



National Birth Justice Fellowship

an initiative of Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center

Request for Applications

Fellowship Overview

Purpose

The National Birth Justice Fellowship is a leadership program designed for community leaders working to advance birth equity across the United States. This fellowship supports local changemakers who are actively engaged in initiatives aimed at reducing health inequities and injustices experienced by birthing families, particularly among populations that have been historically marginalized. A central goal of the fellowship is for each fellow to make strides on an identified project that advances their birth justice work, allowing them to directly apply the skills and knowledge gained throughout the program. In addition, the fellows will work collaboratively to co-create a resource to support the field of birth justice. Fellows will engage in both virtual and in-person learning sessions, innovation labs, workshops, and collaborative meetings, all aimed at nurturing leadership and promoting health justice. This fellowship, funded by The Wagner Foundation, provides a unique opportunity for leaders across sectors to build their capacity, expand their networks, and advance both individual and collective projects that will contribute to transformative changes in birth justice.

Award Information

Up to **5 community leaders** will be selected by December 2024 and invited to join the inaugural Fellowship cohort.

Key Dates and Deadlines

October 14, 2024 at 9 am ET	Applications Open
October 29, 2024 at 12 pm ET	Optional Informational Webinar
November 22, 2024 at 11:59 pm ET	Deadline for Fellowship Application
December 2 - 13, 2024	Finalist Virtual Interviews
December 2024	Selection of Fellows
January 2025 - June 2026	Fellowship period



How to Apply

We invite you to submit your Fellowship Application online by selecting this [APPLICATION link](#) to begin. Nominate a fellow at this [NOMINATION link](#)

Submission Options

Applicants can submit responses for the narrative section of the application [Section 4] through the following strategies:

- Typed/written format in the online application portal, or
- Pre-recorded audio uploaded to the application portal.

Please note, for written applications there are listed word count limits for each question. For recorded audio responses, the recording can be 12 minutes at the longest for all responses. If you have questions about the application submission using a pre-recorded audio, please contact birthingjustice@bmc.org

Register for the Optional Informational Webinar

Register for the optional informational webinar taking place on Tuesday, October 29th at 12 pm ET [here](#). If you would like to submit questions ahead of the informational session, please email your question to birthingjustice@bmc.org by noon ET on October 28, 2024.

Contact Information

Please direct inquiries to: birthingjustice@bmc.org

About the National Birth Justice Fellowship

The **Vital Village Networks National Birth Justice Fellowship** is an 18-month leadership program designed to increase opportunities for diverse grassroots and community leaders to build skills, capacity, and networks. The fellowship aims to promote culturally affirming, community-led solutions that advance birth equity and justice through policy change, community-based research, data storytelling, and narrative change that transforms systems of health, education, and care for birthing families.



The central focus of the fellowship is twofold: first, for each participant to make substantial progress on a key birth justice project through tailored support and by utilizing the skills and knowledge gained throughout the program; and second, for fellows to collaborate in creating a resource that contributes to the broader advancement of the birth justice field.

Program Goals:

- **Community Leadership & Engagement:** Strengthen and center the agency of community leaders and innovators (including caregivers and families) in advocating for birth justice.
- **Project Advancement:** Each fellow will work on a priority project to advance birth justice in their community, gaining technical assistance and peer support.
- **Collaborative Action:** The fellowship cohort will develop a resource that contributes to the national birth justice movement
- **Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Build and strengthen partnerships across healthcare, education, social services, and other sectors that influence birth justice.

Program Highlights:

- **Duration:** 18 months of intensive learning, collaboration, and project advancement.
- **Key Activities:**
 - Monthly learning sessions and quarterly coaching sessions.
 - Peer-to-peer learning with birth justice leaders across the country.
 - Engagement with local, regional, and national experts advancing birth equity.
 - Co-design of the fellowship learning journey with Vital Village Networks.
 - Advanced training on data storytelling, participatory research, narrative change, community power building and engagement strategies.
 - Support for fellows to advance a birth justice project within their community, alongside their organizational partners.
 - Co-creation of a resource or tool to advance birth justice work across the nation.

