

F.R. Bigelow Foundation | Systems Change | Application Scoring Rubric

Grantmaking focus areas:

F. R. Bigelow Foundation believes that our community should not only benefit from our work, but inform and form it as well. Creating solutions to today's issues requires a collaborative approach. Our work is also rooted in a commitment to racial equity.

The goal of our Systems Change Grant Program (invite-only) is to support efforts to help systems adapt, transform and/or be disrupted to achieve more equitable results.

The Foundation's Systems Change Grant Program seeks to address root causes of any issue impacting the East Metro (including, but not limited to, the five funding priorities of our Community Solutions Grant Program).

This includes non-partisan activities such as advocacy, organizing, research, civic engagement, narrative change and/or storytelling, but does not include lobbying.

Funding Priorities:

Arts & Culture

Strengthening the arts and culture sector to serve all individuals and all communities across the East Metro region

- The Foundation believes that all peoples, their cultures, and their art contribute to the meaning and understanding of our humanity and should be honored and celebrated.
- Priority will be given to arts and culture organizations that seek to amplify narratives and voices across BIPOC communities and other communities experiencing marginalization (e.g., people with disabilities, low-income communities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, formerly incarcerated people, etc.) through the arts.

Community & Economic Development

Building a strong and vital East Metro through community building, physical development and strengthening support for low-income individuals, families and underrepresented communities through workforce development and training

- The Foundation seeks to invest and partner in solutions informed and formed by the people facing the highest barriers to wealth creation, economic security and family-sustaining career pathways. In the East Metro, this includes BIPOC, women, veterans, young people, people with disabilities, formerly incarcerated people and LGBTQIA+ people.
- Specific priorities for wealth creation include strengthening the entrepreneur ecosystem and increasing local ownership of businesses and homes.
- Regarding economic security, the Foundation recognizes the importance of anchor institutions embedded at the neighborhood level. For workforce development, we will prioritize employment pathways that meet the needs of individuals and employers alike.

Health

Increasing health equity through quality, affordable, culturally relevant services, particularly for low-income, uninsured, under-insured and socially marginalized individuals

- The Foundation continues to prioritize health organizations that focus on health equity and increase access to affordable, culturally relevant health services.
- The Foundation hopes to align its health grants to be inclusive of programs and organizations that serve low-income families, provide free or affordable, culturally relevant services, and holistic care.
- Given the increase in severity, cost of and demand for mental health services, urgent care and/or crisis prevention, access to reproductive health care, trauma-informed health care, and free or reduced services for uninsured or underinsured communities, the Foundation will prioritize these programs and organizations to continue to serve our most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Human Services

Investing in basic needs for individuals and families, helping them be safe, stable and independent

- The Foundation will prioritize grants that assist residents in navigating life transitions, finding safety and stability, and promoting independence.
- In addition to supporting work that centers the voices of the people most impacted by an organization's work, special priority will be given to disability support services, child welfare support services, family and parent support services, food relief and assistance, older adult services, immigration and legal services, and re-entry supports for formerly incarcerated people.

Youth & Education

Supporting under-served children, youth and young adults by investing in access to high-quality education and youth development both in and out of school from cradle to career

- The Foundation recognizes how important it is for students and young people to feel cared for, protected, valued and seen after a difficult period in their learning and growth. This is complex and urgent work, and the Foundation will prioritize organizations that blend academic, social and emotional support for young people most impacted by educational inequity.
- The Foundation will also prioritize support to organizations working to build a robust early childhood system that gives children and families access to high-quality care and education programs.

Section 1: Overview of Proposed Work & Your Role in Community

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant clearly describe their proposed work and demonstrate a meaningful, community-informed role in community advancing systems change? Strong applications will demonstrate efforts to adapt, transform, and/or disrupt systems to achieve more equitable results.

Score	Description
5	The organization clearly and compellingly describes the proposed work and its connection to systems change. The applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of their role within the broader ecosystem, including how their work contributes to adapting, transforming, or disrupting systems. The response is focused, well-articulated, and aligned with the Foundation’s goals.
4	The organization clearly describes the proposed work and shows alignment to systems change. The applicant identifies their role within a broader system, though some aspects of their contribution or positioning could be further clarified or strengthened.
3	The organization provides an adequate description of the proposed work and generally connects it to systems change. The applicant’s role is identified but may be somewhat unclear, narrowly defined, or lacking connection to a broader system.
2	The organization provides a limited or vague description of the proposed work. The connection to systems change is weak or unclear, and the applicant’s role within a broader system is not well defined.

- 1**
**Comments
or
Questions**
- The organization does not clearly describe the proposed work or its relevance to systems change. The applicant's role is unclear or not aligned with the program's goals.

Section 2: Current & Future Conditions

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant demonstrate a clear and thoughtful understanding of the systems they are working to change, including root causes, current conditions, and a vision for more equitable outcomes? Strong applications identify underlying drivers of inequity (e.g., structures, policies, power dynamics, mindsets, or relationships) and articulate meaningful shifts needed to achieve systems change.

