

Request for Proposals: AMPLIFY FUND LEARNING & EVALUATION PARTNER

Proposal Deadline: March 31, 2019

We would like the L&E Partner to begin as soon as possible and commit to serving in this role through the end of the Fund's lifespan. We plan to make final grants in 2021 and expect the learning and evaluation work to continue through and possibly beyond the final grant cycle.

This is a unique opportunity to activate the principles and practices of the [equitable evaluation](#) framework in service of building power in communities of color and low-income communities, advancing equitable development, building movement capacity, and strengthening philanthropic effectiveness. This is not a traditional Learning & Evaluation (L&E) engagement. We are seeking a values-aligned partner that brings both solid approaches and tools AND out-of-the box, creative thinking to reflect and support our efforts to adapt, innovate, and disrupt business as usual in philanthropy, particularly in terms of measurement and accountability.

Given the complexity of this body of work, the L&E Partner likely will engage a team of practitioners to accomplish all tasks. We prefer to have no more than one to two individuals that will oversee the full team, ensure integration and quality, and liaise with the Amplify Fund staff and Steering Committee.

ABOUT THE AMPLIFY FUND

In 2017, the [Democratizing Development Program](#) (DDP) of [Neighborhood Funders Group](#) (NFG) began a series of conversations with a small group of its members interested in pooling funds to more strategically support grassroots leadership and power building towards equitable development. This was the genesis of the Amplify Fund, a national pooled grantmaking and capacity building fund focused on building the power, influence, and decision-making authority of people of color and low-income people to transform their communities and advance equitable development.

Amplify is housed at NFG with grants administration support provided in partnership with [Common Counsel Foundation](#). Amplify is NFG's first grantmaking fund, and today, contributing funders include Ford Foundation, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, JPB Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Moriah Fund, Open Society Foundations, Surdna Foundation, and The California Endowment.

Building from DDP's earlier [framework](#) that focused primarily on housing, the Amplify Fund now has a working understanding of equitable development as a values-based approach that:

- Sees the built environment as a community asset where all people, particularly people of color and low-income communities, have the decision-making authority to determine what happens in the places where they live.

- Strives to ensure that neighborhoods and communities work for everyone and provide access to affordable housing, living wage jobs, transportation, healthy environments, safety, and all the things that contribute to resilient and thriving communities.
- Works to shift the profit-driven model of real estate development, which exploits community assets and further marginalizes and displaces people of color and low-income residents.

Anchored in a framework of racial justice and building power among most affected communities, the Amplify Fund invests in local groups, coalitions, tables, and organizations, with a goal of disbursing more than \$17-18 million in grants across eight geographic places over a four-year period. In 2019, Amplify will distribute grants in four pilot sites: Missouri, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, and California (through the Fund for an Inclusive California, F4ICA), and will select four additional sites in coming weeks. At full capacity, the Fund is expected to have approximately 70 grantees.

Our Values and Analysis:

The Amplify Fund is guided by the core beliefs that communities have the wisdom and clarity to drive equitable development agendas, and that a racial justice analysis is necessary for equitable development outcomes since historic and systemic racism are at the root of so many decisions resulting in inequity. By investing in leaders and communities of color in the States, and promoting the leadership of Afro-descendant and historically marginalized communities in Puerto Rico, Amplify believes local power structures will shift, as will decision making about development.

To embody these values over the next four years, the Amplify Fund will:

- Be guided by local leadership in every site, including the co-creation of local grantmaking strategies,
- Center a racial justice analysis in its grantmaking, learning and evaluation, communications, and capacity building with grantees, and support grantees to do the same, and
- Support communities of color and low-income communities as the primary drivers of change including by building their political and economic power.

