Request for Proposals to Promote Success in Community Supervision

September 25, 2018
Dear Criminal Justice Partners,

The Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) Criminal Justice Initiative is pleased to announce our new strategy to advance public safety by improving community supervision. In partnership with leading experts and organizations in the field, LJAF is developing an innovative strategy to shift the focus of probation and parole supervision from catching failure to preventing crime and promoting success. Our commitment to reorienting community supervision reflects an emerging consensus that the status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable, and that prioritizing policy reforms that incentivize organizational and individual-level behavior change will produce better outcomes for individuals and communities alike.

As part of the launch of this work, we are issuing the following Request for Proposals (RFPs):

— Reducing Revocations Challenge: Identifying a Research Intermediary to Support Action Research in 10 Jurisdictions
— Request for Proposals to Promote Success in Community Supervision

Improving community supervision will be a pillar of the Criminal Justice Initiative for years to come, and the work described in these initial RFPs will lay a foundation for a wide range of future investments. We recognize that achieving transformational change in a huge and diffuse system will be no small task but we are driven by a keen awareness of the issue’s urgency. There has never been a more important time to reform community supervision and make it more effective, efficient, and fair.

As noted in Probation and Parole Systems Marked by High Stakes, Missed Opportunities, a publication released today and co-authored by the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Public Safety Performance Project and LJAF, the number of people on community supervision has more than tripled over the past few decades—straining budgets and creating missed opportunities to deliver better results. And while probation and parole are often thought of as alternatives to incarceration, revocations for violations of supervision are a major driver of state prison populations. At the same time, some states and localities have shown it is possible to have less correctional control and less crime simultaneously. We must capitalize on this momentum to advance proven reforms, generate new thinking, and spur innovation in both policy and practice.

Our initial community supervision RFPs describe a broad array of potential opportunities to use research, policy analysis, culture change, and other approaches to expand the evidence base and begin the paradigm shift we need. As part of this process, we expect to learn from the impressive work already underway across the country, support and build on successes, and seed new efforts at the state and local level.

We look forward to making important progress together.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Travis, Executive Vice President
Amy Solomon, Vice President
Juliene James, Director
Sebastian Johnson, Manager
Cybele Kotonias, Manager
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Request for Proposals to Promote Success in Community Supervision

Background

Community supervision is the most common form of correctional control in the United States. Nearly 4.5 million people were on probation (~3.6 million) or parole (~875,000) at the end of 2016—more than three times (239 percent) the number on supervision in 1980.

Accordingly, the reach of community supervision is vast: one in 55 adults is currently on probation or parole. Yet community supervision has historically received far less attention than other parts of the criminal justice system. While existing research has identified problems such as high rates of failure and widespread racial and economic disparities, many critical questions remain unanswered. From sociological, criminological, and behavioral perspectives, community supervision has been profoundly understudied.

Tight budgets and overwhelming caseloads mean missed opportunities to reduce recidivism by delivering evidence-based interventions that focus on the people who pose the highest risk to public safety and most need treatment for substance abuse and mental illness. Conversely, research has shown that over-supervising low-risk individuals can cause more harm than good and can actually increase recidivism rates. Moreover, while probation and parole are often thought of as alternatives to incarceration, people on supervision are sent back to prison and jail at surprisingly high rates. Available data indicate revocations for violations of supervision constitute a major driver of prison populations in many states, and too often these violations are technical in nature (e.g., missing a meeting or failing a drug test).

An emerging consensus among leading policymakers, researchers, and practitioners articulates a new vision: community supervision focused on preventing crime and promoting success rather than simply catching failure. The field is ready for transformational changes, and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) is committed to investing in this new vision through research, policy, and culture change that has the potential to improve public safety outcomes for our communities and individual outcomes for the people on supervision and their families.

