

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a national racial justice organization with offices in five states and the District of Columbia. The lease on our current Georgia office in Decatur ends in summer 2024, and we intend to relocate to Atlanta to be closer to the communities we serve. We wish for our new office to be more than a structure that houses our staff — we want it to be a tool that helps us advance our mission and impact goals by enlivening the community in which it resides.

Accordingly, we have initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a qualified partner to help us:

1. Devise ways in which the office building and/or structures on adjacent land can provide spaces that benefit the residents, community groups, and other nonprofit organizations in the neighborhood; and
2. If applicable, propose a formal partnership with the SPLC to operationalize the afore mentioned proposal(s).

The SPLC will treat partnership proposals as pitches. If we are interested in pursuing a partnership, we will ask for a much more detailed proposal.

2. WHO MAY RESPOND

The SPLC welcomes ideas from all individuals and organizations, but for a partnership, we seek a diversity of organizations, including but not limited to, BIPOC-owned/operated and women-owned/operated businesses or nonprofits. In addition, we seek partners who have:

1. Experience in community redevelopment projects;
2. An understanding of the type of legal, programmatic, policy, and advocacy work the SPLC conducts; and
3. Demonstrated experience integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their work to minimize bias and oppression and address systemic inequities.

3. ABOUT THE SPLC

Founded in 1971, the SPLC is a 501(c)(3) organization that is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. It seeks to bring about systemic change through four program departments:

A. Legal. The legal department advocates on behalf of individuals and communities impacted by discrimination and/or poverty to bring about systemic reforms through high-impact lawsuits, limited direct representation, and public education and advocacy. It has six focus areas: Criminal Justice Reform, Children’s Rights, Economic Justice, Immigrant Justice, Voting Rights, and LGBTQ+ Rights/Special Litigation.

B. Intelligence Project (IP). In the 1980s and 1990s, the SPLC broke new ground suing white supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan. An outgrowth of that work was IP, which tracks and exposes the activities of hate and antigovernment groups. Each year, IP produces a census of active hate and antigovernment groups in the U.S. and regularly publishes web-based content about hate and extremism. Its investigations and research are widely used by lawmakers, corporations, and the media.

C. Learning for Justice (LFJ). LFJ’s mission is to help teachers, caregivers, schools, and communities educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy. LFJ provides free resources to people who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use its materials and services to supplement curriculum, to inform their practices, for professional development, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued, and welcome participants.

D. Policy. The Policy departments has teams working in the halls of state legislatures in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, and Mississippi, as well as the U.S. Capitol, advocating on behalf of individuals and communities whose voices are often ignored by lawmakers. The policy teams both fights against bad laws that would cause harm and proposes and secures for passage of laws that protect and expand human and civil rights, as well as grow the social safety net.

Learn more about our work at: www.splcenter.org.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

The SPLC is open to a wide variety of ideas for how our new office building could be a tool to advance our mission and impact goals.¹ This could take many forms, such as:

- Provide spaces and resources inside and around the building that community members, community organizations, and nonprofits can use, e.g. free meeting space, free WIFI, hosting free events;
- Ground-level commercial/retail leases aimed at helping BIPOC-owned businesses launch or expand, and bring needed businesses/services into the neighborhood;
- Create a landbank to improve blighted land and protect against gentrification and displacement;
- Create a food hall aimed at helping BIPOC-owned restaurants launch or expand; and
- Make improvements in the neighborhood, such as partnering with an organization that is building affordable housing.

Assumptions about the new SPLC office:

- The SPLC will buy land and build an office from the ground up (but will also consider rehabilitating an existing structure or a commercial lease if these options best meet our community impact needs);
- It will be within walking distance of a MARTA train station;
- The staff portion of the building will be 60,000 square feet;
- The land will be two to ten acres and the SPLC is considering buying additional land in the area for the community impact component;
- We intend to open the office in summer 2024;

¹ See the appendix for the impact goals

- The SPLC expects to have its Atlanta office at this location for at least the next 20 years;
- The spaces SPLC provides for community impact could be part of its main office building, in another building on the same parcel of land, or elsewhere in the neighborhood on SPLC-owned land; and
- The community impact portion of this project has no budget — the SPLC is willing to consider big, bold, and audacious ideas.

If you have an idea that you merely want the SPLC to consider without any expectation of partnership, please submit them in any format you would like.

If you are interested in partnering with the SPLC on your proposal, it should include:

A) Description of your organization

1. Describe the general nature of your work and how the racial and gender composition of your staff help create greater value, insights, and viewpoints in the work you produce for your clients or people you serve.
2. Provide examples of similar work, along with contact information for organizations you have served.
3. Describe the qualifications and experience of staff who will be assigned to this project. Provide a more detailed background of the proposed project lead, including their CV.

B) Proposal details

1. **Overview:** Please provide a narrative describing your proposal.
2. **Your role:** What exactly will your role be? For instance, will you be operating and managing what you propose to build?
3. **Impact, learning, and evaluation:** Who will your proposal impact and what will the impact be? If we are interested in pursuing a partnership with you, how would you put together a quantitative projection of what the impact will be? After your project is built, what would be the goals in the first three years? How would you evaluate impact on an annual basis?
4. **Gentrification and displacement:** How will your proposal avoid contributing to gentrification and displacement? Will it serve as a speedbump to them?
5. **Work plan:** Please propose a detailed timeline for implementing your proposal.
6. **Budget:** Provide an estimated budget for implementation and ongoing operating expenses.

It is possible that SPLC will ultimately have several partners for this endeavor. We will consider proposals submitted jointly from multiple organizations/individuals.

