

# Improving Racial Equity

This compendium captures the wisdom shared from the many authors who contributed to our blog series about racial equity in philanthropy between 2018-2021. The series explores how greater foundation transparency can set the stage for improving racial equity in philanthropy. Review this series to learn how greater foundation openness can move people to action to improve equity and inclusion.

## Open for Transformational Change: How Foundation Transparency Sets the Stage for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

February 14, 2018

*Whitney Tome is the executive director of Green 2.0, a campaign dedicated to increasing the racial diversity of mainstream environmental NGOs, foundations and federal government agencies through data transparency, accountability, and increased resources.*

Philanthropy invests billions of dollars into charitable causes each year. According to Foundation Center, foundations gave an estimated \$59.28 billion in 2016. That's a tremendous amount of capital. For better or worse, the field of philanthropy is a leader in determining what's important and how social change happens. Whoever holds the purse also holds the power. And with power comes responsibility for foundations to set the gold standard, especially for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ).



In my role as executive director of [Green 2.0](#), I spend a lot of time helping foundations better understand how improved foundation transparency around DEIJ can position philanthropy to lead by example instead of just playing catch up, or worse, just going through the motions. Though we focus on the environmental field, what we have learned in the process can serve as a helpful example for all of philanthropy because every sector has been influenced by the power and privilege that exist in our society.

***“Being transparent about the demographics of foundation staff and boards...can spur a review of recruitment and hiring process to reduce implicit biases.”***

So what have we learned? The environmental movement, in particular, has failed to adequately represent people of color. In 2014, Green 2.0 commissioned “[The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations](#)” report authored by Dr. Dorceta Taylor, which found that while people of color are 36% of the U.S. population, they only comprise 12% of foundation staff in the world of environmental funding. And [ample studies](#) have shown that [communities of color](#) are [disproportionately affected](#) by environmental hazards. Green 2.0 envisions a different, more diverse movement that wins environmental battles for those most impacted. To catalyze transformational change, Green 2.0 works to increase the racial and ethnic diversity in the mainstream environmental movement. We call for data transparency, accountability, and increased resources to ensure NGOs and foundations are diverse.

As the sustained drumbeat to improve workplaces and increase opportunities for talented people of color, Green 2.0 engages with environmental NGOs and foundations by calling on

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them to share their demographic data year after year. This is not just transparency for transparency's sake. We find there are direct benefits to this kind of transparency that spurs change for the better as outlined below. But there is still lots of room for improvement.

Since 2014, only 12 of the Top 40 environmental foundations have answered the call. Given the benefits of transparency to the DEIJ movement, it is important that both GuideStar and Glasspockets encourage disclosures pertaining to diversity data in their respective profiles. In the case of Glasspockets, the transparency self-assessment covers disclosures about both diversity values statements and demographic data, and what we have learned here is it remains a challenge for the field as a whole with fewer than half of participating foundations reporting any kind of values statement, and fewer than 10 percent disclosing any demographic data at all. And out of a universe of more than 86,000 foundations, only 500 foundations have willingly submitted their demographic data to [GuideStar via their profile page](#) demonstrating that this is a challenge for all foundations.

Commitment means:

- **Being transparent about the demographics of foundation staff and boards.** Greater transparency can spur a review of recruitment and hiring process to reduce implicit biases but also allow foundations to identify the full range of organizations they should be supporting.
- **Encouraging grantees to submit their diversity data and communicate how they are working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice both internally and externally.** As funders, foundations are uniquely suited to holding grantees accountable for advancing a more diverse environmental movement.
- **Recognizing your role as leaders in the field that influence the whole.** When foundations make a move and engage deeply on issues, others follow suit. Foundations have an opportunity and responsibility to show the field the value of diversity through its action and set the standard on recruiting, attracting, and retaining talented people of color.

In order to see transformational change, foundations need to make a real commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, internally. That's more than providing lip service to the value of diversity. It is rather embedding equity and justice in the practices, policies and procedures of the organization and for foundations also into their grantmaking. Ask your foundation simple questions that may result in complex but informative answers as a start:

- Are you tracking the data of your staff and board?
- Do you have an organizational vision and/or mission around diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice?
- Is there authentic leadership on DEIJ issues and are they holding the organization and themselves accountable for change?
- Are your internal policies for attracting, recruiting, hiring, promoting and retaining staff transparent, equitable and consistently implemented?
- Are you assessing your organizational culture and making constant adjustments to achieve your vision?

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- Are you tracking the demographic makeup of your grantees? Are you sharing those statistics with program officers? Are you using this to inform future grantmaking?

Several foundations have made or are starting to ask these questions, but many are not public about them. From sharing the demographic data of their grantees to intentional recruiting and hiring staff of color, these foundations are changing their focus and what they fund. One foundation has been collecting the demographic data of their staff and grantees for several years; and sharing that data with grantees and program officers. This data gives program officers insight into where the dollars are going, how to shift their portfolio over time, and for their grantees they can now compare themselves to other organizations in the field. As a foundation, they have engaged in more DEIJ conversations internally and externally from how they support racial equity through funding to how they support the internal DEIJ work of grantees. This has spurred important conversation and reflection about funding, commitment, and action that this foundation is digging into and learning from every year. More need to start this conversation and be public about the answers that they are coming to.

