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# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | **Commissioner Gail Johnson** |
| **From:** | **Lindsay Hoffman, Policy Oversight Administrator** |
| **Via:** | **Omichele Gainey, Clerk of the Commission** |
| **Date:** | **January 26, 2020** |
| **Subject:** | **Community Partners and Equity** |

Many jurisdictions around the country are embarking on the work of creating more equitable local governments. Similarly, many communities are organizing to address and eliminate racial disparities on the neighborhood and non-profit levels. Where these efforts intersect presents an opportunity to elevate the work across the board. The Commission's Race and Equity Subcommittee has asked this office to explore how the City could leverage its equity work with the community groups it funds through partnerships, grants, sponsorships and other mechanisms.

Information about how other cities, counties, and states are approaching this question is sparse. But there is one sector that is exploring it deeply: philanthropy. Major foundations are realizing the power of their dollars in encouraging grantees to consider both their internal diversity and the equity impacts of their work. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy frames this as the power to:

> Explore what the most strategic social justice grantmakers already understand: To make the world a better place, communities need to build power; funders need to share their power with these communities; and they both need to wield their power to influence relevant audiences and decision-makers. Fundamentally, these funders acknowledge the role of power and activate it to create change – with humility and attention to privilege.[1]

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[1] http://www.ncrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Power-Moves-Philanthropy.pdf

The Collins Foundation in Oregon has made diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) an underlying tenet in their grantmaking. They don't require that applicants have a DEI focus, but they have structured their application process in a way that forces organizations to examine their own disparities and those of the communities they serve. The Foundation recognizes that community organizations are coming to this table with a variety of experience. Many have never been asked these questions, and the Collins Foundation has worked to create an environment where they can safely learn and find ways to do business better. The Foundation offers technical support and equity training for interested grantees. They also request demographic information as part of the application process. The Collins Foundation looks for how much the staff, leadership, and volunteers of an organization reflect the communities they serve. While they don't have a clear-cut standard of expectation for how these numbers look, the Foundation does require that each applicant organization have a non-discrimination policy at work. This policy must cover everyone involved with the organization, from staff and the board to the people served, with a clear anti-discrimination commitment.[2]

Just as equity and disparity improvements are new territory for the City, the same is likely true for many community partners. Some foundations that have requested demographic information from applicants have found initial discomfort and resistance from those unsure about the reasons for the request and the purpose of the information.[3] By deepening relationships across sectors, efforts to increase capacity and awareness can result in progress across the board. For example, the Heinz Foundation in Pennsylvania hosted an equity communications training for their grantee organizations.[4] By working together with their applicants, both the equity conversation and the organizational relationships were strengthened.

Similarly, Long Beach, California, has worked to offer value added programs for their community partners to increase capacity on equity and other topics. Rather than demanding equity progress in a vacuum, Long Beach actively works with community partners to expand reach and cultural competence. The city's Office of Equity works with city staff and community partners to incorporate equity and inclusion into their work. Their Neighborhood Leadership Program and "Everyone In" Economic Inclusion Listening Tours embed equity concepts to empower, normalize, and bring the conversation into the community.[5]

It also appears critical that the underlying core values driving this work be established before beginning this process. Foundations have found that they need to clearly articulate their goals to applicants in order to achieve buy-in on all levels. When we are able to clearly articulate our goals to community organizations, we are better able to bring them along with us.

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[2] https://www.collinsfoundation.org/responsive-grantmaking-submission-guidelines/frequently-asked-questions
[3] http://grantcraft.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/equity.pdf
[4] http://www.heinz.org/equity
[5] http://www.longbeach.gov/globalassets/health/healthy-living/office-of-equity/clb_toolkitbook_singlepages

Just as cities are developing their own Equity Lenses for decision and policy making, these lenses can also be used in making funding decisions.  For example, the Maryland State Arts Council has developed an anti-racist funding tool that customizes its decision-making lens to its goals.[6]

To this end, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity has developed a handbook for grantmaking through a racial equity lens.  They recommend taking a multi-layered funding approach, where foundations both fund dedicated equity programs and also infuse this lens across all programs, whether they are centered in equity or not.  By asking for demographic and other data, foundations can force their applicants to examine their practices and start identifying potential areas for improvement.  The handbook cites examples from the San Francisco Foundation, which has developed a simple chart for applicants to track the demographics of staff, board members, volunteers, and community members served.

The Ford Foundation has taken this work farther by crafting open ended question designed to guide conversation between program officers and applicants that really examines connections between diversity and quality.  Discussion questions posed by the Ford Foundation include:

(1) What forms of diversity do you think are important for strengthening the quality of the work proposed? Does your organization's staff and board reflect this diversity?
(2) How do you propose to draw upon diverse perspectives in the community/field that the proposed work will serve?
(3) What diversity challenges does your organization face in its work overall?
(4) What progress has your organization made to increase its diversity in the last two or three years?[7]

The Foundation, though, recognizes that this is complex and sensitive work. Rather than leave community partners feeling targeted, they have paired this process with a menu of Support Strategies, designed to deepen relationships and empower their applicants to make progress in addressing disparities and achieving equity.  These strategies include:

(1) Establishing specific goals for increasing the representation of under-represented groups in the organization's board or staff.
(2) Asking the organization to form a project advisory committee that better represents under-represented groups.

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[6] https://www.msac.org/sites/default/files/files/Re-Tool_2018.pdf
[7] See footnote 3

(3) Making a linked grant to an organization that better represents under-represented groups to promote its participation and involvement in the project.

(4) Providing support for staff and board recruitment activities to improve diversity.

(5) Working with other grant makers supporting the organization to establish expectations and support to improve diversity.

(6) Conditioning subsequent grant payments on progress toward diversity goals.

(7) Involving senior foundation leadership in discussions with the organization to highlight the importance of diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented people in foundation-funded work.[8]

As the Subcommittee explores how to use its position as a funder to encourage community partners to engage in equity work, private foundation work in this area will offer good examples on how to proceed.

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[8] See footnote 3.