



The Critically Conscious Youth Development Grant Program

A Request for Proposals 2018

I. Background and Long-term Vision

The Perrin Family Foundation is dedicated to advancing youth-led social change in Connecticut. We understand youth-led social change as a long-term process that builds the confidence, knowledge, skills and collective power of young people while addressing the root causes of injustice and equity in their lives and community.

Our mission and strategy is informed by our deeply held belief that youth become stronger – and communities become safer, healthier and more just – when young people’s voices are valued, respected, and engaged as equals in the decision-making processes that impact their lives and communities.

Creating opportunities for youth to share their truths, question the status quo, exercise leadership and take action to create change, will not only pave the way for young people’s lifelong participation and leadership in the civic sphere, it also has the potential to transform our youth, communities, and institutions in the here and now.

We see the development of youth leadership and positive community change as mutually reinforced and inextricably linked. When youth voices are authentically engaged, the communities, institutions and systems that shape their lives become more inclusive and responsive. And when those communities, institutions and structures are held accountable for offering equitable opportunities and resources, then all youth will truly be able to realize their full potential.

II. Our Process: Listening, Learning and Building a Bridge to Liberation

PFF’s 2013 [field scan](#) identified the importance of bridging the gap in youth development practices and youth organizing approaches, in order to build a stronger youth led social change field. This is no less salient or relevant today. Across the state, youth development organizations engage most of the youth population that participate and enroll in out-of-school time programs. Yet, many are not engaging young people in a deeper exploration of their identities, understanding root causes and realities of power and oppression in their lives and communities, practices which research clearly demonstrates are vital and necessary for young people’s holistic development and future civic engagement trajectory.

This past year, we intentionally started a journey of reviewing scholarly research, meeting with model programs in the region, and convening local youth practitioners for feedback on how to strengthen the youth-led social change landscape. Our listening and learning reinforced that both young people and those working with them in community settings are seeking support and shared language to understand and navigate structural oppression in their communities – and these opportunities should not be limited to only young people participating in youth organizing. Furthermore, youth development organizations could be powerful allies for youth organizing groups. This allyship is necessary for the expansion of scale, scope and impact of social change work across the state. PFF has the opportunity to deepen its approach and engage youth and practitioners in building a bridge between youth development and youth led social change to move young people towards liberation. This has led to the development of a new grant program funding opportunity: Critically Conscious Youth Development.

III. What is Critically Conscious Youth Development?

PFF developed the Critically Conscious Youth Development (CCYD) grant program with the intention of sharing a framework that introduces a new lens for youth development programs focused on centering identity, lived experience and political education as a core competency. **The framework of Critical Consciousness is the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and develop a critical lens to navigate and challenge these systems.** Critical Consciousness is composed of three components; critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action¹. All three of these components are present in youth organizing efforts. The critical reflection component is often left out of youth development practices and is necessary to develop effective youth development programs for youth directly impacted by inequity and injustice. *A deeper dive into the Critical Reflection component is covered in appendix A of this RFP.*

PFF's Critically Conscious Youth Development framework directly names and elevates Critical Consciousness as a core competency to effectively implement youth work. Youth most directly impacted by inequity and injustices are often exposed to many environmental and social risk factors at an early age. PFF's Critically Conscious Youth Development framework directly names and elevates Critical Consciousness as a core competency to effectively implement youth work. Traditional approaches to youth development focus on providing young people with support, skills, and opportunities to shape their individual choices, behaviors, and direction. These efforts, while valuable, stop short of helping youth understand and address the structural barriers that impede their equitable access to the resources and opportunities essential for their success.

