



**Reducing Revocations Challenge: Identifying a Research  
Intermediary to Support Action Research in 10 Jurisdictions**

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  
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# Reducing Revocations Challenge: Identifying a Research Intermediary to Support Action Research in 10 Jurisdictions

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## 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—239 percent higher than the number on supervision in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Despite this historic growth, probation and parole receive far less attention than other parts of the criminal justice system. Many aspects of supervision policy and practice remain understudied and poorly understood, particularly the reasons why people violate supervision conditions and how the system responds to those violations. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates more than 350,000 supervision terms ended in incarceration in 2016,<sup>2</sup> but we do not know how many of these exits from supervision were the result of a new sentence and how many were the result of a technical violation (e.g., missing a meeting or failing a drug test). And while there are no reliable national estimates of the impact of supervision revocations on jail and prison populations, state studies have consistently found revocations are a major driver of prison admissions—resulting in great human and financial costs.<sup>3</sup>

These data gaps make it difficult for policymakers and practitioners to understand the contours of the problem or develop effective solutions. However, a growing body of research on the effectiveness of alternatives to incarceration, along with numerous policy innovations at the state level, point to better ways to address violations and safely reduce revocations.<sup>4</sup> The Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) is committed to improving community supervision policy and practice, including reducing the high number of revocations. We believe the first steps are working with practitioners to address data gaps, developing interventions and policy changes rooted in data and research, and evaluating their impact.

## Request for Proposals

LJAF works to address our nation's most pressing and persistent challenges using evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approaches. Within that scope, LJAF's Criminal Justice Initiative focuses on improving community safety and advancing the values of equity, fairness, effectiveness, and racial justice.

As part of our commitment to spurring innovation and testing effective reforms in community supervision, LJAF will support action research in 10 jurisdictions via a research intermediary, with the goal of uncovering the reasons for revocations and developing safe and innovative approaches to reducing them. We are issuing this RFP to select a research intermediary ("the intermediary") to develop and manage a Reducing Revocations Challenge ("the Challenge"), which will include selecting action research teams committed to analyzing and addressing supervision violations and safely reducing revocations; providing technical assistance; and supporting peer-to-peer learning. The RFP describes the Challenge in more detail, outlines the expected activities and deliverables for the intermediary, and provides information on the timeline and process for making an award.

## Challenge Overview

The community corrections field is ready for transformational change; many leaders already embrace new models that focus on promoting success rather than simply catching failure. To facilitate this transformation, LJAF will select an intermediary organization to co-develop, launch, and manage the Reducing Revocations Challenge. The intermediary will provide analytical guidance and make subgrant awards to up to 10 action research teams to study and design interventions to reduce revocations while protecting public safety. These 16-month subgrants will be awarded to action research teams, consisting of a research partner and a local probation department or district office in a statewide system.

The Challenge will be divided into two distinct phases of work. **Phase I** will involve selection of teams to analyze the unique drivers of supervision failure and develop recommendations for changes to policy and practice that will reduce revocations. Phase I will conclude with publication of 10 site-specific research reports, a cross-site meeting to promote peer-to-peer learning, and a national brief to share cross-site findings and lessons learned. **Phase II** will test model interventions and policies. This RFP will result in an award for Phase I only; additional funding may be provided to support Phase II at LJAF's discretion.

### Phase I

The first phase of the effort will require the intermediary to select up to 10 action research teams via a competitive selection process. The teams will conduct in-depth research and data analysis on the drivers of supervision failure and develop recommendations for policy and practice that are responsive to a probation agency's unique challenges. In selecting the action research teams, the intermediary will consider demographic, geographic, and other relevant factors in ensuring a representative cohort of agencies, as well as availability and quality of data.

