



AFSC

Why consider restructuring?

In 2020, the AFSC Board approved a ten-year Strategic Plan (2020-2030) following two years of a widely inclusive process. The plan both affirms our historic commitment to listen closely to, and be led by, communities impacted by systemic injustice, and challenges us to be even more faithful and intentional in this important aspect of our work. The plan includes vital commitments to anti-racism, feminism, and incorporating youth in programs and organizational life. It also challenges us to think intersectionally and globally and affirms AFSC as an organization focused on systems change. The full Strategic Plan can be found online at afsc.org/strategicplan.

The fundamental question before us now is how best to organize ourselves to advance our recently established strategic goals. AFSC's leadership team recognizes that staff, partners, and communities, have made tremendous gains under the organization's current structure. We also see opportunity for deeper connection and greater impact. In proposing to modify structures, we aim to strengthen AFSC's ability to transform systems of oppression and injustice while maintaining what makes our work effective and unique.

What could restructuring accomplish?

AFSC has been trying to operate more holistically under our current structure for years. While we have been successful in some areas, some consistent challenges remain. Our current issue-based collaboratives in the U.S. have done an excellent job coordinating efforts that center and honor impacted communities and their vision for change. However, these efforts have also suffered from a lack of consistent financial and staffing resources and accountable decision-making mechanisms, leaving network coordinators without authority or budgets. Likewise, some of our planning at the thematic level remains fragmented and unable to scale up the work from local to national and global. There are current limits to our ability to plan, design, and implement an integrated program-based approach in accordance with our Strategic Plan.

Restructuring could:

- Help create more comprehensive and well-resourced systems of support for local, national, and international work.
- Create more opportunities to elevate or lift up locally-led work and best practices.
- Build learning and cohesion across programs globally.
- Help us live up to our commitments for climate justice, youth work, racial justice, and gender justice.
- Open programmatic, fundraising, and budgeting opportunities that are being missed in our current approach.

Changes are being proposed with an eye toward maximizing our overall programmatic influence and impact.

What is the process for restructuring?



In June 2021, AFSC’s Leadership Team shared an initial set of proposals for AFSC’s structure with the Board. The Board provided additional time for these proposals to be further developed with staff and governance, including the Corporation. This work is ongoing, and several working groups have been organized, including one with U.S. unions. We are encouraged by these active co-design processes. We feel confident that all staff and governance members are committed to processes and concrete outcomes that affirm our Quaker values—and that all members of the AFSC community are in unity regarding our commitments to achieving systemic change that builds a better world.

What changes have been proposed for U.S. programs and why?

The Leadership Team’s most recent proposals (initial draft shared in April 2021, but in process) seeks to address several considerations specific to the U.S.:

- Our strategic plan challenges us to “work with communities and partners worldwide to challenge unjust systems and promote lasting peace.” Challenging systems requires concerted efforts, rooted in our methodologies of community organizing, research and advocacy, at the local, state, and national levels. We are most successful when we achieve these linkages.
- At present, our near 25 programs across the country plan their work independently. There is no mechanism in place for collectively setting shared outcomes, and short- and long-term objectives based on our three thematic areas: just peace, just migration, and just economies. A reimagined structure could open the way for collaboration and increase impact for systems change.
- At present, programmatic funding is determined and managed at the regional level. There is no mechanism to fund and manage national level collaborative efforts. There is a disparity in regional access to funds, and allocations are not aligned with strategic programmatic goals.
- Few staff are able to devote consistent, full-time attention to developing collaborative, national level work across issue areas.
- Each regional executive committee by design maintains a narrow focus on its own region, which does not encourage deep exploration and support of more intersectional, collaborative work between regions, across issue areas, and the provision of resources needed to support such work.

With these considerations in mind, the Leadership Team has proposed restructuring to align our staffing structure with the three thematic areas of the strategic plan. We hope this will create more opportunities for program-led, cross-regional, and global collaboration. We recognize the importance of power-sharing and are committed to codesigning vehicles that facilitate that. We see potential for AFSC to achieve both tremendous local successes and unprecedented national impact and systems change. And we look forward to co-designing and seasoning this work with staff and governance to achieve that change together.

The Leadership Team
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