“While youth development proponents agree that young people need supports and opportunities, the choices young people make and the support they receive (or don't receive) are informed by broader social and political contexts. These include systemic barriers that are shaped by race and economic inequality: bad schools in poor neighborhoods, high rates of incarceration in communities of color, a lack of living wage jobs, and marginalization from the social networks through which middle-class people gain access to jobs, housing, and education. But they also include more subtle social and political barriers: gender identity, body image, sexuality, self-image, internalized racism, and the psychological deprivations of class. Yet youth development practitioners as a whole are just beginning to understand how young people engage with their communities and form their social and political identities.”²

Youth development programs have an opportunity to acknowledge youth's lived experiences with inequity and injustice to support personal and community transformation. Considering, youth development programs engage youth through a variety of practices; organizations are invited to think deeply and creatively in developing their own methodology for engaging youth in Critical Consciousness. The methodology is the “how to” of implementing the work of aforementioned Critical Consciousness framework. While this funding opportunity advances Critically Conscious Youth Development as a framework for supporting the holistic development of youth, PFF recognizes that it can occur through a wide range of program models and activities. It is just as possible to incorporate Critically Conscious Youth Development in an arts program as it in a sports program or a mentorship program or a college access program. We invite organizations applying for this funding opportunity to think deeply and creatively about the particular methodology they use to develop critical consciousness.

A young person struggling in school may be directed to a tutoring or academic enrichment program, where they are never supported to question why their school curriculum is not reflective of the breadth of history, leadership and resilience exhibited in communities of color, unpack how they've experienced racial bias at the hands of school faculty or in school policies, and explore how all that informs their relationship to school. Anti-bullying and anti-violence initiatives ask young people to shift their interpersonal interactions but do not examine or challenge the systemic violence that marginalized youth encounter daily – at the hands of police officers, the criminal justice system, or immigration

¹ Watts, R. J., Diemer, M.A., and Voight, A.M (2011). Critical Consciousness: Current Status and Future Directions

² Ginwright, Shawn., (2003) Youth Organizing: Expanding Possibilities for Youth Development.

policies. Financial literacy classes teach young people to make informed and responsible choices about managing money, but don't talk about the history of slavery, redlining, predatory lending and its impact on communities of color and inability to attain generational wealth accumulation. Mainstream media depicts stereotypical and negative images of young people of color, women, members of the LGBTQ community and people living in poverty while simultaneously advancing promises of an "American Dream" where all have equal opportunity and upward mobility if they just make the right choices. When young are not afforded spaces to explore and contextualize the injustices they experience, inequity becomes normalized and internalized rather than challenged and changed.

Critically Conscious Youth Development offers an alternative by creating access to supportive spaces where young people can unpack contradictions between *what they are told* and *what they experience*, meaningfully explore their identities, and draw connections between their lived experience and historical, social, and political patterns. In doing so, it advances a more holistic approach to young people's development, deepens young people's love and appreciation for their whole selves, and expands young people's sense of agency, power and opens a pathway to liberation. In the words of Angela Davis, "We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society."

IV. The Funding Opportunity

This funding opportunity is designed to support youth organizations that embrace and advance the **framework of Critically Consciousness Youth Development** to address aforementioned gaps in the youth development sector. Organizations applying should be committed to addressing the development of youth most directly impacted by inequity and injustice. The funding opportunity includes:

- 1. Multi-year Funding Commitment.** In the philanthropic sector, multi-year grant making has proven to be an effective practice. The CCYD grant program will support a cohort model of up to 6 organizations. Each organization will receive a two-year grant commitment of up to \$30,000 per year.
- 2. Participation in the Capacity Building Cohort**
Organizations funded through the Critically Consciousness Youth Development grant program will participate in a two-year capacity building initiative. Success in past capacity building initiatives has proven the dual approach: grantmaking + capacity building = solid investment in organizational growth and youth impact. We believe in a responsive approach, and will be developing the CCYD capacity building cohort with input from selected organizations and needs of the group.

All grant recipients will be fully expected to participate in the capacity building cohort. Below is a general overview of the anticipated capacity building structure:

Year One: The cohort will meet 3-4 times a year for convening's, trainings, meetings and retreats. Organizations will receive ongoing coaching and support from a consultant.

Year Two: The cohort will have a more intensive focus; this may include monthly trainings, workshops and retreats led by experienced youth development consultants.

