

# Missoula County Media Release



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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## MISSOULA COUNTY AWARDED ADDITIONAL \$700,000 BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE TO ADVANCE LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM

### New Funding Will Help Missoula County Build on Progress Toward Eliminating Jail Overuse and Misuse

**MISSOULA, Mont.** – The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today announced a \$700,000 grant to Missoula County to continue building on efforts to reform the local criminal justice system and safely reduce Missoula County’s jail population. The grant is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$148 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders in Missoula County and across the country determined to tackle one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. Missoula County was first selected to join the collaborative Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2017 with funding to address the disproportionate number of Native Americans incarcerated at the Missoula County Detention Facility.

Today, Missoula County was one of 13 jurisdictions selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. With this funding, Missoula County joins 20 other Challenge jurisdictions already receiving deep investment from the Foundation to implement local reform, in addition to 12 new jurisdictions joining the Safety and Justice Challenge Network. This new round of funding will provide Missoula County and partners with additional support and expert technical assistance to implement strategies that address the main drivers of local jail incarceration, 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 abuse issues.

“The overarching goals of our work are to reduce inappropriate incarceration, decrease criminal recidivism, and enhance public safety and community connection while maximizing efficiency of taxpayer dollars,” said County Commissioner Nicole “Cola” Rowley, who has worked extensively with stakeholders and partners on justice-related projects. “Our participation in the Safety and Justice Challenge has been crucial to moving us toward these goals, and the additional support will allow us to develop and implement a more comprehensive and data-driven approach on a faster timeline.”

In partnership with Missoula criminal justice agencies and various service providers, Missoula County aims to reduce the average daily jail population by 18 to 22 percent over two years. Key strategies and initiatives to achieve this goal and create a safer, more effective system include:

- Implementing front-end jail diversion with law enforcement;
- Supporting prosecutor-led diversion efforts;
- Increasing use of the Public Safety Assessment tool;
- Providing post-booking stabilization;
- Providing outreach and education about indigenous cultures and racial disparities; and
- Enhanced services for people with mental illness or substance abuse issues involved with the justice system.

Prior to receiving MacArthur Foundation funding, Missoula County and its partners were able to implement the low- or no-cost recommendations in the Jail Diversion Master Plan, which included prioritizing mental health training, increasing jail programming, emphasizing cultural awareness, implementing an evidence-based DUI court, increasing re-entry and housing assistance, and streamlining court processes, among others. With the additional funding from the MacArthur Foundation, Missoula County can move forward with the more vigorous strategies outlined above to positively impact how law enforcement and the courts work to reduce the local jail population while enhancing community safety.

Three years after its public launch, the Safety and Justice Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of 52 counties, cities and states modeling and inspiring reforms to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country. The jurisdictions involved with the Challenge are already yielding promising initial results toward reducing jail populations and expanding alternatives to incarceration. For example, since joining the initiative, Philadelphia has decreased its jail population by 36 percent and Cook County, Illinois, by 26 percent.

“There is growing demand for criminal justice reform across the country, and local jurisdictions are leading the way,” said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur’s Director of Justice Reform. “MacArthur is increasing our investment because we are seeing promising results and an appetite for more reform as evidenced by the diversity and creativity of the solutions implemented and tested across the Network. While progress is not always easy, and there is no single solution or quick fix, these jurisdictions are proving it is possible to rethink local justice systems from the ground up with forward-looking, smart solutions.”

Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to Missoula County, its partners and the other jurisdictions involved in the Challenge: the Center for Court Innovation, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, the Vera Institute of Justice, Policy Research Inc. and the W. Haywood Burns Institute.

More information about the work underway in Missoula County can be found online at [www.missoulacounty.us/government/civil-criminal-justice/jail-diversion-efforts](http://www.missoulacounty.us/government/civil-criminal-justice/jail-diversion-efforts) as well as at [www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org](http://www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org).

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#### **About the MacArthur Foundation**

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people, effective institutions and influential networks building a more just, verdant and peaceful world. MacArthur is placing a few big bets that truly significant progress is possible on some of the world’s most pressing social challenges, including over-incarceration, global climate change, nuclear risk and significantly increasing financial capital for the social

sector. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows Program, the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of journalism in a responsible and responsive democracy, as well as the strength and vitality of our headquarters city, Chicago. More information about the Foundation's criminal justice reform work can be found at [www.macfound.org/criminaljustice](http://www.macfound.org/criminaljustice).