Green 2.0 will continue to advance enduring change in the environmental movement broadly but we call on foundations to dedicate the time and resources needed to change the face of philanthropy to one that is more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just.

*--Whitney Tome*

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## Why Salary Compensation Transparency Can Counteract Equity

March 7, 2018

*Vincent Robinson is founder and managing partner of [The 360 Group](#), a national executive search firm dedicated to creating social impact by placing exceptional leaders into extraordinary mission-driven organizations.*

In The 360 Group's work as executive search consultants to foundations and nonprofits, we know that transparency around compensation is a perennially thorny issue, and one that we find many well-intentioned organizations getting wrong. Given the counter-intuitive nature of what I'm about to say, I would like to provide important context that may help others understand how we approach compensation transparency, particularly in light of our efforts to make diversity and equity a key priority in our work.



***“We advise our clients not to ask that candidates submit their salary histories because we know that contributes to inequitable salary structures, particularly for women and people of color.”***

For a bit of background: I launched The 360 Group 13 years ago, specifically with an eye on making the sector more diverse, more contemporary, and better prepared to address a whole new set of challenges in increasingly complex times. Our view is that more diverse teams — and more diversity in leadership — maximize the variety of perspectives that organizations need to be successful, effective, and more representative of the communities that they serve. Countless studies, notably those by [Maggie Neale](#) and [Scott Page](#), have demonstrated the power of diversity in groups and teams, only emboldening our firm's mission and theory of change. Diversity in groups can also make what can be challenging work a hell of a lot more fun.

Beyond compensation, then, our goal is to extend our reach and that of our clients to identify people from all backgrounds and walks of life for leadership opportunities. To do that, we want to reduce barriers for candidates, rather than build them up (and those barriers can be completely artificial). Our charge is to understand organizations well and identify candidates who can lead them and have the desire to do so with passion, heart and values.

At The 360 Group, market comparables drive our guidance to clients (and candidates) around compensation, as well as the skills and value of a candidate. We do not tie executive compensation to salary history. We know that women and people of color are represented in just a fraction of leadership roles — across every sector. To build that leadership bank, especially in senior positions, we seek out candidate pools of devoted (and often underpaid) nonprofit professionals as well as highly-paid executives. The salary one has earned shouldn't dictate the salary one may earn, so we advise our clients not to ask that candidates submit their salary histories because we know that contributes to inequitable salary structures, particularly for women and people of color. That is our philosophy and commitment in this work. And in states like California and Oregon, as of 2018, it is now against the law for employers to ask candidates for salary history because of this very issue.

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Perhaps more important than the range itself is transparency around the process by which foundations establish their executive compensation. Demystifying the process serves to create both internal and external understanding about how this key decision is made, and discloses who gets to weigh in on the process. This level of transparency is helpful to the institution as much as outsiders – just ask any compensation consultant! Useful examples of how other foundations are publicly describing their executive compensation process are included in the helpful Glasspockets transparency self-assessment tool [here](#).



Additionally, we also field questions about why we do not post a salary range for the CEO role. Our answer comes from the heart: we don't want fabulous people to self-select out, based purely on numbers. To be truly committed to equity (which we are), creating even the perception of obstacles runs at cross-purposes to acting in equity. For better or worse, in the philanthropic field, salaries and compensation packages are all over the map. That is why we rely on independent market analyses and our compensation expert colleagues to inform ranges for our client organizations. So if a role is valued at between, say \$300,000 and \$500,000, the person ultimately selected will be compensated in that range based on the experience and value they bring to the role – regardless of whether they have earned a fraction of that amount or orders of more magnitude. That is equity in compensation, a practice we have relied on from the inception of our firm, and just one important ingredient in our efforts to bring diversity and equity to our sector.

As I've noted above, not all transparency works against diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are specific kinds of transparency that work to accelerate the creation of a more equitable sector.

--*Vincent Robinson*

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## It's Not You, It's Me: Breaking Up with Your Organization's Inequitable Funding Practices

March 21, 2018

*Erika Grace “E.G.” Nelson is a Community Health and Health Equity Program Manager at the [Center for Prevention](#) at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. E.G. recently led the Center through an equity scan of its Request for Proposal (RFP) policies and procedures.*

“It’s not you; it’s me” is possibly the most cliché break-up excuse, but for many funders, it really is their own policies and procedures that undermine their ability to find community soulmates. Perhaps you have had conversations with community members who have said that they found out about your funding opportunity too late, were too busy to apply, or, worse yet, were rejected even though their project sounds like a great fit based on the conversation you are currently having with them. The reality is that funders typically enact policies that are convenient for themselves, as opposed to what makes sense for grantseekers, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) fall by the wayside of expediency. As a result, organizations with the most social and fiscal capital have the best shot at receiving awards.



