Social Innovator Accelerator Applicant Guide

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS THROUGH JULY 16, 2021

The Social Innovation Forum believes that social innovation is critical to ensuring that our public and private resources are leveraged in the most effective ways to address social problems. Yet, it is often difficult for emerging innovations to receive the recognition and support they need to develop and spread their impact. The Social Innovation Forum provides a unique opportunity for innovative nonprofits to gain visibility, expand their networks, and build capacity.

For our 2021 – 2022 Social Innovator Accelerator, we will select one nonprofit Social Innovator for each of our eight “social issue tracks.”

2021 – 2022 SOCIAL ISSUE TRACKS AND SPONSORING PARTNERS


Anything Goes: Innovative, Effective, and Sustainable Approaches to Our Region’s Toughest Social Issues
Track Partner: Boston Open Impact

Building and Sustaining Social Capital
Track Partner: MassMutual Foundation

Community Approaches to Advancing Racial Justice
Track Partner: Social Innovator Alumni Collaborative

Comprehensive and Innovative Approaches to Supporting Communities Affected by HIV/AIDS
Track Partner: The Colman and Carol Levin Fund

Pathways to Intergenerational Wealth in BIPOC Communities
Track Partner: Wagner Foundation

Promoting Career Exploration for Youth Through Civic Engagement
Track Partner: American Student Assistance

Women and Girls: Addressing Health and Wellness Inequities
Track Partner: JAKET Foundation

Work-based Learning and Mentorship Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults
Track Partner: Someone Else’s Child (SEC)
BENEFITS TO SOCIAL INNOVATORS

Each Social Innovator receives access to cash and in-kind benefits valued at more than $150,000:

- Six months of consulting services focused on enhancing the organization’s ability to articulate the social problem it is addressing, its innovative approach, and its social impact. The consulting engagement culminates in the development of the following materials designed for funder/investor audiences:
  - Written investment prospectus
  - Five-minute pitch (with PowerPoint slides)
- Five months of executive coaching
- $10,000 cash upon completion of the consulting engagement
- Showcasing via numerous events, including a spring Showcase in May 2022 (exact date TBD) that annually attracts more than 350 business leaders, institutional funders, and individual philanthropists
- Networking and relationship-building support
- Graphic design services
- Presentation coaching
- Additional support from SIF’s in-kind partners (e.g., legal, graphic design, PR, technology)
- $2,500 capacity building grant in 2023

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Social Innovator Accelerator is open to programs and organizations that:

- Are a registered 501(c)(3) or use a fiscal agent that is a 501(c)(3)
- Address a specific social need as described in at least one of our social issue tracks
- Are working in the Greater Boston area, unless otherwise noted in the social track description
- Have been operating for at least one cycle (usually a year) and have a proven concept
- Have a minimum of 1.5 FTEs (full-time equivalents — counting full and part-time staff, not volunteers)
- Have an annual operating budget of $100,000–$2 million*, unless otherwise noted in the track description
- Are at an inflection point in their growth and development

*Note: Organizations with budgets greater than $2 million are welcome to submit an application for a specific program/initiative that has a total budget of less than that amount. In these cases, the entire application must refer to the program/initiative, not the parent organization, with the exception of the Anything Goes track.

Additionally, groups applying on Community Approaches to Advancing Racial Justice will need to have annual operating budget of $100,000 - $1M. This track intends to support a nonprofit that is in an early stage and/or is currently engaged in small-scale work, so the range has been adapted to reflect that priority.

HOW TO APPLY

To submit an application, follow these three steps:

1. Read through this Applicant Guide to determine whether or not your organization is a good “fit” for the Social Innovator Accelerator and for at least one of our social issue tracks.
2. Self-nominate or be nominated via our online nomination form. After nomination, the program or organization leader will receive an email with a link to the application and further instructions within one business day.
3. Complete the online application. First round applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until Friday, July 16, at 5:00 pm. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Starting the week of August 16, we will invite a select number of organizations to submit second round application materials. These second round materials will be due on Monday, September 13, 2021.
To learn more about our application process and what it means to be a Social Innovator, please attend one of our optional upcoming information session:

**SOCIAL INNOVATOR ACCELERATOR INFORMATION SESSIONS**

**Wednesday, June 23, 10:00 – 11:30 am**
Virtual Session on Zoom

**Tuesday, June 29, 1:00-2:30 pm**
Virtual Session on Zoom

To RSVP and receive Zoom details, please email team@socialinnovationforum.org

**Timeline and Commitments**

**SELECTION PROCESS**
The selection process begins on **Friday, July 16**, upon receipt of the first round applications and ends **the week of November 29, 2021** when we will call all of the finalists to let them know if they have been selected to participate in this year’s program.

