Positive Youth Justice Initiative: Organizing for a Healthy Justice System
Program Evaluation Request for Proposals

The Positive Youth Justice Initiative is funded by Sierra Health Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and is managed by The Center.

www.shfccenter.org/positive-youth-justice-initiative
The Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) is helping communities across California transform juvenile justice practice and policy into a more just, effective system that is aligned with the developmental stages of young people. The Center is announcing the opportunity to submit proposals for the evaluation of Organizing for a Healthy Justice System, the most recent component of PYJI. Up to $125,000 is available for the evaluation contract.

The Center

The Center has a broad definition of health, believing that health is influenced by many factors, including socioeconomic conditions, environment, education, housing and income. These factors have come to be known as the social determinants of health. Where we live, work and play has a significant influence on our health.

The Center also believes in health and racial equity, which means achieving the highest possible standard of health for all people and giving special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health, based on social conditions. Reducing health disparities is a key factor in striving toward better health for all and reflects our commitment to ensuring that people throughout our funding region have the opportunity to lead healthy lives.

Background

Sierra Health Foundation first launched the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in 2012 to transform juvenile justice into a more just, effective system that is aligned with the developmental stages of young people. PYJI is based on four essential elements of juvenile justice that supports the well-being of youth:

1. **Shifting the juvenile justice field toward a positive youth development** frame applies a strengths-based, youth-as-resources lens and acknowledges that all young people bring resources, strengths and assets to bear on their community and their own lives. This frame also acknowledges that young people are in need of key developmental supports to mature into healthy, productive adults. These supports are defined through the initiative as education, employment, civic engagement, physical health and mental health.

2. **Trauma-informed care** acknowledges the likelihood that young people in the juvenile justice system have encountered deep trauma and require opportunities to heal to address root causes of delinquency. This approach also recognizes that juvenile justice system operations are not necessarily trauma-informed. The development of trauma-informed policies and practices throughout the juvenile justice continuum are critical to recognizing the level of trauma young people have been exposed to, offering opportunities for young people to heal and avoiding re-traumatization while in the system.

3. **Wraparound service delivery** aims to achieve positive outcomes by providing a structured and individualized team planning process that results in plans that are more effective and more relevant to the child, family and community by being more holistic than traditional case plans. Wraparound should be strengths-based, culturally responsive and support young people and their families (biological, adoptive or nurturing) in a coordinated manner, in the least restrictive environment, utilizing community and social supports including the formal and
informal networks found in neighborhoods where young people reside.

4. Finally, **improved operational capacity** is focused on assessing a young person’s developmental, physical and mental health needs and reducing the racial and ethnic disparities that exist throughout the county juvenile justice system. Approaches include the use of data collection and reporting processes, use of validated screening and assessment tools, structured decision-making tools and building and sustaining healthy, supportive and inclusive relationships with youth, their families and communities.

Integrating these four distinct, yet complementary, design elements of PYJI provides a framework for the reform’s approach and are discussed in greater detail in the initiative’s Briefing Paper and Implementation Phase II Concept Paper posted on Sierra Health Foundation’s web site, http://www.shfcenter.org/pyji/publications

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**INVESTING IN ORGANIZING FOR A HEALTHY JUSTICE SYSTEM**

To further accelerate a statewide movement toward a healthier justice system – one that focuses on well-being, reduces system involvement and improves justice system practices, The Center decided to strengthen the demand side for juvenile justice reform by expanding the capacity of collaboratives throughout California. (See Elements of a Healthy Juvenile Justice System infographic.) In early 2017, with support from Sierra Health Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation, 11 nonprofit community-based organizations and their countywide collaboratives received a total of $1.3 million as partners in Organizing for a Healthy Justice System.

The partners are:

- Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (Alameda County)
- Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
- Fresno Barrios Unidos
- Resilience Orange County
- RYSE Youth Center (Contra Costa County)
- Sacramento Area Congregations Together
- San Diego Organizing Project
- Sigma Beta Xi Inc. (Riverside County)
- Silicon Valley De-Bug (Santa Clara County)
- Young Women’s Freedom Center (San Francisco County)
- Youth Justice Coalition (Los Angeles County)

See www.shfcenter.org/positive-youth-justice-initiative for links to information about each of these organizations.
These organizations and their collaborative partners play critical roles in advancing a healthy justice system agenda, and represent racial and ethnic populations that are overly represented in and inequitably treated by the juvenile justice system. They are working with youth, families and communities of color who are disproportionately impacted by the juvenile justice system to develop local policy agendas and a stronger, more cohesive constituency that can advocate for system transformation.