Request for Proposals Goal and Objectives

LJAF aims to address our nation’s most pressing and persistent challenges using evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approaches. The goal of this RFP is to help spur community corrections research and policy innovations that promote success and improve supervision outcomes. LJAF seeks proposals for projects that address the following priorities:

1. Shaping, accelerating, and evaluating state policy changes
2. Reducing revocations while protecting public safety
3. Accelerating adoption of evidence-based practices and supporting leadership development and culture change to sustain reforms
4. Promoting fairness and justice
Below is a brief description of these priorities and areas of particular interest to LJAF. This is not meant to be an exhaustive or limiting list; rather, these examples are provided to illuminate LJAF priorities and inspire leading thinkers to propose groundbreaking and transformative projects that may or may not be represented here. LJAF looks to researchers, practitioners, and policy experts to submit proposals responsive to one or more of the above objectives, and to the broader goals of protecting public safety and improving supervision outcomes.

1. **Shape, Accelerate, and Evaluate State Policy Changes**

LJAF aims to advance state policies that ensure the right people are on supervision and that interventions address their underlying needs. We hope to support projects that advance a transformation from reactive (catching failure) to proactive (preventing crime and promoting success) approaches. Recent policy reforms have aimed to focus scarce supervision resources on the people who pose the greatest public safety risk and to align supervision approaches with research on what works to facilitate behavior change. LJAF seeks proposals that shape, accelerate, and/or evaluate these kinds of state policy changes. Priority areas of interest include the following:

- Assessing state policies that reorient the scope and goals of probation or parole toward promoting success
- Aligning incentives for agencies, offices, supervisors, officers, and clients. Applications addressing this area of interest may propose to evaluate agency- and office-level funding structures and incentives, or test incentives at the supervisor, officer, and supervisee level to encourage success-oriented behavior, including applying behavioral economics insights to community supervision policy and practice
- Developing and testing policies designed to address the needs of special populations, for example by connecting individuals on community supervision to behavioral health treatment

2. **Reduce Revocations While Protecting Public Safety**

LJAF invites proposals that increase understanding of the causes of revocations and develop interventions to reduce incarceration while protecting public safety. Too little is known about the underlying behaviors and practices—of the person on supervision and the person or agency providing supervision—that lead to revocations to prison or jail. Although we do not know how many revocations result from technical violations of supervision, existing data suggest revocations are a significant driver of incarceration. In some cases, money spent on incarceration could achieve better outcomes if redirected to address the challenges of those on supervision, thus preventing revocations. LJAF seeks proposals that reveal the drivers of revocations and advance changes to policy and practice that safely reduce violations and incarceration. Priority areas of interest include the following:

- Increasing understanding of the practice and culture of revocations and the circumstances that motivate officers, agencies, and judges to revoke individuals to prison or jail
- Assessing the impact of revocation decisions, for example by analyzing the results of various approaches within or across jurisdictions, evaluating changes in practice and policy in a single
jurisdiction, or examining the outcomes and experiences of people who are and who are not incarcerated while serving a term of supervision

- Studying the condition-setting process and examining the relationship between supervision conditions and public safety outcomes

3. Accelerate Adoption of Evidence-Based Practices

LJAF invites proposals to grow and accelerate adoption of evidence-based practices and to support the leadership development and culture changes needed to sustain reforms. A growing body of research examines the programs, practices, and policies that are most likely to produce positive results. They include evaluating individuals with a valid risk-needs assessment to determine the appropriate level of service and supervision; placing individuals in programs that use cognitive behavioral therapies and other research-based approaches; and incentivizing individuals to stay crime- and drug-free with the right balance of consequences for violations and rewards for compliance.

Despite these advances, community supervision agencies face challenges in fully integrating these practices into their operations. Through this objective, LJAF seeks proposals that will help supervision agencies scale up effective programs and increase uptake and high quality implementation of evidence-based practices. Priority areas of interest include the following:

- Developing and testing tools, processes, and methods for increasing high-quality implementation of evidence-based correctional practices
- Assessing methods for facilitating culture change and leadership development to support an organizational orientation of promoting success
- Increasing understanding of how intensity, dosage, duration, combination, and sequencing of treatment relate to public safety outcomes
- Evaluating the nature of interactions and relationships between justice system actors and the person under correctional supervision that influence behavior change and desistance, and increasing knowledge about effective case management for special populations

4. Promote Fairness and Justice

LJAF plans to examine and address racial and economic disparity in community supervision. Correctional control is concentrated in communities of color, with 1 in 23 black adults on probation compared with 1 in 81 white adults. One study finds that 1 in 6 black men aged 20 to 34 without a high school diploma are on probation. The limited data available indicate the most extreme consequence of failure—revocation to incarceration—is also borne disproportionately by people of color.

