



RESEARCH REPORT

Justice Fellowship Pilot Program Report

Building a Foundation for Change: A Report on the Multnomah County Justice Fellowship Pilot Program and Recommendations for the Future

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Key Facts	4
Forward: Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator	5
Recommendations and Goals for Growth	7
About This Report	8
Justice Fellowship Purpose	8
Report Scope & Methods	8
Background	9
Funding	10
Building the Foundation	10
Planning and Curriculum Development	10
Identifying the Changemakers	11
Investing in Changemakers	13
The Journey Unfolds	14
Fellowship Launch and Graduation	14
Measuring Success	16
Post-Session Surveys and Interviews	16
Charting the Path Forward	17
Strategic Visioning and Action Planning Session	17
Recommendations for the Future	18
Curriculum and Session Structure	18
Feedback from the Justice Fellowship Cohort	20
Feedback from Presenters	21
Conclusion	21
Next Steps:	21
The Proposal Process: A Collaborative Approach	22
Project Proposals for Justice Fellows: Advancing Equity in Multnomah County	22
Appendix A: Pre- and Post-Fellowship Survey Findings	24
Acknowledgments	25
About the Authors	26

Executive Summary

Leaders in the Multnomah County criminal legal system are committed to meaningfully involving community members in shaping more equitable justice system policies. The Multnomah County Justice Fellowship Pilot Program, inspired by the successful Justice Fellows initiative in San Francisco, was established to empower individuals with lived justice system expertise to actively participate in creating a fairer system.

Launched in March 2024, the program selected 10 fellows through a competitive process. Fellows were provided with a comprehensive 17-session curriculum that covered many aspects of the criminal legal system to prepare them for active engagement and advocacy with policy makers. The program also fostered meaningful dialogue between the fellows and criminal justice leaders, resulting in the identification of strategic priorities to address in discussions about criminal legal system policies.

A review and assessment of the Justice Fellowship Pilot Program finds that it demonstrates immense potential to empower community members with lived expertise to drive meaningful reform within the criminal legal system. By equipping fellows with knowledge, resources, and a platform for their voices, the program prepares them to become influential advocates for change.

The successful elements of the pilot implementation lay a strong foundation for the potential growth and expansion of the Justice Fellowship, further amplifying voices traditionally absent from policy discussions and ultimately driving policy change in service of a more equitable system.

The Justice Fellowship pilot program succeeded due to several key factors. The manageable cohort size fostered collaboration among diverse individuals with lived experience in the criminal justice system. The selection process prioritized strong leaders committed to community development. The program structure, balancing structured learning and interactive discussions with system leaders, facilitated valuable connections and knowledge sharing.

Beyond the formal curriculum, the fellowship fostered a sense of community and empowerment, providing a platform for fellows to share their stories and engage with leaders. It highlighted the need to bridge technological and cultural gaps faced by those reintegrating into society after incarceration. By acknowledging the shortcomings of the justice system and valuing the "user perspective," the fellowship created a space for mutual learning and potential reform. The success of this pilot program indicates the potential for future iterations to further leverage the expertise and lived experiences of those impacted by the criminal justice system.

The Justice Fellowship is funded by the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge](#) (SJC), a nationwide initiative aimed at reducing over-incarceration by rethinking how America uses jails. Multnomah County has been a recipient of SJC funding since 2015.

Key Facts

- The pilot engaged 10 competitively selected fellows from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- The 17-session weekly curriculum covered various facets of the criminal legal system and was delivered by system leaders and elected officials.
- Fellows identified strategic priorities for the program's future and policy reform discussions.
- Fellows were compensated monthly for their participation

Forward: Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the inaugural Justice Fellowship Project, detailing its implementation, outcomes, and recommendations for future iterations. As Project Coordinator, I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative potential of this initiative.

The pilot program brought together a diverse cohort of individuals with lived experience in the criminal justice system. It offered them a platform to engage with system leaders, share their insights, and contribute to meaningful dialogue. This report highlights the successes of the fellowship, including the robust selection process, the impactful nature of the sessions, and the strong sense of community that emerged among participants.

However, the report also acknowledges areas for improvement. Challenges related to session format, time management, and participant engagement underscore the need for a more active facilitation role for the Project Coordinator. Furthermore, varying levels of technical proficiency among cohort members necessitate a more diversified approach to communication and support.

One of my biggest takeaways was the cohort's deep desire to be heard, share their stories, and contribute to positive change. They were accountable for their past actions that led to their involvement in the criminal justice system, but also keenly aware of the system's shortcomings and failures. They are committed to reforming these systems to ensure fairer treatment and better support for others facing similar circumstances.

This commitment was evident throughout the sessions. Fellows sometimes steered the conversation away from the planned presentation, leading to more engaging discussions with leadership. Building relationships with the presenters was often more important to the cohort than receiving information they might not have found relevant, especially since many had lived through the subject matter. The opportunity to share their stories and ask questions of leadership was invaluable to them.

