

# FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR BIRTH JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Fall 2023

**IN A NUTSHELL:** The Ms. Foundation for Women’s Birth Justice Initiative is launching a second open call for proposals. We will provide two-year grants to birth justice organizations led by and for Black, Indigenous, and other women of color, including cis women, trans women, and non-binary people of color. Organizations eligible for funding must be implementing birth justice strategies that are rooted in movement building and organizing, and connected to the broader reproductive justice movement. Eligible organizations should also be serving the **South, Midwest, Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories** and working for change at a local or state-level. Ms. will award grants ranging from \$50,000-\$100,000, distributed over two years. Deadline for proposal submission is **October 30 at 5:00pm ET**. Details about eligibility criteria, assessment criteria, and application timeline can be found below. We strongly encourage all applicants to read the full Request for Proposals (RFP) before beginning your application.

### I. About the Ms. Foundation and the Birth Justice Initiative

The mission of the Ms. Foundation for Women is to build women’s collective power in the U.S. to advance equity and justice for all. We achieve our mission by investing in, and strengthening, the capacity of women-led movements to advance meaningful social, cultural and economic change in the lives of women. Ms. has six grantmaking initiatives, one of which is the Birth Justice Initiative.

Launched in 2022, our Birth Justice Initiative aims to:

- advance equitable birth outcomes and experiences;
- strengthen the capacity, organizational infrastructure, and financial stability of grassroots Black, Indigenous and women of color-led birth justice organizations; and
- expand the frame of birth justice to support intersectional movements and strategies that recognize the full spectrum of experiences and identities in birthing, parenting, and family building.

We believe that Black, Indigenous, and women of color (including trans women and non-binary people) are key experts and should be decision-makers in shaping policy and culture change around birth justice. By investing directly into organizations led by and for women and girls of color, we are ensuring that the movement to address racial based disparities in healthcare, including birth outcomes and experiences, is led by those who are impacted most.

Strengthening the collective power of communities of color is critical to addressing the root causes of these disparities and advancing birth justice for all.

The U.S. has one of the highest maternal mortality rates of all developed nations and Black women die at three to four times the rate of white women in birth – one of the widest racial disparities in women’s health. Systemic racism, implicit bias, and anti-Blackness all contribute to the significant disparities in birth outcomes among Black, Indigenous and birthing people of color. Moreover, the spectrum of intersectional issues that comprise birth justice and the ability to have children and parent with dignity, are not only limited to the birth process.

As such, the Ms. Foundation's Birth Justice Initiative invests in organizations who represent the full spectrum of birth experiences including—but not limited to—preconception health, mental health and wellness, infertility, abortion access and abortion care, comprehensive sex and sexuality education, non-racist culturally affirming and gender expansive healthcare, access to birth workers of color, access to lactation support and services, postpartum health and wellness, grief and loss care and support, and sexual assault prevention and survivor support services. Organizations supported collectively utilize a range of movement building strategies to advance birth justice—such as narrative change, policy and systems change, advocacy, leadership development, direct service among others. And finally, they work at the intersection of birth justice and other movements, such as disability justice, youth justice, LGBTQIA+ justice, environmental justice, economic justice, and criminal legal reform. To learn more about the Birth Justice Initiative and organizations we currently support, click [here](#).

**During this cycle, Ms. will provide one-time grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to selected organizations not currently receiving funding from Ms.' Birth Justice Initiative. The grant period will comprise two years. Eligible birth justice organizations should be serving the South, Midwest, Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories.** As shared in Ms.'s [Pocket Change](#) report, these regions comparatively receive the least amount of philanthropic resources. Furthermore, birth justice and reproductive justice are under attack in many states within these regions, resulting in denials or delays in care for birthing people, among other injustices. It is our hope that by prioritizing support for organizations led by and for women, girls, and gender expansive people of color in the South, Midwest, Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories, other funders see the value of this work and fund it with abundance.

## II. Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for funding, **applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:**

1. At least 50% of your organization's leadership must include trans women, cis women, and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). An organization's leadership includes people with significant influence or decision-making power (i.e. the executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members or governing boards).
2. Organization's primary mission must center Black, Indigenous and Birthing People of Color.
3. Organizations must be operating in the U.S. South, Midwest, Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories.
4. Organizations must have operating budgets no greater than \$2,000,000.
5. Organizations must be a 501(c)(3) organization or fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) organization.

## III. What We Do Not Fund

- Organizations with a 501(c)(4) legal status.
- Individuals.
- Organizations currently receiving funding from Ms. through the Birth Justice Initiative. *Separate communication will be sent to current grantees, particularly organizations up for renewal. Feel free to follow up with your Program Officer with questions.*
- Organizations whose leadership is not composed of a majority (>50%) of cis women,

trans women, and/or non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

- Academic research.

#### IV. Assessment Criteria

**Ms. will assess applications based on the following assessment criteria:**

- **Working towards birth justice.** We will prioritize organizations who can describe the underlying causes of injustice affecting their communities, and seek to change the conditions, institutions, and policies that create or maintain inequality and oppression. We will pay attention to how the organization describes how reproductive oppression impacts the people it serves and how reproductive justice influences how it provides services or conducts its programs.
- **Utilizing movement building and organizing strategies.** While we understand that birth justice organizations often offer direct services as part of their core work, we will prioritize organizations that use organizing and movement building strategies (e.g. narrative change, policy and systems change, advocacy, leadership development) and/or multi-strategy approaches.
- **Community engagement.** We will look for organizations who can articulate how and why they serve cis women, trans women, and/or non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and how it involves people impacted by birth injustice in various aspects of the organization's work.
- **Expansion and inclusion.** We are open to supporting the full spectrum of birth justice work as defined in part I of this RFP. We will pay close attention to and prioritize disability justice work, work that focuses on pregnant and parenting youth, family building for LGBTQ/trans/non-binary families, and work that connects birth justice and the criminal justice system.
- **Geographic focus.** Within the regions eligible for funding (the U.S. South, Midwest, and Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories), we will look for organizations who work at the local or state levels. National organizations with a substantial local or state presence and impact will also be considered.
- **Organizational lifestage.** While this portfolio will support organizations at different phases of organizational development (e.g. emerging, growing, mature, and transitioning organizations), we will prioritize support for organizations in the emerging, growth, and transitioning stages. For more information on how we think about these stages, see the [FAQ](#).

