RO🌱T CAUSE
RESEARCH CENTER

2020 Call for Applications
Application Deadline: Monday, May 11, 2020 (11:59 p.m. ET)
Click here to access the [online application](https://forms.gle/YbU5DuVzsmh6HPAo6) (https://forms.gle/YbU5DuVzsmh6HPAo6)

Root Cause Research Center
Community Research Incubator Program

ABOUT THE ROOT CAUSE RESEARCH CENTER
We believe that the people most impacted by an issue are best positioned to discover the root causes and solutions of that issue. They are the ones with the firsthand experience, social context, insights, and networks that are necessary to fully unearth the whole story behind a deep-rooted problem.

The Root Cause Research Center works alongside and trains community members to investigate and report community concerns. We bring together impacted community members and train them in community organizing, research, and design--all to help them tell their own data stories to the public, to policymakers, and to other connected stakeholders. We partner with local grassroots leaders to launch Community-Based Participatory Research projects. We also design inventive and interactive visuals that break down complex information for policy change.

The Root Cause Research Center is a policy-focused, grassroots-led institution grounded in Data Equity, Movement Science, and Abolitionist Planning (see Definitions below). We are actively building a new system in the American South that provides an alternative to the traditionally hierarchical and classist model of research. We lean into transformative justice by creating community-based alternatives to dehumanizing and inaccessible research institutions that use impacted community members as test subjects rather than co-investigators.

In practice, this work looks like: providing data and research training to impacted community members, community-led research initiatives into housing or other structural determinants of health, [Community-Based Participatory Research](#) projects, co-creating high dimensional reports and infographics with the community members most affected by targeted health disparity, adhering to the Global Data Ethics Project (GDEP) framework, equity audits of major institutions and programs, counter-mapping development projects in traditionally divested neighborhoods, creating community organizing explainers for canvassing or public forums, and so on.

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

We primarily work with people in the American South who have low opportunities and resources. We believe that dominant cultures create false narratives that pathologize the poor as the architects of their own harm to justify the extraction of wealth from marginalized peoples. The Root Cause Research Center focuses on challenging dominant institutional narratives and developing counter-maps in response to those narratives, with a particular focus on racial capitalism, racial banishment, and the criminalization and capitalization of poverty. Our work is rooted in scholar Ananya Roy's concept of "a world with many souths." We believe the conditions in the US South are an extension of plantation capitalism and are connected to the global south. Our research holds space for the radical traditions of subversive intellectualism, abolitionism, and militant research as fields of study in scholarly work. Critical to these traditions are the concepts of 1) Visibility, 2) Recognition, and 3) Representation.

We are focused on the US south because our cities and rural areas share similar problems and have faced violent retaliation in building institutionalized local power. Our approach is to let the people most impacted by policy problems be the ones coming up with the strategies for change. Instead of a "think tank" where a bunch of scholars come up with solutions, we want to train and work with the people impacted to identify the problems, research the best solutions, and build local collective power. Our belief is that the "root cause" of most policy challenges is best known by the people impacted—and that any transformative change will be led by them.

DEFINITIONS

Data Equity

Data Equity is about creating an opportunity for all to reach their full potential by directly addressing systemic oppression. We do that by being:

- Considerate (recursively evaluating your work in collaboration with the people impacted),
- Cooperative (acknowledging power dynamics, sharing-power, and respecting the skills and wisdom of lived-experience at the table),
- Inclusive (making sure the people most impacted by the issue are present from ideas to implementation),
- Accountable (taking responsibility for your work and how it counteracts or is complicit with stereotypes, stigmas, and other systems of oppression), and
- Flexible (We can not always have the foresight to do no harm, but we can have the integrity and agility to do better).

Movement Science

Analytically speaking, Movement Science is a disciple that uses data (qualitative and/or quantitative) to move people to progressive social and political action. This discipline is generally utilized by disenfranchised and systemically impacted community members who are compelled to develop deeply technical and/or investigatory skills in order to better illustrate injustices, aid self-definition, and ensure collective safety and survival. However, the term Movement Science does not have a fixed or restricted definition. The daunting complexity of social and political problems does not allow for a finite solution, approach, nor does it create a rigid, clear-cut solution-ist. Movement Scientists come from a myriad of backgrounds and generally have many skill sets that they employ in their work. This is why Movement Science, conceptually speaking, is a spectrum of practices in which practitioners employ a wide variety of communal, cultural, political, artistic, and technical skill sets in order to gain traction against convoluted systems of oppression.