- **June**: The RFP is launched during the **week of June 7**. We will hold two information sessions, **Wednesday, June 23** and **Tuesday, June 29** for interested, potential applicants.
- **July**: First round applications are due on **Friday, July 16**. The Social Innovation Forum staff and track partners review first round applications to check that applicants meet our basic eligibility requirements and are a good “fit” for at least one of our social issue tracks.
- **August and September**: During the **week of Monday, August 16**, we will invite a select number of organizations to submit second round materials. **Second round applications are due on Monday, September 13**. In September, a diverse evaluation committee composed of track partners, SIF staff members, and 10 to 15 issue-area experts, including business professionals, foundation staff, academics, government officials, and others, will read and score the applications for each social issue track. The Social Innovation Forum will moderate a committee meeting and collect written comments from the evaluators for each track.
- **October and November**: For each social issue track, we will invite three organizations (finalists) to participate in two-hour long “Informational Site Visits.” These sessions will be held over Zoom, but may change depending on the COVID-19 related circumstances. These sessions will take place between **Tuesday, October 26 and Friday, November 12**.
- **November**: In November, the Social Innovation Forum will conduct due diligence and follow up with the applicants as needed. The 2022 Social Innovators will be notified of their selection during the **week of November 29**.
- **December**: The new Innovators will be publicly announced at an evening reception at the **beginning of December** (date TBD).
**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATORS**

The 2021 – 2022 Social Innovator Accelerator calendar is outlined below for planning purposes (dates and events are subject to change). Those invited to submit a second round application will receive a more detailed calendar in mid-August.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week of June 7, 2021</td>
<td>RFP released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 23 &amp; Tuesday, June 30</td>
<td>First round information sessions for applicants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, July 16, 2021</td>
<td>First round applications due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of August 16, 2021</td>
<td>Second round invitations issued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, September 13, 2021</td>
<td>Second round applications due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26 – November 12, 2021</td>
<td>Informational Site Visits with Finalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of November 29, 2021</td>
<td>Finalists are informed of their status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early December 2021</td>
<td>2022 Social Innovators welcomed at an evening reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of December 6 or 13, 2021</td>
<td>2022 Social Innovators attend an orientation session</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2021 – May 2022</td>
<td>Working sessions with SIF consultants and in-kind partners focused on preparing Showcase deliverables (prospectus, pitch, PowerPoint deck)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2022 (Exact Date TBD)</td>
<td>Annual Social Innovator Showcase</td>
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**TIME COMMITMENT REQUIRED OF SOCIAL INNOVATORS**

In order to take full advantage of the consulting, coaching, and other services that the Social Innovator Accelerator provides, Social Innovators should expect to commit on **average six to eight hours per week for six months** (December 2021 to May 2022). Starting in September 2022, Innovators will check in with the Social Innovation Forum staff once per quarter regarding performance measurement and will begin to work with their executive coaches. The Innovators will also have continued access to the Social Innovation Forum’s network and to our in-kind partners. From September 2022 to end of 2023, we ask that the Innovators set aside a few hours per month for the following activities: a one-time group closure meeting, preparation for the quarterly check-ins, and executive coaching sessions.

**OTHER COMMITMENTS REQUIRED OF SOCIAL INNOVATORS**

In choosing Social Innovators, we look for leaders who are committed to partnering with us and who will be active participants in all meetings and events. Media release and other commitments of the process are outlined in our [Statement of Agreement](#). In order to submit an application for the Social Innovator Accelerator, nonprofit leaders **must** accept the terms of this agreement.
2021 – 2022 Social Issue Tracks

ANYTHING GOES: INNOVATIVE, EFFECTIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO OUR REGION’S TOUGHEST SOCIAL ISSUES

Track Partner: Boston Open Impact

About Anything Goes

Over its 18-year history, the Social Innovation Forum (SIF) has focused on a wide range of individual tracks targeting specific social issues. While this approach has allowed the Social Innovation Forum to build a diverse portfolio of over a hundred of Social Innovators, many innovative and effective organizations could not apply to the Social Innovation Forum because their work did not align with SIF’s social issue tracks in a given year.

The local nonprofit sector is constantly evolving as new organizations are established and existing organizations expand and improve their work. While there are countless models for social impact, today’s most effective organizations have several key characteristics in common, such as deliberate focus on their missions, intentionality around bringing in the voices of the communities served into the decision-making processes, ability to quickly and efficiently pivot and adjust to the new or changing conditions, efforts towards building and expanding social capital, commitment to financial sustainability, focus on collecting and using performance data to improve their work, capacity to mobilize, support, and motivate staff, volunteers, and supporters.

