



Strategic Planning Request for Proposals New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (“the Institute”) is seeking an experienced planning and evaluation consultant to lead an exploration process for developing a national expansion strategy. This strategy will include a recommended expansion model, scope of work, issue focus, geographical coverage and the necessary resources, infrastructure and systems (administrative, fundraising, communications, etc.) to advance this vision.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Established in 1999 by Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein, the Institute’s mission is to empower Black, Brown and other people of color by building reparative systems that create wealth, transform justice and harness democratic power in New Jersey and beyond.

The Institute’s racial justice advocacy—powered by a dynamic team and stellar Board of Trustees—is a model for states as places to build community power from the ground up.

We are an organization with that “special sauce,” as our Board Chair Paulette Brown calls it — where we listen to Black and other communities of color, advocate alongside them to build reparative systems and achieve powerful results.

The Institute advocates for systemic reform that is at once transformative, achievable in the state and replicable in communities across the nation. Our “from the ground up” approach is particularly meaningful given the current attacks on democracy on the federal level.

At present, the Institute has twenty-three staff and eighteen Board members. Our current strategic plan was adopted in 2023 and is guiding our work through 2027.

In recent years, the Institute’s advocacy – with partners – has led to groundbreaking successes, including:

- allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in Newark’s school board elections
- the restoration of voting rights for 83,000 people on probation and parole
- the end of the anti-democratic “county line” on New Jersey’s primary ballots
- a ballot cure process to prevent automatic ballot rejection due to signature issues



- expanded early in-person voting and online and automatic voter registration
- legislation combatting home appraisal discrimination
- legislation establishing a program promoting first generation home ownership
- a \$15 minimum wage
- a closure announcement for New Jersey's youth prisons
- funding for restorative justice hubs in key cities
- more racial equity and public participation in redistricting
- an independent state prosecutor
- release of original data analysis of New Jersey's staggering racial wealth gap
- stronger First Amendment protections for recording police conduct
- convening of the first-of-its-kind [New Jersey Reparations Council](#), due to release its report in June 2025.

More Institute successes can be found [here](#).

Notably, the Institute has been at the forefront of key social justice work in partnership with national organizations through litigation, advocacy campaigns, reports and events. These organizations include NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Southern Poverty Law Center, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Black Voters Matter, the Roosevelt Institute and more.

The Institute has already achieved recognition and presence on the national level, setting the stage for its expansion.

BUILDING A STRONGER NATIONAL PRESENCE: EXPANSION MODELS

This RFP is to enable an exploration of an expansion of the Institute's work beyond New Jersey to best serve stakeholders, the Institute, New Jersey and communities outside the state. Models for consideration include but are not limited to: 1) expanding to one or more other states (whether through starting a new chapter or joining with existing organizations); 2) becoming a regional



organization based in several regions of the country; 3) advocating for federal policy or 4) becoming a social/racial justice policy resource for state/national policy.

RATIONALE FOR EXPANSION

Deep and lasting change is best achieved when organizations can work on multiple levels. The Institute has already made deep impact in New Jersey and has implemented advocacy that can apply to other regions, states and nationally. We believe that we can multiply our impact by expanding our presence beyond the state.

TIMELINE

Summer/Fall 2025, the Institute will hire the consultant pursuant to this RFP.

By Winter 2025-2026, the Consultant will have submitted a final strategic plan recommending a roadmap for the Institute's expansion, including the following elements:

- what it means to have a “national presence” and the most effective model
- objective, strategy and tactics including SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound)
- budget for expansion and implementation
- suggested parties, roles and responsibilities for expansion process, as well as implementation
- personnel requirements for expansion process, as well as implementation
- priority issue areas
- fund development strategies for expansion, as well as implementation
- administrative, technological, operational and communications systems, strategies and personnel needed for the expansion process, as well as implementation
- assessment of the current and future direction of the social/racial justice field, including private foundation investment trends, emerging research, government programs and policy efforts
- a list of other organizations working on the proposed issue areas and in what capacity



- an evaluation of whether the Institute needs to establish a 501(c)(4) to advance its work beyond New Jersey
- an evaluation of how the expansion plan fits into the Institute’s current five-part theory of change: Community Engagement, Research and Analysis, Public Education, Advocacy and Accountability. (A one-page summary of this ToC is included at the end of this RFP.)
- suggested early action items to demonstrate progress, create momentum and buy-in for the expansion

By 2026, the Institute will have laid the groundwork for, launched and implemented its plan for expanding its presence beyond New Jersey.

