

The Life Story Grants

A FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

PART 1

About the Opportunity **2**

About The Life Story Grants 2

A focus on communities 4

A focus on six 'moments' 5

Our core values 7

About the funders 8

PART 2

The Work We're Seeking to Support **9**

Grantmaking priorities 9

What we cannot support 11

Project qualifications 11

Grant terms and amounts 12

PART 3

Process **13**

High-level grantmaking process and timeline 13

How to submit your letter 13

Interested in learning more? 13

Where to direct your questions 14

“So many factors are at play. Early sexual abuse, generational trauma, economic status... Just being a person of color, there’s an x on your back.”

NE’COLE, SEX TRADE SURVIVOR, SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER

PART 1

About the Opportunity

The trajectories of girls and women in the sex trade are often marked by many on-ramps into exploitation—poverty, violence, discrimination and system failure—and few exit ramps for girls and women who seek to leave. The NoVo Foundation learned about these often unseen realities from those who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), over years of listening and partnership. A year ago, we launched *The Life Story: Moments of Change* to illuminate these truths, lifting up the voices, experiences and insights of survivors.

This year, we are deepening our support to organizations who are changing those life trajectories. Specifically, we are seeking to fund system-focused strategies that help close on-ramps into commercial sexual exploitation while building many more exit ramps. To that end, we are pleased to announce a call for Letters of Inquiry for The Life Story Grants.

About The Life Story Grants

The NoVo Foundation is dedicated to catalyzing a transformation in global society, from a culture of domination and exploitation to one of equality and partnership. Ending the vulnerability of girls and women to all forms of exploitation and violence is core to that mission; centering those who experience the overlapping oppressions of racism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, transphobia and economic discrimination guides our approach.

From these communities, we have learned how the sex trade profits from their inequity. It is no coincidence that girls and women of color, Indigenous girls and women, immigrant girls and women, trans girls and women, and gender-nonconforming people are disproportionately impacted by this form of violence.

The vast majority of these girls and women enter the sex trade because of the failure of social systems to support them, and a dearth of economic options. Survivor after survivor has shared the same stories and patterns about various systems that have failed them—like schools, foster care, law enforcement, health clinics, housing, immigration. Systemic inequity and poverty enabled their exploitation in the first place.

Survivors also share that violence is inherent to the sex trade: emotional, psychological and physical. The impact of this violence can last a lifetime. The trauma can ripple across communities and be passed down through generations. It is trauma that has no place in a just and healthy society, and it cannot be regulated away.

System failures call for systems-based solutions to create lasting change—and that's where we see an untapped opportunity for anyone who wishes to improve the lives of marginalized girls and women. Many practitioners in critical systems come into contact with people in sexual exploitation. By offering compassion, resources and opportunity, practitioners can close an on-ramp to exploitation—or open an exit ramp.

That is the vision of The Life Story and our related grantmaking: we believe far more can be done to close on-ramps into exploitation, earlier in the lives of girls and women, and far more can be done to open exit ramps and ensure that survivors have access to the support they need to thrive. The Life Story Grants will support system-focused work that addresses those in sexual exploitation today and those at-risk, answering short-term needs while building long-term wellbeing.

The Life Story Grants approach is grounded in two influences: the people and communities who are disproportionately impacted by the sex trade but are largely invisible; and critical life moments where a different path becomes possible.

“I come from generational prostitution. I was in foster care and had a son. When they took him away, I remember being just broken. That kicked my prostitution into high gear. It was the only way I knew how to make money quickly. I had a false illusion that if I made enough money I could get an apartment, get a job and then I could get my son back.”

QUINTEGIA, SEX TRADE SURVIVOR, ADVOCATE AND SERVICE PROVIDER

Focus on communities

The Life Story Grants will prioritize projects that center the communities who drive much of the NoVo Foundation's work—and who are often unseen in mainstream narratives of the sex trade, despite bearing the brunt of system failures that lead to sexual exploitation. Particular focus will be placed on:

1. GIRLS AND WOMEN OF COLOR

From housing and education to policing and financial policies, social systems in the US have historically discriminated against communities of color. For these reasons, girls and women of color are disproportionately represented among those experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.