Abolitionist Planning

The Urban Planning profession is historically rooted in white supremacist ideology that serviced 20th Century industrial and real estate capital by designing social stratification and segregation into US cities & policy. As the planning profession strives to be more inclusive, we believe this inclusivity does nothing to alter the fundamental role of professional planning in perpetuating institutional harm. In 2017, a group of UCLA graduate students in Architecture, Public Policy, and Urban Planning co-facilitated a course called, "Abolitionist Planning in Today's Political Conjuncture" and published an abolitionist planning guide. Later that year, Geography Professor Dr. Deshonay Dozier published a response stating that "there is no room for professional planning in the abolitionist movement." Inspired by these conversations on the west coast, we want to expand the spirit and practice of abolitionist planning to the south. Dozier suggests a counter curriculum that will give students a strategy to circumvent harmful institutions. Using her suggestion: "We can divert from training students and ourselves from perpetuating institutional harm by changing the curriculum and strategy of professional planning," we are launching the Southern Abolitionist Planning Curriculum. This curriculum will serve as a counter-narrative to institutionalized planning studies while emboldening citizens with technical knowledge in areas such as zoning, urban design, and geography to impact and protect their communities.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY RESEARCH INCUBATOR PROGRAM
The Community Research Incubator is a 24-week (6mos) cohort-based program that includes participant stipends, mentorship services, training, research exhibition, as well as participatory data collection, research, and reporting. A minimum of 80% of each incubator will be Community Researchers. Community Researchers are participants who have been strategically recruited to apply based on their lived-experience in relation to a predetermined structural or social issue. Up to 20% of the cohort may be Institutional Incubator Participants (I2P), though most cohorts will have none at all. I2Ps are individuals who may represent a large institution that is interested in partnering with Community Researchers. I2Ps commit to following the guidance and leadership of Community Researchers. During the course of the 24 weeks, Community

Researchers are trained and mentored in launching their own research projects within a predetermined topic area. Institutional participants will also receive some training as they engage in this program. The incubator culminates in a Community Research Expo where Community Researchers will share their work, demo projects, and/or solicit funding to accelerate the growth of their work.

2020's incubator topic areas include:
- Housing Justice (This incubator cohort is known as the Louisville Eviction Lab)
- Cooperative Economics (in partnership [New Economy Coalition](#))
- Racial Wealth Gap (in partnership with [Metro United Way](#))
- Violence Prevention (in partnership with the [Smoketown Neighborhood Association](#))

Incubator Mentorship and Training

RCRC facilitation will help participants to identify and illustrate problems as systems, clarify points of intervention, raise questions and alternatives when considering varying approaches, provide an accountability mechanism that prioritizes and advocates for the participation of impacted individuals in decision-making and implementation strategies, measuring impact, and help to define actionable goals.

The RCRC will provide training in the following areas: Our Data Bodies's Community Power Tools for Reclaiming Data, Community-based Participatory Research, Abolitionist Planning, counter-mapping, investigative techniques, health and data equity, data collection, research design, advocacy & policy development, and infographic design. RCRC will also track and monitor the incubator for long term evaluation and impact assessment.

Community Researchers who receive stipends through this program will be required to attend a minimum of 24 research work sessions with RCRC staff. They will also be required to attend all skill labs offered for their cohort.

Institutional Incubator Participants (I2Ps) & Other Supporting Partners

Representatives from institutions may partner or work with the incubator by doing one or more of the following:
- **Be Our Guest:** Attend the Community Research Expo (join our email list to get updates on dates)
- **Donate to RCRC:** Support the incubator by donating resources, time, talent, or treasure
- **Donate to the Research:** Donate resources, time, talent, or treasure to a specific research project or cohort to help them continue their work
- **Join the Incubator:** Aside from Community Researchers, there will be other incubator participants who are not subject to the same credentialing requirements as the Community Researchers. These participants, who will likely be institutional partners, will

be limited to a minority of 20% or less of a topic area cohort. Institutional Incubator Participants (I2Ps), they will defer to the guidance and authority of Community Researchers, they will not receive stipends, and they will be required to attend a minimum of <u>six</u> work sessions which will be determined by the Community Researchers.