These best practices hold true across a wide range of organizations – and across different neighborhoods, social issues, and stages of organizational development. Over the last seven years, Boston Open Impact has supported organizations focused on such social issues as opioid use disorder, immigration, youth development, mental health, and civic engagement. Members of the Boston Open Impact funders group continue to be interested in the aforementioned topics, but are also always open to learning about and supporting new and important social issue areas.

The Social Innovation Forum has historically focused on supporting grassroots, community-led organizations in the Greater Boston area. (Grassroots groups are organizations that do not just reflect the voices of those people most affected by the issue being addressed, but are responsive to and largely led by these constituencies.) However, only about 7.5% to 8% of grants from foundations in the United States go to communities of color. The work of these organizations is rooted in deep knowledge and understanding of their communities, their strengths, and needs, and usually leads to long-lasting positive change for those served.

What We Are Looking For

On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:

- Improve conditions and expand opportunities for residents of Greater Boston
- Being led by representatives from communities served
- Reflect and respond to the voices of those communities most affected by the issues being addressed
- Strive to develop models that can be expanded and/or replicated, or otherwise increase their social impact
- Focus on collecting and analyzing performance data to continuously improve their initiatives

The Anything Goes Track will only accept applications from standalone organizations with budgets under $2 million. Organizations with a fiscal sponsor will be considered. However, local branches of national programs and programs within organizations are not eligible for this track.

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BUILDING AND SUSTAINING SOCIAL CAPITAL
Track Partner: MassMutual Foundation

About the Social Issue
Social capital is considered crucial for society to function efficiently. Producing positive outcomes through cooperation within or among social networks, the norms of reciprocity, trust, and sharing of resources drives greater access to those resources, as well as higher levels of civic engagement at both individual and collective levels. There are three types of social capital:

a) **Bonding** refers to connections between members of a network who view themselves as similar; helps them “get by”
   
   *Example:* my neighbor will babysit for me

b) **Bridging** refers to building connections between people who differ in some socio-demographic sense; helps them “get ahead”
   
   *Example:* I met an executive at the train station who connected me to the hiring department and I got a job

c) **Linking** refers to norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal, or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society.
   
   *Example:* I was able to navigate the school board and found a way to get my child the right services

In the United States, communities with higher levels of social capital enjoy more economic health and social wellbeing. Additionally, social capital is an important factor in communities’ ability to alleviate and recover from negative shocks and build resiliency. According to research published in the journal PLOS One, communities with high levels of social capital experienced less severe coronavirus outbreaks in 2020.

The importance of social capital in America has never been greater for economic empowerment and social mobility of historically marginalized communities, given the detrimental effects of COVID-19 that these communities have experienced. Many of the historically prevalent challenges resulting from perpetual inequity, such as poverty and job, housing, and food insecurity, were exacerbated by the pandemic. This is why it is important for communities to have access to social capital in order to navigate challenges and identify resources across a range of issue areas, such as financial services, education, housing, healthcare, food security, and others. Stable and connected communities cannot be viewed as long-term aspirational goals, but rather should be considered the standard for living healthy, stable, and successful lives. In an era of “social distancing”, we must find new ways to effectively build and maintain social capital. It is essential for our society to start thinking and acting more cooperatively, seeing our fellow community members’ goals and challenges as our own, as well as supporting systems, organizations, and communities that are doing so.

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4 [https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/explanation-types-social-capital/](https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/explanation-types-social-capital/)
6 “How social capital helps communities weather the COVID-19 pandemic.” [https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0245135#sec009](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0245135#sec009)
What We Are Looking For
Social Innovation Forum seeks organizations that contribute to building and strengthening our communities through innovative outlets that focus on any of the three tiers of social capital mentioned above (bonding, bridging, or linking) and that help make lasting connections between individuals and nonprofit organizations and other institutions that partner with and support them.

