



## Request for Proposals (RFP) Nonprofit Capacity Building: Strategic Relationships

**Letters of Intent: Due March 30, 2021**

The John Rex Endowment supports an environment where children and families in greater Wake County live healthy lives. Guided by the belief that all children should reach their full potential, the John Rex Endowment works with the community to support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children.

In this funding opportunity, the John Rex Endowment will award up to 4 Strategic Relationships grants in 2021. The grant term is 3-years, beginning July 1, 2021. Funding requests may be up to \$300,000 (\$100,000 per year).

### Questions?

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### Key Dates in 2021 Application Process

March 10 at 2:00 PM	Informational webinar <a href="#">(register here)</a>
March 17 at 10:00 AM	Informational webinar <a href="#">(register here)</a>
March 30 at 11:59 PM	Letters of Intent (LOIs) due
Week of April 5	John Rex Endowment notifies LOI applicants and invites full applications for consideration
May 4 at 11:59 PM	Applications due
By end of May	Applicants notified if submission is advancing to review by Board of Directors
Week of June 14	Applicants notified of funding decision
July 1	Grant start dates

## Overview and Background

The John Rex Endowment's work is guided by our [Strategic Roadmap](#) which reflects our desired impact to ensure children and their families are safe, healthy, and living to their full potential. The funding areas within the Strategic Roadmap are:

- Children's positive social, emotional, behavioral health and well-being is related to a child's ability to understand their own feelings and emotions, as well as the feelings and emotions of others. It is essential as they learn empathy, and establish and maintain social relationships.<sup>i, ii</sup>
- Nonprofit Capacity Building is whatever is needed to bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission into the future. Capacity building is not a one-time effort to improve short-term effectiveness, but a continuous improvement strategy toward the creation of a sustainable and effective organization. [National Council of Nonprofits](#)

Our Guiding Principles are:

- Focusing on prevention;
- Supporting promising and proven practices;
- Addressing the connected and diverse factors that influence children's well-being; and
- Committing to and deepening our understanding of health and racial equity.

Funding for capacity building and specifically for collaborative efforts is difficult to come by, it is particularly scarce for organizations led by people of color due to long-term racial biases in philanthropy.<sup>iii</sup> We've heard about the impacts of inequitable funding from both the local nonprofit and funder community. While there is no magic wand to fully correct these practices and inequities, the John Rex Endowment has made an intentional choice of prioritizing organizations with Black, Latinx, and Indigenous leadership for this funding opportunity.

Working collaboratively can be challenging under the best of circumstances. Organizations may experience difficulty in creating equitable collaboration when it comes to decision-making, sharing data and money, delegating responsibility, and/or establishing accountability. Collaboration is increasingly challenging during times of crisis, such as we are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the deeply rooted systemic inequities regarding racial justice, health, and the economy.

This Strategic Relationships funding opportunity offers collaboratives the ability to engage an outside consultant to assess their collaboration to-date and to receive recommendations on how to strengthen their partnerships.

The John Rex Endowment will award three-year grants of up to \$100,000 per year to four (4) collaboratives to assess and develop their capacity to strengthen: 1) their collaboration, 2) the quality of their collective planning, and 3) the impact of their unified action. For additional information about collaborative capacity building, read about Relational Capacity Building.<sup>iv,v</sup>

## Eligibility

The John Rex Endowment is providing grants to collaboratives comprised of representatives from multiple organizations.

The Endowment defines a collaborative as any intentional alliance of individuals and/or organizations, representing diverse constituencies and perspectives and committed to an agreed-upon purpose, that reaches beyond the capacity of individual members through a process of shared decision making and action in which each member maintains its own autonomy.