Beyond developing a values-driven grantmaking program, Amplify's theory of change calls for staff and steering committee members to organize in the philanthropic sector to:

- Promote power-building and other strategies that position communities of color, low-income communities, and other historically marginalized communities as decision makers,
- Raise the profile of locally-led groups and models of equitable development among local and national funders,
- Call attention to geographies that national philanthropy often overlooks, and

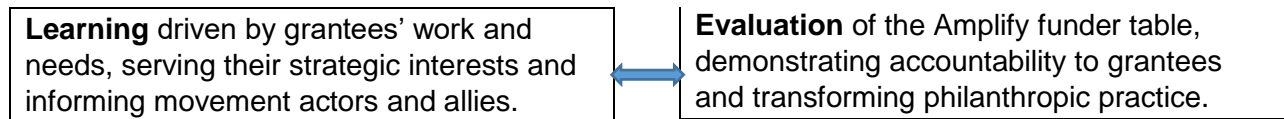
- Develop a strategy to ensure long-term sustainability for the work after the Fund sunsets.

Amplify’s most defining characteristic is that our [theory of change](#) positions people most affected as drivers of change. How to bring this characteristic to life is a critical learning question for us.

OUR VISION FOR LEARNING & EVALUATION

The Amplify Fund is fundamentally about disrupting the status quo – through our approach to equitable development and within the field of philanthropy. Learning and evaluation has been built into our approach from the beginning and is a critical component of our efforts. We seek an L&E Partner who shares our values and analysis, our commitment to racial justice and power building, as well as our appetite for disruption in pursuit of transformation.

The L&E Partner will lead a dual-track, integrated process to achieve two inter-related goals:



On the grantee learning side, we aim to have the experience of an Amplify Fund grantee be a deeply meaningful learning experience. We would like to live our values by democratizing the learning process overall, engaging and centering grantees in determining relevant learning questions in and across sites, and useful methods for addressing them. We anticipate an initial Discovery Phase to tap grantee input for a co-design process, as well as robust feedback loops that honor their wisdom and leadership throughout. We do not intend to undertake any learning activities that do not contribute directly to grantee learning and growth. The goal is not to create more work for grantees, but to aid their efforts with meaningful and targeted activities that surface and capture learnings that serve them in real time as well as last beyond the life of the grant fund, and that help us evolve the grantmaking strategy in each place over time.

On the funder evaluation side, we also seek to live our values – by flipping the script and holding ourselves accountable to grantees, testing and refining our theory of change, and sharing what we learn about our struggles as well as successes, with the field. Some questions we seek to address are how funder inputs help or hinder equitable development; and how our own practices as a funder table can advance racial justice and community power building and dismantle negative power dynamics in philanthropy, including the ways in which white dominant culture influences our work. We do not want a sanitized evaluation that makes us feel good, but an honest assessment that points us and others to re-imagine philanthropy in service to grassroots movement building. We are looking for an evaluation that is communicated out in multi-media format, that is useable and reproducible, and that will not sit on a shelf.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES & DELIVERABLES OF THE L&E PARTNER

The L&E Partner will be a key member of the Amplify Fund team, co-designing this body of work with grantees, local advisors, staff, and core funders, and communicating to myriad internal and external audiences. We are eager for someone who brings strong experience and a clear vision for how to approach this differently than a typical funder-driven evaluation – along with an ability and appetite to truly partner with us to co-create the process and adapt as we learn. We are informed by the framework of [equitable evaluation](#).

While the final scope of work would be developed collaboratively, here are our initial ideas about the role of the L&E Partner:

- Engaging grantees and [local strategy advisors](#) to develop a learning framework and to identify learning questions for each local funding site as well as across the sites. Learning questions would relate to the outcomes articulated in the Fund’s [theory of change](#).
- Planning and executing a series of meaningful, grantee-driven learning experiences in whatever configuration of grantees is appropriate for cross-learning and sharing to advance both grantee learning and Fund learning. Amplify will rely on the L&E Partner to design and deliver content as well as manage all logistics for these grantee convenings and other meetings related to learning and evaluation.
- Documenting learnings – in as low-burden, high-engagement ways as possible – from grantees, and integrating other complementary sources of knowledge and practice on equitable development, power building, and racial justice; returning learnings to the field through written and other creative communications approaches; and translating them for philanthropic audiences.
- Developing an evaluation framework for the funder table to track progress toward desired outcomes and to inform and improve current grantmaking practice.
- Producing multi-media (especially visual) evaluation products to inform the field in real-time, not just at the end of the four years or annually.

