and policy landscape in your state or locality and where you will need to build or exert power to achieve your goals
     - If relevant, name gaps in your knowledge of the political and policy landscape, or identify power you will need to build, and how NIRH can assist with meeting either goal during our partnership
   - Communications Goals: Brief overview of your goals for press coverage and overall visibility of the project, and any activities you anticipate engaging in to achieve those goals. This could include drafting op-eds, earned media, press conferences, social media campaigns, or other events. Please indicate any opportunities for NIRH to elevate the public profile of this project, be a named
partner on this project, and/or co-branding opportunities for materials, events, or other relevant activities.

- The purpose of this section is to better understand your overall communications goals and strategy; NIRH understands these could change as the project evolves.

- Potential Challenges: List potential challenges to your success and how you plan to avoid or overcome them, and where you might want strategic guidance and technical assistance from NIRH to address them.

5. **Anticipated Allies & Stakeholders** (no more than one page)

Where relevant, please include information on how NIRH can support you in strengthening or building relationships described in this section.

- Brief overview of the organizations and/or coalitions that hold the most power in your locality or state to move policy on the issue in your partnership proposal. This section should include a description of your relationship to these organization(s) or coalition(s) – which could include, but is not required to include, that you are one of those organizations. Please note that NIRH is actively seeking both partners who already hold power and those whom we can help to build power in coalition spaces.

- As relevant, organizations or coalitions you plan to partner with on this initiative, including those you are already in relationship with and those you plan to build a relationship with, how you plan to build those relationships as needed, and the values and/or practices that guide your collaboration.

- Elected officials and/or administrative agencies you plan to work with on this initiative. As relevant, provide a brief description of your existing relationships with elected officials, as well as those that you plan to build a relationship with, and how you plan to do so.

6. **Initiative Timeline** (no more than one page)

- Outline of an anticipated timeline for the initiative that includes the key goals and interim objectives to achieve during this partnership period (January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022).

7. **Proposed Budget** (no more than one page)

The range of funding awarded will be up to a maximum of $40,000; NIRH will determine the final grant based on the resources needed to complete the proposed activities. Possible budget lines include staffing, coalition meetings, materials development, technical costs (e.g., website), and other direct program costs.

- Provide a budget narrative detailing how funds would be used and an anticipated breakdown of funding that will be spent on lobbying, if applicable. Any lobbying expenditures must be expended in compliance with both NIRH’s and the partner organization’s obligations under federal tax law.
Please note that the funding awarded should not be the exclusive source of funding for any staff person, unless the staff person is a temporary role dedicated to this initiative only.

Indirect costs should not exceed 15% of your initiative’s budget. Indirect costs include overhead expenses or ongoing operational costs and administrative or other expenses that are not directly allocable to a particular activity or initiative.

8. **Letter(s) of Support**
   - If your proposal directly involves close collaboration with additional organization(s) or coalition(s) that are not co-authors of the proposal and who will not receive funding, please submit a letter or letters of support from each organization or coalition. Each organization or coalition can choose to submit their own letter or jointly sign one letter indicating their willingness to partner and any other relevant information.
   - Additional letters of support from organizations or policymakers are welcome, but not required.

**Selection Process and Deadlines**

1. **Distribution of RFP:** The RFP will be distributed on October 27, 2021.

2. **Webinar:** NIRH will host a webinar on November 4, 2021, at 1:00 pm EST to provide guidance on writing a successful proposal and to answer any questions about this RFP. All organizations interested in applying are asked to attend. Register here.
   - Organizations who are unable to attend the webinar, or who have additional questions following the webinar, are welcome to set up a time to talk with NIRH staff by emailing partnerships@nirhealth.org.

3. **Final Proposal Submitted:** Final proposals should be submitted by November 23, 2021. To submit your proposal:
   - Complete the submission form here with background and logistical information about your organization. You can find a PDF of all of the questions asked in the submission form here to assist you in filling it out.
   - Email a Word document or PDF file of your proposal to partnerships@nirhealth.org. Please use the subject line "NIRH 2022 Partnership Proposal" in your email and use the following format to name your proposal file: [OrganizationName]_NIRHProposal2022.
   - Contact us at partnerships@nirhealth.org with questions about proposal submission.

4. **Proposal Review and Follow-Up:** Proposals will be reviewed by NIRH staff. Additional information or clarification of the proposal may be requested of applicants.

5. **Announcement of Decisions:** Applicants will be informed of decisions on a rolling basis; all applicants will be notified of final decisions by December 22, 2021.
Strategic Guidance and Technical Assistance Menu

Funding offered in this RFP is 501(c)3 dollars which can be used on a variety of activities like administrative advocacy, activist engagement, and coalition building, as well as a certain amount of direct and grassroots lobbying within federal and state laws. However, some goals may require 501(c)4 activities, like a greater lobbying expenditure and electoral work. We are proud to offer wrap-around support and technical assistance to our partners, including both lobbying and electoral work, and want to work with you to expand your 501(c)4 capacity.

Strategic Guidance

• Plan development and identification of near, mid, and long-term benchmarks for policy, advocacy, and electoral goals
• Integration of racial equity and reproductive justice approach
• Facilitation or facilitation training
• Building connections between advocacy groups, elected leaders, and the political infrastructure, as well as with national resources and other state groups working toward similar goals
• Access to our ongoing series of capacity building webinars on topics including state and national policy; fundraising and donor development; data integration, testing, and experiments; and advocacy rules and regulations

Advocacy Support

• Coalition coaching on management and/or expansion, and how to achieve shared priorities
• Development of advocacy, voter engagement, accountability, and mobilization campaigns
• Creation, expansion, and maximization of lobbying capacity
• Creation and implementation of endorsement programs
• Collaboration with NIRH Action Fund

Legislative and Administrative Policy Support

• Policy strategy
• Government relations strategy, policy mapping, and lobbying support, including training for organizations/advocates as well as serving as a validator
• Legal research and analysis
• Proactive policy drafting or best practice feedback on existing drafts
• Development of resources, including talking points, testimony, briefs, and other materials

Communications Support

• Communications strategy and planning
• Message development based on existing national and state best practices
• Localized messaging and guidance on public opinion research to inform customized messaging for both legislative and electoral campaigns
• Creation of messaging resources and talking points for legislators, candidates, advocates, and activists