2. INDIGENOUS GIRLS AND WOMEN

The numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women reflect a collective silence surrounding the violence that these communities experience. Underlying these tragedies is a deep current of sexual exploitation stemming from colonialism and its continued effects, such as extractive industries on and near Native lands, jurisdictional complications that allow perpetrators to evade prosecution, and effects of boarding schools.

3. IMMIGRANT GIRLS AND WOMEN

Many immigrant girls and women have no safety nets, whether because of deep isolation, language barriers, or difficulty navigating US social and legal systems. The fear of deportation deters them from seeking help when they experience violence or sexual exploitation. This invisibility prevents our systems from being equipped to identify and support survivors.

4. ADULT WOMEN AND MOTHERS

Current legal and social frameworks protect minors who are sexually exploited—and often stop at age 18, without considering the broader realities of how lives unfold. An exploited 17-year-old is seen as deserving of support, until her next birthday. The circumstances that brought a minor to the sex trade aren't considered once she becomes an adult; instead, she often is assumed to be there by choice, and any chance of support and compassion dissipates. Mothers—both adult and teenage—experience even deeper vulnerability to exploitation, and require different kinds of support.

5. TRANS GIRLS AND WOMEN

Trans women are murdered at epidemic rates in the US—especially trans women of color. This extreme violence directly reflects this community's disproportionate representation in the sex trade, where exposure to state and private violence

increases. Trans women’s vulnerability is shaped early in life, through discrimination in schools, families and communities. Later in life, one in five trans people face homelessness, one in four suffer job discrimination and one in three live in poverty, according to the National Center on Transgender Equality—all powerful on-ramps to sexual exploitation.

“I travel to communities and work with medical providers, first responders, school personnel, and also parents and students, so they can have the basic knowledge and understanding of what exploitation is and what to look for.”

JERI, INDIGENOUS SURVIVOR AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER

Focus on six moments

Every person is the true expert of their life, and the injustices they endure. As we learned from many women with lived experience of the sex trade, pathways into exploitation can begin long before she is actually exploited. Being born into an inequitable society creates vulnerabilities that social systems—foster care, education—currently fail to address. Later in life, systems of housing, law enforcement, public health, mental health and addiction services can stigmatize women in sexual exploitation, putting up barriers to a safe exit and stability. Women told us: these system interactions could have gone a different way.

The Life Story: Moments of Change describes 13 such moments of system interaction; we encourage you to visit the website and explore the multiple factors that can create vulnerability to sexual exploitation. In this funding opportunity, we are seeking to support approaches in six specific contexts and systems, in the US: Housing, Medical Needs, Law Enforcement, Trauma and Mental Health, Immigration, and Systems Impacting Youth. (Please note that projects that do not explicitly address one or more of these six contexts will not be eligible for funding.)

1. HOUSING

For girls and women in the sex trade, it’s easy to feel trapped in a housing paradox. If lack of housing drove her into prostitution, her ability to leave exploitative and violent situations decreases when those same housing systems deny her shelter as a result of having a criminal record resulting from prostitution. For women who are being trafficked, it can be difficult to leave traffickers when they are providing a roof for her and her family. Access to safe, stable housing is necessary to protecting the dignity and safety of survivors, and is a critical exit ramp.

2. MEDICAL NEEDS

While 88% of those in exploitation report they have been in contact with a healthcare provider¹, only 6% of healthcare workers report treating a victim of human trafficking at some point in their career². Like many victims of domestic violence, survivors of commercial sexual exploitation often have reasons to not disclose their victimization to medical practitioners. We've seen some changes to better protect survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault who come into contact with medical settings, and the same can be true for sexually exploited girls and women.

3. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Policies that criminalize anyone selling sex are misdirected and wrong; instead, we seek strategies that provide direct support to survivors while holding buyers and traffickers accountable for the harm they cause. We also see urgent opportunities around long-term reform: new strategies that address the impact that the criminal justice system has had on both heavily policed communities and communities that lack law enforcement, while always centering survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. This funding opportunity seeks to improve the way that law enforcement, including prosecutors, respond when they come into contact with survivors of commercial sexual exploitation.

4. TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH

The persistence of trauma throughout the lives of those in the sex trade calls for attention and specific approaches. Studies have demonstrated the extent of early-life trauma and the subsequent vulnerability to exploitation among girls and women in the sex industry^{3,4}. Any pre-existing trauma will be compounded in the sex trade, as studies have also revealed the prevalence of PTSD, depression and other mental health diagnoses⁵. The result is complex trauma that, unless seen and addressed by supportive and appropriate services, can be a significant barrier to exit. This funding opportunity is seeking projects that directly engage trauma by affording the specialization, safety, dignity and healing that those with lived

¹ Lederer, L. J., & Wetzel, C. A. (2014). The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities. *Annals of Health Law: The Health Policy and Law Review of Loyola University Chicago School of Law*, 23(1), pp. 61-91.

² Chisolm-Straker, M., Richardson, L. D., & Cossio, T. (2012). Combating Slavery in the 21st Century: The Role of Emergency Medicine. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 23(3), pp.980-987. doi:10.1353/hpu.2012.0091

³ Goswami, S. (2002). Unlocking Options for Women: A survey of women at Cook County Jail. *University of Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender & Class* 89. 2(1), pp. 106.

⁴ Raphael, J., Feifer, K., Bigelsen, J., Dempsey, M., & Rhodes, S. (2017). *What We Know About Sex Trafficking, Prostitution, and Sexual Exploitation in the U.S.* World Without Exploitation.

⁵ Lederer, L. J., & Wetzel, C. A. (2014). The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities. *Annals of Health Law: The Health Policy and Law Review of Loyola University Chicago School of Law*, 23(1), pp. 61-91.

experience of commercial sexual exploitation deserve—particularly through mental health and drug addiction services. Work in this area includes traditional healing and medicinal practices, and Indigenous approaches.

5. IMMIGRATION

In addition to focusing on immigrant girls and women across all systems, The Life Story Grants also focus on immigration systems themselves. With increasingly narrow avenues to legal work and lawful immigration status, girls and women can find themselves locked into an underground economy. Without access to information or any other opportunities, she may not know her abuse is illegal, or how to report it; she is afraid of deportation, violence, or shame in her home country. But exit ramps can appear—through service providers, attorneys, and others. These systems can provide important opportunities and protections for a survivor, but only when she has the resources to advocate for herself.

6. SYSTEMS IMPACTING YOUTH

While all of the above systems and contexts impact youth as well as adults, The Life Story Grants also seek projects that specifically focus on youth for two reasons. The first is the critical opportunity to close on-ramps early in a young person's life—bending a life trajectory away from exploitation before any vulnerabilities are exploited by others. This attention is particularly critical for cis and trans girls, gender non-conforming youth, girls who have experienced child sexual abuse, and girls of color. The second reason is youth-oriented projects are often already interdisciplinary in nature, making connections between school, foster care and housing, for example. Without a shared understanding of how vulnerabilities can expose girls to traffickers and buyers, these systems can isolate girls and deepen their risk of exploitation.

Our core values

NoVo's work to end commercial sexual exploitation comes from our vision for a more just and balanced world. We ground our work in [a set of core values](#). The ones we rely on most as we carry out our work to end sexual exploitation are these:

RESPECT FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE

We are deeply grateful for the many self-identified survivor leaders who helped us understand life trajectories, the possibilities they hold for lasting and systemic change, and how overlapping oppressions call for new and nuanced solutions. With their expertise, we are able to center the lives of those girls and women whose experiences are rarely represented in mainstream conversations about the sex trade, and to rely on their expertise in informing our strategies. Their input has shaped every aspect of our work to end sexual exploitation, including the approaches prioritized in The Life Story Grants.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

We work towards social justice goals that address the systems of oppression that render women and girls vulnerable to exploitation in the first place. We are constantly examining social inequities and systems failures through the lens of race, gender and economic discrimination—and all the ways those overlap and compound our world’s worst inequities.

