

Request for Letters of Interest

An Invitation to Join the SAFE (Safety and Fairness for Everyone) Network to
Keep Immigrant Families Together & Communities Safe

Due: January 17, 2019

In November 2017, the Vera Institute of Justice [launched the SAFE \(Safety and Fairness for Everyone\) Network](#) by convening a group of 11 (which has now increased to 12) diverse cities and counties that committed public funding to legal representation for immigrants in their communities facing deportation – a crucial last line of defense for those targeted by increased immigration enforcement. These local leaders are committed to keeping immigrant families together and communities safe by protecting due process for those who cannot otherwise afford an attorney and ensuring that anyone who faces the devastating consequences of deportation receives a fair day in court. To support these efforts, Vera provided catalyst funding and expert technical assistance to help design, launch, and administer these programs. Vera has also partnered with legal service providers to deliver ongoing substantive, procedural, and programmatic technical assistance to the Network; build a community of practice; and develop evidence of the impact of representation on case outcomes, families, and communities.

In its first year, [the SAFE Network has demonstrated](#) that publicly funded counsel programs are an effective and common-sense approach to protecting immigrant communities from extended detention and erroneous deportation. Building off of the success of the SAFE Network's first year and the growing national momentum toward universal representation, Vera is expanding its network. Vera now invites applications to join this growing national movement of local governments committed to safeguarding due process for their immigrant communities while keeping families together and communities safe.

In its second year, the Network will continue to:

- Support local communities in protecting the well-being and rights of all residents;
- Advance the narrative that American values support keeping communities safe by upholding the constitutional guarantee of due process for all people residing here; and
- Make the long-term case for a right to counsel in deportation proceedings.

SAFE Network Membership

Vera is introducing to its Network tiers of participation to reflect the diverse needs and interests of the jurisdictions working to protect their immigrant communities through increasing access to counsel. Applicants will be considered for one of three levels of membership– Member, Partner, or Affiliate.

Vera will award up to five jurisdictions that meet the standard of universal representation, as described in the Criteria section below, with *Member* status, which includes a catalyst grant of up to \$100,000. Many jurisdictions that are committed to SAFE Network values may not yet have implemented programs that meet the standard for Member status. Vera encourages these jurisdictions to apply to join the network as *Partners* to receive other benefits of Network

participation, including Vera’s support in developing a program that protects the due process rights of all immigrants, thereby potentially qualifying the jurisdiction to receive Member status and catalyst funding in the future. *Affiliate* membership is open to local jurisdictions, advocacy groups, legal service providers, and/or legal collaboratives that are interested in participating in the national movement for universal representation, but that are in jurisdictions that have not secured public funding for deportation defense.

The criteria for each of these levels and its associated benefits is outlined below:

- **Members** (*Up to 5 jurisdictions will be selected for Member status*):
 - **Criteria:** Applicants must:
 - Be a *city, county, state government entity, or collaborative of jurisdictions*;
 - Demonstrate an *urgent demand* (e.g., because of a large immigrant population under threat or a large immigration detention center nearby);
 - Make a *commitment of public dollars* (public-private partnerships will also be considered) to support legal representation for immigrants in *removal proceedings* or a pathway to doing so within 6 months;
 - Prioritize serving those who are *detained*;
 - Articulate an *intent and pathway to dedicate funds after the first year*;
 - Show a strong *commitment to the following three priority values and best policy practices*:
 - 1) due process and fairness in our justice system;
 - 2) representation of immigrants in removal proceedings, with a priority for serving those who are detained; and
 - 3) a “universal representation” model that takes a “merits-blind” intake approach and does not deny services to any categories of immigrants in removal proceedings other than those based on income requirements;
 - Demonstrate an ability to launch a program in a timely manner; and
 - Ensure data collection and reporting to Vera to support the evaluation of the project.
 - **Benefits:**
 - **A catalyst grant of up to \$100,000 from Vera** provided directly to a selected legal service provider to augment the local funding for representation of detained immigrants under a universal representation model.
 - **In-kind infrastructure support**, including:
 - **Training and technical assistance for Network legal service providers** – Vera provides initial training and regular continuing education and skill-sharpening through peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and challenges, expert individualized case assistance, in-person legal trainings, and webinars. Vera also provides problem-solving support in capacity-building and managing detention facility and immigration court stakeholder relationships.

- ***Program performance and outcome monitoring*** – Vera collects quantitative data from legal service providers and qualitative data from regular site visits and other contact with the sites to monitor program performance, report on progress and findings to funders, and identify important trends that may inform technical assistance and program management. With an eye toward evaluation, Vera has created a secure network database targeted at measuring the impact of representation on *family unity, economic impact, court proceedings, and outcomes*.
 - ***Streamlined program administration*** – Vera can assist jurisdictions in their procurement processes by running a competitive RFP to identify qualified legal services providers, negotiating contracts with chosen providers, and administering funding to providers based on work performed.
 - ***Strategic support to jurisdictions*** – Vera can provide communications and messaging support as well as strategic guidance on securing continued funding of the program in the local jurisdiction. Vera is available to meet with local stakeholders to educate them about the program.
 - **Connection to a national movement of local jurisdictions similarly committed to ensuring fairness and safety for their communities.** As a SAFE Network Member, local jurisdictions have regular and direct access to other jurisdictions across the country implementing a variety of innovative and important protections for their communities.
- **Partners:**
 - **Criteria:** Applicants must:
 - Be a *city, county, state government entity, or collaborative of jurisdictions* (jurisdictions where the legal defense program is entirely privately funded will be considered for this level of membership if the local government is significantly involved in the program’s creation or implementation); and
 - *Have a program piloting deportation defense* (this may include programs that do not fully operate within the three SAFE Network priority values, such as those that do not adhere to a merits-blind intake system).
 - **Benefits:**
 - **In-kind infrastructure support**, including:
 - ***Training and technical assistance for Network legal service providers*** – Vera provides initial training and regular continuing education and skill-sharpening through peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and challenges, expert individualized case assistance, in-person legal trainings, and