Given my own lived experience, there weren't many surprises during the project, but it did highlight some aspects I had perhaps taken for granted. The lack of technical proficiency, particularly among those recently released, stood out. The carceral system offers little to no technology education; and when it is provided, it's heavily censored with limited access. This issue was likely compounded by the fact that most fellows were Gen X or older Millennials who didn't grow up with technology and may have been incarcerated during major technological shifts.

For some recently released fellows, this knowledge gap extended beyond technology to recent cultural shifts. These included advancements in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), such as the use of updated ethnic categories or non-binary pronouns, as well as unfamiliarity with current social and political events. Individuals in the carceral system often live in an information

vacuum. While I don't see this lack of awareness as a problem, as individuals were eager to learn, it highlights the setbacks and struggles of reintegration and the need for reform.

Even with my own lived experience, I assumed the fellows would be proficient with email. While I anticipated that recently released fellows might struggle with technology, I was surprised by the lack of digital literacy among fellows who had been out for a while. This suggests that future fellowships should diversify communication methods beyond email to perhaps text messaging or video chat applications.

Initially, I was anxious about how criminal justice system leaders would receive me, someone with a criminal record, and by extension, the cohort. However, my anxieties eased during the initial planning phase when I interacted with system leadership. Sharing my story, my work, and my vision for the fellowship, along with how they could contribute, resonated with them. The leadership demonstrated a belief in the mission, offering support and flexibility.

The insights and recommendations presented here aim to inform the continued development and refinement of the Justice Fellowship Project. By addressing the identified challenges and embracing the key takeaways, we can ensure that future iterations of the program maximize its impact and contribute to a more just and equitable criminal justice system.

The true measure of the fellowship's success lies not only in the experiences of the cohort members, but also in how system leaders leverage this invaluable resource to drive meaningful change. It is my hope that this report serves as a catalyst for continued collaboration and action, ensuring that the voices of those most impacted by the criminal justice system are heard and valued.

Sincerely,

Enrique Rivera

Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator



Recommendations and Goals for Growth

INTEGRATE THE JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP INTO ONGOING COUNTY PROGRAMS

Secure ongoing budget commitment and identify appropriate positions within County departments, to institutionalize the Fellowship's impact, ensuring its longevity and embedding the valuable contributions of justice-involved individuals within the County's work.

REFINE THE CURRICULUM

Develop a more comprehensive and adaptable curriculum that reflects current issues and policy changes, and incorporates input from fellows themselves, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness in empowering fellows with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for meaningful change.

ENHANCE OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Diversify the pool of applicants even more by continuing to seek individuals from underrepresented communities and implementing a formal nomination process, ensuring that the Fellowship reflects the rich diversity of those impacted by the justice system and amplifying a wider range of perspectives and experiences.

FOSTER COLLABORATION

Explore partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders in the criminal legal system to maximize the program's impact and reach, creating a unified and amplified voice for reform and ensuring sustainability of the Fellowship's efforts.

ESTABLISH A FORMAL NETWORK

Enhance the Justice Fellowship's influence by establishing a network of compensated consultants to contribute their expertise to decision-making tables and policy conversations, with a specific focus on increasing equity in the criminal legal system. This will help to formalize the role of community members as critical voices in the development and implementation of reforms.

ENHANCE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Future iterations of the Justice Fellowship should incorporate dedicated support staff with experience in trauma-informed practices. This will ensure that Fellows receive the necessary emotional and practical support to navigate the challenges of the Fellowship and promote their overall well-being.

DEVELOP A MENTOR NETWORK

Engage graduated fellows to serve as mentors to future fellows, with a focus on building trust and nurturing the development of future leaders. This will provide ongoing support and guidance for fellows as they transition into new roles and continue to grow their impact in the field of justice reform.

About This Report

Justice Fellowship Purpose

The Multnomah County Justice Fellowship, funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's [Safety and Justice Challenge](#) (SJC), is a pilot program designed to empower individuals impacted by the criminal legal system to leverage their lived expertise and contribute to meaningful reforms. The program's goal is to create a more equitable justice system by ensuring that fellows — those most directly affected by the system — become key stakeholders in policy decision-making processes.

To achieve these objectives, the program invested in a cohort of 10 fellows, providing them with a comprehensive four-month curriculum. This intensive learning experience allowed fellows to gain insights into the system's complexities, engage directly with criminal legal system leaders and elected officials, develop advocacy skills, and prepare to participate in policy projects within legal system agencies.

The fellowship's ultimate aim is to cultivate a broad network of community leaders ready to serve as compensated consultants for specific projects, advisory committees, or policy development discussions within or related to the criminal legal system. Having completed its pilot phase in June 2024, the program plans to launch additional cohorts and become a replicable model for meaningful community engagement in system reform.

Report Scope & Methods

This report describes the Justice Fellowship's development, from inception to implementation. It highlights the program's strengths, as well as recommendations for improvement that can inform future iterations of the program.

To compile this report, the authors reviewed planning documents, the Multnomah County Justice Fellowship Design Blueprint, the Justice Fellowship Project Timeline (Gantt chart), and other relevant materials.