***Have you ever taken the time to think about how your funding portfolio might look differently if your RFP process was designed to be more equitable and inclusive? We recently completed an equity scan, and here is a bit about how this reflection has led to changes in our RFP process.***

***“Funders typically enact policies that are convenient for themselves, as opposed to what makes sense for grantseekers.”***

At the Center for Prevention, our goal is to improve the health of all Minnesotans by tackling the leading causes of preventable disease and death – commercial tobacco use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy eating. While Minnesota has one of the best overall health rankings in the nation, we see huge gaps in health outcomes when considering factors such as race, income, and area of residence.

We also know that communities are aware of what they need to be healthy, but organizations established by and for marginalized communities tend to face greater barriers than well-resourced, mainstream organizations in getting what they need. We wanted to remove as many barriers from our application process as possible so that we could find and support more community-based and culturally-tailored approaches to addressing health needs. To begin identifying these barriers, our team reflected on challenges identified by communities we work with and walked through our application process from beginning to end using an equity lens. As a result, we have implemented several systemic changes to move towards our vision of a truly equitable process.

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## Bringing the Funding Opportunities to the Community

We began our journey by thinking about funding opportunities. Before an organization can even apply for funding, it needs to know that an opportunity exists. Through community conversations, we learned that many organizations were unfamiliar with our resources and work. We recommended that project teams develop a tailored outreach plan for each funding opportunity, with specific outreach to organizations or sectors we considered to be key stakeholders or who had been markedly absent in previous rounds. Moving forward, we also have a goal of literally meeting folks where they are at – town halls, cultural events, on social media – to share our work and funding opportunities.



As a result, here are some ways we shifted how we engage with community organizations through our RFP process:

- **Time.** Once applicants find out about an opportunity, they need to apply, which takes some time. We learned that some potential applicants prioritized other opportunities because they didn't have the staff capacity to apply for multiple opportunities concurrently. The easiest solution to this problem was to give applicants more time, so we extended our open application period. In our case, we went from no set minimum to at least six weeks.
- **Assistance.** We also wanted to make sure that applicants could make informed decisions about how to prioritize staff time, so we opened up new channels for discussing funding opportunities. We made sure that every application had a designated point person for answering questions from the public, and even piloted some creative ways to interact with the community in advance of the submitted application, such as an "office hours" hotline where anyone could call in and ask questions. The number of inquiries was manageable and allowed applicants to receive guidance on whether their projects were a good match before they invested time in applying. Follow-up survey data showed that this strategy paid off because applicants reported that they understood our funding objectives and that the time they invested in applying was appropriate for the potential award.
- **Accessibility.** We are also working towards using more accessible language to articulate the merits of a viable proposal. We now run a [readability test](#) on all RFP language before publication, with the goal of using language that is no higher than an eighth grade reading level. Such tests have helped us remove jargon, and improve comprehension by professionals outside of public health as well as by non-native English speakers.

## Leveling the Playing Field of Community Relationships

Our team also considered the role relationships play in evaluating proposals. We approached equity from two angles. We set limits on which and when "outside information"—knowledge we have about a project that didn't come from the application—can be shared during proposal review. We also started reaching out to new applicants to discuss their work more deeply. Our familiarity with mainstream organizations and those we have previously funded can influence how we evaluate an application, and in some cases lead to an unfair advantage for groups that

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already have many advantages. So these limits on “outside information” were put in place to level the playing field, as well as to begin to strengthen relationships with organizations that were new to us. These conversations helped us to fill in gaps in our understanding that we may unconsciously fill in for organizations we are already familiar with.

*“We now run a readability test on all RFP language before publication...to remove jargon, and improve comprehension.”*

## Transparent Evaluation Processes

We felt transparency in our decision-making process could only improve the quality of proposals. One way we have done this is by making scoring rubrics available to applicants. We also began providing tailored feedback to each declined applicant on how the proposal could have been stronger in hopes that it will improve future submissions. Though we have yet to determine what impact this will have in the future, we can say that applicants have been appreciative and found this feedback to be useful.

## Hope and More Work to Be Done

While we don't yet have much data to analyze post-implementation, we have noticed a few positive outcomes. We have seen a great increase in applications from greater Minnesota in particular, demonstrating that our targeted outreach is increasingly effective. Our funding awards to projects by and for people of color have also doubled in one of two opportunities we have analyzed since implementation. Despite this progress, we continue to wrestle with how to develop scoring tools that better reflect our values.

The above are just some examples of how we have begun to identify and address equity barriers in our process that may be helpful for others. If your foundation is considering something similar, here are some things we learned from our experience that may be helpful for you.

- **Leadership & Promising Practices.** As with any new process implementation, support from leadership is critical. If you are met with resistance, keep in mind that funders typically want to emulate best and promising practices in philanthropy, and sharing what other funders are doing around diversity, equity, and inclusion can be highly motivating.
- **Checks & Balances.** It is also important to keep in mind that old habits die hard. It is not necessarily because team members are resistant to change, but simply need to get into the routine of doing things differently. For that reason, be sure that you build in checks and balances along the way to ensure that all who touch your RFP process have the opportunity to identify pain points along the way while also upholding equity commitments.
- **No One Size Fits All.** Keep in mind that there is not one model that will work for everyone, and much in the same way, not all the communities you serve will be pleased with the changes you make. So, keep asking for and responding to feedback from community and know that correcting mistakes is part of improvement and part of ensuring our processes continue to be ones that facilitate, rather than undermine, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

--Erika Grace “E.G.” Nelson



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## Hiding Your Diversity Data Helps Keep #PhilanthropySoWhite

March 28, 2018

Orson Aguilar is president of [The Greenlining Institute](#).