To be eligible to apply, organizations must minimally:

- Hold as a core value of the organization a commitment to advancing youth-led social change and centering the lived experiences of youth most directly impacted by injustice and inequity, including youth experiencing any of the following: ableism, classism, cisgenderism/transphobia, heterosexism, xenophobia, sexism and racism.
- Be geographically focused on supporting the healthy growth and development of young people in under-resourced communities across Connecticut. Organizations outside of Connecticut will not be considered for funding.
- Support and engage young people between the ages of 13-24.

- Demonstrate consistent and ongoing programming throughout the year with a commitment to developing youth leadership over time.
- Demonstrate willingness to or currently implement practices that intentionally and explicitly engage youth in dialogues about power and root causes of systemic oppression.
- Embrace youth voices in decision making as tool for transformation and social change.
- Be fiscally sponsored by a tax-exempt organization or have independent 501(c)(3) status.

Preference and added consideration will be given to:

- Small, nascent, and/or grassroots organizations with strong community connections.
- Organizations that display a clear racial justice lens and an institutional commitment to addressing this on all levels of the organization.
- Organizations led by people of color and/or a person residing in the community where the organization engages youth.
- Organizations that actively engage low-income youth and/or young people of color.

The following criteria will be closely considered during the application review process:

Note: The following questions are for generative purposes as you think about your work and alignment with this opportunity (the formal proposal questions are in section VII).

**Additionally, we recognize that many grassroots groups working with youth may not have paid or compensated staff. “Staff” in the context used below, refers to any adult playing a central role in leading the program or organization and engaged in day-to-day work with young people.*



How is your organization activating youth engagement?

- Is your program intentionally designed with a strengths based approach to explore, celebrate and affirm youth’s lived experiences and layers of identity?
- Do trained adult allies/staff regularly engage youth in meaningful dialogue undergirded with a political education analysis that explores the root causes of injustice and inequity in their lives and communities?
- Are youth leaders integral to the organization’s decision-making process? Is there a clear intention to avoid tokenizing youth in organizational decision-making spaces?
- Does the program design enable adults and youth to engage in a mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge that challenge adultist norms?
- Do youth take what they are learning outside the program’s walls? Is the organization committed to supporting youth to lead, educate and build community spaces addressing social justice issues?
- Are youth invited, supported, and encouraged to participate in social justice efforts in their local community or around the state?



How is your organization activating the leadership of staff*?

- Does staff demonstrate an understanding of critical consciousness and the advantages of approaching youth development practices through a critical consciousness lens? Is staff aware of institutional barriers and potential challenges in implementing this framework?
- Can staff explain how the program’s methodology and design advance critical consciousness and aligns with the organization’s core mission and community needs?
- Does staff demonstrate an understanding of the distinctions between community service, civic engagement and youth-led social change?



How is your organization activating institutional commitment?

- Does the organization have dedicated staff to develop and implement the program?
- Does the organization make staff learning a priority by routinely and intentionally creating time and space to develop learning, strengthen facilitation skills, group work and one-on-one mentoring?
- Is the organization committed to learning about and advancing racial justice at an individual, programmatic and institutional level?
- Do the institutional leadership, staff and board reflect the community?
- Is the organization interested in or currently partnering with youth-led organizing groups?

V. Selection Process and Timeline

Our team is committed to thoughtfully reviewing every application submitted through this RFP. There will be two phases of the review process. Phase one consists of a paper review of all submitted proposals. Phase two, will include learning visits by PFF staff to a smaller subset of organizations advancing to the second round.

To apply for this grant opportunity, organizations must:

1. Attend an information session.
There is an evening, in-person and a web-based, virtual option. **Participation in ONE of info sessions is required in order to apply.** Organizations attending the info session should RSVP to Mercedes MacAlpine, Program Associate at mmacalpine@perrinfamilyfoundation.org. During the info session, we will give a detailed overview of the CCYD grant program and are available to answer questions regarding the RFP.
2. Submit an application via our online portal by September 23rd by 11:59pm. Instructions for the online portal will be distributed after attending the info session. You may preview the application questions on pages 6 - 7.
3. Agree to participate in a two-year capacity building cohort with the understanding that the implementation and creation of the capacity building work will be developed based on the needs and strengths of the selected organizations in the cohort. Dates will be determined upon launch of the cohort in 2019.

