



2023 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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

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 advanced our mission in 43 states, including more than 80 localities by working side-by-side with more than 200 organizational partners.

NIRH works on the state and local levels to advance reproductive health, rights, and justice by pulling on every policy lever possible, including legislation, budgetary advocacy, regulatory change, and executive action. NIRH's work centers the communities most impacted by attacks on reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, and access to reproductive health care, especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). We prioritize partnering with organizations led by and deeply connected with BIPOC communities as we work towards eliminating racial and economic disparities in access to reproductive health care and in reproductive and pregnancy-related health outcomes, so that all people can determine their own futures and all families can thrive.

NIRH staff and board have committed to racial equity, and as such have been engaged in a multi-year process to adopt and implement a racial equity lens, both internally and in how we engage with our partners. We recognize the interconnectivity of identities, such as race, socio-economic status, immigration status, ability, gender, sexuality, 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.

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Partnership Opportunity for State and Local-Level Policy and Advocacy

NIRH is seeking partnership proposals for work on the state and/or local level from across the United States. **Proposals must align with at least one of [NIRH's 2023-24 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.

Up to \$25,000 in funding is available per partnership. Joint proposals in which two or more organizations receive funding are welcome and are eligible for up to \$40,000. **The partnership cycle is July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.**

We are prioritizing proposals from reproductive justice organizations and organizations that serve and center communities of color, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities. We strongly encourage proposals from organizations with an operational budget below \$500,000 per year.

NIRH provides one-time funding allocations to support work towards sustainable and long-term policy solutions on the state and local levels. Because of this, the following expenses are not eligible for funding:

- Direct services, like abortions or doula care
- Costs associated with direct services, like purchasing equipment
- Grants to national organizations

NIRH's 2023-24 Policy Priorities

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States issued their decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturning nearly 50 years of abortion rights precedent set by *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. NIRH believes that while *Roe* was never enough, particularly in ensuring abortion access to Black, Indigenous, and all communities of color and to low-income people, it is also true that losing *Roe* has only exacerbated barriers to reproductive freedom. Since the decision, anti-abortion legislators and advocates have accelerated a dangerous agenda, especially at the state and local levels. The loss of *Roe* does not begin and end with abortion rights – the impact of this decision is felt across the spectrum of reproductive health care and has exacerbated existing disparities in access and in health outcomes. NIRH's policy priorities are responsive to this environment, where bodily autonomy is threatened not only through restrictions on abortion but also through growing attacks on contraception and on the social safety nets that are necessary to support thriving families and communities.

Safe, equitable access to abortion without shame or stigma

Access to safe and legal abortion is critical to a person's ability to maintain their health, dignity, and right to self-determination, as well as a crucial step towards social and economic equality for all. Post-*Dobbs*, it is essential to shore up and expand abortion access in states where abortion rights are protected -- and minimize harm, facilitate access, and build towards long-term culture and policy change in states where abortion is banned or restricted. NIRH is working to protect and expand:

- Access to abortion, whether provider-based or self-managed; strong and sustainable abortion care infrastructure; and protections against investigation, prosecution, and other punishment of those providing, aiding, or seeking abortions
- Funding for abortion care, including for abortion funds and practical support organizations; coverage and sufficient reimbursement in public and private insurance; and an end to local and state funding and support for anti-abortion centers*
- Values-aligned and affirming public education initiatives on abortion from state and local governments
- Strategic, tailored, and impactful clinic safety initiatives

* All initiatives focused on funding or coverage for abortion care include partnership with [All* Above All](#).

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, the ability to choose the method that is right for them, and the means and opportunity to stop or change that method at any time. NIRH is working to protect and expand policies that support:

- Confidential access to the full range of contraception for all, including young people, without cost-sharing or other barriers, and the ability to stop or pause using contraception at any time
- Access to family planning and referrals for contraception care in school-based health centers
- Clinical training in non-coercive, person-centered contraceptive counseling

Eliminating racial and economic disparities in reproductive and pregnancy-related health outcomes