At this point, it's no secret: Philanthropy needs to diversify. Diversity, or the lack thereof, has become something of a hot-button issue in recent years. We've seen dozens of articles urging foundations to make changes, including a 2016 [op-ed](#) co-written by Dr. Robert Ross, Luz Vega-Marquis, and Stephen Heintz entitled, *Philanthropic Leadership Shouldn't Look Like the Country Club Set*.

And a handful of foundations have demonstrated what is possible when they make diversity, equity, and inclusion organizational priorities. The California Endowment (TCE), one of the pioneers in these efforts, adopted a 15-part Diversity Plan in 2008, and since that year, TCE has published four "[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audits](#)" to track its own progress. The audit is simple and profound, stating: "By openly reflecting on our progress and challenges related to diversity, equity and inclusion, we hope that the audit fosters a broader culture of continuous improvement where we challenge ourselves to always do better and to advance -- for the field, for our staff, and for the communities we ultimately serve."



And yet, despite this heightened awareness and the concerted efforts of a handful of organizations, diversity and equity in philanthropy as a whole haven't changed much. The [data](#) published by the [D5 Coalition](#) suggest that we have seen virtually no increase in the number of people of color who hold staff and leadership positions at foundations, and little increase in the representation of women.

***"Making philanthropy more diverse and inclusive should be a top priority for everyone."***

More frustrating is the fact that very few foundations have decided to voluntarily disclose their demographic data since the attempted passage of California's A.B. 624, proposed legislation that would have required large foundations in the state to collect and disclose demographic data for themselves and for their grantees.

According to a [search](#) on [Glasspockets.org](#), only 10 of the more than 90 foundations publicly committing to working more openly have disclosed both their diversity data and their diversity values policies. The list of 10 foundations includes foundations such as The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, Annenberg Foundation, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation. They should be applauded. Interestingly, more than 40 foundations have stated that they have diversity/values policies, yet most of them fail to disclose their own diversity data.

Making philanthropy more diverse and inclusive should be a top priority for everyone, regardless of whether or not your foundation focuses on supporting communities of color. This isn't just a numbers game. As Ruth McCambridge reminds us in her [recent article](#) for *Nonprofit Quarterly*, "Lack of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in philanthropy enlarges the understanding gap between philanthropy and the communities meant to be final beneficiaries." By not including more people who understand the experiences of communities

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of color in leadership positions, foundations put extra distance between themselves and these communities and can't know how best to serve them.

Diana Campoamor and Vikki N. Spruill, veterans in the struggle to diversify philanthropy, jointly [wrote](#) in 2016, "Few would argue that there has been too little discussion about making the sector look more like the people it serves. The real challenge has been to set in motion the measures that assure greater diversity throughout the sector."

***"The only way philanthropy will remain relevant is if it evolves along with the communities around it."***

Just as it took #OscarsSoWhite to jolt the Motion Picture Academy into action, will it take #PhilanthropySoWhite taking off on social media to transform this sector? A group of people has championed this issue from within the world of philanthropy for years, and yet progress remains slow. It's no longer a question of awareness; it's a question of priorities. Of course, every foundation has its own vision and purpose, but the only way philanthropy will remain relevant is if it evolves along with the communities around it. That means being intentional about hiring more people from diverse backgrounds who can bring much-needed perspectives to the table; tracking the demographics of people who benefit from grant dollars; tracking the demographics of foundation board and staff, and being transparent about all of those numbers.

Why is transparency so important? Because we've seen it drive massive change in other fields. Since the California Public Utilities Commission began requiring the companies it regulates to report how much contracting they do with businesses owned by women, people of color and service disabled veterans, these companies' [contracts with diverse businesses](#) went from \$2.6 million in 1986 to \$8.8 billion in 2016. In philanthropy, transparency can drive the field to build more coalitions of foundations that can hold each other accountable to high standards of transparency and inclusiveness. It can help them learn from the inclusive practices already adopted by some foundations.

Ultimately, it's going to take a bigger push than anything we've seen before to transform the sector. Otherwise, philanthropy will become more and more out of touch with the people it seeks to serve, and it will become increasingly unable to address the needs of a rapidly changing America.

What is perplexing is that large foundations value data and frequently fund social justice efforts to obtain more gender, racial, LGBTQ and ethnic data as positive outcomes of their grants. The fiscal impact on foundations to collect this data about their own operations and grantees would be negligible. Foundations like TCE have demonstrated "*the sky didn't fall*" when the data was published, as critics suggested would happen 10 years ago. Just the opposite: The foundation learned from its data to make better decisions on how to operate.

In an era of greater transparency, and increasing recognition that we are a diverse and multicultural nation, we urge more foundations to take the leap and conduct and share their own diversity and inclusion audits.