Additionally, the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) — whose Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator oversaw the planning and launch of the Justice Fellowship — with the assistance of two Portland State University Masters in Social Work (MSW) student interns, created and administered post-session surveys for the Justice Fellowship cohort and post-fellowship surveys for presenters at the end of the Justice Fellowship Pilot Program, and also conducted post-program interviews with each of the fellows. The results of these surveys and interviews were incorporated into this report.

Multnomah County Justice Fellowship Pilot Program Report

Background

The Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, a statutorily created collaborative body made up of key public safety leaders, first applied for and received funding through the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) in 2015. The Safety and Justice Challenge grant project was collaboratively developed and approved by LPSCC members and is managed by staff in the LPSCC office.

Increasing community engagement and reducing racial and ethnic disparities has been a primary focus of Multnomah County's Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) project since first receiving funding in 2015. In 2021, as the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing challenges continued to disrupt existing community engagement efforts, the County's SJC project team decided to identify alternative community engagement strategies that would create pathways for community members to be embedded in reform efforts and to be adequately compensated for their time and expertise.

County LPSCC staff surveyed other SJC sites to identify successful and replicable models to engage the community in more long-term and meaningful ways. Ultimately, the successful Justice Fellowship programs in San Francisco and Cook County, IL inspired the development of a Multnomah County Justice Fellowship. Using San Francisco — where the District Attorney's office launched a successful fellowship for justice-impacted leaders in partnership with a curriculum consultant — as a model, Multnomah County successfully applied for funds from the MacArthur Foundation to hire staff, contract with a community-based provider to assist with facilitation and curriculum development, and launch the Justice Fellowship pilot.

Local policy makers have signaled a deep commitment to working alongside community members, as demonstrated through myriad community engagement efforts, including community listening sessions where community members shared their experiences in the court process directly with Judges, and community engagement events to engage community in planning and generate support for the launch of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. However, they have not been provided with sufficient education, incentive or infrastructure to effectively share power and co-create policies with the community. Understanding this, LPSCC staff met individually with key criminal legal system leadership to gauge their interest in meaningfully partnering with community members and discuss any concerns or hesitations they held about integrating community voices into policy discussions.

After funding was secured, Multnomah County hired a full-time Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator to oversee and manage the Justice Fellowship and, using a formal procurement process, contracted with Territory, a consulting firm with expertise in human-centered design.

Funding

Multnomah County has been a recipient of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge grant funding since 2015. Since then, a total of \$4.926 million dollars have supported innovative jail reduction strategies that address the main drivers of the local jail population, including unfair and ineffective practices that take a particularly heavy toll on people of color, low-income communities, and people with mental health and substance use challenges. Most recently, Multnomah County used SJC funds to support an overhaul of the County's pretrial system and launch the Justice Fellowship.

MacArthur Foundation SJC grant funds support:

- a full-time LPSCC Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator
- stipends for fellow participation during the four-month program, as well as in ad-hoc policy projects and meetings
- meals and supplies for sessions
- a contract with Territory to assist with facilitation, curriculum development and material design.

Building the Foundation

Planning and Curriculum Development

The Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator, in partnership with Territory, began developing the program curriculum in November 2023. The overarching curriculum goal was to delve into various aspects of the criminal legal system to equip fellows with the information needed to participate in policy-level discussions. A secondary goal for the program curriculum was to offer an opportunity for fellows to directly engage with system leaders and elected officials. In service of these two goals, the Project Coordinator requested that agency heads, systems leaders and elected officials — rather than trainers or operational staff — present the curriculum to this first cohort.

The curriculum was developed through a collaboration with criminal legal system leadership, who drew upon their expertise to help design each session. This involved meetings and

interviews with system leaders and related agencies, during which they were asked to identify the three most critical aspects of their work. During the curriculum development meetings, presenters were encouraged to structure their sessions around an emphasis on engaging with the fellows by answering questions about their decision-making processes within the criminal legal system and asking questions to better understand the fellows' perspectives.

To help presenters create engaging presentations, Territory created a Justice Fellowship Presenter Guidelines document that offered an agenda template with clear segments for introductions, new information, a question-and-answer session, and practice. The document also emphasized key adult learning principles: balancing facilitator talk with participant engagement, framing the lesson with clear objectives, utilizing varied and interactive teaching methods, creating an inclusive environment, and regularly checking for understanding.

The presenters were then responsible for creating concise and dynamic presentations to introduce their respective topics to the fellows. To enhance the learning experience further, presenters were encouraged to bring supplementary materials such as handouts, articles and podcasts that could be used during sessions, as preparatory work or as follow-up assignments. Presenters were required to submit their presentations to the Project Coordinator two weeks prior to their scheduled session to provide the coordinator an opportunity to review the materials and provide feedback based on the learning style and dynamic of the cohort.

Identifying the Changemakers

Recruitment

Recruitment for the inaugural Justice Fellowship cohort of 10 fellows began in January 2024. Ideal candidates were identified as individuals with lived experience in the criminal legal system who could bring a mix of the following characteristics and could demonstrate a strong commitment to being part of a collaborative learning cohort.