Collaborating organizations must designate a representative applicant to take the lead in the application process. For funding consideration, the collaborative needs to:

- be a grassroots organization based in Wake County (the Endowment defines “grassroots” as having originated to mobilize leadership at a community-based level; lead agency may not be a government agency);
- advocate for children’s social, emotional, behavioral health and well-being needs as highlighted by the pandemic’s impact, with an intentional emphasis on the impacts on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous children (age 0 to 18);
- be implementing or striving for policy and/or system-level improvement strategies at the municipal and/or county level;
- have been in operation for at least three (3) years; and
- have 501(c)(3) status or a designated fiscal sponsor, and fiscal sponsors must have 501(c)(3) status or be a government agency or college/university. (The fiscal sponsor does not need to be a member of the collaborative. A fiscal sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is required. In the selection of a fiscal sponsor, determine if they have the capacity to manage a grant of the size being requested. See [Using Fiscal Sponsors.](#))

Priority consideration will be given to Black/Latinx/Indigenous-led grassroots organizations who have shared lived experiences relevant to the populations they serve. Applicants will be asked to provide information about how they identify as one of these priority populations.

- Grant awards will not be made to, or on behalf of, individuals.
- Applications from regional or statewide coalitions are not eligible.

## What We Will Fund

This funding opportunity is made of two stages, first is the Assessment phase followed by a Capacity Building phase. In the Assessment phase, priorities will be identified to determine the Action Plan for the Capacity Building phase.

**Assessment phase** provides an outside perspective to assess how the collaborative has been operating and what it hopes to achieve. The goal is to identify priority needs and recommended steps for improvement.

- This phase will:
  - Be conducted by an outside professional consultant who is skilled and qualified in implementing an effective collaborative assessment process and is experienced in capacity building efforts with collaborative structures. (See [Working with Consultants](#))
  - Meaningfully involve collaborative leadership, staff (if applicable), partners, and the children and families the collaborative hopes to impact.
  - Use a trusted or proven practice framework, guide or tool for comprehensively assessing and developing the capacity of the collaborative that is appropriately matched to the applicant.
  - Include a review of important collaborative documents and background materials in addition to gathering key stakeholder input.
- Upon completion of the Assessment, the consultant will produce a written document (confidential to the collaborative and not shared with the Endowment) that describes the process completed and recommends areas for the collaborative's improvement. These recommendations may be broken into shorter-term and/or lower-cost improvements as well as longer-term and/or higher-cost improvements.
- Following the consultant's Assessment report, the collaborative will draft an Action Plan identifying prioritized activities, a timeline, and roles and responsibilities.

**Capacity Building phase** is to implement the Action Plan.

- This phase will:
  - Execute the agreed upon activities of the Action Plan.
  - Follow an agreed upon timeline of the Action Plan activities.
  - Follow the roles and responsibilities of the Action Plan activities among collaborative partners.
- Depending on the nature of the proposed capacity building work, the grantee may continue working with the same consultant as used in the Assessment phase or may engage another consultant/s.

## Working with Consultants

An outside consultant is needed for the Assessment phase of Strategic Relationships grants, but the consultant does not have to be identified prior to the application submission.

Identifying a consultant requires assessing the person's technical skills as well as their racial equity approach to the work. Selecting a consultant who will meet your collaborative's unique needs can seem like a daunting task, as it will be important to select someone who can be flexible and able to relate to your partners, as well as to the children and families you support. A good consultant match will provide the right balance of an external perspective that can highlight areas of growth for your collaborative, with a respect for the lived expertise of your proximity to the issues you are addressing. While everyone, consultants or otherwise, may be at different phases of their racial equity journey, see our [Working with Consultants](#) guide for questions you can use to identify the best consultant for your collaborative. The guide also provides general tips on grantee-consultant relationships.

Consultants should have:

- State of NC regulations and licensure requirements as applicable.
- A minimum of three years collaborative experience (as staff, leadership, member, or consultant).
- A minimum of two years recent experience and demonstrated effectiveness working in a consulting role.
- Demonstrated skill in effective collaborative assessment processes and experience in capacity building efforts with collaboratives.
- Proven experience centering racial equity in assessments and/or capacity building activities.

The John Rex Endowment does not endorse or recommend consultants or consultant firms. However, any awarded grantees who would like support in selecting a consultant will have access to technical assistance by [We-Collab](#) at no cost to the grantee.

## Grantee-Funder Partnership

From day one, our staff seeks to cultivate a trusting relationship and equal partnership with the collaborative. The Endowment staff will host a Kickoff Meeting with grant-funded collaborative leadership, staff (if applicable) and the consultant/s at the beginning of the grant term. A Reflection Meeting will take place at the end of the Assessment phase and at the end of each grant year. For subsequent grant years, the collaborative will submit that grant year's Reflection Report and Project Budget Report. As needed, other meetings may be initiated by the grant-funded partner or the Endowment.