Program Requirements:

- Participate in monthly learning sessions, quarterly milestones sessions during the first 12 months of the fellowship
- Participate in monthly collaborative design labs to co-create a new resource for the field that can help advance birth justice nationally, during the final 6-months of the fellowship.
- Build capacity to use data storytelling, data visualizations, participatory research, and narrative change strategies to capture and disseminate information on the impact of birth justice initiatives.



National Birth Justice Fellowship Program Outcomes

- **Leadership Advancement:** Expand the network of leaders across adjacent fields to birth justice to exchange wisdom, promising practices, lessons and tools and take collective action
 - Build leadership skills, including trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches to birth justice.
- **Data Storytelling:** Improve strategies for data storytelling and making the case for birth justice initiatives, policies, and innovations.
 - Strengthen ability to leverage data and participatory research to measure the impact of birth justice work and drive meaningful policy change.
- **Narrative Change:** Use storytelling to advance policy and systems-level changes that promote birth justice.
 - Advanced understanding of multisectoral approaches to advancing birth justice – including community level advocacy, transformation of healthcare and public health systems, and policy and practice change.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Develop and expand partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including local caregivers and families, to advance birth equity.
 - Learn new approaches for supporting collaborative action, including coalition governance, equitable decision-making processes, dignity-centered community partnerships and participatory research and data storytelling

This fellowship provides a unique opportunity for leaders across sectors to build their capacity, expand their networks, and advance both individual and collective projects that will contribute to transformative changes in birth justice.

Program Details & Requirements

The fellowship will involve a series of interactive virtual meetings and peer learning sessions, as well as two in-person convenings, to support their local efforts and contribute

Birth Justice Fellows will receive a \$2,500 stipend to honor time for participating in fellowship meetings and activities, including participation and presentations at Vital Village Networks Annual National Community Leadership Summit.

Participation in the Birth Justice Fellowship includes the following requirements:



- **In-Person Fellowship Program Launch (2 days):** Formal kick off of the fellowship program, tentatively scheduled between February 11-13, 2025. This in-person gathering will set the foundation for collaboration and growth throughout the fellowship. Fellows will have an opportunity to build connections with other fellows, potential mentors, receive an introduction to the program structure and learning opportunities and shape the program design, and establish support for their learning journey.
- **Monthly Virtual Learning Sessions:** Learning sessions will take place once a month and will be held from January 2025 to June 2026, on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 2 - 5pm Eastern. (Fellowship meeting dates are listed in the 2025-26 Fellowship Calendar below).

Fellows will convene for learning sessions that including webinars and peer-led sessions that allow fellows to dive into a particular subject and learn from and with one another around key topic areas, such as:

- Coalition governance and decision-making
 - Ethical storytelling and Participatory Research approaches
 - Data storytelling for social change
 - Collaborative leadership and sustainable leadership pathways
 - Community-based approaches to evaluation
 - Participatory and inclusive data planning, collection, and analysis methods
 - Mindsets, frameworks and narrative change strategies
 - Community engagement and co-design
- **Quarterly Individual Milestone Sessions:** with members of the Vital Village Networks team and/or a peer mentor. These will be scheduled at regular intervals and focus on tailored support to achieve project milestones.
 - **In-Person Fellows Retreat and National Convening (3 days):** Participation in a community leader convening and project presentation during the 2025 National Community Leadership Summit, planned for October 2025 in Boston, MA. The mandatory in-person convening will focus on key areas of community capacity building. Fellows will also co-design a one-day retreat that will be focused on areas of growth and restoration of greatest interest to the cohort group.

2025-26 Fellowship Calendar:

Overview of Key Dates.

Before applying for the fellowship, please review this schedule of engagements, dates and times. Fellowship sessions are not optional. Participation of the entire cohort ensures a rich,



collective learning experience for all fellows. If you are aware of immovable conflicts with scheduling, consider applying in a future year.