RADICAL HOPE

We don’t believe any form of exploitation is inevitable. Instead, we believe we can contribute to systemic progress that addresses the root causes of injustice. Grounded in that optimism, we remain focused on long-term solutions while addressing short-term needs. When we live in a world that is free, liberated and just, no girl or woman will experience the trauma inherent to the sex trade.

The work to end commercial sexual exploitation is held across all staff and program areas—it is a core expression of NoVo’s values and priorities.

About the founders

Created by Jennifer and Peter Buffett in 2006, NoVo is a social justice foundation dedicated to catalyzing a transformation in global society to move from a culture of domination and exploitation to one of equality and partnership.

We support the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a caring and balanced world. We envision a world that operates on the principles of mutual respect, collaboration and civic participation, thereby reversing the old paradigm predicated on hierarchy, violence and the subordination of girls and women. To learn more, please visit our [website](#).

PART 2

The Work We're Seeking to Support

Grantmaking priorities

We are looking for projects or approaches in the US that:

- Imagine and create new possibilities where the lives of girls and women in exploitation intersect with key social systems, closing on-ramps into to the sex trade and opening exit ramps; for example:
 - dedicated capacity to address a particular system or agency's response to survivors of commercial sexual exploitation;
 - a pilot program within a system to address the needs of survivors;
 - a collaboration between systems and community-based providers to develop specialized responses.
- Focus on one or more of the above six 'moments.'
- Arise from any of these starting points:
 1. New collaborations among partners who have a strategy to address a particular moment/moments;
 2. Existing work that is addressing one or more moments of change and opportunity in a survivor's life;
 3. A new idea from existing organization.
- Demonstrate a specific focus and understanding of how the below communities are impacted by the sex trade, where they are present in the context of the project or approach:
 - Girls and women of color
 - Indigenous girls and women
 - Immigrant girls and women
 - Adult women and mothers
 - Trans girls and women

- Are led or heavily informed by those with lived experience of the sex trade. Considerations here include:
 - **Leadership:** Those who serve as paid management or director-level staff in an organization and have decision-making power and capacity have lived experience of commercial sexual exploitation.
 - **Consultation:** The work involves deep, meaningful and collaborative consultation with those with lived experience of commercial sexual exploitation. This consultation does not mean eliciting individual stories. It means asking for expertise, perspectives, analysis, opinions, approval and other meaningful input.
 - **Experience from many backgrounds:** One person cannot and should not speak for all.
 - **Compensation:** In order to ensure those with lived experience of commercial sexual exploitation are meaningfully integrated into the overall project and their role as experts in this process is recognized, participation should be compensated.
 - **Safety and wellbeing:** The work holds a trauma-informed lens, prioritizing the continued wellbeing of participants and examining potential for re-victimization or re-traumatization.
- Demonstrate a commitment to responding to trauma for all individuals involved in the project. For examples and information about such strategies, visit [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) or the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#).
- Hold potential for:
 - Replication in other contexts or communities.
 - Case study and/or promising practices research, to contribute to solutions-based literature, in collaboration with the individuals, organizations and communities involved.
- Project leaders and teams should have institutional support to be included in a learning community, alongside other NoVo grantee partners focused on closing on-ramps to and opening exit ramps away from commercial sexual exploitation.

What we cannot support

- We do not support organizations that hold a “rescue” mentality that sees those in the sex trade as individuals in need of “saving” rather than women and girls who are entitled to the resources and support they need to be agents of change in their own lives and their own communities.
- We firmly believe that no one who personally exchanges sex or sexual acts should ever be criminalized or subjected to further violence and stigma at the hands of the state, and we don’t support organizations who take that approach.
- We also firmly believe that the sex trade is inherently harmful, and that buyers and those who profit off the sale of sex by another human being should be held accountable. For that reason, we do not support organizations that actively promote the decriminalization of buyers or anyone else profiting off the sale of sex by another human being. Additionally, we do not support organizations that actively promote the legalization or full decriminalization of the sex trade by advocating it is a form of labor like any other, rather than a system of exploitation.