August 20 th 2018	CCYD RFP announcement
September 5 th 2018 @5:30pm-8:00pm (New Haven) *RSVP by August 31st	CCYD info session
September 10 th 2018 12pm-1:30pm (Via ZOOM Conference Call) *RSVP by August 31st	CCYD webinar info session
September 23 rd by 11:59pm	Proposals are due via our online database. Link will be shared with organizations after attending info session.
October 22 nd -November 16 th 2018	Organizations advancing to phase two are notified and learning visits are scheduled.
Mid-December 2018	Selected organizations are notified of final decisions

VI. Communicating with PFF Staff

We are happy to embark on this new journey with our Connecticut community. Please share this RFP with colleagues or community members who may be interested and aligned with this funding opportunity.

All questions regarding the CCYD grant opportunity should be directed to Program Officer, Amarilis Pullen at apullen@perrinfamilyfoundation.org. We understand there may be specific questions about the RFP; these questions will be best addressed at the info session.

All RSVP's for the info session and technical assistance support regarding our online database, should be directed to Program Associate, Mercedes MacAlpine at mmacalpine@perrinfamilyfoundation.org.

VII. Proposal Questions

While organizations must submit application questions via our online portal, a preview of the application is provided below for your reference.

Part 1: General Information

1. Provide a brief organizational history, mission statement and origins of youth-led social change work within your organization. (If your organization operates multiple programs, please list and provide a brief explanation).
2. Describe the context for your organizational work. What need or challenge does your organization seek to address? How does Critical Consciousness connect to your organization's mission?
3. What geographic area does your organization serve?
4. Describe your staffing model, including number of part-time staff, full-time, or volunteer staff. If your organization operates multiple programs, please list and provide a brief explanation of each one.
5. Briefly describe any networks, partnerships, and/or collaborations you are involved in that are connected to youth-led social change efforts. How do these connections support your current youth development work?

Part 2: Non-Profit Fiscal Status

Tax-Exempt Organizations (Complete this section ONLY if you are a tax-exempt organization)

1. How does your Board of Directors reflect your community?
2. List names of Board of Directors and indicate their community affiliations?
3. How does the Board interact with youth leaders?
4. How many youth serve on the Board?

Fiscally Sponsored Organizations (Complete this section ONLY if you are a Fiscally Sponsored Organization)

1. Do you have an Advisory Board? If yes, please describe their role in regards to your work and how they interact with the organization's youth leaders and staff.
2. List names of Advisory Board members or Steering Committee and indicate their community affiliations.

Part 3: Program Narrative

1. Please provide a description of the program that you are requesting funding for. Be sure to include the following information:
 - a. Purpose and goals of the program design.
 - b. Ages and demographics of youth.
 - c. How many youth are engaged in the program(s)?
 - d. How are youth recruited?
 - e. Where and how often do youth meet throughout the year?
2. What is the length of time that youth are typically engaged in the program/organization from entry to exit?
3. What method or approach does your organization utilize to advance Critically Conscious Youth Development? Why do you use this particular method? Please include two concrete examples of how your organization has engaged young people in Critically Conscious Youth Development?
4. Based on your knowledge of the Critically Conscious Youth Development grant program, please explain why your organization makes an ideal candidate.
5. Are there aspects of your current programming or organization that would need to shift, change, or evolve in order to align with Critically Conscious Youth Development? If so why and how?

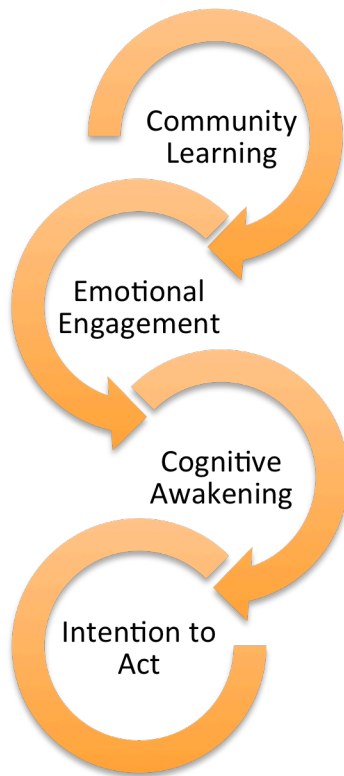
Part 4: Outcomes and Evaluation

1. How do you define success for this project? Please describe at least two specific ways you expect this project to impact youth and one specific way you expect this project to impact the broader community.
2. How will you know if you have been successful? Please be specific about how you will measure your desired youth and community impact.

