



OPEN REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTENT

April 27, 2020

Timeline:

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Monday, April 27, 2020	LOI released
Wednesday, May 13, 2020 by 11:59pm ET	Submit LOI to megan@fundforsharedinsight.org Sign-up for 30-minute video call to discuss LOI here
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If you have any questions about Fund for Shared Insight or this LOI, please feel free to email Melinda Tuan, managing director at melinda@fundforsharedinsight.org.

Project Description:

Fund for Shared Insight seeks to support organizations who want to develop and disseminate toolkits and guides to help foundation staff and principal decision-makers build their feedback and listening practices with the people and communities they seek to help, and especially those whose voices are least heard.ⁱ

We hope these toolkits and guides will be informed by research and experience and will include practical advice, steps to take, and case studies of foundations who have built practices of feedback and listening to *ultimate beneficiaries* into their work. These toolkits and guides should reflect the [core principles of feedback](#), which were developed by [Feedback Labs](#) and their community of organizations working closely on feedback.

The goal is *not* that foundations “go around” nonprofit partners, but that they work in partnership with nonprofits to listen to the people and communities that both funders and nonprofits are ultimately seeking to serve in their work. In recent weeks, the Council on Foundations issued a call to action to

philanthropy, asking funders to make [eight commitments during COVID-19](#). As of this writing, more than 700 funders have signed this pledge which includes:

- *Commit to listening to our partners and especially those communities least heard, lifting up their voices and experiences to inform public discourse and our own decision-making so we can act on their feedback. We recognize that the best solutions to the manifold crises caused by COVID-19 are not found within foundations.*

To date, Fund for Shared Insight and our signature initiative Listen4Good have created [some tools for funders](#) to put these types of commitments into action, and individual foundations such as the James Irvine Foundation have created [listening guides](#) for their staff. We see a need and demand for more broadly applicable toolkits and guides to help funders live out their commitment and their stated goals and values around connecting with, listening to, and being better informed by those they seek to help. For the purposes of this LOI, these resources could be newly developed and/or an updating of toolkits, guides, programming, or other resources to feature listening to the people and communities funders seek to help. The key is that they be practical and applicable, helping funders to take actionable steps toward better listening as soon as possible.

In addition to development of actionable resources for funders, the project should include plans for strategic dissemination campaigns of the resources. Where appropriate, this could include plans for dissemination campaigns at major U.S. philanthropy conferences in 2021 and 2022, as well as integration into existing programs such as foundation staff cohorts, board trainings, or incubators. We would also be interested in plans for ongoing coaching or training support to foundations that would accompany the digital resources developed.

We are deeply committed to and have been working to articulate the relationship between high-quality feedback/listening and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). We seek LOIs from organizations with proven track records of advancing EDI practices by foundations in the U.S. We also want to understand how EDI lenses, and in particular an [equity screen](#), will be brought to the toolkit/guide development and dissemination campaigns. We are interested in serving a range of funders with these tools, from those who have not really thought before about whether/how to connect meaningfully with those they seek to serve all the way to those who have experience with it but want to make it deeper, more systematic, and/or better articulate their EDI goals. We welcome and invite groups to apply in partnership through the forming of organic collaborations.

With a grant budget of \$1M, we hope to make up to seven grants. We will convene the funded organizations regularly over the course of the two-year (2020 – 2022) grant period to share the work they are doing, stay in sync with one another's projects, and plan for dissemination campaigns and coaching support to funders once the toolkits/guides are released. We anticipate grants of roughly \$150K each, but we are flexible and want to understand and support the full costs of the work, so some grants could be smaller or larger (in particular recognizing the cost of collaborative proposals may be higher). We share the overall budget figures to give groups considering this LOI a sense of how to scope the work pragmatically.

We plan to make decisions on these grants no later than August 15, 2020 and our hope is that at least some prototypes of the toolkits, guides, and resources could be ready for publication and sharing by March 2021 when Fund for Shared Insight plans to host a national gathering in Baltimore. (Of course, we

will assess the pandemic situation as March 2021 approaches and adjust as needed.) As part of the LOI, we hope to understand what timeline would work for you and your organization/partnership of organizations to do the project you propose.

About Fund for Shared Insight

Fund for Shared Insight is a national funder collaborative working to improve philanthropy, informed by insights from the people we serve. Shared Insight emerged from the belief that funders and the organizations they support can be more effective and do more good in the world if we are open to systematically listening to, and acting on, feedback from the people and communities at the heart of our work.

Our **overarching goal** is that foundations and nonprofits be meaningfully connected to each other and to the people and communities they seek to help. As we progress toward achieving that goal, our **desired impact** is that communities and people we seek to help, especially those whose voices are least heard, will be better off in ways they define for themselves.