--Orson Aguilar

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## From Dark Ages to Enlightenment: A Magical Tale of Mapping Human Rights Grantmaking

April 4, 2018

Mona Chun is Executive Director of [Human Rights Funders Network](#), a global network of grantmakers committed to effective human rights philanthropy.

Once upon a time, back in the old days of 2010, human rights funders were sitting alone in their castles, with no knowledge of what their peers in other towers and castles were doing – just the certainty that their issue area, above all others, was underfunded. Each castle also spoke its own language, making it difficult for castle communities to learn from one another. This lack of transparency and shared language about common work and goals meant everyone was working in the dark.



Then a gender-neutral knight, clad in human rights armor (ethically produced of course), arrived in the form of our [Advancing Human Rights](#) research. With this research in hand, funders can now:

- Peer out from their towers across the beautiful funding landscape;
- Use a telescope to look at what their peers are doing, from overall funding trends to grants-level detail;
- Use a common language to compare notes on funding priorities and approaches;
- Find peers with whom to collaborate and new grantee partners to support; and
- Refine and strengthen their funding strategies.

Armed with this knowledge, human rights funders can leave their towers and visit others, even government towers, to advocate and leverage additional resources in their area of interest.



### Mapping Uncharted Territory

The *Advancing Human Rights* initiative, a partnership between Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) and Foundation Center, has mapped more than \$12 billion in human rights funding from foundations since 2010. Because of the great potential such data has to inform

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and improve our collective work, many years of work went into this. Ten years ago, HRFN recognized that in order to help human rights funders become more effective in their work, we needed to get a better understanding of where the money was going, what was being funded and how much was being spent. After our initial planning, we partnered with Foundation Center, brought in [Ariadne](#) and [Prospera](#) as funder network collaborators, formed a global Advisory Committee and hashed out the taxonomy to develop a shared language. Then, we began the process of wrangling funders to share their detailed grantmaking data.

It was no easy feat, but we published the first [benchmark report](#) on human rights grantmaking for 2010, and since then, we have worked to improve the research scope and process and trained funders to use the tools we've developed. In January, we released our first ever trends analysis. Over the five years of data collection featured on the [Advancing Human Rights research hub](#), we've compiled almost 100,000 human rights grants from funders in 114 countries.

## Adopting A Can-Do Attitude

In 2010, major funders in our network didn't believe this could be done.

First, could we get the grantmaking data from members? For the first few years, we campaigned hard to get members to share their detailed grants information. We created a musical "Map It" parody (set to the tune of Devo's "Whip It") and launched a Rosie the Riveter campaign ("You Can Do It: Submit Your Data!"). We deployed pocket-size fold-outs and enormous posters thanking foundations for their participation. Several years later, we have seen our gimmicks bear fruit: 780 funders contributed data in our most recent year. When we began, no human rights data was being gathered from funders outside North America. In our first year, we incorporated data from 49 foundations outside North America and in the most recent year, that number more than doubled to 109. The value of participation is now clear. Repeated nudging is still necessary, but not gimmicks.



*The Human Rights Funder Network celebrates its Rosie the Riveter "You Can Do It: Submit Your Data!" campaign. Photo Credit: Human Rights Funders Network*

## Data Makes A Difference

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Once we had the research, could we get busy funders to use the data? With all the hard work being done in the field and so much to learn from it, we were committed to creating research that would be used. Focusing as much energy on sharing the research as we had compiling it, we aimed to minimize unused reports sitting on shelves. Global tours, presentations, workshops and tutorials have resulted in funders sharing story after story of how they are putting the findings to use:

- Funders sift through the data to inform their strategic plans and understand where they sit vis-à-vis their peers;
- Use the tools to break out of their silos and build collaborative initiatives;
- Use the research to advocate to their boards, their governments, their constituencies; and
- Enter into new areas of work or geographies knowing the existing landscape of organizations on the ground, search for donors doing complementary work, and discover the issues most and least funded.

Overall, their decisions can be informed by funding data that did not exist before, beyond the wishful daydreams of funders in their towers.

I wish I could say that we'll live happily ever after with this data. But the pursuit of human rights is a long-term struggle. Those committed to social change know that progress is often accompanied by backlash. As we face the current challenging times together, sometimes we just need to recognize how far we've come and how much more we know, holding on to the magic of possibility (and the occasional fairy tale) to inspire us for the still long and winding, but newly illuminated, road ahead.