The consultant should perform the following when drawing up the expansion plan:

- Evaluation of the Institute’s mission, values, structure and strengths
- Evaluation of expansion challenges
- Environmental scan benchmarking the organization in alignment with other policy and racial justice organizations with a similar focus, regionally and nationally
- Engagement with other organizations, partners and Institute staff and Board of Trustees for input (and other conversations as the Consultant sees fit)

TIMELINE FOR CONSULTANT

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| Mid-September 2025 | Present early findings of Beyond New Jersey proposal to Institute Sr. Staff |
| Mid-November 2025 | Provide updated findings to Sr. Staff for review and consultation with Board of Trustees, based on further research and prior findings |
| December 2025 | Provide updated findings to Sr. Staff for review and consultation with Board of Trustees based on further research and prior feedback |



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| Early January 2026 | Present findings to Sr. Staff and full Board |
| Early February 2026 | Strategic Plan finalized |
| First Quarter 2026 | Expansion process begins |

SUBMISSION DEADLINE & INQUIRIES

Proposals are due by Friday, May 16, 2025, 2:00 PM EST.

All submissions must be sent to rfp@njisj.org. A link to the file may be provided in lieu of an attachment for excessively large electronic submissions. An email acknowledgement of each submission received will be sent to the applicant.

Additional inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to rfp@njisj.org.

All proposals received by the deadline will undergo a preliminary screening.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

- All submissions must be electronic, standard-size (8.5" x 11") pages.
- General Information, Narrative, Qualifications & References and Project Plan & Budget sections (see below) must not exceed a word count of 4,000.
- Attachments & Supporting Documents must be type-written. Include additional attachments as needed.
- Faxed or mailed copies will NOT be accepted.

REQUIRED PROPOSAL INFORMATION

1. General Information
 - a. Contact information: Name of consultant/firm, address, phone number, email address and website.
 - b. RFP source: How did you learn about this opportunity?
2. Narrative, Qualifications & References



- a. Opening: Your approach to strategic planning/consulting.
 - b. Qualifications: Relevant work activities, expertise, knowledge and planning experience, strengths and prior successes. Please note any prior experience assisting policy research and/or advocacy organizations.
 - c. Your Team: Information about all team members who will be involved with the project, including names, email addresses, title, tenure, experience and education.
 - d. References: Three client references (please include each individual's name, address, phone number, email address and relationship to the bidder).
3. Project Plan & Budget
- a. Work Plan: With consideration of guidance above, detailed work plan, including:
 - i. Major stages and milestones
 - ii. Specific activities to be conducted at each stage
 - iii. Timeline for the activities to be conducted at each stage
 - b. Budget: Detailed project budget and proposed payment schedule a
4. Attachments & Supporting Documents
- a. Work samples: At least one sample of a previously completed strategic plan. Portions may be redacted to protect private information as needed.
 - b. Supporting documents: Attachments may also be included.

EVALUATION, NOTIFICATION & TIMELINE

Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following weighted criteria: qualifications, scope of work, work plan and budget. The evaluation will include review of materials and interviews with applicants.

Notification of Selection

All applicants will receive written notification of the Institute's decision regarding their proposal.



Additional information may be required from the selected applicant prior to the awarding of the project. The Institute reserves the right not to select an applicant for project implementation if, in its determination, no qualified applicant has applied or is sufficiently responsive to the service need.

In the event that no proposal is selected, the Institute may elect to either not develop the service pending further analysis of alternatives to meet the expressed need or issue a new RFP to attempt to expand the pool of potential respondents.

Contract Execution

An applicant will be chosen and contract executed by June 6, 2025.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Ownership and Confidentiality

All intellectual property will become the property of the Institute. All data remains the sole property of the Institute. The consultant shall agree to keep information related to this process in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract and any confidential business information or proprietary information that has been gathered on this project. If the bidder deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, the bidder must indicate this in the relevant sections of the response.

2. Cost of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the Institute.

3. Reservation of Rights

The Institute reserves the right to request or negotiate changes in a proposal, to accept all or part of a proposal, or to reject any or all proposals. The Institute may, at its sole and absolute discretion, select no provider for these services if, in its determination, no applicant is sufficiently responsive to the need. The Institute reserves the right to withdraw this RFP and/or any item within the RFP at any time without prior notice. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify any proposal, which does not adhere to the RFP guidelines. This RFP is being offered at the discretion of the Institute. It does not commit the Institute to award any contract.