- **Skills:** Deep listening, emotional coping skills, critical thinking, some professional exposure (paid or volunteer).
- **Attributes:** Confidence in speaking, willingness to listen and understand, readiness to share personal experiences in a relevant and effective manner, dedication, and openness.
- **Interests:** A genuine interest in learning and a willingness to put in the hours; interest in equity-focused criminal legal system reform or a related field.

To recruit qualified candidates, LPSCC developed an application process that included a brief questionnaire and required a resume. The application questions were developed by LPSCC and reviewed by the Multnomah County Attorney's Office, Human Resources, the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) and the Office of Community Involvement (OCI).

The application was developed to be a low-barrier process to encourage submissions. The Project Coordinator offered to assist potential applicants without a current resume to develop one, as well as help with completing the application questions. Interested individuals were also encouraged to review the program calendar to verify their availability to attend the majority of the sessions and to submit their applications by Feb. 5, 2024.

The fellowship application was designed to identify candidates with lived experience, either personal or professional, in the justice system. In order to better understand individual experiences, the application emphasized two particular sections:

- **Personal lived experience:** Recognizing the unique insights individuals gain from direct system involvement, this section encouraged candidates to share their personal experiences with the criminal legal system .
- **Professional experience:** Acknowledging that expertise can come from various paths, this section focused on qualifications, accomplishments and knowledge related to the criminal legal system.

To provide transparency and attract qualified applicants, the application also included:

- Background information on the fellowship's purpose, funding and goals
- A description of the ideal candidate profile
- Details on financial support and requirements for fellows
- A timeline of the selection process
- Application questions on motivations, experiences, goals and potential conflicts of interest.

An application scoring rubric was established based on Multnomah County HR's hiring practices to ensure a fair and equitable selection process. The application was primarily available online; in an effort to increase accessibility, paper applications were also available upon request.

Outreach

Outreach efforts to recruit candidates launched in early January 2024, beginning with targeted emails to LPSCC member organizations, relevant County departments and community partners, as well as promotional social media posts and internal communications.

The Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator conducted targeted outreach by identifying community partners, including the Multnomah County Library, as well as other programs that specifically cater to formerly incarcerated individuals, such as Portland State University's Higher Education in Prison and Project Rebound, and Portland Community College's Legal Resource Center.

In-person outreach to promote the Justice Fellowship among a broader audience consisted of information sessions at strategic library branches throughout Multnomah County, offering interested members of the public a place to ask questions about the fellowship's requirements and purpose. The library information sessions were also intended to give applicants an opportunity to access application and resume writing assistance. However, the Project Coordinator was able to hold only two of the planned seven sessions due to a prolonged stretch of inclement weather in the area.

Fellow Selection

Outreach efforts yielded an impressive result, netting 87 complete applications. The applications were reviewed by a panel of County staff members using the scoring rubric. The 15 candidates with the highest-scoring applications were invited to interview with a panel of County and non-County panelists.

The interview included only two questions, which were designed to gain additional information about the candidates' background and experiences in the criminal legal system, as well as their motivation to be part of the fellowship cohort. The interviews were structured to be more conversational and allow time for the fellows to ask questions and expand upon areas of their interest and background that they believed to be relevant to their candidacy.

The panel ultimately selected 10 fellows for the inaugural Multnomah County Justice Fellowship cohort.

Investing in Changemakers

To support fellows commitment to attending all sessions and engaging in coaching meetings, Justice Fellowship participants received a range of benefits to support their involvement. Benefits included:

- A monthly stipend of \$1,000 intended to cover costs fellows may incur during participation, including transportation, childcare and the fellows' time.
- All materials for the sessions
- Meals during the fellowship sessions.

The stipend was established to acknowledge the time commitment required by the fellowship and to help alleviate any financial barriers that might have prevented individuals from participating. The stipend was not a salary or payment for services, but rather a way to support participants and enable them to focus on the valuable learning and development opportunities offered by the fellowship.

Fellows were required to attend the majority of the sessions in order to receive the stipend. In the event a fellow was unable to attend a session, they were encouraged to contact the Project

Coordinator and identify opportunities to obtain the information from the missed session. The majority of fellows attended all sessions during the pilot program.

The Journey Unfolds

Fellowship Launch and Graduation

Beginning March 1, 2024, the Project Coordinator held individual meetings with each fellow to welcome them, introduce them to the program, and learn more about their backgrounds, experiences and expectations. These meetings served as a trust-building opportunity, with the coordinator also sharing their own lived expertise.

On March 16, 2024, the Justice Fellowship officially launched with an opening session designed to foster camaraderie among the cohort, build trust and develop community agreements for shared learning.