The funded nonprofit partners have planned their work around a set of guidelines. They are expected to:

- Develop or strengthen collaboratives to develop a common agenda through a collective impact approach
- Leverage existing public and political will to advance an agenda consistent with the Healthy Justice System Framework
- Focus on systems change advocacy rather than service delivery
- Engage with external technical assistance providers
- Participate in initiative evaluation activities coordinated by The Center
- Participate in three Learning Community convenings (the first was held on April 7 in Los Angeles).

Their grants end in July 2018.

**Evaluating the Organizing for a Healthy Justice System Approach**

The Center is seeking a dynamic individual or team to evaluate its Organizing for a Healthy Justice System approach of expanding the capacity of collaboratives throughout the state to advocate for juvenile justice reform. The evaluation is not of the specific projects carried out by the funded nonprofit organizations and their collaborative partners. Instead, the evaluation is intended to help The Center and the funded partners carry out this approach most effectively and to generate findings that could be used by other funders and advocates.

**Evaluation Questions**

The questions intended to guide the evaluation are:

1. How (if at all) does the advocacy environment/infrastructure in the counties with funded community partners change over the grant period?
2. To what extent and in what ways (if any) does community power to advocate for a healthy justice system in the counties with funded community partners change over the grant period?
3. What lessons are learned by The Center and community partners about organizing for a healthy justice system?

To the extent possible, The Center seeks to trace the contribution of its support (in funding, technical assistance or other forms) and the contribution of the work of its community partners to changes in the advocacy environment.

**Evaluation Guidelines**

The Center believes in engaging its community partners in meaningful ways (beyond data sources) in the planning and conduct of evaluation.

The Center believes that its community partners are experts in their community and the issues being addressed.

The Center uses the professional standards for evaluation articulated in documents such as the American Evaluation Association’s *Statement on the Importance of Cultural Competency in Evaluation* and *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* and the Joint Committee’s *Standards for Program Evaluation*. 
**Design and Methodology**

Recognizing the challenges created by the geographic distribution of the Organizing for a Healthy Justice System sites and the diverse policy targets of their work, The Center looks to the evaluators who apply to this opportunity to present their best thinking about how to answer the above questions within the constraints of funding and the evaluation guidelines. The selected evaluation team will have 1-2 months to finalize plans in consultation with The Center and community partners.

**Budget and Timeframe**

The duration of this contract is 13 months from August 2017 through August 2018. The total budget should not exceed $125,000, inclusive of travel and expenses.

Proposers may submit budgets in one of two ways. The budget may be based on an all-inclusive hourly rate for each staff person. In this case, the budget must list staff, number of hours and hourly rate for each activity. Other costs, such as travel, should be listed separately. The second option is to submit a detailed budget listing personnel (FTE, salary and fringe), operating costs (travel, materials, other), and indirect (up to 15% of direct costs).

The budget narrative should provide a clear description of how the budget supports the proposed activities.

**Eligibility and Qualifications**

Eligible applicants are research institutions, universities, colleges, policy centers, private and nonprofit consulting firms and other entities or individuals qualified to propose.

Applicants must demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. Commitment to racial and health equity
2. Cultural humility and competence with the communities that will be mobilized for policy change
3. Knowledge of juvenile justice systems and issues in California
4. Familiarity with community organizing and advocacy for policy and systems change
5. Expertise in and experience with collaborative approaches to evaluation
6. Expertise in and experience with evaluation methodologies, including data collection methods and data analysis and interpretation
7. Ability to anticipate and develop creative solutions to evaluation challenges to maintain the credibility and utility of the evaluation

**Working with The Center**

The Center recognizes that evaluation activities require time and effort on the part of PYJI’s nonprofit partners and will work with both the partners and the evaluators to minimize the burden while maximizing the benefit of the evaluation to all.