#### *Analyze data to understand the drivers of supervision failure*

While a wide range of research methods may be employed, the intermediary will support action research teams in answering key questions related to supervision policy and practice, revocation decisions, and the pathways of people on probation. The analyses should include an examination of the following questions:

- What is the legal and policy context in which revocations are occurring, including the conditions imposed on people serving a probation sentence?
- What is the underlying behavior that leads to revocation, including the violations that result in a recommendation for revocation?
- To what extent are new crimes being committed? How do they relate to the original crime, and are geographic patterns similar to overall crime patterns in the jurisdiction?
- What types of conditions are violated prior to a revocation recommendation, including the number and severity of prior violations?
- What graduated responses to the violations were recommended prior to the revocation recommendation?

- How do the actions taken by the court differ from the recommended action from the probation agency?
- What is the final outcome of revocation hearings?

The analyses should incorporate risk levels, length of supervision terms, treatment needs, gender, race and ethnicity, and other characteristics that are necessary to understand the dynamics of revocation decisions and develop responsive interventions. As part of this analysis, the teams may identify the segment of the population that is low-risk and could benefit from less supervision through reduced reporting, inactive supervision, or shorter supervision terms, as well as the higher-risk segment that may require more support and services to reduce risk. With a better understanding of the factors driving supervision failure, the ways in which the justice system responds, and the characteristics of the population, action research teams will develop strategies to address two kinds of supervision failure: 1) missed opportunities for crime prevention and 2) incarceration for technical violations of supervision that do not involve a new crime.

#### *Develop responsive policy changes and program interventions*

At the conclusion of the analysis, the intermediary will convene the teams for a cross-jurisdiction summit to discuss common themes and potential solutions. These conversations will promote peer-to-peer learning, allow experts to share information on potential intervention models, and create opportunities for sites to brainstorm and vet ideas with their colleagues. The intermediary will review and provide feedback on the 10 site-specific reports developed by the action research teams and develop and publish a brief synthesizing the data findings and common themes across sites.

Following the convening, the action research teams will develop recommendations for changes to policy and practice that will reduce revocations and improve supervision outcomes. LJAF and the intermediary will review these recommendations and proposed interventions, and successful sites may proceed to Phase II.

## **Phase II**

If approved, the second phase of the Challenge may involve implementing testable ideas and promising models, measuring outcomes, and evaluating proposed interventions. Phase II funding for action research teams would be determined by LJAF in collaboration with the intermediary. Requirements and guidance for this phase will be developed in advance of the cross-jurisdiction convening.

## **The Role of the Intermediary**

The ideal partner for this role will be a national organization with experience facilitating action research projects and demonstrated expertise in community supervision policy and practice.

The intermediary will collaborate closely with LJAF staff on key decisions but will be responsible for both strategic planning and day-to-day coordination. Specifically, the intermediary will accomplish the following objectives during Phase I of the Challenge:

### **Objective 1: Manage the Challenge Process**

Once the intermediary is chosen, the first order of business will be developing the process for soliciting proposals and recommending action research teams for selection by LJAF. Criteria for site selection will be developed in concert with LJAF and are expected to include the geographic and population diversity of jurisdictions and availability of required data in electronic format. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Developing criteria for selecting jurisdictions
- Drafting and disseminating the RFP
- Conducting a webinar to describe the Challenge process
- Drafting FAQs and responding to inquiries from potential applicants
- Reviewing applications and making recommendations for funding

### **Objective 2: Provide Technical Assistance to Action Research Teams**

In addition to day-to-day coordination, the intermediary will be expected to provide low touch technical assistance to participating jurisdictions. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Serving as point of contact for grantees on matters relating to subject matter expertise, as well as the requirements of the Challenge
- Providing input and feedback on proposed research designs to ensure common outcomes of interest and the ability to conduct cross-site analyses
- Reviewing data analyses and advising on interpretations
- Advising on proposed policy changes and interventions to reduce revocations
- Securing LJAF approval at each stage of the research and policy analysis process

### **Objective 3: Promote Peer-to-Peer Learning**

The intermediary will be responsible for managing the network of participating jurisdictions and promoting cross-site collaboration. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Conducting webinars for participating jurisdictions on common themes and challenges
- Coordinating logistics and programming for a cross-jurisdiction summit
- Helping jurisdictions prepare for the summit, including selecting teams to participate and preparing presentations or other materials