On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:
- Provide support in coordinating, navigating, and promoting community resources in a range of areas such as financial services, education, housing, healthcare, etc. to achieve social change
- Focus on developing and strengthening self-sustaining local systems that support all residents by engaging people who are interested in supporting communities and building social capital
- Intentionally partner with and promote collaboration among fellow nonprofit organizations addressing various social issues for the purpose of building and strengthening communities
- Build community connections between schools, community centers, civic associations, banks, and other institutions through resource coordination and partnerships
- Advance cross-sector partnerships that bring business, government, and nonprofits together toward creating and enhancing social capital
COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO ADVANCING RACIAL JUSTICE
Track Partner: Social Innovator Alumni Collaborative

About the Social Issue
Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color want to lead healthy, thriving lives. These communities seek quality health care, education, child welfare, financial services, and criminal justice systems that uphold, honor, and respect the dignity of their culture and humanity; however the current systems in the United States are designed in direct opposition to those desires. Disparities persist from the health care system (where blacks are 1.9 times more likely to die of diabetes\(^8\) and 2.3 times more likely to experience infant death than whites\(^9\)) to the education system (where 48% of the Latinx population and 30% of blacks attend schools in high poverty areas, compared to just 15% of whites\(^10\) and blacks are 3.7 times more likely to be suspended than whites\(^11\)). The impacts of systemic oppression can also be seen in the criminal justice system (where blacks are 7 times more likely to be incarcerated than whites\(^12\) and white men in the poorest wealth deciles are less likely to be incarcerated than black men in the wealthiest deciles\(^13\)), the child welfare system (where Native American children account for 2.4% of children in foster care but represent less than 1% of the population\(^14\)), and the financial services system (where black and Latinx borrowers continue to be denied conventional mortgage loans at rates far higher than their white counterparts\(^15\) and entrepreneurs of color have a disproportionate share of unmet capital needs and yet are less likely to receive financing across large banks, small banks, and online lenders).\(^16\) Taken together, these systems form a web that creates barriers for people of color at each stage of their lives and enables the policies and people that perpetuate systemic racism.

While no group or individual can bring about systemic change alone, leaders of color can produce collective impact by working in collaboration to advance interventions and innovations in their communities. Approaches might include work that disrupts systems of racial oppression by re-empowering individuals, centering intersectional justice and those with the least access to institutional power, promoting collaboration across organizations and sectors, and building coalitions. This work is part of a change and process of transforming the current structures to create ones that better tend to human flourishing.

In the U.S., philanthropic decision-making and resource allocation are unevenly distributed. Nationally, 92% of CEOs of foundations and 89% of executives on foundation boards are white\(^17\) and only 8-9% of grantmaking goes into communities of color.\(^18\) White led nonprofits have budgets that are 24% larger than those led by people of

\(^12\) “Prisoners in 2016.” https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p16.pdf
\(^13\) “Poor white kids are less likely to go to prison than rich black kids.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/03/23/poor-white-kids-are-less-likely-to-go-to-prison-than-rich-black-kids/
\(^14\) “Why are Latinos so overrepresented in the state child welfare system?” https://commonwealthmagazine.org/courts/why-are-latino-so-overrepresented-in-the-state-child-welfare-system
\(^15\) “For people of color, banks are shutting the door to homeownership.” https://revealnews.org/article/for-people-of-color-banks-are-shutting-the-door-to-homeownership/
\(^18\) “How African-American led organizations differ from white-led organizations.” https://www.phillyaalf.org/research-report/
color and nonprofit organizations led by black women receive less money than those led by black men or white women. Unrestricted assets of nonprofits with leaders of color are 76% smaller than those led by whites. The selection process for this track is a pilot program of the Social Innovation Forum (SIF) to shift power and decision making for SIF’s Social Innovator Accelerator from funding partners to nonprofit leaders who are knowledgeable about the issue area and the challenges faced by small nonprofits. On this track, a group of six nonprofit leaders from organizations that have previously participated in the Social Innovator Accelerator will be evaluating applications and selecting an Innovator.

**What We Are Looking For**

*On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:*  
- Advance racial justice using approaches that re-empower individuals, disrupt systems, promote collaboration and coalition building, and take an intersectional approach.  
- Are led by leaders of color. Given the unequal distribution of philanthropic resources to organizations led by white leaders and leaders of color described above, this track seeks to select an organization led by leader(s) of color.  
- Meaningfully include their constituents/beneficiaries in their decision-making processes.  
- Have an annual operating budget of $100,000 - $1M. Please note: SIF’s nonprofit tracks are typically open to organizations with an annual operating budget of $100,000 - $2 million. This track intends to support a nonprofit that is in an early stage and/or is currently engaged in small-scale work, so the range has been adapted to reflect that priority.

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19 “Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color leave Impact on the Table.”  
https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/disparities-nonprofit-funding-for-leaders-of-color
About the Social Issue
The devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic in the US began in the 1980s and continues to this day. By the early 1990s, HIV was the No. 1 cause of death among Americans ages 25 to 44. In 1995 and 1996, the FDA approved two new groundbreaking antiretroviral drugs to help treat HIV/AIDS. Doctors began prescribing both these drugs, calling the combination "highly active antiretroviral therapy" (HAART), and it became the new standard care, greatly lengthening the life span of people living with AIDS.