Theory of Change: Fund for Shared Insight pools financial and other resources to provide grants, coaching, inspiration, and community-building through collaborative philanthropy. Shared Insight is guided by a theory of change outlining our goals and what we need to do to reach them. Like all of our work, our theory of change is underpinned by a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

The focus areas in our theory of change include:

1. Build the practice of high-quality, client-focused feedback loops among nonprofits
2. Build a culture and practice of listening and feedback among foundations
3. Build a robust feedback field in the social sector
4. Experiment and innovate around meaningful connections in philanthropy
5. Encourage our core funders to “walk the walk” of Shared Insight’s commitments and values

This project fits into #2 and #3. For each of these five work areas, our theory of change lays out the ideas and assumptions behind them; what we have already learned; how our EDI lens is applied; our short-, medium-, and long-term goals; and the activities and implementation markers along the way.

Our investments have included grantmaking in three areas: foundation openness: supporting information-sharing efforts among funders; feedback practice: supporting initiatives to develop and improve feedback loops; and feedback research: examining the link between client feedback and client outcomes.

As Shared Insight continues to learn and evolve, much of our focus has been on our signature initiative, Listen4Good, designed to help nonprofits build sustainable, high-quality, client-focused feedback loops that lead to positive and lasting change in the way organizations deliver services, make decisions, and relate to clients. Our work is centered on the goal of elevating the voices of those least heard and informed by an active commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

More information about Fund for Shared Insight is available at: <https://www.fundforsharedinsight.org/>

Criteria for Applicants

- U.S. 501c3
- Philanthropy support organization that supports a network of foundations in the U.S.
- Organization has sufficient capacity to execute the proposal, and capacity to work with Shared Insight evaluation partner, ORS Impact, to measure results
- Proven track record of advancing equity, diversity, inclusion practices in foundation strategy, measurement, and/or grantmaking
- Proven track record of developing toolkits, guides, case studies, resources to influence and equip foundations for more effective philanthropic practices
- Proven track record of conducting dissemination campaigns around toolkits, guides, case studies, resources to influence foundation practice

Submission Instructions

The spirit of this LOI is for it to be a brief overview of your plans as we do not want to take anyone's time unnecessarily with a longer proposal at this early stage. We envision no more than three pages (more or fewer is fine too, we just need the content and don't want you taking your time adjusting length or word count) should be enough space to cover:

- Resource design and methodology – what type(s) of resource(s) will you plan to create, and what will your development methodology be?
- Resource dissemination campaigns – once the toolkit(s) or guide(s) are complete, what will your plan be for strategic dissemination campaigns in 2021 and beyond including via your own channels or other organizations and channels that reach funders. Ideally, one of the dissemination campaign channels would be a key sector conference or conferences (once we have those again), so please explain how you would approach that channel in particular.
- Project timeline – if we notified you of a grant in July 2020 vs. August 2020, would this make a difference for when you could start the work? What is your proposed timeline for creating the resource, launching it, and disseminating it after launch?
- Please explain:
 - Your previous experience working to create resources targeting funders and working to influence funder practice, and how that will inform this project, and
 - Your commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in your work and your track record of influencing EDI practices by foundations in the U.S.
- Please share the name(s) and background(s) of the person or team that will work on this project.
- Anticipated true cost budget – we want to cover the true cost of the work including overhead so please scope out what you can accomplish realistically in the range of \$100,000 – \$200,000 (we do not have a set amount per grant but expect to make roughly seven grants in this range). If two or more groups were partnering, we will consider larger-budget proposals as well.

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ⁱ Definition of “people and communities we seek to help” and “the voices least heard”

Since our founding, Fund for Shared Insight has focused on listening to the voices least heard in order to improve nonprofit and philanthropic practice and, ultimately, improve lives and communities. The phrase “voices least heard” has dual meaning for us. First, it refers to people whom nonprofits and foundations seek to help, such as families accessing food pantries or free clinics, youth attending afterschool enrichment programs, residents living in public housing, recent immigrants using legal-aid services, or individuals participating in job-training programs. This definition typically excludes intermediaries, such as teachers, volunteers, social entrepreneurs, or others who might help manage, shape, run, or deliver nonprofit programs and services.

Secondly, “voices least heard” refers to people who are the least heard in our broader society due to historic inequality and enduring structural barriers. While nonprofits and foundations should listen to all participants and intended beneficiaries, Shared Insight further prioritizes marginalized groups. This definition includes people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, people living in poverty, and, depending on the context, others, such as people in rural communities, where structural conditions have isolated or excluded their voice. We understand that these definitions are complex and evolving, and that our thinking will continue to evolve in service to our overarching goal of better listening as a vehicle to positive and just social change.

It is important to note that:

1. We do direct grantmaking that prioritizes the voices least heard because this is an underinvested area in our sector
2. At the same time, we are building tools that will benefit the broader sector – to encourage feedback across stakeholder groups and make feedback a natural part of what we all do (leveraging our more limited/targeted investment in Listen4Good)