

Request for Proposals: Tariff Act Advocacy Grants

FEBRUARY 2023

Summary

Across the globe, over 17 million adults and children are in conditions of forced labour imposed by private actors, such as multinational corporations. Those individuals – and the goods they produce – are part of vast and complex global supply chains which are often used to mask the existence of forced labour. The United States is the largest importer of goods at-risk of being produced with forced labour, with an estimated value of more than \$144 billion a year, or 40% of the global total.

Section 307 of the U.S. Tariff Act of 1930 prohibits the importation into the United States of goods that have been made “wholly or in part” with forced, indentured, or convict labour. Under the law, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has the power to issue Withhold Release Orders (WRO) and Findings to prevent such products from entering the country. In 2019, the Freedom Fund established the Tariff Act Legal Fund (TALF) as part of our broader work focused on leveraging trade mechanisms to drive corporate actors to prevent, identify, mitigate, and remediate forced labour in their operations and supply chains. Since then, TALF has supported numerous frontline organisations across the world to conduct on-the-ground investigations to gather evidence of forced labour in specific industries and submit the collected evidence to CBP.

While the number of WROs has increased in recent years, CBP’s enforcement actions do not reflect the breadth and depth of evidence submitted by civil society and, more importantly, constitute only one component of a broader global regulatory accountability regime. Trade mechanisms – such as the forced labour import ban under the Tariff Act – are only one tool with a limited mandate and must be used in combination with other strategies to create systems change and effectively combat forced labour across the world. As such, there is a need to expand the range and diversity of mechanisms used to ensure accountability for exploitative labour practices and secure remedy for affected workers.

Building on our existing support for frontline groups around the world, the Freedom Fund is now launching new **Tariff Act Advocacy Grants**, supporting civil society to plan and implement follow-up advocacy strategies using the evidence gathered for a Tariff Act petition. Our aim is to encourage and support creative uses of complementary strategies to disrupt the global trade of goods produced with forced labour and help secure remedies for people in conditions of forced labour.

Interested parties who have sent a Tariff Act petition to CBP should submit proposals, no longer than 3 pages, before **Friday 24 March 2023**. Detailed instructions for submission are set out below.

Project criteria

The Tariff Act Advocacy Grants provide dedicated funding for civil society to explore advocacy strategies aimed at securing accountability and supporting access to remedy, after a Tariff Act petition – showing that certain goods are produced using forced labour and that those goods are being imported into the United States – has been submitted to CBP.

The list below provides examples of activities that grantees may wish to undertake as part of this project:

- Engaging in public awareness campaigns and public or private advocacy to resolve the labour issues in question, secure remedies, and ensure better working conditions for affected workers
- Using the collected evidence as part of strategic advocacy targeting the media, lawmakers, businesses, industry bodies, and/or the public to affect broader regulatory changes
- Developing a media strategy to raise the profile of the human rights violations laid out in the petition
- Using alternative accountability mechanisms, such as exploring the viability of civil/criminal litigation or submitting a complaint to an OECD National Contact Point
- Collecting additional evidence of forced labour to provide more up-to-date information to CBP or another government agency, where appropriate
- Organising relevant convenings and dialogues to share information and raise awareness of the labour issues in question with target audiences.

Scope

This is a global call for proposals. The RFP's scope does not focus on specific countries or industries and is not limited to any specific advocacy activities. Projects focused on securing remedies for affected individuals in conditions of forced labour will be prioritised.

Budget

Interested parties may apply for a grant of up to USD \$20,000. Grant funds shall only be used for costs associated with the Tariff Act follow-up advocacy project.

Timeline

Grants will be provided to cover activities over a 12-month period.

Risk management

We take the protection of human rights defenders extremely seriously and are acutely aware of the risks involved in advocating for accountability for exploitative labour practices. All projects should incorporate a risk analysis and mitigation plan covering risks to staff and other relevant stakeholders, especially affected workers.

Organisational criteria

Human rights organisations, civil society organisations, watchdog groups, trade unions, worker groups, and investigative journalists are invited to submit proposals. We are particularly interested in receiving applications from organisations based in the Global South or partnerships between international and local groups.

Applicant organisations must be able to demonstrate:

- Presence in the target country (or a well-established and pre-existing relationship with local civil society or worker groups based in the target country)
- Experience engaging in activities proposed under the project (or a well-established and pre-existing relationship with an individual or group with such experience)

Please note that **only individuals/organisations that have submitted a Tariff Act petition to CBP (or those that have an existing relationship with an individual/group that has done so) are eligible to apply.**

Proposal format and timeline

Interested parties should submit a proposal of **no more than 3 pages (including annexes)** covering the following elements:

- Project overview, describing how the proposed activities fit the project criteria outlined above

- Summary of Tariff Act petition submitted to CBP (including date submitted, target company/industry, evidence presented, and information about any relevant subsequent developments)
- Methodology
- Team structure and experience in carrying out the proposed activities
- Key project risks and proposed mitigation strategies
- High-level workplan
- Proposed budget (up to \$20,000)

The proposal must be written in English and submitted electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

23 February 2023	Release of RFP.
By 24 March 2023 5PM UK time	Final proposals due.
By 14 April 2023	All applicants notified.
May 2023	Grant agreements signed with selected grantees.

Proposal submission instructions

- 1) Draft your proposal, no longer than 3 pages, and save as a PDF or Word Document.
- 2) Upload the finished proposal document to <https://send.tresorit.com>
- 3) Send **the link generated** to TALFund@protonmail.com with the subject line **'Tariff Act Advocacy Grants'**

For any questions about the Tariff Act Advocacy Grants, eligibility criteria, or the submission process, please email Marta Bylica (TALFund@protonmail.com).