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 - ***Strategic support to jurisdictions*** – Through Network-wide communications, Vera can provide messaging support as well as generalized strategic guidance on securing continued funding of the program. Vera also provides a forum for government officials within the Network to share information and challenges.
 - **Partnership with Vera and the SAFE Network to enhance its current program** and more comprehensively protect due process for all immigrants facing deportation. Vera welcomes on-going communication with Partners on strategy for moving forward a universal representation program.
 - **Connection to a national movement of local jurisdictions similarly committed to ensuring fairness and safety for their communities.** As a SAFE Network Partner, local jurisdictions have regular and direct access to other jurisdictions across the country implementing a variety of innovative and important protections for their communities.
- **Affiliates:**
 - **Criteria:** Applicants must:
 - *Demonstrate an interest in participating in the national movement for universal representation* and partnering with Vera through advocacy efforts, provision of legal services to detained immigrants in removal proceedings, and/or data collection to support a national evaluation of the project. Affiliate membership is not limited to local governments. Advocacy groups, legal service providers, and/or legal collaboratives are encouraged to apply even if there is not currently local public funding or government involvement in their efforts.

- **Benefits:**
 - **In-kind infrastructure support**, including:
 - ***Access to certain web-based training and technical assistance activities for legal service providers as availability allows.***
 - ***Potential program performance and outcome monitoring*** – With an eye toward evaluation, Vera has created a secure network database targeted at measuring the impact of representation on *family unity, economic impact, court proceedings, and outcomes.*
 - **Connection to a national movement of local jurisdictions similarly committed to ensuring fairness and safety for their communities.** SAFE Network Affiliates will have regular and direct access to other jurisdictions across the country implementing a variety of innovative and important protections for their communities.

The Competition

Local jurisdictions will be selected through a competitive application process, which will take place in two stages:

- 1) Applicants submit Letters of Interest (see below) by January 17, 2019.
- 2) After evaluation, a subset of applicants for all levels of participation in the Network will be invited to submit full proposals where we will ask for more detailed information.

Application Timeline

December 14, 2018: Vera will host a webinar at 2:00 PM EST for jurisdictions contemplating submitting a Letter of Interest. Every jurisdiction planning to attend must email SAFE@vera.org using the subject heading of “SAFE Network Webinar” no later than 6:00 PM EST on December 12, 2018, stating an intention to participate. Vera staff will send the call-in information.

January 8, 2019: Questions about the Letter of Interest process must be submitted to SAFE@vera.org no later than 2:00 PM EST on January 8, 2019.

January 17, 2019: Applicants must submit a Letter of Interest no later than 11:59 PM EST on January 17, 2019.

Letter of Interest Requirements

A Letter of Interest must address:

- 1) why the applicant is interested in joining the Network, including whether your jurisdiction has a large immigrant population or nearby detention center;
- 2) how your jurisdiction will fund deportation defense, whether through the use of public funds and/or public-private partnerships. Be specific as to amounts, timing and certainty of the funding, whether there are anticipated obstacles or challenges, and proposed solutions for addressing such challenges;
- 3) indications of the jurisdiction’s or a local government leader’s commitment to funding counsel for immigrants;

- 4) the type(s) of removal defense legal representation that your jurisdiction is funding or intends to fund. If it is known, describe (1) who will be providing the services, and (2) what, if any, the eligibility requirements for services will be; and
- 5) the type of support or technical assistance that your jurisdiction is interested in receiving from Vera.

The suggested Letter of Interest length is 2-3 pages, but may not exceed 5 pages (not including optional attachments). Please include the following contact information:

- Agency/Office Name:
- Address:
- Primary Contact Name and Title:
- Primary Contact Telephone Number:
- Primary Contact Email:
- Other Related Contacts:

Submitting the Letter of Interest

Letters of Interest must be submitted by e-mail to SAFE@vera.org. The subject of the e-mail should be “SAFE Network Letter of Interest from [Name of Jurisdiction].” Vera will send e-mail confirmations of receipt for all Letters of Interest within two business days of receipt.

Questions and More Information

This Request for Letters of Interest may be updated at any time. To be on Vera’s distribution list for relevant updates (including answers to questions asked), please email SAFE@vera.org with the subject line “SAFE Network Updates Requested.”

For more information, join our webinar (see above). Notes from the webinar will be sent to everyone registered for the webinar or for updates.

For other questions, please email SAFE@vera.org no later than **2:00 PM EST on January 8, 2019**. The subject line for emailed questions should be “SAFE Network Question.” Answers to questions will be addressed during the webinar or circulated no fewer than three days before the January 17, 2019 deadline to everyone registered for the webinar or for updates.