For nearly 30 years, the reproductive justice movement, led by Black women and gender-expansive people, has pushed our nation and reproductive health and rights advocates to recognize the right of all people to live their healthiest lives, to choose when and whether to become parents, and to parent their children with dignity and safety. Abortion bans and restrictions on family planning, which fall hardest on people of color and those struggling to make ends meet, only exacerbate the ongoing crises of racial and economic disparities in reproductive and pregnancy-related health outcomes caused by racism and white supremacy. NIRH is working to protect and expand:

- Policies and initiatives to address racial disparities in pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity and work towards birth justice for all, especially Black communities
- Protections for pregnant people and parents at risk of being, or who are currently, criminalized or incarcerated
- Mandated comprehensive, LGBTQ-inclusive K-12 sexuality education, including funding and training to ensure implementation

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- and local-based groups to advance reproductive health, rights, and justice policy, while simultaneously building the skillsets, capacity, and power of organizations leading this work. The types of activities we take on in each partnership are customized based on the unique needs and objectives of our partners.

NIRH intentionally prioritizes partnerships with reproductive justice organizations led by and serving Black, Indigenous, and all communities of color that are the most directly impacted by attacks on bodily autonomy. We recognize that these organizations, which have historically been and continue to be at the forefront of the fight for reproductive freedom, have also been disproportionately underfunded.

To provide more context to our partnership approach, NIRH has drafted three case studies that offer examples of how we 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 initiative.

Case Study #1

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. As part of communications support, NIRH issued press releases under our own brand with partner quotes, cobranded public materials including social media graphics, and provided quotes for coalition press releases. 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; to assist with this, NIRH joined the coalition directly and provided 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 elected officials. Together, NIRH and the partner organization presented 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. Upon passage, NIRH and the organization jointly issued a press release and shared posts on social media uplifting each other's work. NIRH then 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.

Proposal Guidelines

To submit a complete proposal, please fill out a [submission form here](#) and email a proposal that meets the guidelines below to partnerships@nirhealth.org by April 23, 2023.

For joint proposals, in which more than one organization will receive funding from NIRH, please submit one single, jointly authored proposal. Each organization in the joint proposal should complete its own submission form.

For proposals that include other organizations as close collaborators who will not receive funding, please submit a Letter of Support from each organization as described in [#8, Letter\(s\) of Support](#).

We recognize that this is 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. We also understand that not every organization has staff dedicated to fundraising or proposal writing. We do not require nor give preference to proposals that are "polished" – we are more interested in your ideas and how you will work to implement them to create change. 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.

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)

- Overview of the organization, its mission, and its activities
- Name, title, and brief bios of staff who will be involved in the initiative, and a description of the demographics of the staff and the primary communities served by the organization
- Organization’s values around racial equity and how this lens will be applied to the development and implementation of your proposed initiative

4. Description and Goals of Initiative (no more than three pages)

Throughout this section please clearly lay out the role that you envision NIRH playing in the partnership and how our [Strategic Guidance and Technical Assistance](#) will impact the initiative’s likelihood of success. We encourage you to review the section of this RFP on [NIRH’s Approach to Partnership](#), especially the [Case Studies](#), for additional guidance on what this could look like.

- Description of your overall goal(s) and how you plan to achieve them. Please include information on
 - the community or communities the initiative centers and its potential impact on those communities
 - interim objectives
 - your anticipated activities to achieve these objectives and goals
 - Please also include any information on how this initiative will build capacity of your organization, supporters, coalition partners, and/or elected officials.

- Defining a near-term or short-term initiative.

NIRH would like to partner on a mix of initiatives this year, including some that anticipate potential near-term wins and some who are working towards longer-term wins. We define “near-term” as having a potential of success within one or two years, and “long-term” as taking three years or more to be successful. For this section, we’d like to hear how you are thinking about the timeline for your proposed initiative.

- *If you are proposing a near-term initiative*, please share your analysis of the policy and political landscape that you will be working in, the existing resources and relationships that you will draw upon to work towards success, and the resources and relationships you will need to access or build to be successful.
- *If you are proposing a long-term initiative*, please share the interim goals or benchmarks you anticipate achieving by the end of the partnership, the existing resources and relationships that you will draw upon to work towards success, your goals for building power organizationally and/or within the state or locality where you are working, and a general description of the path you envision to long-term success.
- *If relevant*, name gaps in your knowledge of the political and policy landscape that NIRH can support you in addressing.

