

2024 Grantee Racial Equity Retreat

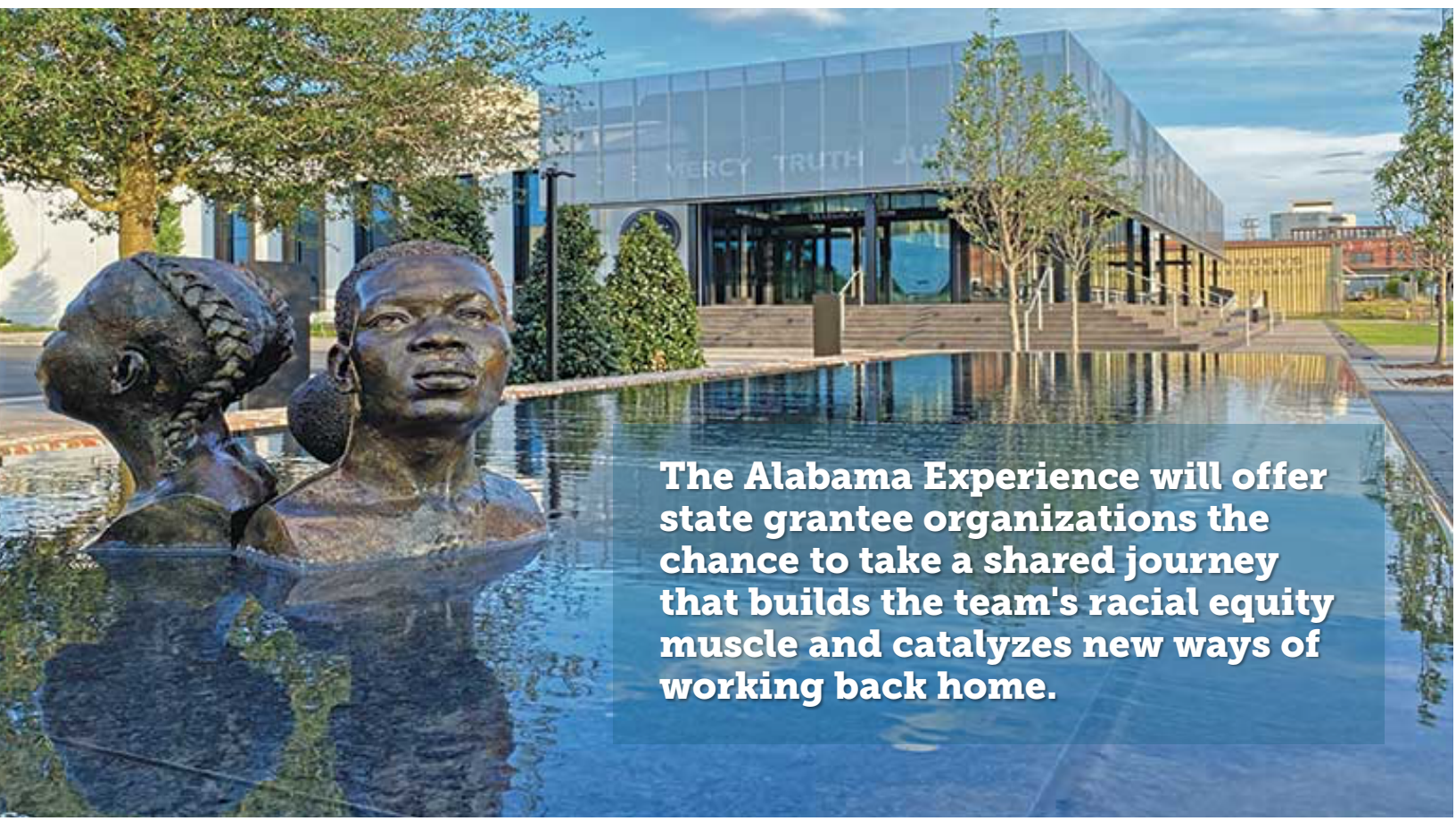
In 2024, the Alliance for Early Success is replacing its annual grantee meeting with an all-new offering focused on supporting state advocacy organizations in their efforts to become allies for antiracism. **The Alabama Experience** will take teams from state grantee organizations—200 people in all—on a shared journey to Montgomery, Alabama, that will incorporate the Equal Justice Initiative’s [Legacy Sites](#) and many of the city’s other powerful spaces that explore our nation’s history of racial injustice and movement toward civil rights. Alliance state advocacy grantees can bring teams of three, and the team must include a senior member of the organization. We are also encouraging them to bring staff working in equity initiatives, coalition support, and/or community engagement.