## Grant Size and Financial Term

The John Rex Endowment will award up to four (4) Strategic Relationships grants in 2021. Grants will cover three years, beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2024. Funding requests may be up to \$300,000 (\$100,000 per year for three (3) years) to cover costs for both the Assessment and the Capacity Building phase). Funds are for consultant costs, to support the collaborative partners' time, and for associated meeting or project costs.

Collaboratives applying for a Strategic Relationships grant may determine within this three-year period how much time to allocate to the Assessment phase, with the remainder of the time set aside for the Capacity Building phase. We typically expect that collaboratives will require, on average, six-to-nine months to complete an assessment, but we understand the collaborative assessment process will influence how much time an organization needs to carry out this phase well.

## Application Process

The John Rex Endowment uses an online grant application and management system.

- The first stage of the application process is to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI is a form in the online grant management system that is reviewed by Endowment staff.
- First-time users of the system will need to create an account in order to apply online. See the [guidelines and tips for using our online grant management system](#). If you have previously set up an account for your organization, you may use that account for this submission as well.
- To access the LOI questions, potential applicants are welcome to create an account even if they are still deciding whether or not to submit an LOI. Returning applicants will have access to the LOI through the account they previously created.
- Applicants will either be invited to submit a full application or receive notice that their LOI has been declined. Applicants are typically notified of the review decision within 10 business days of the LOI deadline.
- Applications are reviewed by the Endowment's Grants Review Committee who recommend which of them to proceed to the Board of Directors. Applicants will be notified of their application's status following the committee's review in May 2021.
- The committee presents recommended applications for funding to the John Rex Endowment Board of Directors for award consideration and approval. Applicants will be notified of their status following the board meeting in June 2021.

## Supporting Documentation

In addition to our Working with Consultants guide, the John Rex Endowment has identified the following resources that may be helpful to collaboratives applying for a Strategic Relationships grant:

- Collective Impact [Forum](https://collectiveimpactforum.org/), <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/>
- Community Catalyst's *Strength in Numbers: A Guide to Building Community Coalitions*, [http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc-store/publications/strength in numbers a guide to building community coalitions aug03.pdf](http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc-store/publications/strength-in-numbers-a-guide-to-building-community-coalitions-aug03.pdf)
- Community Toolbox *Coalition Building*, [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion- strategies/start-a-coalition/main](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/start-a-coalition/main)
- Plan4Health-An American Planning Association Project *Coalition Building and Partnerships*, <http://plan4health.us/coalition-building/>
- TCC Group's *What Makes an Effective Coalition?*, <https://www.tccgrp.com/resource/what-makes-an-effective-coalition-evidence-based-indicators-of-success/>
- Centers for Disease Control (May 31, 2016). *Health-Related Quality of Life: Well-Being Concepts*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>

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<sup>i</sup> Child Trends (2016). *Child Well-Being: Constructs to Measure Child Well-Being and Risk and Protective Factors that Affect the Development of Young Children*. Retrieved from: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/child-well-constructs-measure-child-well-risk-protective-factors-affect-development-young-children>

<sup>ii</sup> Early Childhood Connections. *What is Social-Emotional Development?* Retrieved from: [http://www.earlychildhoodconnections.com/Index.htm\\_files/Soc%20Emo%20Informational%20Flyer.pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodconnections.com/Index.htm_files/Soc%20Emo%20Informational%20Flyer.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Stanford Social Innovation Review (2020). *Overcoming Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding*. Retrieved from: <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/overcoming-the-racial-bias-in-philanthropic-funding>

<sup>iv</sup> TCC Group (2020). *Relational Capacity Building: Why Does Working Together Feel So Damn Hard?* Retrieved from: <https://www.tccgrp.com/insights-resources/insights-perspectives/relational-capacity-why-does-working-together-feel-so-damn-hard/>

<sup>v</sup> TCC Group (2015). *Relational Capacity: A New Approach to Capacity Building in Philanthropy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tccgrp.com/resource/relational-capacity-a-new-approach-to-capacity-building-in-philanthropy/>