

A Note from U.S. Programs

July 23, 2009

As \$50 billion dollars in federal stimulus funds began flowing to the states in recent months, advocates around the country were ready to ensure transparency, accountability and equity in the distribution of recovery funds. OSI has provided support to a range of national groups this year to ensure that federal stimulus spending is transparent and that dollars flow equitably to communities most in need. Advocates at the state and local level are actively engaged now that the money is in state hands, and we have recently requested proposals to support emerging state coalitions to ensure transparency and equity.

Promoting Equity

A range of groups are providing policy tools and expertise to advocates to promote equity in the recovery. The [Center for Social Inclusion](#) is developing tools to facilitate alliances among African Americans, Latinos and women of all races to demand investment of stimulus funds in a broad range of jobs – not just construction jobs that are disproportionately filled by white men. [PolicyLink](#) is providing guidance to federal agencies, states and localities on how recovery dollars should equitably address the needs of low-income people, women and people of color. The [Opportunity Agenda](#) is promoting the use of Opportunity Impact Statements, which will assess whether publicly funded projects provide equal opportunity to all the communities they serve.

OSI support has also enabled [New America Media](#) to launch a new “Stimulus Package News Beat” in the ethnic media sector that is developing original, syndicated news with a lens on the economic life of ethnic minority and immigrant communities.

To amplify the public drumbeat, OSI is supporting a range of grassroots networks involved in economic recovery advocacy around the country. The [National Training and Information Center](#) is advocating for housing equity, financial regulatory reform, and TARP accountability through its affiliates in 13 states, and the [PICO National Network](#) is engaging the faith community through 1,000 congregations in 150 cities nationwide. The **Inter-Alliance Dialogue** is a dynamic new partnership of five national, people of color led grassroots organizing networks, with important technical support from the Institute for Policy Studies, that seek to influence the federal debate on economic recovery and structural inequality. It includes the **National Domestic Workers Alliance**, representing thousands of mostly immigrant women who work as housekeepers and nannies; the [National Day Laborer Organizing Network](#), a coalition of local immigrant day laborer centers across the U.S.; [Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#), an alliance of grassroots groups who are organizing to build an agenda for power for working and poor people; [Jobs with Justice](#), an economic justice organizing network with 40 local coalitional chapters in 25 states; and the [Right to the City](#), a network of 50 grassroots groups from eight major metropolitan areas that amplifies local voices in the national conversation around urban justice, human rights, and democracy.

Ensuring Thorough and Accessible Data

New partnerships with organizations long focused on ensuring transparency in state and federal spending are bolstering the advocacy efforts of equity groups. The

Coalition for an Accountable Recovery provided the Obama administration with an interim architecture for a state and national system that would ensure the best possible data through the administration's recovery.gov and federal agency websites. An emerging counterpart, States for a Transparent and Accountable Recovery, is helping grassroots organizations win fairer and more effective use of stimulus monies at the state level. And longtime OSI grantee **OMB Watch** launched Bailout Watch to spotlight how prior stimulus funds are being used and propose new methods for increasing transparency and accountability in future stimulus discussions.

With OSI support, equity and transparency groups are now working together to develop metrics for measuring equity. Spearheaded by the Center for Social Inclusion, OMB Watch, Jobs with Justice, and Open the Government.org, advocates are pushing both federal and state governments to include equity related data in reporting on the use and impact of economic stimulus programs.

Requesting Proposals to Support State Coalitions

Earlier this month, the Open Society Institute issued a request for proposals to support alliances of state-based organizations working to ensure that federal and state economic recovery efforts are transparent and accountable, benefit those most in need, and enhance equity rather than reinforce structures of inequality.

Ideally, these alliances will seek comprehensive and timely collection and dissemination of recovery-related spending data, advocate for equitable spending, promote a strong social safety net, and spotlight the role of decisionmakers in the success or failure of economic recovery programs. We are currently accepting proposals from six states: California, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. Through the OSI-Baltimore Office, OSI will also be supporting a Maryland-based alliance. [Learn more about this opportunity.](#)

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