4. Conflict of Interest

Applicants agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal. The following individuals or entities are ineligible to be an Institute vendor, and therefore may not submit a proposal:

- Institute employees, Board members and their family members

THE INSTITUTE'S #DoSocialJustice THEORY OF CHANGE



“Social justice should be the underlying goal of all humanity.”
Alan V. Lowenstein, NJISJ Founder

SYSTEMS CHANGE ADVOCACY



STEP 1:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



STEP 2:
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS



STEP 3:
PUBLIC EDUCATION



STEP 4:
ADVOCACY



STEP 5:
ACCOUNTABILITY

FROM THE GROUND UP
THREE INTERCONNECTED SOCIAL JUSTICE PILLARS

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

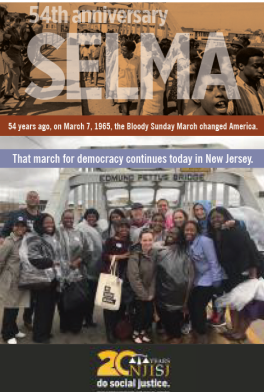
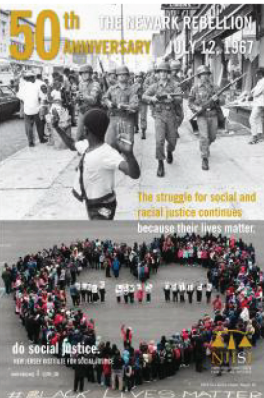
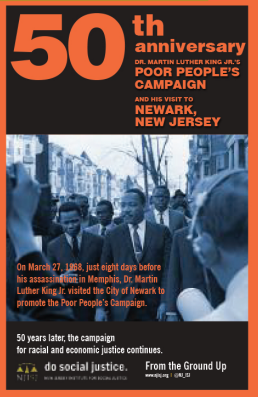
Through its economic justice pillar, the Institute seeks to develop policies and practices that will close New Jersey’s staggering racial wealth gap and connect urban residents of color to full-time, meaningful work and wealth.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Through its criminal justice reform pillar, the Institute advocates for the reimagining of traditional policing practices and the transformation of New Jersey’s justice system.

DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE

Through its democracy and justice pillar, the Institute advances a progressive and policy-driven agenda to expand the franchise, build democratic power, and ensure political accountability.



Engaging and partnering with those closest to the challenge to define the problem and advocate for solutions



Utilize research and analysis, inspired by the lived experiences of people in communities, as the basis for systems change advocacy

FOCUS GROUPS
SURVEYS
COMMUNITY MEETINGS
CONVENINGS
COUNCILS, CAMPAIGNS,
CONFERENCES, PARTNERSHIPS



IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGE

Conduct research and analysis to develop policy proposals, informed by learning from communities, to address systemic challenges



Empowering communities to tell their story and raise awareness of their issues

REPORTS
WHITE PAPERS
FACT SHEETS
DATA BRIEFS



PROPOSE POLICY CHANGE

Telling the stories and educating the public to frame the narrative and raise awareness.



Empower communities to tell their stories, supported by research and analysis, to frame and promote narratives for long-term, systemic change

OP EDS/LETTERS TO EDITOR
MEDIA COVERAGE
PUBLIC EDUCATION MATERIALS
EVENTS



FRAME THE NARRATIVE

Activating partners to move policy proposals into action through a multi-pronged approach



Partner with grassroots leaders, youth, clergy, system actors, and other advocates to champion the passage of legislation, executive action, etc.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY
PHONE 2 ACTION
COALITION-BUILDING
GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING
RALLIES
PUBLIC HEARINGS & TESTIMONY
TASK FORCES



PROMOTE SOLUTIONS

Monitoring implementation and enforcement to ensure that system changes return resources to the community



Tracking enforcement of systems changes to ensure implementation, enforcement, and accountability

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
COALITION OVERSIGHT
FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH



MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION

Inspired by the fierce urgency of now, the Institute’s social and racial justice advocacy knocks down load-bearing walls of structural inequality and builds reparative systems that create wealth, transform justice, and harness democratic power—FROM THE GROUND UP—in New Jersey’s urban communities.