--*Mona Chun*

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## An Interview with Lateefah Simon, President, Akonadi Foundation...On the Power of Openness, Listening, and Connecting to Improve Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

June 21, 2018

*Lateefah Simon is a nationally recognized advocate for civil rights and racial justice, and brings more than 20 years of executive experience in advancing opportunities for communities of color and low-income communities in the Bay Area. Prior to joining Akonadi, which seeks to eliminate structural racism that leads to inequity in the United States, Simon served as program director for the San Francisco-based Rosenberg Foundation, a statewide grantmaker focusing on systemic barriers to full access to equity and opportunity for Californians. She managed the Foundation's portfolio of grants supporting groundbreaking advocacy in criminal justice reform, immigrant rights, low-wage workers' rights, and civic engagement.*



*Before joining Rosenberg, Simon was executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, where she revamped the 40-year-old organization's structure and launched successful community-based initiatives, including the Second Chance Legal Services Clinic. Her passion for supporting low-income young women and girls, and her advocacy for juvenile and criminal justice reform began at San Francisco's Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD), now called the Young Women's Freedom Center. Simon became executive director of that grassroots organization, run for and by young women who come through and are affected by these systems, at age 19; she remained in that role for 11 years.*

*In January, our PhilanTopic colleagues interviewed Simons to discuss her work on racial equity in this [5Qs post](#). Recently, Janet Camarena, who leads Glasspockets, caught up with Simons for a follow-up interview about her career arc from grassroots activist to foundation leader, her observations about how openness can help to mitigate the grantee/grantmaker power imbalance, and how her current grantmaking practices are informed by important lessons she learned about philanthropy, equity, diversity, and inclusion from the other side of the grantmaking table.*

**GlassPockets: As the field of philanthropy is turning its attention to racial equity, I think there is a lot we might be able to learn from your story of how you started out in philanthropy when you led a small, grassroots organization, knowing no one in the field, and now have navigated your career to becoming a philanthropy insider. Can you start by describing your career path, the challenges you faced as a young woman of color, and how you broke into philanthropy? What were some of the key breakthroughs for you that made it possible?**

**Lateefah Simon:** I started my career in the in the 1990's - in the midst of the AIDS crisis, the war on drugs and the out migration and displacement of black people. Sill in high school, I began working as an organizer at the [Young Women's Freedom Center](#) in San Francisco. The girl-led organization was founded to build advocacy and power with systems involving young women through political education, organizing, and building economic stability.

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*“I remember thinking, ‘If I’m ever a funder, I am going to listen.’”*

Three years after joining the organization, I became its executive director. I was a single mother, living in low-income housing – but, despite these struggles, I was an excellent organizer. As a young executive director of color, I faced daily challenges in engaging with folks in philanthropy because I was not part of their usual networks. One encounter during these early days still haunts me. It was 1998, and we’d just launched a political education program in juvenile hall and in SRO hotels. We were building a membership base to mount a campaign to oust the homophobic ombudsman at the detention center. A program officer from a well-known advocacy funder came to visit and learn more about our work. We’d assembled about 15 staff and organization members - all homeless and system-involved girls. Rather than trying to understand our programmatic approach, she immediately dismissed the work as not aligned with the foundation’s definition of organizing, in effect telling us “we were not organizing.” It was at that moment that I realized that the power dynamics of race and class manifested in the funder and organizer relationship, even among well intentioned funders, were dangerous. She came into a space run by, and for, women of color and told us what she thought was best for our community. She set up the dynamic: We couldn’t engage in honest conversations, we couldn’t push back, and if we wanted resources from her group, we’d have to fall in line. I felt so clear at that moment about the purpose of our work with these young women, and I remember thinking, “If I’m ever a funder, I am going to listen.”

Another challenging instance I remember is that I had to fill out a diversity report about our organization for a foundation that had no people of color on its leadership team and might have benefited more from the exercise than we did. We had to report statistics such as how many people of color and how many women we had on staff and were serving through our programs. We had to comply with the data points to get the funding that we needed. I remember thinking about the contradiction inherent to a process like this one in which the funders themselves didn’t have to disclose their own diversity data. That’s why the fact that [GlassPockets](#) encourages foundations to publicly share their own [diversity data](#) as part of their commitment to transparency is so important. I think foundations have more to learn than community-based groups from such an exercise.

In contrast, one of the first funders to believe in me was Quinn Delaney, founder of the Akonadi Foundation. She and an advisor came to a site visit and took the time to listen to me for two hours, using it as an opportunity to learn rather than demonstrate what she already knew. She listened, asked questions, believed in us, and supported us. Another transformational experience was when I was newly hired at the [Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area](#). I was pitching funders about our work, and I was lucky enough to land a meeting with Dr. Ross, CEO of The California Endowment. He was one of the most gracious people I’ve ever met. I told him what we were doing and he declined our programmatic grant request. But he also said, “I believe in you, so I’m going to give you some money. It’s important that we invest in young people of color.” He invested in me as a leader, and in so doing, demonstrated to me the importance of foundations having flexibility even when programs don’t align.

Maya Harris, when she was at the Ford Foundation, is another positive example of a funder who worked to make philanthropy more inclusive by making time to provide one-on-one assistance. Instead of saying “no” to my grant application, she actually personally called to walk

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me through the grant application step-by-step, and told me what I needed to correct about the proposal to make it stronger.

Those individuals continue to be mentors in my life to this day, and they've worked like that with scores of young people. Building strong relationships between grantees and grantseekers is invaluable. These types of investments of time and resources and mentorship are vital to building mutual trust for real social change to occur.

