



Fellowship Questions & Answers

During the September 18 information session, we received many questions in the meeting chat. We are sharing them and their corresponding responses here, slightly edited for clarity.

Do we share applicant names with the evaluators?

We do share the names with evaluators. This is to ensure we avoid conflicts of interest in the process. We take your privacy and data seriously, though. They will have access through the evaluation period, but not afterward. Our evaluators come from our community and receive training not only in the evaluation process but also in maintaining confidentiality. We will never share your idea or details beyond this process without your knowledge.

If we are not selected, will our ideas/proposal be kept confidential?

Yes. We will never share your application details with anyone beyond the evaluation process. Once the evaluation closes, only the applicant and the Voqal Partners program manager can see the information.

Do you have tentative dates for the July 2027 convening? Will that be an in-person event or a virtual one?

The July 2027 convening will be in person, and the dates are still TBD. We will know the dates early next year.

Can you provide more concrete examples of what point a project is considered no longer in the idea phase?

Many factors come into play, so it's hard to offer a definitive definition. The program is designed to help individuals outline the steps to bring an idea to life. Whether that's developing a business plan or fundraising strategy, or building a volunteer network or testing messages, the ideal applicant is someone who hasn't had access to the time, money, and/or support to do these things in service of realizing the idea. If you've gotten to a place where any of this exists, this might not be a space where you'll get resources to take you to your next phase, even if it's early or new in the scheme of things.

If you are fiscally sponsored but don't have funding (and are not sure where it might come from), is that too far along?

Generally, no, but without more context it's hard to say. We hope the answer above helps you determine further.



Is it too far if we've conducted informal preliminary research on the need for our issue/goal in our community?

Again, that's hard to say without more context, but most likely not. We'd be looking to ensure the research is part of your project, not the end goal, more than anything. It might prove you have something to go on that's worth expanding, so important to refer to the application.

Do you fund work that includes policy development and/or policy advocacy? (Since there can sometimes be prohibitions on this for 501c3 organizations.)

Yes, please submit proposals that include policy change and advocacy work. We do not limit 501c4-type activities and are incorporated as such ourselves.

Will the geographic scope or number of people served be part of the evaluation criteria (ie: if our work isn't ready to scale, is that disqualifying)?

That is not an evaluation criterion - the reach can be hyperlocal or national. We'd rather see quality over quantity. The fellowship is a space to figure out how to scale an idea, so absolutely not disqualifying!

What are the expectations of fellows in terms of progress on our projects by the end of the fellowship?

At the end of the program, we don't ask what you did but what you learned. We understand that six months is not that long, and you may have changed your mind, run into unforeseen obstacles, or had to move more slowly than anticipated. The fellowship is intended to give participants the time and space to figure things out, so we fully expect that may mean where you intended to end is not what came true. On the other hand, if things go according to plan and you do have concrete outcomes at the end, great. We'll cheer that on too. We are there to support fellows in the ups and the downs.

Are you hoping that ideas turn into social enterprises or organizations? How is Voqal measuring its own success or impact via the collection of incubated ideas?

Along with the above, we hope you get where you want to be, or at least see a more stable path to get there, but we don't expect anything specific to happen in six months. We measure success by knowing that the program's resources and structure provide the fellows with the opportunity they need to keep the idea moving, wherever that work lands at the end of the program.

Could you tell us more about the coaching offered?

The coaches are a group of people dedicated to helping the fellows think through their ideas and grow. They include program alums familiar with the process. We introduce the coaches



to the chosen fellows early in the program. Then you can meet with any or all of them throughout the six months. In general, they offer space to think through anything from technical aspects through leadership development.

Is there somewhere on the website where we can get a printout of coaches and their specialties? As this is a critical part of the program's value, it would be helpful to understand their potential benefits before applying.

We aren't able to provide coach names before the program's start, as they vary each year. Most coaches are program alums and understand the process; they have been where you are. Others come from trusted, values-aligned spaces and lead with liberatory values and practices. In fact, the pool of coaches is largely informed by the skills or support the chosen fellows indicate they need during the application and interview processes.

Is a community-engaged action research proposal eligible for funding?

Yes, as long as it's tied to systemic change and a vision for the future. That should be a component of the project, not the end goal.

Are letters of recommendation a competitive contribution as a supporting link?

You are welcome to share letters of rec, but they will be treated as supporting documents like any other upload.

Should we provide citations or stats to justify our claims surrounding community injustice?

If you think it's important to illuminate your vision and work, but it's not necessary. We appreciate that data is holistic and might not be numbers-driven, so we'd love to hear you speak from experience and the heart more than frame your idea around statistics.

What happens after the fellowship? Is Voqal connected to a national network of potential foundations or VCs that might help take these ideas to the next stage?

We have an active alum network and stay engaged with anyone interested, as well as a growing funding network of VCs - that's a commitment for us to ensure there's more capital going to this work.

Do we have to pay taxes?

This requires a two-part answer.

1. You do not need to pay taxes on the \$30,000. It is considered an award by the IRS. We will not issue you a 1099.
2. You may need to pay taxes depending on what you use the money for. If you hire anyone, purchase equipment, or pay yourself a salary, you may have to pay taxes



during the transaction or afterward. It'd be best to consult with your accountant or a local firm, as this can vary by state.

If we have a specific question about whether a project fits in these guidelines, is there someone we can check with?

Yes, you can email fellowship@voqalpartners.org. We will respond as soon as we're able.

Where do the philanthropy funds come from?

We hold licenses for internet service that we lease to a major corporation. We use the cash royalties to fund our programs.

Does Voqal support ideas that include spiritual and healing endeavors?

Yes, we would welcome applications that include these, as we would welcome any application that draws on a range of approaches, practices, and principles. The core element we're evaluating is that the work is in service to the vision.

Do you fund projects that are creatively aligned and leverage different art forms such as creative writing, archiving, or exhibitions?

Yes, we welcome creative expressions of all kinds!

What if our bold idea is somewhat related or similar to a previous fellow's idea? Would that work against or for our application? Would there be opportunities for further collaboration if the ideas are related but not exactly the same?

We know it will take everything and everyone to achieve liberation, and sometimes the work you do may be aligned with others in terms of location, practice, or community. We would not disqualify anyone whose work resembles what has already happened/is happening, as long as the origins are clearly distinguished. We have an active alum network and welcome collaborations among the community when it feels right.