NOTE: Please only submit proposals inclusive of properties, partnerships and/or ideas that are currently 100 percent owned or controlled by your submission entity. Any potential third-party partnerships can be identified within the submission but should not be explored formally or informally until the SPLC has had the opportunity to review and is consulted.

We understand that you may need additional information to accurately understand the full scope of work to complete this proposal. Please join the bidder's conference on Wednesday, October 27, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. EDT. Register here: https://splcenter-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_e97YY_NuQ9mooBUqvbh1cg

5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Responses will be evaluated along several dimensions:

1. Qualifications;
2. Understanding and practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion;
3. Impact;
4. Work plan;
5. Budget; and
6. References.

6. PROCESS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

1. **Closing date: Proposals are due by 5 p.m. EDT on Monday, November 29, 2021.**
2. Inquiries: Please direct them to Seth Levi, Chief Strategy Officer, no later than 5 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, November 2, 2021: seth.levi@splcenter.org.
3. Conditions of the proposals: All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the SPLC.
4. Submission instructions: Proposals must be a single PDF document, no longer than 10 pages, and the file name must include your organization's name. Email them to seth.levi@splcenter.org. Mail submissions will not be accepted.

APPENDIX

SPLC Impact Statement

W.E.B. Dubois said, “As the South goes, so goes the nation.” So many of the civil rights challenges that the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) was established to defeat have echoed his words – laws and policies that have spread from the South to other parts of the country, disenfranchising and oppressing communities of color across the United States. To effectively counter the structural racism and other forms of oppression that exist today, we are committed to changing the South in order to lead the way for the rest of the country.

Whom we serve

The SPLC focuses on communities of color and other marginalized groups in the South with the goal of defending their rights and mobilizing efforts to win progressive policies that transform the social and political context of the region. Our work is grounded in the communities of our five Deep South states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi. Our strategies include litigation, policy advocacy, research and documentation, community organizing, and public education. We strive to work with community partners to transform the political agenda, mobilize constituencies to demand change and build political power, and achieve racial justice in the places where slavery, genocide, and Jim Crow were drivers of society. Today, the legacy of these injustices perpetuates inequities and discrimination for Black, indigenous, and communities of color, particularly in the South.

Theory of change

In order to protect our democracy and the rights of exploited and oppressed communities in the South, we must ensure that governments and institutions are responsive to the needs, hopes and futures of all. We must create a culture in the South that allows all residents to thrive. We must dismantle systems that oppress the most vulnerable and deny accountability for human rights violations. To achieve institutional effectiveness, we need to partner with and support communities who demand accountability and take action to achieve change. We recognize that there are many entangled barriers to these demands. The SPLC’s role is to overturn and eliminate barriers and align ourselves with communities to demand and effectuate change.

We have identified four areas of work that offer the greatest opportunities to achieving our mission. While there are many urgent needs, we recognize that one organization cannot do everything very well. We choose to prioritize these areas of work in order to achieve maximum impact. With this focus in mind, we adopt the following goals:

Eradicating poverty.

Being born poor or growing up in poverty is the single most significant indicator of poor health outcomes, low quality education, domestic/community violence and/or encounters with police or the criminal justice system. Children living in poverty are also more likely to live in poverty as adults. The United States has a greater number of residents living in poverty than any other industrialized nation; the Southern region has had the highest poverty rate of any region of the country for most of the last fifty years. In fact, in the last fifty years, the net decrease in poverty in the South is only one percent (1 percent)². There is an overrepresentation of Black and Brown adults, children and families who are poor in the United States, a direct result of structural racism and barriers to opportunity, this is especially true in the states in which SPLC works and lives. While some improvements have been made in recent years, the COVID pandemic has reversed many of these gains, plunging millions into food and housing insecurity.

² <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/154286/50YearTrends.pdf>

Decriminalizing and decarcerating Black and brown people.

The United States has the highest incarceration rate on the planet with 2.2 million people currently in the nation's prisons and jails — a 500 percent increase over the last forty years. Although people of color only comprise 30 percent of U.S. population, they make up 60 percent of its prison population. The U.S. population is just 5 percent of the world's population, but our country is home to 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population. In four of the Deep South states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi), more than half of the prison population is black. Inequitable policies and procedures define America's criminal justice system, perpetuate mass incarceration, lead to racially disparate outcomes with impunity, and result in millions of individuals with some manifestation of a criminal record. Such a record is all too often a life sentence of obstacles to employment, education, housing, voting, family reunification and public benefits.

Protecting voting rights and civic engagement.

Despite the United States' claim of being “the oldest democracy,” its systems of elections and elected representation were designed to vest power in a minority of the people. Since the founding of the republic, legislative changes and legal rulings have helped to advance universal suffrage and free and fair elections, but it was done in a context where vesting greater power in the majority of people would not undermine white supremacy — largely because the nation was still overwhelmingly white. Granting nonwhites greater participation in elections and elected representation was permissible only because it would not threaten the underlying power structure. With the nation's white population soon to become a minority, white, conservative elected officials are exploiting the nation's archaic systems of elections and elected representation to keep power vested in the white minority.

Dismantling white nationalism and protecting democracy.

We are in the midst of another moment of racial reckoning in the U.S. Though a majority of Americans find themselves grappling with what it means to dismantle the structures and systems that uphold white supremacy, far too many are clinging to the vestiges of white hegemony for dear life. And too often they're armed. We need look no further than recent terrorist attacks in this county for evidence of the very real threat of violence against Black, Indigenous and communities of color, immigrant and Jewish communities – Mother Emmanuel in Charleston, the Tree of Life in Pittsburgh, and Walmart in El Paso. Hundreds of lives have been taken to uphold white supremacy. Our very democracy is under threat.