The Center will provide support in connecting the evaluators to PYJI’s nonprofit partners and facilitating the development of a strong relationship.

The Center will provide opportunities for interactions between PYJI’s nonprofit partners and the evaluators during in-person convenings organized by The Center.

The Center has a collaborative approach to working with external evaluators. This involves regular communications to coordinate interactions with the nonprofit partners, discuss evaluation activities, solve challenges encountered during the course of the evaluation, and generally work together so that the evaluation is useful and credible.
Selection Criteria and Process

Responses to this RFP must be submitted through the online application process. We recommend looking at the questions listed there before beginning to write your proposal.

Proposals submitted by the deadline and meeting the application guidelines will be evaluated based on consistency of proposed plans with the specifications outlined in this RFP, including the qualifications of the staff, completeness with regard to the required elements, and feasibility of the proposed plans. The most competitive proposals will include:

1. Evidence that proposed staff meets or exceeds the qualifications listed above.

2. Evaluation approaches that:
   a. Respond to the above questions
   b. Describe plans for engaging with the nonprofit partners that address the twin goals of limited burden and meaningful collaboration
   c. Demonstrate the evaluation expertise of the applicant by identifying evaluation methods (including analysis and reporting) that are feasible and technically sound (following the professional guidelines listed earlier)

3. A budget that is appropriate for the plans and timeline.

Applicants who submit the proposals that are most highly ranked based on the selection criteria will be invited for an interview with the review team, which will include representatives of the community partners and The Center staff.

The final selection will be based on the results of the interviews and approval of The Center.

Application Timeline

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
Wednesday, June 28, 2017, at 1 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time)

INTERVIEWS WITH FINALISTS:
July 17-21, 2017

CONTRACTOR SELECTION:
Late July 2017

Proposals are submitted by responding to a series of questions on the application found on The Center’s online grants portal. To be considered, your application must be submitted via the online grants portal by 1 p.m. (PST) on June 28, 2017. Submission guidelines follow. Proposals received after the due date/time will not be reviewed. Submission before the deadline date is advised in case you experience technical difficulties with submitting your application through the portal. Please plan accordingly as we may not be able to respond to your requests for help on the deadline date.
Important Application Guidelines

Access the PYJI Organizing Evaluation application at https://www.grantrequest.com
SID_5509?SA=SNA&FID=35054

To help us process your proposal, please follow these submission guidelines:

• We encourage you to open the online application and review the questions before beginning to prepare a proposal.
• New users of the portal will need to create an account as the first step in the application process.
• We encourage you to submit your proposal before the deadline date in case you need help with any of the guidelines below.
• The deadline for submission of proposals is no later than 1 p.m. PST on June 28, 2017.
• For optimal functionality, please use Internet Explorer as your web browser for the portal.
• Respond to all fields. Required fields are marked with an *.
• Upload all documents listed under “Application Attachments Checklist.”
• On the portal, you may click “Save & Finish Later.” You will receive an e-mail with a link to return to your in-progress application.
• You may only submit your application once. Be sure your application is complete and accurate, including required documents, before submitting it.
• If you need help submitting your application, send an e-mail to centergrants@shfcenter.org with the subject line: PYJI Eval Question.

Send questions about this RFP and the application process to centergrants@shfcenter.org with the subject line: PYJI Eval Question.

Application Attachments Checklist

• Proposed budget for the full 13-month contract period, August 2017 through August 2018 – upload a budget as a pdf file following the guidelines provided above. The total budget should not exceed $125,000, inclusive of travel and expenses.
• Proposed budget narrative for the full 13-month contract period, August 2017 through August 2018 – upload a narrative as a pdf file that explains your proposed expenditures. In no more than two pages, describe the bases for the costs presented in the proposal.
• Evaluation plan – upload a plan of no more than five pages that describes how the evaluation questions identified in the RFP will be addressed, including likely methods choices, data sources, collaborative approaches, possible approaches to reporting and a rough timeline.
• Brief (no more than three pages per person) resumes of all those who would be part of the evaluation team.
• Two to three reports or other work products demonstrating your experience and expertise. Products from evaluations of community organizing and/or juvenile justice would be especially useful.