Additionally, probation and parole often amplify the burden of criminal justice fines and fees, which most often fall on those with the fewest economic means. In addition to acting in a debt collection capacity for fines and fees assessed by the courts, probation and parole agencies typically assess their own fees, which support their operations and may create incentives to extend supervision for those who comply with their payment requirements. These problems are further exacerbated by private probation companies, which may have a motivation to increase caseloads to generate greater profits and are often
subject to minimal oversight or accountability. Through this objective, LJAF seeks proposals that will promote fairness and justice through research, education, and advocacy campaigns. Priority areas of interest include the following:

- Analyzing supervision populations and decision points by race, ethnicity, and financial wellbeing, including misdemeanor and private probation, for which comprehensive data are not currently available
- Developing advocacy strategies for addressing racial and economic disparity in community supervision, e.g., challenging pay-only, private probation
- Conducting cost-benefit analyses weighing public safety, costs, and revenue against economic impact of compliance with supervision conditions, including opportunity cost of lost work hours; actual cost of travel, childcare, and other expenses related to compliance; monetary sanctions and supervision fees

Application Step One — Letter of Interest Submission
Organizations or teams interested in responding to this RFP should first submit a letter of interest (LOI) by 7:00 p.m. EST on October 31, 2018. LOIs are not to exceed three single-spaced pages with 12-point font. Please send the LOI to CommunitySupervision@arnoldfoundation.org with the subject line, “COMMUNITY SUPERVISION LETTER OF INTEREST.” All LOIs must adhere to the criteria below. Failure to meet any of these criteria within the specified timeframe may result in disqualification. LJAF may reach out to the project point of contact with questions following the LOI submission. Teams selected to submit full proposals will be notified by November 21, 2018.

What a Letter of Interest Should Include

- **Project contact**: Provide the name, organizational affiliation, email, and telephone number for the primary project contact.

- **Responsiveness to Objectives**: Specify which objective(s) the project aims to address: 1) shape, accelerate, and evaluate state policy changes; 2) reduce revocations while protecting public safety; 3) accelerate adoption of evidence-based practices; and/or 4) promote fairness and justice. Projects must address at least one of the objectives and may address more than one.

- **Project design**:
  - **Project goal(s) or research question(s)**. For each objective to be addressed, specify the project goal(s) (for non-research projects) or research question(s) (for research projects) that the project seeks to advance or explore.
  - **Approach**. Provide a brief summary of the project design including a brief rationale for the proposed approach and a high-level timeline. Proposals are expected to have project periods of 24 months or less unless a strong justification is presented for a longer period. Projects that are research experiments may propose project terms that vary from two to five years, depending on renewed LJAF approval after the two-year mark.
Jurisdiction criteria. If proposing partnership with a community supervision agency, describe reasons for selecting partner(s), if already selected; if not selected, list the specific jurisdiction criteria necessary for the project to be successfully completed. Examples of criteria may include leadership commitment, specific data elements, staff capacity to extract data, and stakeholder support for research. RFP respondents are welcome to suggest partner sites but encouraged to explain how the sites will help meet the study objectives.

Deliverables. Provide a brief description of project deliverables. Example deliverables may include reports, peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, new assessment models, strategy memoranda, advocacy or communications templates, and ancillary materials.

- Team capacity: Summarize the team’s capacity to achieve the project goals.
- Budget Summary: Provide a budget estimate for appropriate project costs, including a total as well as subtotals for personnel, travel, subgrants, contracts/consultants, and other direct project costs. See below at page 7 for guidance on developing a budget. The budget summary does not count toward the total page length.

Application Step Two — Proposal Submission
Project teams selected to submit proposals will be contacted by November 21, 2018. Proposals are due by 7:00 p.m. EST on December 19, 2018 and should be submitted via email using the subject line “COMMUNITY SUPERVISION RFP PROPOSAL.” to CommunitySupervision@arnoldfoundation.org. All proposals must adhere to the criteria listed below. Failure to meet any of these criteria within the specified timeframe may result in disqualification. LJAF may reach out to the project point of contact with questions following the proposal submission.