Most recently, there has been the sense HIV is an issue of the past, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that by the end of 2018 an estimated 1.2 million people in the United States were living with HIV. While AIDS deaths have gone down significantly due to advances in science and technology, there are still high rates of infection. There is no cure for HIV yet, but from 2005 to 2010, the scientific developments significantly transformed the lives of people living with HIV. Additional research is being conducted in an effort to make current treatment options, including HAART, more accessible, as well as to concentrate on developing a vaccine.

While developments in prevention and treatment have changed the nature of how this epidemic can be brought to a close without a vaccine or a cure, it is clear that HIV prevention and treatment are not adequately reaching those who could most benefit from them. Individuals who received treatment in the 1980s and 1990s continue to suffer from debilitating side effects, in addition to struggling with the trauma of losing loved ones to the disease over many years. HIV continues to disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities and the LGBTQ+ community, especially gay and bisexual men. Research by the CDC shows that 1 in 2 black, gay men will be diagnosed with HIV during their lifetime, compared to 1 in 11 white, gay men. Yet these populations confront many barriers when they seek access to treatment and support.

Many people in the LGBTQ+ community have reported experiencing stigma and discrimination when accessing health services, leading some individuals to delay necessary health care or forego it altogether. In Massachusetts, HIV is thought to be spreading undetected among people who inject drugs and lack stable housing. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, clinics have limited in-person visits, doctors' offices and emergency rooms have halted routine HIV screening, and physicians have been relying on video calls with patients, an alternative that is not accessible for those who are homeless or fear family members will discover their status. Addressing the gaps

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22 HIV. https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/statistics.html
such as these in access to health and wellness support are critical to keeping communities safe and healthy, and furthering our society’s overall wellbeing.

**What We Are Looking For**

*On this track, applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:*

- Utilize innovative ways and solutions to offer access to HIV treatment and prevention for those who experience barriers in receiving the services (e.g., homeless populations, incarcerated individuals, individuals experiencing substance use disorders, and others).
- Provide education, access to information, mental health support, and connection to networks for LGBTQ+ youth in order to support them in living and building healthy lives.
- Offer mental health support to seniors either living with HIV, experiencing side effects of treatment, having lost loved ones to HIV/AIDS, or being at risk of contracting the disease.
- Collaborate with other organizations supporting the LGBTQ+ communities in order to offer wraparound support, including HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention.
- Possess deep knowledge and expertise about the LGBTQ+ community and HIV/AIDS crisis in Massachusetts.
PATHWAYS TO INTERGENERATIONAL WEALTH IN BIPOC COMMUNITIES
Track Partner: Wagner Foundation

About the Social Issue
The U.S. economic system is built on racial inequity. Today, the wealth gap continues to widen along racial lines. Nationally, the median annual income for black and Latinx individuals is $40,300 and $40,700 respectively, compared to $69,000 for whites. The income gap is even greater in Boston, where the median income for whites ($91,000) is more than double the median income for blacks ($41,200). In Boston, white households are more likely than nonwhite households to own every type of liquid asset. For example, approximately 80% of whites own a home, compared with 34% of U.S. blacks and less than 20% of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. This inequity persists in retirement savings (56% of white households compared to 21% of blacks and 8% of Dominicans) and use of a checking or savings account (with only 7% of whites being without a checking or savings account, compared to 47% of Puerto Ricans and 26% of U.S. blacks). Business owners of color in Massachusetts earn twice as much as those working for wages, but still, black and Latinx residents are 2.5 times less likely to own a business compared to white residents. All considered, nonwhite households in Boston have a fraction of the wealth of white households. While the median net worth of white households in Boston is $247,500, that of Caribbean black households is $12,000, U.S. blacks is $8, and Dominicans is $0.

In virtually every facet of our society economic inequity persists. Overcoming these barriers demands a holistic response, addressing immediate needs and the systemic inequities behind them. Homeownership, career development, entrepreneurship, and other wealth-building strategies enable families to offer better opportunities for future generations. Bold, community-driven solutions are needed to build economic prosperity and intergenerational wealth in BIPOC communities.

What We Are Looking For
On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:

- Develop pathways for families to get out of the cycle of poverty and build intergenerational wealth. Approaches might be in the areas of housing affordability/homeownership, workforce development, support for small business owners, advocacy, and more.
- Deliver bold solutions driven by an awareness of both immediate needs and systemic issues.
- Increase economic prosperity in BIPOC communities with a focus on community-driven solutions.