Project qualifications

- Registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations (or any initiatives/groups/collaborations with a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor), tax-exempt Tribal governments or Tribally-chartered institutions, in addition to current NoVo grantee partners, are eligible to submit a Letter of Inquiry.
- Collaborations will need to have a lead applicant. At this time, we are unable to directly support individuals or other formations outside of non-profit organizations.
- Any organization, Tribal government, or Tribally-chartered institution that is currently or is seeking to address CSE within one or more of these six moments is encouraged to apply.
- Current NoVo grantees are eligible to apply, but are encouraged to consider how this project support will enable them to engage with particular systems or moments in new or particular ways that they are not able to do within their existing funding structures.
- Projects may be on a one- or two-year timespan, but most grants will support reaching project goals over the next three years.
- Projects may include a planning phase, particularly if new emerging collaborations/alliances are key to the project objectives. Organizations must demonstrate a strong likelihood of partnership for any new alliances and collaborations.

- While NoVo does support organizations that work to end commercial sexual exploitation globally, this opportunity is limited to US-based organizations, given the specificity of context and systems this work seeks to shift.
- For a single organization, funding requests should not exceed 33% of the organization's total budget. For collaborations between multiple organizations, funding requests should not exceed 33% of the total combined budgets of all organizations in the collaboration.
- Organizations may submit more than one LOI, but are encouraged to be judicious and strategic when doing so, clearly demonstrating how one funding request cannot achieve the envisioned outcomes.

Grant terms and amounts

- Grants will be up to three years; minimum grant size is expected to be \$100,000 per year. Maximum grant size is expected to be \$600,000 per year. The highest levels of funding will be directed towards projects that seek to comprehensively address systems, or significant collaborations between multiple systems or partners.
- We anticipate that most funding for The Life Story Grants will be allocated as project support, in order to maintain focus on closing on-ramps and building exit ramps within particular systems. We will consider general support on a limited basis only.
- We will consider funding requests for the full project budget, but encourage applicants to consider and identify additional sources of funding where possible.
- For collaborations, we ask that applicants identify a primary or host organization, Tribal government, or Tribally-chartered institution that can disseminate funds to the other entities in the project. Project budgets should include how much funding will be allocated to each entity. If applicants are invited to submit a full proposal, we will be asking for Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) demonstrating the relationship between entities in the project and the process by which funds will be disseminated.

Process

High-level grantmaking process + timeline

Letters of Inquiry will be accepted until Friday, April 19, 2019, 3pm Eastern time, via this online submission form: novofoundation.force.com.

In the form, we ask you to tell us about your proposed project, along with information about your organization's mission and history. We ask what the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and women (cis and trans) looks like in your community, which systems or "moments" your project seeks to address, and how survivors will play a role in leading, informing, and/or shaping this project. If you are submitting as a collaboration, you will be asked to include a brief history of your relationship to one another. We also ask for basic budgetary and financial information.

We are a small staff, so we also ask for your patience. If we are interested in requesting a full proposal, we will contact you using the contact information provided in your LOI submission form. We anticipate providing those notifications middle of June 2019, but may need to adjust to volume of submissions. All other applicants will be notified within the same time frame.

How to submit your letter

At this time we are only accepting submissions via this [online submission form](#) and in English. If you are facing accessibility challenges or need us to make alternate accommodations to submit your LOI, please contact us at thelifestorygrants@novofoundation.org.

Interested in learning more?

Please see novofoundation.org/thelifestorygrants for FAQ.

Additionally, we will be hosting informational webinars in March to explain the Letter of Inquiry process and answer any questions you might have. Participation in the webinars

is not mandatory and has no impact on project evaluation. Should you have any questions, please participate in one of the upcoming webinars:

Tuesday, March 19th

Tuesday, March 26th

For up-to-date webinar information and registration, please visit novofoundation.org/thelifestorygrants.

Where to direct your questions

thelifestorygrants@novofoundation.org

Letters of Inquiry should be submitted using the following [online submission form](#) by 3:00pm Eastern time (UTC -4) / 12:00pm Pacific time (UTC -7) on Friday, April 19, 2019. LOIs will not be accepted by mail or email.