Score	Description
5	The response provides a clear and compelling analysis of current conditions and root causes within the system. The organization demonstrates a strong understanding of how structural inequities, power dynamics, and/or policies create barriers for communities. The vision for a more just and equitable system is clearly articulated, with specific and meaningful shifts identified. There is a strong connection between the root causes identified and the changes the organization seeks to advance.
4	The response provides a clear analysis of current conditions and identifies relevant root causes. The organization demonstrates a solid understanding of systemic factors contributing to inequities, though some aspects may lack depth or specificity. The vision for change is articulated, with general shifts identified, though connections between root causes and desired outcomes could be further strengthened.
3	The response describes current conditions and identifies some root causes, though the analysis may be general or surface-level. The connection to broader systems or structural factors is present but not fully developed. A vision for change is included but may be broad or lacking specificity in the shifts needed to achieve it.

2 The response focuses primarily on symptoms or immediate challenges rather than underlying root causes. Analysis of systems, structures, or power dynamics is limited or unclear. The vision for change is vague or underdeveloped, with little connection to systemic shifts.

1 The response does not clearly describe current conditions or root causes. There is little to no evidence of systems-level analysis. The vision for change is absent, unclear, or not aligned with advancing equitable outcomes.

**Comments
or
Questions**

Section 3: Strategies & Activities

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant demonstrate clear, coherent strategies and activities that address root causes and contribute to systems change? This may include approaches such as advocacy, organizing, research, civic engagement, narrative change, and/or storytelling.

Score	Description
5	The organization presents clear, well-defined, and cohesive strategies that directly address root causes and strongly align with systems change. Activities are intentional, feasible, and logically connected to long-term outcomes. The approach demonstrates a strong understanding of how change happens within systems.
4	The organization presents solid strategies that align with systems change and address root causes. Activities are generally clear and feasible, though connections between strategies and long-term outcomes could be further strengthened.
3	The organization describes adequate strategies and activities that relate to systems change, though they may be somewhat general, lack cohesion, or lean toward programmatic work rather than deeper systemic impact.
2	The organization includes limited or unclear strategies. Activities may focus on short-term outputs or direct service, with weak or unclear connections to root causes or systems change.

1
Comments
or
Questions

The organization does not present clear or relevant strategies for systems change. Activities are unclear, not feasible, or not aligned with the program's goals.

Section 4: Community Voice

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant show that their work is informed by, formed with, and benefiting the communities most impacted? The applicant should demonstrate how community voices shape their strategies and how they collaborate with organizations, coalitions, or public partners to build collective strength toward shared goals.

Score	Description
5	The response clearly demonstrates that the work is informed by, formed with, and directly benefits the communities most impacted. Community voice is meaningfully integrated into decision-making and strategy, not just consulted. The organization shows strong, authentic collaboration with partners, coalitions, or public entities to advance shared goals and collective impact.
4	The organization describes how community voices inform and influence its work and identifies who benefits. Collaboration with partners is evident, though the depth of shared decision-making or collective strategy may not be fully articulated.
3	The response identifies the communities served and suggests some level of engagement, but it is unclear how deeply community voice shapes decisions or strategy. Partnerships are mentioned but appear more transactional or loosely connected to shared goals.
2	The description of community engagement is vague or surface-level, making it difficult to understand how communities inform or shape the work. Collaboration with others is limited, unclear, or not meaningfully connected to the work.

- 1** The response does not clearly identify the communities most impacted or how they are involved. There is little to no evidence that community voices inform, form, or benefit from the work, and collaboration is absent or unclear.
- Comments
or
Questions**

Section 5: Financial Health & Organization Capacity

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant demonstrate the organizational capacity and financial health needed to sustain their work over the next five years? The applicant describes how their budget aligns with their goals, identify areas of growth, and outline the resources needed to carry the work forward.

Score	Description
5	The response clearly demonstrates organizational capacity and financial health to carry out the work over the next five years. It thoughtfully connects budget, staffing, and infrastructure to systems change goals, while also naming areas for growth and how resources will support long-term sustainability.
4	The organization provides a clear overview of its capacity and financial position, with general alignment between budget and goals. Areas for growth and resource needs are identified, though connections to long-term sustainability or systems change may not be fully developed.
3	The response includes general information about staffing, budget, or operations but lacks depth or clear alignment to systems change goals. Resource needs or areas for growth are mentioned but remain broad or not fully connected to sustaining the work.
2	The description of organizational capacity or financial health is minimal or unclear, making it difficult to assess readiness for long-term work. The relationship between budget, goals, and resource needs is loosely addressed or underdeveloped.

1

**Comments
or
Questions**

The response does not provide enough detail about organizational capacity or financial health to determine readiness. It is unclear how the organization will resource or sustain the work overtime.