#### V. Online Application Guidance

Organizations that meet the eligibility criteria listed in Section II are invited to apply for one-time grants ranging from \$50,000-\$100,000, distributed across two years. (For example, an organization awarded \$100,000 will receive \$50,000 each year for two years. An organization awarded \$50,000 will receive \$25,000 each year for two years.) Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Those that are funded may not be funded at requested levels. Please be assured that every request will be given full consideration.

**Organizations must apply through Ms.' online portal. Completed submissions include a completed digital application (embedded in Ms.' portal), a written narrative proposal, and supporting financial documents. Submissions are due October 30 at 5 PM ET.**

Here is more specific guidance for completing and submitting your materials:

1. **Create a user account:** Please use the link below to access the digital application form and create a user account. Please retain your username and password. The Ms. Foundation for Women does not have access to your account login information.

<https://us.grantrequest.com/application.aspx?sid=829&fid=35157>

**If you run into issues creating a user account, contact [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org)**

To log back in to the system once an application has been saved or submitted, please use this link.

<https://us.grantrequest.com/accountmanager.aspx?sid=829>

In order to view your account page, your internet browser must accept cookies. We strongly recommend using Google Chrome to complete your application.

2. **Take an eligibility quiz:** Once you have created a user account, please begin the online application process by completing the eligibility quiz. This section seeks to validate that applicants meet the eligibility criteria laid out in section II. If the quiz is successful, you will be directed to continue the online application and be able to submit your proposal. *If the eligibility quiz is not successful and you have questions, please contact the Grants Management Team at Ms. Foundation: [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).*
3. **Complete your submission:** Completed grant requests include (1) a completed digital application form, (2) an uploaded written narrative proposal, and (3) supporting financial documents.
  - a. **Digital Application Form:** A digital application form is embedded in Ms. grants portal, and includes several multiple choice questions about your leadership and community makeup, the region you serve, and your organization's legal status. There are also a few short answer open-ended questions regarding your organization's vision, mission, approach to advancing birth justice, and the constituency you serve and how their input informs your work.
  - b. **Written Narrative Proposal:** Organization's written proposals should respond to each of the following open-ended questions separately. We recommend one to two paragraphs per question (no more than three to five pages total). Applicants must upload this narrative to the portal, ideally as a PDF document.
    1. **Organization Summary** - Please briefly describe the work of your organization (e.g., mission, history, current goals and strategies).
    2. **Environmental Context** - Please briefly describe the political, historical, and/or socio-economic context in your locality, state, or region that

creates the injustices you are fighting against.

3. **Birth Justice** - Please describe what birth justice means to your organization.
  4. **Organizational Context** - Please tell us about the stage of development you are in (e.g., emerging, growing, mature, transitioning organization) and describe the current opportunities and challenges you face as an organization. You can touch on internal, external, or both considerations. *For more information on how we think about these stages, see the [FAQ](#).*
  5. **Community Engagement** - Describe the community or communities you serve and stand with, and share how their input is reflected in your work.
- c. **Most Recent Operating Budget:** The budget must show total income and expenses for the fiscal year. NOTE: We accept existing organizational budgets; you are not required to use the Ms. budget template. If you do not have an existing budget that clearly delineates income and expenses, we encourage you to use the [Ms. budget template](#).
  - d. **Selected Pages from Form 990** (Page 1 and Schedule A): Please submit a copy of Page 1 and Schedule A from Form 990; you do not need to send the full document. If your organization is not legally required to file a Form 990, please submit the financials you share with your board in lieu of the 990. If you are unsure, please click [here](#) for additional information.
  - e. **Audited Financial Statements:** A complete copy of your organization or fiscal sponsor's most recent audited financial statements. If your organization is not legally required to get an audit, please submit the financials you share with your board in lieu of audited financials, such as your balance sheet or P&L statements. If you are unsure, please click [here](#) for additional information.

If you run into issues when filling out your application form, contact [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org)

## VII. Key Dates

RFP Released	September 28, 2023
Information Session	October 5, 2023, 3-4pm ET <i>Register for the virtual information session by clicking on the link below. A recording of this webinar will be available at the same link after October 5.</i> <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DrWvojsLRISiy--E4ParwA">https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DrWvojsLRISiy--E4ParwA</a>
Proposal Due	October 30, 2023 at 5pm ET/4pm CT/2pm PT
Review Period	November 1, 2023 through January 2024
Award Notifications	By end of January 2024
Funding Distribution	Early 2024

## VIII. Contact Information and FAQ

**Troubleshooting:** For questions or assistance related with your online application, please email Grants Management at [grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org](mailto:grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org).

**Questions on Proposals:** If you have questions, please refer to our [FAQ](#). If your question is not answered, please do not hesitate to contact Birth Justice Program Officer: Sona Smith, [ssmith@ms.foundation.org](mailto:ssmith@ms.foundation.org). We will make best attempts to respond to your inquiries in a timely manner. Please note that due to a large volume of inquiries, response time may vary. We will try to accommodate different language needs as we are able.

### Thank You!

The Ms. Foundation for Women looks forward to learning more about your work.