The 17-session curriculum on the criminal legal system included 14 weekly sessions and three "Anchor Days." the "Anchor Days" focused on collaboration and reflection, while the 14 weekly sessions delved into specific facets of the system, including:

- Collaboration and Local Reform Efforts
- Using an Equity Lens
- Policy, Practice, and Law Making
- Policy Analysis
- First Responders
- Victim and Survivor Services
- Public Defenders
- The Courts
- Law Enforcement
- Corrections
- Community Corrections
- Grant Writing 101
- District Attorney
- Activism and Direct Social Services

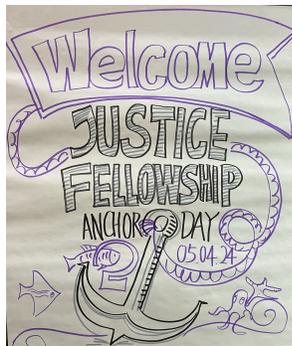


Fellows met every Wednesday evening for three-hour sessions, with additional time each week outside of the planned curriculum dedicated to socializing, reflection, preparation, and debriefing as a group.

The three "Anchor Days," strategically placed at the beginning, middle, and end of the fellowship, provided dedicated time for participants to connect, plan collaborative efforts, and reflect on the course content. Anchor Days 1 and 2 were facilitated by the Project Coordinator and included a visual capture of each session by Territory.

ANCHOR DAY 1

The first Anchor Day, held on March 16th, 2024, served as an initial orientation and team-building session. The day focused on welcoming the fellows, establishing ground rules and facilitating introductions. Activities included an icebreaker and group discussions. Additionally, fellows received an overview of the program and discussed their individual interests and collective skills. The day concluded with a reflection and a reception.



ANCHOR DAY 2

A mid-fellowship event held on May 4th, 2024 was designed to help participants regroup and refocus. Fellows reviewed previous sessions, set goals and strategized on how to apply their expertise to create change in the criminal legal system. The day involved group discussions, breakout sessions and action planning. The morning focused on goal-setting and strengths, while the afternoon was dedicated to action planning and closing remarks.

ANCHOR DAY 3

This final session on June 22nd, 2024 focused on planning and certification. Activities included an icebreaker, a goal-setting exercise and a reflection on the fellows' shared history. Participants and invited presenters jointly envisioned the fellowship program's future, created shared goals through an affinity mapping process, and prioritized these goals through ranked choice voting. This session was facilitated by a facilitator from Territory. The session concluded with a certificate presentation and a reception.



Measuring Success

Post-Session Surveys and Interviews

After each session, fellows assessed the achievement of session goals through a survey developed by Portland State University Masters in Social Work (MSW) student interns, in partnership with LPSCC staff. The anonymous surveys were made available online after each session.

*I feel valued ...
I feel like there's a
space for my ideas
and for me*

The open-ended questions allowed for comprehensive feedback about each session, including questions that asked:

- **New Learnings:** What new information was important to you?
- **Prior Knowledge:** What did you already know?
- **Value of Review:** How did reviewing these learnings benefit you?
- **Desired Information/Skills:** What additional information or skills would you like to have?
- **Application:** How do you plan to use the information presented?
- **Clarity and Usefulness:** Was the information presented clearly and usefully?
- **Participation:** How did you and your colleagues participate?
- **Feeling Heard:** In what ways did you feel heard?
- **Improvement Suggestions:** How could the presentation be more accessible and valuable?
- **Questions:** What questions do you have for the presenters?

In addition to the post-session surveys, the PSU interns, again in collaboration with LPSCC staff, developed a more in-depth interview to be conducted with each fellow at the midpoint of the fellowship to understand their experience. The interview questions were designed to capture each fellow's experience in the program up to that point, solicit feedback about the structure of the program, and allow the fellow to share learnings and future goals from their participation. Interviews were conducted by the interns both virtually and in-person over the course of three weeks.

*Everyone that is
working on the
fellowship has been
really good. I
appreciate it.*

All presenters were also asked to provide post-fellowship feedback via a survey about their experiences leading their sessions and suggestions for future iterations of the fellowship program.

Charting the Path Forward

Strategic Visioning and Action Planning Session

The final session, Anchor Day 3, was designed as a joint strategic visioning session for fellows and presenters to develop a blueprint for moving the fellowship from a program centered on curriculum learning into one that drives action. The session was facilitated by Territory in order to allow the Project Coordinator to engage as a participant. In addition to the Fellows, a select group of presenters were invited to participate in this session. Due to timing and unforeseen commitments, only two of the nine presenters attended.

At this session, the group collaboratively outlined strategic priorities for the next one to two years, focusing on program enhancements, sustained engagement, policy impact, cohort cohesion and youth involvement. Participants defined and ranked clear action steps alongside recommendations for future cohorts.

The session resulted in the following agreed-upon priorities.

PRIORITY 1: PROGRAM EVOLUTION

The cohort unanimously agreed that it's time to elevate the fellowship. Rather than repeating the inaugural model, they recommended a phased approach that builds upon the accomplishments of the first cohort, creating structures that empower fellows to participate in decision-making.

PRIORITY 2: SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

While the current cohort completed the fellowship program, fellows desired continued, meaningful engagement with both the Justice Fellowship and LPSCC. They advocated for the development of tools and structures to facilitate this ongoing involvement. Specifically, this could include being involved in the development of the structure/curriculum for future cohorts or participating as faculty during the program phase.

PRIORITY 3: AMPLIFYING INFLUENCE

Beyond learning, participants agreed that it's time to share knowledge. Fellows urged LPSCC to create and coordinate opportunities for the Justice Fellowship, along with other individuals with lived experience, to actively participate in policy discussions and decisions.

