

# The Social Justice Accelerator

## *at The Urban Justice Center*

### Program Application

True pioneers often set out with limited resources, no clear path, and no instructions. What they do have is a strong vision, and they move boldly forward -- passionate and dedicated -- to bring their vision to life. The need for such pioneers has never been greater, as the events of 2020 have laid bare many of our society's deepest injustices and inequities.

The Urban Justice Center (UJC) is looking for just such social justice pioneers for the second cohort of our Social Justice Accelerator (SJA). The SJA is designed to shepherd new and early-stage social justice organizations through the challenges of developing a well-functioning and high-impact operation. The Accelerator grows out of UJC's decades-long history of incubating and supporting organizations that stand with marginalized communities, fight for inclusive communities, and push for transformative system-level change. Fueled by this history, the SJA invests in individuals and organizations at the forefront of social change by providing the support and resources to help them develop and scale early-stage social justice initiatives.

Over the course of one year, with the option and intention to extend for a second year, the SJA provides up to five individuals with the support and resources to turn their vision for social change into a reality.

What we provide:

- \$25K in Seed Funding
- Fiscal Sponsorship: UJC will provide fiscal sponsorship for initiatives that are not yet separately incorporated and/or do not have their 501c3 status.
- Back Office Support: Assistance with accounting, finance, payroll, and benefits.
- Organizational Development Support: Coaching and training to help you build, test, and launch your initiative.
- Extensive Network: Expert guidance from UJC's extensive network of mentors, consultants, and colleagues, as well as connections to external advisors and potential partners.
- Community: Access to a wider ecosystem of social impact organizations, and the opportunity for collaboration with UJC's other awardees and anchor projects.
- Space to Work: Free office space in UJC's downtown Manhattan office, including access to free printing, faxing, postage, office supplies, and conference rooms.

Our goal is to bring together a cohort of individuals who are able to innovate and carve a path forward in the face of uncertainty, and who will champion justice and equity even in the face of challenge.

### The Urban Justice Center

UJC is a not-for-profit advocacy organization with a unique platform that combines radical freedom with necessary support. UJC's anchor projects must raise their own operating funds, but then have virtually complete freedom in directing their programs – including, hiring, methods, goals, and daily management. The UJC currently houses twelve projects and employs a staff of over 200 lawyers, researchers, social workers and advocates. Our projects have a long history of making serious impacts on behalf of a wide array of poor and disenfranchised populations.

## **About the Social Justice Accelerator**

The Social Justice Accelerator is designed to shepherd new and early-stage social justice organizations through the challenges of developing a well-functioning operation. Participants will be awarded a space to work out of in UJC's office, in downtown Manhattan, in addition to extensive support and supplies (see below for details). In addition to this concrete support, shared experience and opportunities for collaboration with UJC's other awardees and anchor projects, participants will benefit from expert guidance of mentors, consultants, instructors and colleagues.

The incubator program will be supervised and mentored by Doug Lasdon, UJC's founder and Executive Director. Doug has overseen the creation of dozens of social justice projects both at the UJC and beyond. He currently teaches (part time) at the Cornell Law School classes in Poverty Law and Social Entrepreneurship.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

SJA welcomes a diverse pool of applicants representing a variety of backgrounds, communities, experiences and fields of practice.

What we look for:

1. A clear articulation of the social justice issue or problem being addressed, as well as a vision for change.
2. A clear description of the strategy or work planned/ being used to solve the problem.
3. An understanding of the timeline and resources required to launch and establish the initiative.

Both individuals and early-stage organizations (under 2-years old), and projects with more than one person may apply. Projects should be based in NYC but can have work targeted anywhere. Projects do not need to be incorporated but should be prepared to incorporate and apply for their 501(c)3 within 2 years of entering the accelerator.

### **Application Details**

The application is an opportunity to highlight the aspects of your idea or initiative that are boundary-pushing, creative, visionary, and/or any other factors that you feel set your initiative apart. Please use this space as a time to demonstrate the clarity of your vision, and the reasons why you are the right person to bring your vision to fruition.

### ***Applications should include:***

#### Summary Information

1. Project Title and one-page project summary
2. Name and Contact Information
3. Two personal or professional references with names and contact information

#### Project Description

*Please address the following in up to 3000 words.*

1. What is the problem you are trying to solve?
2. What approach and/or specific strategy will you use to address the problem, and why is this the right approach/strategy?
3. What does the world look like when this problem has been solved?

4. Why is your organization necessary? Who else, if anyone, is addressing the issue and how you will build on, intersect with, and/or improve upon that work?
5. Why are you the person/ people to build this initiative, including relevant skills, experience, or personal connection to the problem.
6. How do you expect to use the two years of the SJA program to further your work and strengthen your organizational capacity for after the fellowship ends? Please be as detailed as possible.

#### Finances & Funding

1. Annual budget
2. Funding already raised, including specific sources and amounts of funding for salary and benefits
3. Current plans for further funding

#### Resume

1. A recent copy of your resume

### **Application Timeline and Submission**

Applications are due on December 7, 2023

Please submit all materials and questions to: [socialjusticeaccelerator@urbanjustice.org](mailto:socialjusticeaccelerator@urbanjustice.org)

Finalists will be notified in January and interviewed in early February.

Final decisions will be made by February 15, 2024.