**GP: How do those breaks you received inform how you now structure your own grantmaking policies and procedures to ensure those not connected and well-resourced have a chance?**

**LS:** In philanthropy, we should look at prospective grantees as our educators. I've been in philanthropy for seven years, and I'm very clear about what I *don't know*. It is a privilege to be in this sector, and important to approach the work as a student, not an expert, and ask the questions without having the answers. We are students of the movements that we seek to support. Now, being in the sector, I'd like to be the kind of professional funder who continues to "do the least harm and do the most good."

*"We are students of the movements that we seek to support."*

I always tell my staff that you should be working the hardest that you've ever worked. And they are. Our Akonadi team continues to work hard at creating intentionality in our grantmaking by taking the time to answer the phone and respond to grantees, to walk people through the application process, and to answer questions. We do public information sessions in communities that may not have heard of Akonadi and wouldn't know how to apply for a grant. We attend grantee community events and plan learning convenings to engage our community of grantees to find out how we can sharpen our process. It's a privilege to support groups that are doing the most difficult work on the front lines, fighting racism and oppression, particularly in the current political environment in which so many of the communities we serve are under attack. The bottom line is that we try to hold a high standard of excellence while also making the process accessible and making ourselves as available as possible.

**GP: As more industry conferences and foundation portfolios are focusing on racial equity, what advice would you give them on practices that can help the field improve its record and better serve and reflect its communities?**

**LS:** Through our Beloved Community Fund, we supported an annual event at Oakland's Lake Merritt called [510Day](#), which is organized by youth in the community to bring to light issues like gentrification, over-policing and mass incarceration. 510 Day happened on the heels of #BBQBecky, the story that went viral about the white woman who called the cops on black folks having a barbecue at Lake Merritt in Oakland. The event gained national attention because of the community response to the incident, and put a spotlight on the economic pressures that communities of color are facing in the city. I spoke to a young man at the event, and he said, "If you're a police officer or a firefighter, you get a four-gun salute when you die. We, the community, are out here organizing and doing the work on the streets. We are the first responders in our neighborhoods to crime and violence."

*"We have to find ways to connect with those groups who are not on 'the radar,' but are doing the heavy*



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*work of healing and organizing communities that are hit hardest by racism and oppression.”*

I sat with that as a funder. There is a heavy weight on us in philanthropy. We have to stay aware of what’s happening in our communities, and what’s happening at the margins of those communities that we serve. We have to find ways to connect with those groups who are not on “the radar,” but are doing the heavy work of healing and organizing communities that are hit hardest by racism and oppression. That means getting out of our offices and into the streets. Not just carrying protest signs and bullhorns, but to set up and clean up after rallies, and to show up for the movement and get involved, to meet and learn from the people who are most affected. Additionally, when thinking about equity, it’s important that foundations realize that we shouldn’t talk about equity without being explicit about advancing *racial equity*. That means addressing and fighting racism on every level from the ground up. At the same time, we have to continually think about how to do the most good and the least harm.

In a perfect world, philanthropy would be focused on working ourselves out of business. What would it be like if real money was re-invested in struggling communities so folks would not get pushed out and our communities lived up to the promise of possibility? Philanthropy is filling gaps around the world that are extremely important. We can’t wait for government to catch up, or fill gaps left by cuts in government support. But we have to think very carefully about power and who gets to distribute resources, or we are part of the problem.

**GP: Since you have worked on both sides of the philanthropic table, what advice would you give to grantseekers and grantmakers about strengthening their relationship, particularly in ways that can mitigate the power dynamic and pave the way for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion?**

**LS:** It’s hard being a funder and being asked this question. Every foundation is different, and every leader is different. My advice to grantseekers would be: Don’t compromise your vision and values for resources. Stay true to your vision, and follow that. I know this is a struggle because I’ve been there and know that often you don’t have that luxury because you have to make payroll and launch a campaign. But as much as possible, stay true to the work and the people.

And, in a perfect world, grantseekers could speak to their funding partners with complete honesty and integrity and wouldn’t have to fold or bend their ideas. I wish I could go to a site visit and have an honest conversation about what’s *not* working. We know how amazing people are, and the incredible work they are doing, wouldn’t it be powerful to engage in a conversation about what would make things better? That should go for funders too. Find ways to hold funders more accountable. This is so tricky because of the power dynamics, but there are tools, like [GrantAdvisor](#), where grantseekers can review foundations and provide information about the process and what the experience applying for funding is truly like.

Also, neither side should consider a decline letter as the end of the story. Instead, grantseekers should use declines as an opportunity to engage funders and learn about ways to strengthen your application. These kinds of conversations allow the program officer to explain why they chose to decline the request, whether it is worth your time to re-apply at a later date, and how you can write a stronger proposal. And funders should be willing to engage in such conversations and use them as a tool for learning as well, because these post-proposal dialogues can also be a time to get feedback from grantees on your process as well, so both of you can learn from the experience.

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**GP: Since Akonadi has been doing racial equity work for nearly 20 years, and you are now two years into your administration there, what new directions are ahead for it under your leadership? Are there changes you have already made because of your experience being a grantee, nonprofit executive director, or philanthropy outsider?**

**LS:** I came into a foundation where the principles of racial equity were built into the brick and mortar of this institution. I don't know if everyone comes into a foundation like that. We deeply value building relationships with our grantees, and think of ourselves as partners in the work. As funders, we try to be thoughtful about the demands that we place on our grantees, and are available for them to provide feedback, answer questions, or just be here as thought partners. Our staff actively engages with our grant partners, out in the field at events, or through convenings. I was lucky I landed in a foundation that mirrors my values and pushes me to think about the sector and our work even more.