PRIORITY 4: COHORT COHESION

Fellows expressed a strong desire to maintain connections with each other as a cohort and see LPSCC actively support ongoing relationship building within and between cohorts.

Recommendations for the Future

Application

Despite the overall success of the application and recruitment process in attracting candidates, there is room for improvement.

To further enhance equity and diversity among candidates, the following improvements are recommended:

- **Formal Nominations:** Introduce a nomination process to widen the pool of potential applicants.
- **Information Source Question:** Inquire how applicants learned about the fellowship to refine outreach strategies.
- **Diversify Application Options:** Allow for various submission formats (e.g., video recordings) to accommodate different communication styles.
- **Comprehensive Scoring Rubric:** Refine the scoring rubric to ensure clear and consistent evaluation with specific criteria and weights for each application section.
- **Ensure Access:** All participants should have equal access, including access to technology like computers, tablets, and phones. To facilitate this, consider including a question in any application or assessment, asking individuals if they would like or need technological support.

Curriculum and Session Structure

Throughout the pilot, it became clear through observation and feedback that while the cohort valued the presentations and new information, the most impactful part of the experience was the interaction with system leaders, elected officials, and those involved in the daily operations of the criminal legal system. Although presenters came prepared with slides, activities, and handouts, the most significant learning came from Q&A sessions where the Justice Fellowship cohort could ask questions related to their personal experiences within the system. The most engaging sessions were those where presenters set aside their prepared presentations and adopted an open "town hall" format for discussion.

Fellows and presenters reflected that the structure of each three-hour session was generally considered adequate by most of the cohort and presenters, with dedicated time for presenter preparation and a debriefing period. While the engaging nature of the sessions often led to extended discussions that encroached on the debriefing time, neither presenters nor cohort members desired to extend the overall session length beyond three hours.

In addition to the content, the location of the Fellowship sessions proved to be important to the Fellows' learning. During the program, the majority of the sessions took place in a

classroom setting at the Multnomah County Juvenile Justice Complex, with the exception of the session on emergency communications (911) and the session on the Courts. While the planning team previously explored holding more sessions in relevant locations, it wasn't always possible or a priority. Logistical concerns including transportation, the ability to bring food/drink, and after-hours access made this more difficult.

The sessions were all staffed by the Justice Fellowship Coordinator and supported by one PSU MSW Intern. During the initial planning, the planning group envisioned the Territory consultant having a more hands-on role during each session. However, after the cohort selection the County team decided that a less intermediary approach would be more beneficial to the development of the cohort. This allowed the presenters to directly implement the curriculum, fostering stronger interactions between the fellows and criminal legal system leadership.

We were also mindful of the potential harm our system may have caused the participants, recognizing that discussions about the Criminal Justice System can be triggering for Fellows with lived experience. While there were moments of excited conversation with elevated emotions, in the few instances where a Fellow became triggered, most self-regulated by leaving the room or discussing their feelings amongst themselves or with the PSU MSW intern after the session.

Recommendations for Session Structure:

- **Refine the session format:** A more flexible "town hall" style could facilitate panel discussions, inviting key decision-makers who often interact, such as a judge, district attorney, and public defender for a court-focused session.
- **Diversify presenters:** While system leaders offer valuable insights, involving individuals directly engaged in daily operations or training might be more practical and provide a different perspective. The fellowship would likely benefit from a mix of sessions featuring both leadership and frontline personnel.
- **Incorporate interactive and observational activities:** Including opportunities for fellows to see how the system works in practice through activities such as police ride-alongs, jail tours, and observing court arraignments, would enhance the program.
- **Rethink session locations:** Conducting sessions within the corresponding areas of the system, whenever feasible, would significantly benefit the cohort. This may require shifting session times and creating other accommodations.
- **Increase Staffing:** During the Fellowship sessions, the coordinator focused on logistical tasks which made it challenging to also serve as a dedicated moderator or facilitator, especially given the assumption that presenters would predominantly manage their own sessions. Typically 1-2 MSW student interns were present at each session and assisted with logistical support. In the future, the Fellowship could benefit from additional facilitation - a role that could be filled by the Project Coordinator if logistical support

was available - and dedicated support staff trained in trauma-informed practices. Adding this role will demonstrate that the program supports Fellows emotionally. This role could potentially be filled by compensated graduate Fellows, fostering a supportive network, building trust, and empowering participants.

- **Adjust cohort timing:** The timing of the cohort could be adjusted to not overlap with the legislative session, which created scheduling challenges with presenters.