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PROMOTING CAREER EXPLORATION FOR YOUTH THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Track Partner: American Student Assistance

About the Social Issue
In the United States, youth civic engagement can be traced as far back as 1908 when youth workers marched for better working conditions in the Pennsylvania Coal Mines. It continued through the civil rights movement, and is still present today with youth advocating for their beliefs on major topics such as Black Lives Matter, gun violence, and climate change. Nearly all pressing issues in the world involve young people; topics ranging from education, healthcare, the environment, immigration, housing, gun violence, racial justice, and more. Younger generations are leveraging the resources available to them, such as social media, to educate themselves and their peers on these topics.

Spaces that allow for youth civic engagement through the lens of experiential learning, are important as they help foster skills that can be transferable when entering the workforce. By engaging in these activities, youth are able to gain unique perspectives, build leadership and advocacy skills, expand their network, explore new career paths, and become agents of positive social change. Research shows that youth engagement can lead to increased academic performance, improved social-emotional well-being, and can even be a source of economic mobility. There are limited opportunities to prepare young people to partake in programs that allow for civic engagement, particularly programs that offer an experiential learning experience. A 2015 survey of Massachusetts district superintendents found that 65% reported offering only “few/limited” or “occasional” opportunities for civic learning. Other barriers young people face when looking to engage in hands-on experiential learning opportunities include age restrictions, lack of social connections, and overall lack of quality work experience that help form applicable skills. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines have made it harder for young people to gain access to opportunities to engage civically. Allowing young people to have the tools and spaces for experiential learning and civic engagement will benefit them, and create sustainable and resilient communities in our society.

What We Are Looking For
On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:

- A model that offers middle and/or high schools students opportunities to learn about social issues and advocate for causes that matter most to them
- Programs that provide experiential learning opportunities that allow young people to develop intentional, transferable skills for school, work, and life
- Provide opportunities where young people explore new interests and develop skills that give them the confidence to reimagine different career paths including careers in the advocacy space
- Elevate youth voices through leadership and self advocacy trainings
- Organizations working in rural communities are encouraged to apply

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31 “Why is Youth Civic Engagement Important?” https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important
33 “Why is Youth Civic Engagement Important?” https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important
34 An Act to promote and enhance civic engagement. https://www.macivicsforall.org/whatwedo/civicslaw
WOMEN AND GIRLS: ADDRESSING HEALTH AND WELLNESS INEQUITIES
Track Partner: JAKET Foundation

About the Social Issue
In the United States, women and girls encounter obstacles in receiving access to resources that support their overall well-being including physical and mental health care, self-care, and wellness programming. Major gaps and challenges to obtaining quality care include time constraints due to personal and professional obligations, language and culture barriers, racial bias and discrimination, and the underrepresentation of women in health care leadership and policymaking. Research from the United Nations Policy Brief on Women showed that women and girls, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, are less likely to have access to quality health services, essential medicines and vaccines, maternal and reproductive health care, or insurance coverage. When it comes to primary prevention practices like exercising and eating nutritious food, which can help decrease heart disease, stroke, and cancer, more barriers arise, particularly for low-income women and women of color, including access to recreational facilities and healthy food retailers.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen injustices exacerbate, particularly for women who have been placed at the frontlines both at work and at home. Numerous reports indicate that women account for nearly four in five essential health care workers, and have accepted greater caretaking responsibilities for children and other relatives. The City of Boston reports that the pandemic has also brought new child care challenges to women working from home. The state of Massachusetts has the highest childcare costs of any state in the country, and may lead to many working mothers to reduce their paid work hours or leave the workforce in order to take care of their children. The pandemic has proven that society needs healthy women as they are the backbone of recovery in communities. However, existing disparities for women and girls have increased severely throughout the crisis. Data shows that women have faced higher rates of job loss and poverty, and less access to sexual and reproductive health. Barriers to obtaining health care and access to wellness services, coupled with the effects of COVID-19, have created serious health inequities among women across the United States.