### **Objective 4: Conduct Cross-Site Analyses and Disseminate Lessons Learned**

The intermediary will be responsible for tracking and synthesizing key findings from the analyses across sites, as well as conducting original cross-site analyses and identifying common themes and implications. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Publishing a research brief on cross-site findings and partnering with LJAF to broadly publicize these findings

### **Objective 5: Make Recommendations for Phase II Participation**

Following the summit, the intermediary will be expected to facilitate transition to Phase II of the Challenge. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Making recommendations to LJAF for Phase II funding
- Providing guidance for external communications such as media appearances, testimony, and presentations to local, state, or national stakeholders

### **Objective 6: Serve as Primary Fiscal Agent**

In addition to the responsibilities outlined above, the intermediary will also serve as the primary fiscal agent for the Challenge, as appropriate. Activities and deliverables will include:

- Developing a process for and facilitating collection of information from the sub-grantees for required grant reports
- Overseeing project budgets and grant spending and disbursements, including compliance with LJAF prohibitions on any efforts to influence legislation, distribute propaganda, or participate in a public election or political campaign
- Ensuring timely payment of invoices and reimbursements, in particular as it relates to the cross-jurisdiction convening
- Responding to inquiries from grantees on accounting and other contract issues

Following completion of Phase I, LJAF may make a supplemental award to the intermediary to support Phase II. During Phase II, the intermediary would be expected to provide LJAF with frequent updates on implementation. In addition, LJAF may support evaluations of one or more interventions; in that event, the provider may be required to participate in regular meetings with the evaluation partner(s). Routine collaboration and communication between the intermediary and evaluators would be needed to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities and to ensure the evaluators are promptly notified of any challenges that may interfere with research objectives.

LJAF will oversee the intermediary and have final approval on key staffing and leadership roles. LJAF approval will also be necessary for major deliverables related to each of the objectives outlined above (e.g., research designs, summaries of key findings, external communications, etc.). Representatives from the intermediary will meet in-person quarterly with LJAF to discuss completed deliverables, major activities for the coming quarter, and project budgets and timelines. Additional in-person meetings may be required during key decision points, such as selecting action research teams for Phase I and Phase II funding.

The cross-jurisdiction convening agenda will be developed in collaboration with LJAF. Selection of jurisdictions for Phase I and Phase II funding will be made in consultation with the intermediary, but LJAF will maintain final decision-making authority.



## Grant Terms and Timeline

The term for this grant will be 22 months with the potential to reapply for up to three years of additional funding to oversee Phase II.

Key Activity	Deadline
Proposals due	November 14, 2018
Start date for intermediary	March 2019
Intermediary releases RFP for action research teams	May 2019
Notification of awards for selected action research teams	July 2019
Cross-jurisdiction convening	September 2020
Phase I deliverables and Phase II funding recommendations due	December 2020

The overall budget for Phase I of the Challenge is up to \$2.5 million. The vast majority of this funding is allocated for up to 10 sub-grants to the action research teams of \$200,000 each for research and policy recommendations in Phase I, as well as travel costs to attend the cross-jurisdiction convening. LJAF anticipates awarding up to \$500,000 to the intermediary for Phase I. The budget for the intermediary must include expenses for hosting the cross-jurisdiction convening.

## Application Process

### How to Apply

Proposals are due by 7:00 p.m. EST on November 14, 2018 and should be submitted via email using the subject line “Reducing Revocations Proposal” to [ReducingRevocations@arnoldfoundation.org](mailto:ReducingRevocations@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 and will notify the selected organization of grant awards by March 1, 2019.