Recommendations for Curriculum Content:

Given the dynamic nature of the justice system, the curriculum should be adaptable and responsive to current issues. Key updates could include:

- **Build the Groundwork:** Provide a concise summary of the criminal legal system, covering legal principles, policies, and recent reforms. Offer documents (flow-charts, agency descriptions, articles) to support.
- **Create Flexibility and Ongoing Updates:** Design the curriculum to accommodate emerging issues and new legislation. Regularly refresh case studies and examples to reflect current developments in law and policy.
 - Current Policy changes (e.g., Measure 11, SB 819, Measure 110, HB 4002)
 - Examine the impact and consequences of legal changes
- **Discussion:** Facilitate discussions among fellows to explore the practical implications of changes on their work.
- **Advocacy:** Future iterations of the Justice Fellowship could incorporate into the policy and advocacy curriculum training on testifying at board meetings, encouraging Fellows to sign up and advocate for issues they are passionate about.

Feedback from the Justice Fellowship Cohort

The Justice Fellowship cohort found the group size to be generally appropriate, though some suggested it could be slightly larger. Comfort levels varied, with deeper connections forming among those who had prior relationships. A common desire was for more opportunities to interact outside of the formal setting. Communication outside the Fellowship was infrequent, contributing to a feeling of disconnection among some members. Most members felt they had enough time to participate during sessions, but some raised concerns about individuals dominating discussions. Opinions on having a cohort leader were mixed, with some seeing potential benefits and others expressing concerns about power dynamics.

The Fellowship reaffirmed shared experiences and highlighted the need to deconstruct institutionalization. Fellows emphasized the value of lived experience and expressed frustration

with the lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in policy discussions. Future goals included making a difference in their communities, continuing their development, and mentoring future cohorts. Support from Multnomah County was seen as crucial for achieving these goals. Fellows also valued the food, location, and scheduling of the Fellowship, and made suggestions for improvements.

Feedback from Presenters

Presenters felt supported by facilitators, were satisfied with guidelines and pre-meetings, and believed their presentations aligned with program goals. They observed active participant engagement. Their primary recommendation was to reschedule Saturday events to improve attendance and maintain consistency. They also suggested incorporating a curriculum shaped by fellows, starting with foundational training and then collaborating with them to identify topics that would advance their projects or address issues they are passionate about. Overall, presenters expressed satisfaction with their experience.

Conclusion

The Justice Fellowship pilot program proved to be a valuable learning experience for all involved from presenters to fellows. The pilot successfully laid the groundwork to implement key improvements and launch future additional cohorts to foster a broader network of community experts ready to contribute to decision-making tables. The program's success is evident in the positive feedback from participants, the valuable insights gained from their lived expertise, and the potential for future collaborations on projects promoting equity and addressing disparities in the criminal legal system .

Next Steps:

The ultimate goal of the Justice Fellowship is to integrate fellows into policy and program discussions — fostering a broader network of community experts ready to contribute to decision-making tables as compensated consultants.

In order to accomplish this goal, the Project Coordinator developed a process to match fellows with projects within the criminal legal system aimed at increasing equity and reducing racial and ethnic disparities. This process launched in July 2024. [Streamlining Project Proposals for Justice Fellowship Participation.](#)

To advance the program's mission, the Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator developed a streamlined "Project Proposals Seeking Justice Fellowship Participation" Google form. This

form facilitates collaboration between LPSCC member organizations and Justice Fellows on projects that address inequities and disparities within the criminal legal system.

The Proposal Process: A Collaborative Approach

With the Fellows' training complete, partner organizations can now request their assistance through the new project proposal form. The form:

1. **Introduces the Justice Fellowship:** Provides background information on the initiative and the Fellows' expertise.
2. **Ensures Project Alignment:** Requires a clear explanation of how the proposed project will contribute to reducing inequity and disparity within the criminal legal system .
3. **Details LPSCC Support and Funding:** Outlines the stipend provided by the Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) through the MacArthur Foundation grant. Justice Fellows will receive \$75 per hour for up to 20 hours of work per project (\$1500 total). Organizations have the option to provide additional funding if needed.
4. **Explains Project Matching:** Describes how the LPSCC Public Safety Project Coordinator will review proposals, match projects with Fellows based on skills and expertise, and act as the main point of contact throughout the project.
5. **Outlines Project Types:** Specifies the types of projects suitable for Justice Fellowship participation:
 - Serve on project teams
 - Serve on advisory committees as subject matter experts
 - Provide their expertise and input on various justice-related matters.

This comprehensive form streamlines the proposal process, ensures alignment with the initiative's goals, and provides all necessary information for successful collaborations.

Project Proposals for Justice Fellows: Advancing Equity in Multnomah County

The Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) is seeking project proposals from member organizations interested in collaborating with Justice Fellows. These projects must promote equity and address disparities within the criminal legal system . Projects

will be matched with Justice Fellows based on skills, experience, and alignment with project goals to ensure the best possible fit.

The LPSCC Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator will serve as the central point of contact for both agencies and Fellows, providing comprehensive support throughout the project lifecycle. This includes coaching, facilitating communication, and fostering collaboration to ensure successful project placement and execution.

Thanks to the generous support of the MacArthur Foundation, LPSCC will provide a stipend of \$75 per hour for up to 20 hours of work per project, totaling \$1,500. Organizations needing additional Fellow hours have the option to provide matching funds.

