

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY JUSTICE LAB**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTANT VENDOR POOL**  
**May 2020**

**RFP OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this Request for Proposals is to establish a highly qualified cadre of consultants for the Columbia University Justice Lab, whose expertise and knowledge can be tapped and deployed for ongoing and emergent project needs.

**ABOUT THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY JUSTICE LAB**

The [Justice Lab](#) believes that justice policy should foster strong communities and allow people to flourish in a climate of fairness, dignity, and safety. We advance a community-centered future for justice in which healing and resiliency, rather than incarceration and punishment, are used to solve social problems often rooted in poverty and racial inequality. The Justice Lab seeks to foundationally reconceive justice policy, build community safety and resiliency, and advance racial and economic equity. We do this through actionable research, community-centered policy development, and the sustained engagement of diverse constituencies. The Justice Lab's portfolio includes:

- **Courts and Jails:** Two studies examine the effects of jail and court-ordered fees on people who come into criminal courts. The Rikers Island Longitudinal Study interviews court-involved people in New York City. The Harvard Study of Legal Debt is a randomized trial that assesses the impact of fees in an Oklahoma misdemeanor court.
- **[Emerging Adult Justice \(EAJ\) Project:](#)** The fact that the U.S. has become a carceral state, with the highest incarceration rates in the world, has finally become more widely recognized in public discourse but what is still too often overlooked is that emerging adults (between ages 18 - 25), especially poor youth of color, are bearing the brunt of mass incarceration. Our focus is specifically on this distinct developmental age group, working to create less punitive, more effective, and developmentally appropriate responses to young people who are swept up in our legal system. Our work includes writing and disseminating cutting-edge research reports; creating webinars, podcasts, videos and infographics; partnering and supporting our community partners; developing a digital clearinghouse; providing testimony and sharing research to legislative bodies; hosting forums and conferences; and engaging in communication activities that ensure the wide dissemination of our work. We seek to foment support for bold policy change and provide critical information to advocates, elected officials and others, so that emerging adult justice becomes part of the package of justice reforms being pursued nationally.
- **[Incarceration:](#)** After a sustained increase in the incarceration rate, the prison and jail population of the United States is now more than seven times higher than in the early 1970s. The growth in incarceration rates was produced by a transformation of sentencing policy and a new emphasis on incapacitation and deterrence as the main purposes of punishment. As incarceration rates have now started to decline slightly, a new conversation has started about alternatives to

incarceration and continuing reductions in prison and jail populations. Our Incarceration research includes the Pennsylvania Solitary Study (PASS), which studies solitary confinement in a large state prison system, and the National Academy of Sciences report on incarceration, which reviews research on the rise in incarceration and its effects.

- **[Probation and Parole Reform Project](#)**: Aims to end mass supervision, ensuring that far fewer people will be under supervision; the time people spend under supervision will be dramatically reduced; and instead of being supervised under a punitive regime of surveillance, community sentences – whether under improved probation and parole or some other community-driven approach – will become an opportunity for people to receive services, supports and opportunities so they can successfully integrate into their communities. We work to promote these watershed reforms through research, policy/practice formulation, leadership coaching and communications activities. We work collaboratively with advocates, formerly supervised people, policy makers, academics, practitioners, and philanthropy focused particularly on states in which there are policy maker- or advocacy-driven efforts at reform.
- **[Reentry](#)**: About 600,000 people are released from state and federal prison each year, returning overwhelmingly to neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage. The Reentry Studies— the **Boston Reentry Study** and **New York Reentry Study**— are tailored to studying the process of transition from prison to community of a hard-to-reach population under contemporary conditions of mass incarceration.
- **[The Square One Project](#)**: Imagines a future for justice and public safety that starts from scratch — from square one — instead of tinkering at the edges or cherry-picking cordoned-off areas for reform. To do so, we need to get to the root of the problem: decades of neglect around communities with chronic poverty and the twin crises of ingrained racism. The Square One Project is a three-year initiative focused on promoting and nurturing ideas that can help us achieve true justice and public safety. We’re both an incubator for fresh ideas and a venue for learning more about the enormous body of work that is already transforming justice around the country and world. The Square One Project is on a search for the best ideas about how to make justice a reality for all. We’re looking at what’s happening in neighborhoods, in research, in history, and among creative thinkers from every background and field. We’re working with agents of change — from prosecutors, police officers and judges to local neighborhood members, city officials, academics, health providers, and more. We will share and build on innovative ideas and solutions that are already working, and consider new ways of addressing the violence, poverty, and racial inequity that stand in the way of public safety and justice for all.
- **[Youth Justice Initiatives](#)**: Imagines a world where the tens of thousands of youth currently under the custody of juvenile justice systems are treated the same way that we would want our own children to be treated – in their own homes and communities, provided with dignity and respect, and given opportunities to grow and become successful, productive citizens. To achieve this goal, we are working to replace outdated, punitive youth prisons, which are often located far from youths’ families and communities and still exist nationwide, with expanded community capacity. We use an “inside-outside” strategy that works collaboratively with advocates, system-impacted youth and families, practitioners, and elected officials, to plan, design, and implement new systems where ineffective, archaic youth prisons become relics of

the past and youth are served in their own homes and communities. Through a combination of policy, research, leadership-coaching and communications activities, our work aims to build widespread support for state and local reforms and develop the capacity of current and future leaders to execute bold change.

**AREAS OF EXPERTISE SOUGHT:**

To ensure that our projects have readily accessible capacity to assist with our work, the Justice Lab is looking for individuals who have expertise and proven records of accomplishment in one or more of the following areas:

- **Budgeting/Finance:** Provide support in analyzing budgets and proposing options to help shift resources outside of justice systems
- **Capacity Development:** Assist in assessing local on-the-ground capacity and facilitating processes to draw these partners into system transformation efforts
- **Convening:** Bring together partners from various allied groups to share and coordinate work
- **Fundraising:** Support efforts to raise funds for different strands of Justice Lab work
- **Legal Analysis:** Analyze laws, statutes, and regulations in support of watershed policy changes
- **Policy and Advocacy:** Provide strategic support and advising to system stakeholders, advocates, and others, aimed at building political will and executing change, in line with individual project goals and vision
- **Research and Writing:** Research and draft discrete products for Lab projects, such as reports, fact sheets, infographics, briefs, and memos.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

In addition to expertise in the skill areas listed above, the most qualified consultants will have documented expertise in one or more of the content areas of the Justice Lab’s portfolio.

**TO APPLY:**

In addition to the documentation requested in the RFP package, please submit the following by **June 6, 2020:**

- A current resume or CV
- A cover letter that specifies:
  - The skill area(s) for which you would like to be considered
  - Why you would like to be considered for a consultant role at the Justice Lab
  - Relevant examples, including citations, of how your expertise matches our needs
  - References, with contact information, from customers for comparable work
  - Your hourly rates by staff level and specialty, along with anticipated availability over the next 12 months

**NOTE:** Submitting information in response to this RFP does not guarantee employment. Rather, this serves as the first step in our ability to engage individuals as consultants for the Lab. Should the Justice Lab choose to engage the services of someone who responds to this solicitation and becomes part of our pool, we would present consultants with a specific scope of work for the project and the exact payment terms.

Information submitted for this RFP will be valid for up to 3 years from the date of submission.