38 “Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention” https://www.iwh.on.ca/what-researchers-mean-by-primary-secondary-and-tertiary-prevention
40 “Environmental Barriers to Activity”https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-causes/physical-activity-environment/
What We Are Looking For

*On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:*

- A model that offers health and wellness programming for women and girls, that support physical and/or mental health, including nontraditional approaches to mental health
- Provide services to attain accessible and affordable health care
- Offer educational opportunities to learn about women’s health
- Consider a systems change approach to improve women’s health outcomes by raising awareness of inequities in the health care system
- Organizations working in Gateway Cities are encouraged to apply
- Women-led organizations are of specific interest on this track
WORK-BASED LEARNING AND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
Track Partner: Someone Else’s Child (SEC)

About the Social Issue
Once they graduate, students face a common problem when trying to enter the workforce: there are limited job opportunities for job seekers with no previous work experience. The implementation of work-based learning experiences (WBLE) is vital to a young person’s success in their chosen post-secondary education and career pathway. Work-based learning experiences such as job shadowing and paid internships provide young adults with the knowledge and skills that will help them connect classroom experiences to real-life work and future career opportunities. Additionally, wrap-around services, such as mentorship programs, college visits, industry field trips, and travel opportunities, allow students to develop new skills and passions, providing them with a more stable path to adulthood. These programs serve as equalizers for students from low-income or under resourced communities, providing opportunities for these students to build important social capital needed to advance their futures.

Internships during adolescence and young adulthood (14-24) are critical work-based learning experiences. A 2017 NACE Job Outlook survey found that 65% of employers indicated that they prefer their candidates to have relevant work experience, and 56% of respondents prefer that it comes from an internship or co-op. Internships offer the opportunity for real, competency-based and hands-on learning that is invaluable in preparing students for the realities of the working world, which the classroom space alone can not do. Mentoring programs are additional support services that have been proven to increase the likelihood of students to succeed. Research shows that healthy and supportive mentor relationships lead to increased high school graduation rates, higher educational aspirations, healthier relationships and lifestyle choices. Nevertheless, there are barriers that limit access to work-based learning opportunities and services that further career exploration. These include lack of participation from employers and schools, misconceptions surrounding who gets to participate in these programs, as well as internships that are offered for little to no pay or school credit. When students have the freedom to explore the options available to them for their future at an earlier age, they are better equipped to succeed.

What We Are Looking For
On this track, strong applicants will be able to demonstrate some or all of these key characteristics:
- Connect young people (14-24), to paid, intentionally designed internships
- Match young people with mentors to build long-term, consistent, committed relationships
- Provide wrap-around supports and services that offer college visits, industry field trips, and other types of travel experiences that allow for college and career exploration
- Programs that support young people from low-income communities, young people with disabilities, and/or those who have dropped out of school are encouraged to apply

46 “Work-based learning experiences.” http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/pre-employment-transition-services/overview/work-based-learning-experiences
Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL INNOVATION FORUM?
The Social Innovation Forum (SIF) brings together nonprofits, philanthropy, government, and business to support the spread of emerging social innovations in Greater Boston. SIF creates positive social change in Greater Boston by:

- Engaging and informing funders and investors so they can direct resources most effectively
- Educating and supporting leaders of nonprofit organizations so they can deliver the most effective solutions to social issues
- Making connections and building relationships across diverse communities so people can help each other generate significant social change

The Social Innovator Accelerator provides a unique opportunity for innovative nonprofit organizations to gain visibility, expand their networks, and build capacity. Each year, we partner with leading local funders to identify and support a small cohort of Social Innovators. Our search and selection process lasts six months and involves two rounds of written applications, informational site visits, and other forms of due diligence. This process brings together a range of stakeholders, including SIF staff, track partners, and an evaluation committee made up of more than 80 business, government, and foundation leaders.

Our unique approach, working with both funders and practitioners, creates a “Social Impact Marketplace” that is informed, connected, and engaged in the pursuit of positive social change and measurable results. Thus, our direct work is leveraged to create broader impact throughout the community.

WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL INNOVATOR ACCELERATOR’S RESULTS?
To date, the Social Innovation Forum has directed more than $46 million in cash and in-kind services to help more than 100 social impact organizations accelerate their growth and amplify their impact. A total of 4,904 individuals are a part of SIF’s community of funders, mentors, and supporters who support these innovative, effective approaches to address important social issues. On average, our nonprofit Social Innovators more than double their revenue four years after engaging with SIF and experience average annual revenue growth that is 10x the Massachusetts nonprofit average.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SOCIAL INNOVATION?
Although much debate surrounds the precise definition of social innovation, at its core, the term encapsulates a drive toward progress in the way society addresses social issues. As we define it at the Social Innovation Forum, social innovation is the process of finding, testing, and honing potentially transformative approaches to solving persistent social problems.

The Social Innovation Forum believes that social innovation often starts with an individual idea, but it takes a vast community of stakeholders to spread the ideas that are demonstrating results. Nonprofits, foundations, businesses, and government agencies are most successful in creating lasting social impact when they work together to advance social innovations through the stages of early development, proliferation, proven outcomes, and widespread impact.
MUST AN ORGANIZATION BE RECOMMENDED BY A MEMBER OF THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO APPLY?