Appendix A: Pre- and Post-Fellowship Survey Findings

Fellowship Presenter Guidelines document

This document had a suggested agenda with an outline:

- **Introductions:** Presenters and participants introduce themselves, potentially with a focused question like, "How much experience do you have with this topic?"
- **New Information:** Presenter unfolds the topic information.
- **Questions and Answers:** Can be separate or mixed in with the new information. It's okay not to know all the answers, but to show where to find them.
- **Practice/Relevance:** Hands-on opportunities to experience and put new skills and information into practice (examples: small group work, roleplays, reflection activities, teach-backs).

The guidelines also included the following information about teaching adults:

- **Follow the 30/70 principle:** 30% facilitator talk and 70% participant engagement.
- **Frame the lesson topic:** State the learning objective at the beginning, middle, and end of each lesson.
- **Use a variety of high engagement strategies:** Sustain participant interest (examples: open-ended questions, relevant examples or scenarios, interactive materials, physical movement).
- **Build equitable and inclusive opportunities:** Ensure all participants can participate and thrive in the learning environment.
 - Check for understanding at regular intervals.
 - Teach and model new skills and/or concepts.
 - Use personal, real-life, and/or culturally relevant examples and experiences when modeling.

The guidelines also suggested that presenters use the "CURE method" when deciding on what content to include, asking themselves the following about their presentations:

- Is it CLEAR?
- Is it USABLE in their mission?
- Is it RELEVANT to what they are trying to accomplish?
- Is it ENOUGH (or too much) information for the audience to be successful?

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of many individuals. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the Multnomah County Justice Fellowship Pilot Program and the development of this report.

We especially want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Mandi Carrol and Kyra Spengler, the Portland State University Masters in Social Work (MSW) student interns. Their assistance with developing and administering the post-session surveys and conducting the mid-point interviews with fellows was essential to gathering critical feedback and insights that informed this report. Their commitment to this project and their thoughtful approach to engaging with the fellows was truly appreciated.

We also extend our thanks to the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) members, the Justice Fellowship Project Coordinator, Enrique Rivera, the presenters who shared their expertise with the fellows, and most importantly, the fellows themselves whose lived experience and commitment to reform were at the heart of this initiative.

Finally, we acknowledge the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge, which made this pilot program possible.

About the Authors

[Enrique Rivera](#) serves as the LPSCC Public Safety Coordinator, overseeing the Justice Fellowship Pilot Program, generously funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Born in Salem, Oregon, Enrique's childhood was characterized by frequent relocations, struggles with alcohol abuse, and involvement in youth gang violence, leading to a 70-month sentence during his young adulthood. However, this challenging period proved to be a turning point. During his incarceration, he dedicated himself to transformation, earning his high school diploma and college credits through distance education with Chemeketa Community College. Upon release, he successfully obtained a degree in Spanish Language and Literature from Portland State University.

Building on this foundation, in 2011 Enrique embarked upon a 12-and-a-half-year career with the Multnomah County Library. Driven by a desire to give back, in 2018, he seamlessly blended his life experiences with his profound passion for libraries. Sharing his personal journey, he provided library services to adults in custody at Columbia River Correctional Institution and later at Multnomah County Inverness Jail. In 2022, his dedication to serving Adults in Custody earned him an invitation to address the ALA Leadership Reading and Panel Session: "Defending the Fifth Freedom: Protecting the Right to Read for Incarcerated Individuals."

Enrique's commitment to expanding access to information for incarcerated individuals is evident in his many achievements. His notable accomplishments include playing a key role in the expansion of Multnomah County Library's reference by mail program, catering to all Adults in Custody in Oregon. Furthermore, he collaborated in organizing a legal clinic at the Hollywood branch library, working in partnership with the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office Access Attorney Program (MAAP), the Metropolitan Public Defender, and the Oregon Law Center. This collaborative effort assisted 130 individuals with diverse legal needs and successfully resolved fines totaling \$61,590.16.

Beyond his work within the library system, Enrique has also been a featured lecturer at the annual Johannah Sherrer Memorial Lecture in Library Service. Additionally, he served as a panelist for the American Library Association and StoryCorps webinar "Making Space for Meaningful Storytelling," which explored the use of storytelling for community healing and empowerment. Enrique has also participated in panels discussing library services for incarcerated and recently released individuals, emphasizing the importance of providing access to books, information, and literacy programs to break the cycle of incarceration. His community engagement includes serving as a guest speaker at events focused on gang violence prevention and more.

Ultimately, Rivera is unwavering in his commitment to restorative justice, dismantling the stigma of previously incarcerated individuals, and advocating for those who have confronted similar challenges.

Sarah Mullen is the Project Director for the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge grant with LPSCC. Sarah provides leadership, planning and coordination to implement eleven jail reduction strategies funded by the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge. In this role, Sarah facilitates multi-disciplinary meetings to plan and launch evidence-based jail alternatives and provides guidance to inform policy decisions that help reduce the size of the local jail population and reduce the rate of racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in the criminal justice system. Prior to joining LPSCC, Sarah spent 10 years as a program manager and consultant, developing gender-responsive reentry programs for justice-involved women in Washington, DC. Sarah received a BA in political science and gender studies from American University.