- Potential Impact

NIRH is interested in partnering on initiatives that, if successful, have the potential to impact the political, policy, and/or access landscapes both in your state or locality and beyond. We are aware that outcomes are hard to predict and will not consider anything in this section to be a commitment. If potential impact isn't something you have thought about or aren't sure about, that's okay. Please write that here, knowing that your proposal will not be penalized for it and that NIRH staff are available to think this through with you.

- *If relevant*, please share any thoughts on the potential impact of a successful initiative or campaign on the political, policy, and/or access landscape(s) of your state or the broader landscape.
 - For example, your initiative could serve as a model for other organizations, states, or cities; your initiative could change the narrative about birth justice in your state or region; your initiative could result in developing new elected official champions on your issue that would broadly impact the progressive landscape of your state; or your initiative could significantly positively impact access to abortion for your region.
 - *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.
- Communications Goals
- The purpose of this section is to better understand your overall communications goals and strategy (if you have one). We understand that these could change as*

the work evolves and will not consider anything in this section to be a commitment. We also understand that a behind-the-scenes approach may sometimes be the best strategy to achieve your goals; if that is the case for your proposal, please share that here.

- Brief overview of your goals for press coverage, overall visibility of the initiative, 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 tactics.
- Please indicate any opportunities for NIRH to elevate the public profile of this initiative, be a named partner on this initiative, and/or co-branding opportunities for materials, events, or other relevant activities.
- 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. NIRH is actively seeking to partner with both organizations who already hold power and organizations whom we can help to build power in coalition spaces.

- 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.
- *If relevant*, include 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.
- Provide a brief description of your existing relationships with elected officials and/or administrative agencies you plan to work with on this initiative, 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 (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024).

7. Proposed Budget

The range of funding awarded will be up to \$25,000. Joint proposals in which more than one organization receives funding are eligible for up to \$40,000. Possible budget lines

include staffing, coalition meetings, materials development, technical costs (e.g., website), and other direct program costs. Organizations should submit their ideal budget for their proposal, but please note that NIRH may propose a modified budget based on our assessment of the initiative's scope and impact.

- Provide a budget narrative (no more than half a page) 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, such as rent, 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 March 22, 2023.
2. **Webinar:** NIRH will host a webinar on March 29, 2023, at 1:00 pm EDT to provide guidance on writing a successful proposal and to answer questions about this RFP. All organizations interested in applying are encouraged to attend. [Register here](#). The webinar will be recorded and a recording will be sent to all registrants, so we urge you to register for the webinar even if you are unable to attend. Organizations are also welcome to email NIRH at partnerships@nirhealth.org to access a recording of the webinar.
 - Organizations who have never submitted a proposal to NIRH before should set up a time to talk with NIRH staff by emailing partnerships@nirhealth.org.
 - If your organization is part of the State Infrastructure Project (SIP), please set up a time to discuss your proposal with NIRH staff by emailing partnerships@nirhealth.org.

3. **Final Proposal Submitted:** Final proposals should be submitted by April 24, 2023. To submit your proposal:
 - [Complete the submission form here](#) with background and logistical information about your organization. To assist you in completing it, a PDF of the questions asked in the submission form is available [here](#).
 - Email a Word document or PDF file of your proposal to partnerships@nirhealth.org. Please use the subject line "NIRH 2023 Partnership Proposal" in your email and use the following format to name your proposal file: **[OrganizationName]_NIRHProposal2023**.
 - 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 June 14, 2023. Partnerships will begin July 1, 2023, and run through June 30, 2024.

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 including administrative advocacy, activist engagement, and coalition building, as well as direct and grassroots lobbying within the limits set by 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 and want to work with you to expand your 501(c)(4) capacity. The National Institute for Reproductive Health Action Fund, a 501(c)(4) entity, may have some funding this coming year to support activities such as lobbying beyond the limits set for 501(c)(3) organizations and electoral work. If they are part of your proposed project, please indicate that specifically; the NIRH Action Fund will be in touch should its resources allow.

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
- Messaging and guidance to inform customized messaging for both legislative and electoral campaigns
- Creation of messaging resources, talking points, press releases, and trainings for legislators, advocates, and activists