Date	Time	Session
January 7, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
February 4, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
February 11 - 13, 2025 (final dates to be confirmed)	In-person two days 9 am - 5pm	Fellowship Launch and Welcome
March 4, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
March 2025	TBD	Quarterly Individual Milestone Session
April 1, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
May 6, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
June 3, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
June 2025	TBD	Quarterly Individual Milestone Session
July 1, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
August 5, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
September 2, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
September 2025	TBD	Quarterly Individual Milestone Session
October 7, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
October 2025 (final dates to be confirmed)	In-person, three days, 9am-5pm ET	VVN National Community Leadership Summit and Fellows Retreat
November 4, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
December 2, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
December 2025	TBD	Quarterly Individual Milestone Session
January 6, 2026	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session
February 3, 2026	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session
March 3, 2026	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session



April 7, 2026	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session
May 5, 2025	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session
June 2, 2026	2 - 5 pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Design Session

Application Process and Award Information

Vital Village Networks will accept applications for Birth Justice Fellows from October 14, 2024, through November 22, 2024, at 11:59pm ET.

A virtual informational webinar will be held on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 12 pm ET, to provide an overview of the fellowship program and interview process. Interested applicants have the opportunity to submit questions to birthingjustice@bmc.org in advance of the session. Questions received by Monday, October 28, 2024, at 12 pm ET will be addressed in the session. The session will be recorded and the video link shared upon request.

Applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee. Finalists will be invited to participate in a virtual interview in December 2024. Selected Community Food Systems Fellows will be announced in mid-December.

Key application and selection process dates include:

- Optional Informational Webinar - October 29, 2024, at 12 pm ET
- Deadline for Fellowship Application - November 22, 2024, at 11:59 pm ET
- Finalist Virtual Interviews - December 2 - 13, 2024
- Selection of Fellows - December 2024

Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be screened for eligibility prior to their review.

- The fellow must be based in the United States or one of the US territories.
- The fellow must have an established partnership with a nonprofit organization, coalition, network, group, cooperative, business, or institution that has a strategic focus on birth justice.



Who Should Apply:

- Non-profit leaders, social entrepreneurs, community organizers, educators, and practitioners working in fields that impact birth equity.
- Leaders from cross-sector organizations working in areas such as health, housing, and social services that impact birth justice.
- Community leaders, advocates, and grassroots organizers working to advance birth equity.
- Birthworkers (doulas, midwives, lactation consultants, etc.).

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee. In reviewing Fellowship Applications, reviewers will consider the following selection criteria:

- History of civic service and birth justice work, with a focus on addressing structural racism and social injustices impacting BIPOC, immigrant, LGBTQ+ communities and people with disabilities.
- Strong existing community partnerships supporting birth justice.
- Commitment to engage deeply in an intensive fellowship to advance an individual/organizational priority project and work with peers to co-create a resource for the field.
- Willingness to learn new approaches and explore frameworks that foster sustainable collective action for birth justice.
- Commitment to advancing community power to address birth equity.

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Statement

Consistent with Vital Village Networks values, this project embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion across multiple dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, gender, age, and socioeconomic status. We strongly encourage applicants to demonstrate an awareness and inclusion of the perspectives and experiences of children, families and communities most affected by inequities. We believe the more we include diverse perspectives and experiences in our work, the more successful we will be as we strive for health justice and a society that honors the dignity of all.

How to Apply



Applicants interested in the Birth Justice Fellowship must complete an [online application](#) by 11:59 p.m. EST on November 22, 2024.

The application is available here: [LINK](#). Vital Village Networks will invite finalists to participate in a virtual interview during the first two weeks of December 2024.

An informational session will be held on October 29, 2024 at 12pm ET, and applicants may submit questions ahead of time to birthingjustice@bmc.org. Please register for the optional informational session at this link: <https://cutt.ly/0eAwhMBz>

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About Boston Medical Center Vital Village Networks

Vital Village is a network of residents and organizations committed to maximizing child, family, and community wellbeing. Since 2010, Vital Village has fostered partnerships between residents and organizations aimed at improving the capacity of communities to optimize child wellbeing, prevent early life adversities, and advance equity through coalition building, leadership development, participatory research, data-sharing, and advocacy. Through our grassroots local network in Boston, our national network of peer communities, Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW), and CRADLE, our participatory research and evaluation lab, we cultivate stronger connections between residents and community-based organizations to co-design community systems-improvement efforts and address structural inequities and foster leadership trajectories that amplify and build community power for social transformation.