No, not at all! Organizations are welcome to nominate themselves via our online nomination form. However, please read through the track descriptions and eligibility requirements closely before doing so. Also, note that the online nomination form is not a first round application. We make no distinction between applicants that self-nominate and applicants that are nominated by others.

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<th>NOMINATION COMMITTEE AS OF JUNE 10, 2021</th>
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<td>RONDA ALEXANDER, VITAL VILLAGE NETWORKS</td>
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<td>SHIRRANDA ALMEIDA, THE MEL KING INSTITUTE</td>
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<td>JAYNE BEKER, THE BEKER FOUNDATION</td>
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<td>MEGAN BRIGGS REILLY, CLOWES FUND</td>
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<td>MIKE CHRISTIAN, SOMEONE ELSE’S CHILD</td>
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<td>NATANJA CRAIG OQUENDO, BOSTON WOMEN’S FUND</td>
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<td>CHERIE CRAFT, SMART FROM THE START</td>
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<td>RAUL FERNANDEZ, BOSTON UNIVERSITY</td>
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<td>JUDE GOLDMAN</td>
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<td>CAITLIN GOOS, WAGNER FOUNDATION</td>
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<td>ELI GUROCK, THE BEKER FOUNDATION</td>
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<td>HEATHER MCMANN, GROUNDWORK LAWRENCE, INC.</td>
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<td>FRANKLIN PERALTA, ENGLISH FOR NEW BOSTONIANS</td>
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<td>ALLISON PICOTT, LENNY ZAKIM FUND</td>
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<td>AZIZA ROBINSON-GOODNIGHT, TRANSFORMATION CULTURE PROJECT</td>
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<td>MARQUIS VICTOR, ELEVATED THOUGHT</td>
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IS IT POSSIBLE TO APPLY AS A PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION?

Yes. Any program or initiative with an operating budget between $100,000 and $2 million may apply. In these cases, the program director as well as a representative from the parent organization must be committed to participating in Social Innovation Forum meetings and events. In addition, the entire application must refer to the program, not the parent organization (budget numbers, performance metrics, etc.). The Anything Goes track will only accept applications from standalone organizations with budgets under $2 million. Organizations with a fiscal sponsor will be considered. However, local branches of national programs and programs within organizations are not eligible for this track.

IF APPLYING TO MORE THAN ONE SOCIAL ISSUE TRACK, MUST AN ORGANIZATION SUBMIT MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION?

In general, yes. Each track has its own set of evaluators who are experts on that particular social issue. While a fair amount of information may be copied and pasted from one application to the next, we ask that multiple-track applicants tailor their answers to some of the more thoughtful, paragraph-response questions to demonstrate their “fit” with each of those tracks. Our evaluators like to see that applicants have thought about how their organizations address specific social issues and what makes them innovators in those spaces.
WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THOSE WHO APPLIED DURING A PREVIOUS CYCLE OF THE SOCIAL INNOVATION FORUM AND WERE NOT SELECTED?
The application itself changes from year to year. In order for us to have consistent information across applicants, all applicants for this year’s cycle must complete a 2021 – 2022 application. However, it is often possible to copy and paste responses from a previous application into corresponding sections of the current year’s application. To assist you, we are happy to provide copies of your past application(s) upon request.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL INNOVATOR SHOWCASE?
The Social Innovator Showcase is focused on highlighting the Social Innovators to potential investors, as well as sparking conversations on the best approaches to developing and spreading innovation. More than 350 business, government, and philanthropic leaders from Greater Boston attend the event, in addition to the nonprofit leaders presenting their work. The Social Innovator Showcase will be held in May 2022 (exact date TBD).
WHO SHOULD I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about the application process, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Dingee, Program Manager at Social Innovation Forum, at team@socialinnovationforum.org or at 978.344.2622.

WHO SUPPORTS THE SOCIAL INNOVATION FORUM?

Social Innovation Forum Lead Sponsors
- Barr Foundation
- JAKET Foundation
- The Charlotte Foundation
- The Devonshire Foundation
- The Poler Family Foundation

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- Social Innovator Alumni Collaborative
- Someone Else’s Child
- Wagner Foundation

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- The Gross Family
- Jordan and Jean Krasnow
- Anne Punzak Marcus and Paul Marcus
- Nutter, McClennen & Fish LLP
- Ellen and Steven Segal
- Elizabeth A. Sheehan Charitable Fund

2021 Social Issue Track Partners
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  - Andrew and Suzanne Offit
  - Rands Foundation
  - Ellen and Steve Segal
- Civic Engagement Funder Collaborative
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