What a Full Proposal Should Include
A complete proposal must include a proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative, along with any relevant appendices.

The proposal narrative length should not exceed 10 pages, single-spaced, with 12-point font. A table of contents, cover page, references or bibliography, and brief team biographies are all required but do not count toward the 10-page limit.

Narrative
The narrative should include the following information, which should be clearly defined and labeled within the proposal. We suggest the table of contents include these sections. We will provide a template to invited applicants to facilitate proposals that comply with the RFP’s requirements.

- Strategic Fit
  - LJAF Objective: Proposals should clearly reference the objective(s) to which they respond.
o **Project goal(s) or research question(s):** For each objective that the project addresses, specify the project goal(s) (for non-research projects) or research question(s) (for research projects) that the project seeks to advance or explore.

- **Project importance:** Provide the rationale for the proposed approach, including a brief summary of the literature to date on the research or policy objective(s) and related research questions. Highlight the gaps in the current state of research related to these questions and explain how the proposal intends to respond to these gaps. Explain why the project or research will add value to the field.

- **Project design:** Respondents should provide a detailed description of the project and research design (as specified below). Respondents are encouraged to explain what **deliverables** will be most appropriate and what will provide the greatest benefit for target audiences, including researchers, criminal justice agency stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners. For research projects, please include the following additional information to the extent relevant and currently available, or explain the process for meeting these requirements:
  
  o **Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol:** If the proposed study should be submitted to an IRB for review, briefly describe the steps that will be taken to accomplish this and what documentation or data will be required of the project team. All steps to satisfy IRB protocol should be integrated within the project timeline table.

  o **Data management:** Project activities may involve handling of sensitive personal data subject to data privacy legal obligations. Provide a brief summary of the mechanisms (e.g., encryption methods, user access controls such as two-factor authentication, etc.) you have used in the past to protect sensitive data, both in transit and in storage, in accordance with applicable laws and/or agreements.

  o **Research Design.** Research proposals should include a description of the analytical strategy and specify the statistical analysis that will be followed to address all research questions, as laid out in more detail in the LJAF Guide for Research Proposals.

  o **Jurisdiction criteria.** If a partnership with a jurisdiction or agency is proposed, specify the necessary criteria that a jurisdiction must satisfy to successfully conduct the proposed study design. Examples of criteria include specific data elements, staff capacity to extract data and accompanying data dictionaries, and stakeholder support.

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1 LJAF is strongly committed to the principles of research transparency and integrity. In order to ensure the utmost in rigor, we require that all research projects involving statistical inferences be pre-registered, and that all non-confidential materials including, but not limited to, survey instruments, computer code, articles, and reports be open and freely available online without a subscription or license fee. In the case of confidential data, proposals should briefly discuss whether it would be permissible to create a de-identified dataset for public use, and if so, how much additional labor that would entail. Please see the two companion documents accompanying this RFP. The first is titled “LJAF Guidelines for Investments in Research” and the second is titled “Key Items to Get Right When Conducting Randomized Controlled Trials of Social Programs.” Both documents define the primary elements that should be incorporated in the study design of a proposal to conduct impact or RCT studies.
for research. If jurisdictions have already been identified, please include letters of support indicating leadership commitment to the project.

- **Project timeline, milestones, and deliverables**: Within a table, clearly identify the project timeline, proposed dates to accomplish project milestones, and project deliverables. Research teams should consider how to disseminate research results to multiple target audiences, including policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Respondents are encouraged to develop papers for both peer-review publication and companion briefs that highlight study results and policy implications. The potential deliverables will likely vary based on the research objectives and questions addressed. Respondents are encouraged to identify which tools, guides, policies, and related materials would be helpful for the field when identifying the project deliverables.

- **Project risks and/or study limitations**: Describe potential risks or study limitations and how the team intends to mitigate these challenges.