<u>Who is Eligible to be a Community Researcher?</u>
Community Researcher eligibility hinges on the following credentials:
- Applicants cannot be a representative or in leadership of a major institution (i.e. a nonprofit, government entity, news media company, university, etc, that has an operational budget in excess of $150,000 annually)
- Applicants must either be from a historically and systematically oppressed race, class, or background, AND be connected through lived-experience to their chosen incubator topic area (i.e. housing injustice, racial wealth gap, etc). Please note that applicants interested in applying for the Cooperative Economics topic area <u>DO NOT</u> need to have lived-experience of that topic area.
- Applicants must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents at the time of application, or individuals granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the time of application (changes in federal policy or law may necessitate that we consider adjustments in eligibility and grant terms);

<u>Who is Eligible to be an Institutional Incubator Participant (I2P)?</u>
I2Ps eligibility hinges on the following credentials:
- Applicants must be nominated by an incubator facilitator or cohort supporting sponsor
- Applicants must represent or be in leadership of a major institution (i.e. a nonprofit, government entity, news media company, university, etc, that has an operational budget in excess of $150,000 annually)

<u>Community Researcher Award Details</u>
Applicants that are accepted into the incubator as Community Researchers will receive the following:
- $900 stipend
- At least 8 core skill labs/trainings
- Mentorship/one-on-ones with RCRC staff members
- Research guidance
- Logistical planning assistance
- Grassroots base-building assistance
- An opportunity to present a project at the Actors Theatre of Louisville in the Pamela Brown Theater to over 600 audience members which will include potential project funders and other key stakeholders.
- Additional pay opportunities include:
  - $100 - if participant gets CITI research certifications
  - $300 - if participant is a Project Coordinator (may be two co-PCs at $150/person)
  - $300 - if participant is a Records Manager (may be two co-RMs at $150/person)

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
- Monday, May 11, 2020 (11:59 p.m. ET)
  Deadline for receipt of completed applications
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- May 12-May 19, 2020
  Application Review and Applicant Interviews

- May 2020
  Notification of awards and incubation period begins

- Oct 2020/Dec 2020 - Community Research Expo

OUR EQUITY POLICY

The Root Cause Research Center (RCRC) is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of accountability, transparency, veneration, belonging, and liberation.

We believe that the people most impacted by an issue are best positioned to discover the root causes and solutions of that issue. Impacted people are the most qualified investigators on our team. The collective sum of our lived experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, self-expression, unique capabilities, and insights allow us to do extraordinary work.

We embrace and encourage every team member's differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make that person unique.

To hold strong to these principles, our transformative accountability strategy includes:
1. The promotion of direct contact/discussion and open face-to-face contact between staff, board members, and affiliates;
2. Assuring that strategic decision-making is made collectively by staff, board, and affiliates by regularly reporting projects and creating opportunities for input and discussion;
3. Using policy and strategy-making as a means of learning and development;
4. Understanding that conflict is inevitable as well as a source of creativity;
5. Regularly checking to make sure that the alignment of how we treat organizational members is congruent with values expressed in work; and
6. By calling attention to power dynamics (place-based, role/hierarchy based, etc) when opening a meeting.

RCRC's equity initiatives are applicable—but not limited—to our practices and policies on recruitment and selection; compensation and benefits; professional development and training; promotions; transfers; social and recreational programs; layoffs; terminations; and the ongoing development of a transformational and healthy work environment.

OUR RACE & CLASS STATEMENT
We believe in foregrounding the intersectional lens around race and class to build resilience in combating systems of oppression through justice and abolition, rather than focusing solely on veneer diversity metrics. In recognition of the lingering damage caused by racist strategies employed within the American Labor Movement, both historically and in the present, as well as the ongoing class issues grounded in White supremacy (i.e. respectability politics, colorism, assimilation pressures, etc) that exist in some Black spaces, we have chosen this intersectional path. Working foundationally at the intersections of race and class, RCRC is building resilience, collective power, and cross-racial solidarity across the state of Kentucky, and inevitably, across the American South.

EVALUATION
Evaluation for the Community Research Incubator will have three main components: 1) a systematic method for monitoring progress toward specific collectively identified goals, 2) a logic model that outlines relationships between interventions and outcomes, and 3) two sets of continuous feedback loops that will happen both during and after incubation periods. The first continuous feedback loop will prioritize the comments and concerns of Community Researchers, and the second will prioritize the feedback of external parties--particularly the feedback of other impacted community members that are not stipend incubator participants.

PROGRAM DIRECTION
Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by RCRC staff and affiliates. RCRC's investigative staff are experienced research analysts, data analysts, and community organizers. All staff members who engage in research and data collection also maintain the following certifications:

- Human Subjects Research certification from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative ([CITI Program](#))
- Responsible Conduct of Research certification from [CITI Program](#)
- Financial Conflict of Interest certification from the National Institutes of Health ([NIH](#))