### What an Application 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 12 pages. A table of contents, cover page, references or bibliography, and brief team biographies are all required but do not count toward the 12-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:

- **Project Design:**
  - Specify how the objectives outlined in the RFP will be achieved. Please provide as much detail as possible on the proposed activities and process for each of the six objectives: 1) Manage the Challenge Process; 2) Provide Technical Assistance to Action Research Teams; 3) Promote Peer-to-Peer Learning; 4) Conduct Cross-Site Analyses and Disseminate Lessons Learned; 5) Make Recommendations for Phase II Participation; and 6) Serve as Primary Fiscal Agent. Please also specify your approach to coordination between LJAF and the selected jurisdictions.
  - Provide a list of proposed deliverables. Respondents are encouraged to explain why the proposed deliverables have been chosen, how they will add value for the community supervision field, and strategies for reaching the target audiences, including researchers, criminal justice agency stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners.
  - Submit a timeline including proposed dates to accomplish project milestones.
  - Describe any potential risks or limitations that you anticipate given the proposed scope of work, timeline, and budget, as well as how the project team intends to mitigate these challenges.
- **Impact to the Field:** Describe the importance of the project to the field, including a brief literature review summarizing the extent and limitations of existing research on the causes and consequences of probation revocations.
- **Team Capacity:** Specify how the project team is uniquely positioned to achieve the objectives and accomplish the proposed approach. Please identify a primary project director, fiscal agent, and key staff for this project, and be specific about the credentials of team members who will staff the project.
- **Appendices** (not included in the total page count):
  - Brief project team biographies that specify the project team role and responsibilities for the project team member
  - Name, email, and telephone number for the primary project contact
  - Organizational chart (if appropriate)
  - Resumes and curricula vitae for project team members
  - References or bibliography

## **Budget**

LJAF requires that 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 also 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.

All applicants must provide:

- **Project budget:** Using the LJAF budget template (available at this [link](#)), list, describe, and provide calculations and cost assumption information for all project costs.
- **Budget narrative:**
  - 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.
  - Please provide an estimated budget broken out by objective.
  - Budgets will be evaluated to determine whether all costs are well justified, reasonable, and cost effective.

## Review Process

In order to ensure a comprehensive review of proposals, LJAF will work with internal reviewers and potentially external reviewers, including scholars, policy experts, and practitioners, to conduct objective reviews of each proposal. The reviewers will make recommendations to LJAF on awards based on the following criteria: (1) project design; (2) impact to the field; (3) team capacity (including financial capabilities); and (4) cost effectiveness of the budget.

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Key Statistics, Table: Estimated Number of Persons Under Correctional Supervision in the United States, 1980-2016*. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 2018. <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=kfdetail&iid=487>.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2016*, by Danielle Kaeble, Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 2018. <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6188>.

<sup>3</sup> The Council of State Governments Justice Center. *50-State Data on Public Safety, Action Item 2: Promote Success on Supervision and Use of Proportionate Responses to Respond to Violations*. New York: The Council of State Governments, 2018. <https://50statespublicsafety.us/part-3/strategy-2/action-item-2/>. Summarizing data from 17 states. In 2019, with funding from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the Council of State Governments Justice Center will publish a 50-state snapshot of probation and parole revocations to prison.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, Ojmarrh, David Wilson, Amy Eggers and Doris MacKenzie. "Assessing the Effectiveness of Drug Courts on Recidivism: A Meta-analytic Review of Traditional and Non-traditional Drug Courts." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40, no. 1 (2012): 60–71; Development Services Group, Inc. *Alternatives to Detention and Confinement*. Washington: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014; Bird, Mia, Magnus Lofstrom, Brandon Martin, Steven Raphael and Viet Nguyen. *The Impact of Proposition 47 on Crime and Recidivism*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2018; Pelletier, Elizabeth, Bryce Peterson and Ryan King. *Assessing the Impact of South Carolina's Parole and Probation Reforms: Justice Reinvestment Initiative*. Washington: Urban Institute, 2017; The Pew Charitable Trusts. *Reducing Incarceration for Technical Violations in Louisiana*. Washington: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2014; The Pew Charitable Trusts. *Mandatory Reentry Supervision: Evaluating the Kentucky Experience*. Washington: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2014.