The Amplify Fund is fully committed to supporting Learning & Evaluation as a core and essential part of our work. To that end, we have budgeted \$150K per year to support L&E efforts, including the costs of planning and coordinating grantee convenings. We have also dedicated additional resources to cover some of the direct costs of the convenings. We have a deep commitment to equity within our process and partnership and are open to negotiating the budget to enable the L&E Partner to deliver an approach with integrity and with high utility to groups on the ground as well as to partners in philanthropy.

DESIRED CAPABILITIES & ATTRIBUTES OF THE L&E PARTNER

We seek a unique and adaptive approach that aligns with our values and matches the complexity of our task. Thus, we are open to proposals from entities that do not necessarily fit

the typical profile of an evaluation firm. Reflecting our core value of centering the people most affected, we strongly encourage organizations led by Black, Latinx, and other people of color, as well as independent practitioners, to apply.

The ideal L&E Partner will bring a mix of capabilities and attributes across its team, including these *essential* capacities:

- A relationship orientation, balancing strong analytical skills with the ability to engage diverse stakeholders at all stages of the process.
- Knowledge of and experience with grassroots movement building, racial justice, community organizing, power building, and/or systems change.
- Embodiment of the principles of “equitable evaluation,” especially the notion that evaluation should be in service to equity, dismantling the myth of “objectivity,” and embracing more than one way of knowing. We know this is an emerging framework in the field, and we don’t expect deep portfolios of sample work; but we do want evidence of the ability to work in alignment with the overall principles.
- Multi-lingual – the ability to communicate in both English and Spanish in order to fully engage with our current grantee base; and the ability to translate learnings for different audiences, from on-the-ground movement players to equitable development partners in government and for-profit sectors to diverse philanthropic entities. This capacity must be present on the L&E team as a whole, not necessarily within every team member.
- A track record of working with a geographically diffuse cohort of local organizations situated in different political, economic, and cultural contexts.

In addition to these essential qualities, we would be especially considerate of these *desired* capacities:

- Knowledge of and experience with equitable development.
- Creative approaches to documenting and communicating learning and evaluation results; visual arts, storytelling, videography, and other media beyond traditional written products are welcome and desired.
- Knowledge of and experience in the U.S. South and Puerto Rico.

RESPONDING TO THIS RFP

To apply, send to amplify@nfg.org a detailed proposal (a maximum of 10 pages, plus attachments for team member bios/CVs), addressing the following:

1. Your interest in working with the Amplify Fund. What about our mission, values, analysis, and orientation to L&E appeal to you, and why are you a good match?
2. Your approach to learning and evaluation, including alignment with the key principles of “equitable evaluation.” How will the L&E design be culturally competent, multi-culturally

valid, oriented toward participant ownership, and able to reveal structural and systems-level drivers of equity? How will it respond and adapt to learning as we go?

3. Your capabilities and experience, including how you understand grassroots movement building, racial justice, and power building, and how your approach to L&E would help advance practical understanding among local groups doing the work in community as well as philanthropic partners who are eager to support this work? Please also share any experience working directly with geographically dispersed grassroots groups – how have you met them where they are and helped to advance their work in a specific place, while also connecting and amplifying their efforts across places? Please be sure to mention any specific experience in the U.S. South and/or Puerto Rico.
4. A general outline for grantee engagement and learning activities. The frequency and form would depend on the learning plan that emerges from their needs; here, we would like some sense of how you would approach engaging local groups within a specific place as well as across places.
5. A proposed budget for the allocated funds, including grantee engagement activities.

Proposals will be reviewed by Amplify staff as well as the L&E subcommittee of the Amplify Fund Steering Committee, made up of representatives of the core funders of Amplify.

KEY DATES

March 12, 2019, 3:30-5:00pm ET | 12:30-2:00pm PT: Optional informational webinar for prospective partners. If you would like to participate, [please register here](#). If you are unable to attend and would like access to the recording, please email amplify@nfg.org.

March 31, 2019: Deadline to submit proposals to amplify@nfg.org.

April 2019: Finalists notified and interviewed by L&E subcommittee.

May 2019: L&E Partner selected and contracted.

June 2019: L&E Partner on-boarded.

July 30-31, 2019: Amplify Fund Steering Committee meeting, location TBD. Please note, the selected L&E Partner must be present at this meeting.