Our goal for the Alabama Experience is to help all of us gain a deeper understanding of the historical and current systems that have shaped power and opportunity, with a focus on recognizing and valuing the Black experience. The Alliance for Early Success’ [theory of change](#) recognizes that structural racism limits how we build power to effect lasting change, and the Alabama Experience is a key part of our work to help state early childhood policy grantees—and us—become more effective in our work to advance equitable policies and practices.

**THE ALABAMA
XPERIENCE**
AN ALLIANCE FOR EARLY SUCCESS EQUITY JOURNEY | SEPTEMBER 24-26, 2024

Why Montgomery? Montgomery is steeped in history that still impacts us today, and experiencing it can be both difficult and emotional, and inspiring and joyful. State grantees will explore the city, visiting a range of civil rights history sites and learning about their connection to today’s America. An entire day will be devoted to the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Sites. Each day will offer opportunities to debrief and process the experience in small, facilitated groups back at the hotel. The Alliance is working with a team of racial equity consultants, and an intersectional state-grantee Advisory Council, to help us curate this experience.

There will be some expected pre- and post-work, as well. State grantees will engage with the history and with fellow attendees virtually in the months preceding the visit, and they will be required to attend a pre-conference webinar that will expose them to readings, videos, and race-based affinity groups. After the experience, state grantees will be supported as they bring the experience back to their organizations with additional webinars and facilitated discussions to process and embed what they learned.



The Alabama Experience will offer state grantee organizations the chance to take a shared journey that builds the team's racial equity muscle and catalyzes new ways of working back home.

A Disruptive Objective

We are currently experiencing a resurgence of white supremacy in the United States—a fear-based reaction to the increasingly open conversation and action about structural and systemic racism and its impacts on all Americans. This is an important moment to learn or be reminded of the realities of slavery, Reconstruction, the advent of Jim Crow, the civil rights movement that successfully changed policy to move our nation towards racial equality, and the ongoing policies and practices that have prevented us from yet reaching that goal. We wanted to offer our allies this opportunity to reflect on that history, in light of the challenges and push-back we are all seeing on the ground right now.

The policy implications of this shift are alarming. The founder of the Equal Justice Initiative—civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson—warns of a racial justice “fatigue” in power structures and cites it as a catalyst for the Legacy Sites project. “I began to fear that we might not be able to win a Brown v. Board of Education today—that today, our courts would not do something so disruptive on behalf of a disempowered, disfavored group of people.” Those working for equitable policy, he says, “must build a new understanding about our history that would motivate us to want to confront these problems, repair these challenges, remedy these long-standing issues” instead of turning a blind eye.

Part of a Journey

The Alliance’s theory of change defines the three major streams of work that we undertake in pursuit of policies in all 50 states that ensure children and their families thrive. While all three are rooted in equity, “Elevating Antiracist Priorities” explicitly tells our team, our grantees, and the state policy advocacy community overall that we believe active antiracism is essential to early childhood policy advocacy.

This workstream includes the “Operationalizing Equity” curriculum and grant program and numerous communities of practice that help advocates center family and practitioner voice, build community power, and pursue policy goals in a trauma-informed way.

The Alabama Experience will be another powerful piece of support that we hope catalyzes new equity-centered practices in agenda setting, coalition work, and organizational development.

Bringing the Alabama Experience to Life

Taking teams from all 65+ of our grantee organizations on an intensive three-day retreat is a big, bold project. But it is one, we believe, the times call for. We have raised programming funding but are seeking several necessary investments needed to make the Alabama Experience as accessible and effective as possible.

Travel Stipends: To ensure all who want to participate are able, we would like to cover travel and hotel costs for state teams.

\$200,000 Airfare for Attendees
\$125,000 Hotel for Attendees

Skilled Equity Facilitation and Expertise: To ensure the journey is thoughtful and effective without doing harm, it is essential to bring in facilitators with experience in this emotional work.

\$35,000

You can reach out to us at alliance@earlysuccess.org to learn more about opportunities to invest in the Alabama Experience.



The Alabama Experience is designed to deepen awareness, foster empathy, and catalyze new ways of thinking and acting. But most of all, we aim to drive a new urgency in early childhood policy advocacy for dismantling of systems born of centuries of racism in America.