**Team capacity**: Identify and establish a primary project director and designate a fiscal agent for any subcontracts. Summarize the team’s capacity to achieve the project goals and provide a brief biography for each project team member, specifying their role and responsibilities for the project. Team biographies do not count toward total page length. Note that competitive respondents will assemble a team with the experience and capabilities to accomplish the proposed project. LJAF encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships with community supervision agencies where appropriate and beneficial. Project teams may partner with universities, researchers, scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and subject matter experts to ensure a highly qualified team.

**Appendices** (not included in the total page count):
- Brief project team biographies that specify the project team role and responsibilities for each project team member
- Project organizational chart (if appropriate)
- Résumés/curricula vitae for project team members
- Letters of support for key partners/agencies, as applicable
- References or bibliography

**Budget**
LJAF requires any resources awarded to an organization be dedicated to the costs necessary to accomplish the charitable, educational, or scientific purpose of a grant. LJAF permits grantees to request reasonable and justifiable funding for all of the direct costs associated with a project, including salaries and federally required benefits for employees, travel, meetings and conferences, data access fees, and payments to third-party consultants and sub-grantees that are directly attributable to or created specifically for the purpose supported by a particular grant.
Moreover, LJAF recognizes that in order to successfully accomplish the purpose of a grant, grantees often need additional financial support to cover a portion of their indirect costs. LJAF’s Indirect Cost Policy defines indirect costs as organizational costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one project and not exclusively attributable to or created for the project supported by a particular LJAF grant. LJAF permits institutions of higher education, including community colleges, to receive an indirect cost rate of 15 percent of total direct project costs; all other organizations (e.g., non-profit, governmental, for-profit, etc.) may receive an indirect cost rate of 20 percent of total direct project costs; however, consulting or subcontract expenses, sub-awards, and tuition (if applicable) shall not be included as part of the total direct project cost base for the indirect cost calculation.

As a 501(c)(3) private foundation, LJAF does not fund or engage in any efforts to influence legislation, distribute propaganda, or participate in a public election or political campaign. For example, LJAF is not permitted to earmark its funds for lobbying activities that may be permissibly conducted by a 501(c)(3) public charity (i.e., via the public charity’s 501(h) election). LJAF is also not able to fund any 501(c)(4) lobbying activity. Accordingly, proposals should not request funding for or list any activities that LJAF is unable to support.

All applicants must provide:

- **Project budget**: Using the LJAF budget template (provided to invited applicants), list, describe, and provide calculations and cost assumption information for all project costs.

- **Budget narrative**: In a separate document, clearly outline and define the total direct project costs, including the fringe rate calculation detail for all personnel. As part of the budget narrative, all personnel and third-party consultant work should be described in relation to the project’s purpose; travel detail should be provided in relation to the project’s purpose (e.g., justification for the purpose of trip, number of trips to be taken, and who will be traveling); the purpose of meetings and conferences should be described (e.g., who and how many people are attending and the purpose of the meeting or conference); if equipment, rent, or other expenses are considered direct, such expenses should be described in detail as they relate to the project’s purpose with a corresponding justification for why such expenses are considered direct. Also in the narrative, please provide an estimated budget broken out by objective.

**Project and Award Timeframe**

- **September 26**: RFP released
- **October 3**: Optional conference call
- **October 31**: Letters of interest due
- **November 21**: Distribution of invitations to submit full proposals
- **December 19**: Deadline to submit full proposals
Optional Conference Call

LJAF will answer questions related to this RFP during an optional call on October 3, 2018 at 1 p.m. EST. Potential respondents are encouraged to prepare for this conference call in advance by reviewing the objectives and proposal requirements. To join the call, please dial 877-594-8353, and use the following code: 30047512#. Respondents are welcome to submit questions in advance by emailing CommunitySupervision@arnoldfoundation.org with “Community Supervision RFP Call” in the subject line.

Review Process

In order to ensure a comprehensive review of letters of interest and proposals, LJAF may work with external reviewers, including scholars, policy experts, and practitioners, to conduct objective reviews of each letter of interest or proposal. The reviewers will make recommendations to LJAF on awards for proposals that demonstrate quality and rigor based on the following criteria: (1) strategic fit with objectives and areas of interest, (2) project design, (3) impact to the field, (4) team capacity, and (5) cost effectiveness.

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