Part 5: Attachments (Please prepare and attach documents upon submitting proposal via our online portal)

- Current FY operating budget.
- Budget for your proposed program (only necessary if your organization operates multiple programs).
- Most recently available financial statement (including actual revenues & expenses)
- Provide a list your current funders (note if they provide general or program specific funding).
- A copy of your organization's strategic plan, theory of change, or logic model if you have one.
- Fiscally Sponsored Organizations, please attach the following:
 - a. Memorandum of Agreement
 - b. Copy of IRS determination letter of the fiscal sponsor
 - c. The most recently available financial statement (IRS Form 990) of your fiscal sponsor.

How a Young Person May Experience the Critical Reflection Process...



Jessica's story is an example for the purposes of this RFP

Community Learning: *Jessica has been experiencing feelings of isolation and frustration while being bussed to a "better school" outside her neighborhood. She joins an organization that supports her exploration of identity and validates her lived experiences. During her time engaging at the organization, she is invited to learn about racism through the framework of the 5 I's of Oppression (ideological, institutional, internalized, interpersonal and intersectional). This is Jessica's first time learning language to describe the everyday oppression she experiences.*

Emotional Engagement: *Through support from her community of peers and adults, Jessica is encouraged to deeply explore her feelings of frustration and isolation arising in her everyday life. She is regularly sharing her feelings and thoughts with peer and adult mentor.*

Jessica is provided with a space to be heard and seen as she struggles with these feelings and explores them in one-on-one conversations with adult mentors, group discussions and/or structured activities. She is able to make a meaningful realization that the term a "better" school is referring to a more resourced and predominately white student population. The 5 I's of oppression opens Jessica to an understanding that her frustrations and feelings of isolation are directly connected to larger issue of institutional racism.

Cognitive Awakening: *Jessica develops an analysis drawing connections between lived experiences with institutional racism and the racial disparities and opportunities in her neighborhood school system. Through her engagement in the program she gains tools and language to name and address systems of oppression she is navigating daily. She becomes more inquisitive and motivated to learn about the history of school segregation and it's impact on school inequity today. Jessica seeks support at her school by reaching out to a trusted school staff about creating a peer support group at her school with other youth bussed into the school.*

Intention to Act: *Jessica expresses interest in sharing her learning with peers and the community regarding inequities in accessing high performing and/or high quality public school options in their neighborhood. Adults at the organization provide space and support for Jessica to build alliances with other youth in similar situations. A group of youth plan and facilitate an open mic during the "school selection period" to educate the community about educational disparities and how to navigate the school selection process.*

Glossary of Terms

Note: The following terms were utilized in the RFP and this list of terms is listed for further clarification.

Ableism: Discrimination towards a social group, in this case disabled people, but it also describes how certain ideals and attributes are valued or not valued.³

Classism: The institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.⁴

Cisgenderism: Denies, ignores, denigrates, or stigmatizes any stereotypical non-cisgender forms of expression, sexual activity, behavior, relationship, or community.⁵

Transphobia: Hatred or fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles, often expressed as stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and/or violence.⁶

Heterosexism: An ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community.⁷

Racism: The systematic distribution of resources, power and opportunity in our society to the benefit of people who are white and the exclusion of people of color.⁸

Sexism: Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls.⁹

Xenophobia: Defined as the "attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity."¹⁰

³ <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5061/4545>

⁴ <https://nccj.org/classism-0>

⁵ <http://www.tghiv.com/for-providers/cisgenderism/>

⁶ https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/The%20Breakdown_0.pdf

⁷ http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/prej_defn.html

⁸ <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/institutionalracism.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sexism>

¹⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/xenophobia/>