Since I have come to Akonadi, I am actively thinking through what power building looks like in the context of the work that is happening here in Oakland. We've seen in philanthropy that a lot of funders are cautious and stay away from electoral work. This year, we are leaning in around integrated voter engagement, and are confident in the leadership of our grant partners to find ways to build power and make sure Oakland is engaging fully in the work to bring voters to the table to build political power. Additionally, we are thinking about the best ways that Akonadi can support cohorts of organizations to work and learn together. We are learning important lessons around how to engage our grant partners in collective learning, and we are actively trying to understand the best use of our positioning as a funder and what our role is in bringing folks together in a way that is not burdensome, and leads to shared momentum.

*--Lateefah Simon & Janet Camarena*

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## Opening Up from the Inside to Engage Philanthropy in Race & Equity

June 28, 2018

*Hanh Cao Yu is chief learning officer for The California Endowment. She started her career in philanthropy through The San Francisco Foundation's Multicultural Fellowship program. In this post, she explores the significance of fellowships and other intentional foundation approaches, to creating a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive philanthropic sector.*

At the age of 7, I remember the sheer terror of my family of five fleeing Vietnam to find political asylum. Branded “alien” and “outsider,” I found it hard to speak about the trauma of my experience as a refugee. Coming to America did not end the pain, violence, or oppression we endured. In the “Land of Opportunity,” we experienced the vicissitudes of discrimination, poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, and sub-standard inner-city schools. I remember the cramped living quarters of our one-bedroom apartment in South LA where gun shots and sirens erupted with regularity. To survive and succeed, I worked hard to assimilate, to perfect my English, and to rarely speak of my early experience or native culture. But all the while, I felt incomplete and a sense of disconnection from my community.



In graduate school, the carefully constructed walls separating my private and public selves began to crack open. As I was considering a topic for my doctoral thesis, I finally chose to focus on the experiences of second wave Vietnamese immigrant students. This not only informed educators on the lived experiences of the children of the “Boat People,” it also helped me to reflect on my own experience of navigating the distinct worlds of family, peers, and schools and the need to constantly “code switch” to fit in and succeed.

Looking for post-graduation opportunities, I never imagined a career in philanthropy. However, I was intrigued by the goal of the Multicultural Fellowship at The San Francisco Foundation (TSFF) to introduce young professionals of color to institutional philanthropy and to increase the pipeline of leaders of color interested in making a difference in their communities through positions in philanthropy, the nonprofit, public, and private sectors.

***“Transparency is often thought of in institutional contexts, but here I am also reflecting on how philanthropy can be improved if more of us “outsiders” who find a seat at the philanthropy table can share the power of our personal stories to influence, inform, and ultimately, to humanize the work.”***

As a fellow, I was introduced to what it meant to have access to power and wealth. I sat in board of trustee meetings and supported the development and implementation of multi-funder initiatives. This program gave me keen insights into the inner workings of foundations and the role of philanthropy. It taught me humility as a steward of charitable resources. More than anything, the fellowship gave me poise and fearlessness to open up for the first time to share my intensely personal history because I realized my new colleagues could learn about the historically excluded communities they were serving through my experiences. Transparency is often thought of in institutional contexts, but here I am also reflecting on how philanthropy can

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be improved if more of us “outsiders” who find a seat at the philanthropy table can share the power of our personal stories to influence, inform, and ultimately, to humanize the work.

I was encouraged to explore why community-led solutions mattered to me. Countering the dominant behavioral expectations around race, class, and culture, this fellowship provided a nurturing, supportive environment. I thrived under the tutelage of a powerful, Black-Filipino female mentor and the support of a peer cohort of accomplished women of color.

I re-entered philanthropy two decades later to fulfill the promise and a great debt of gratitude for the TSFF Fellowship. Joining The California Endowment (TCE) allowed me the opportunity to serve as a member of the executive team and to contribute to one of the most racially diverse foundations in the U.S. Through strategic recruiting efforts, TCE has intentionally established a deep and strong pipeline of diverse staff and leaders—supporting and drawing from high-quality fellowship programs such as [TSFF Multicultural Fellowship](#), [Greenlining Equity Fellowship](#), and [National Urban Institute Fellowship](#).

At TCE, we push ourselves, as grantmakers and change leaders, to learn and adapt to the shifting socio-political environment to create an equity-focused organization and improve our work as a result of having a number of staff who are representative of the diverse communities we serve. This entails:

- **Creating the space and time for healing and difficult internal conversations on race:** Although TCE is renowned for its work to advance health equity and social justice, our staff continues to ensure we take the time to openly discuss the effects of current events on our well-being, and build an “authorizing environment” to support a shared understanding and analysis of racial equity to inform our work with communities.
- **Using the foundation’s platform to influence and collaborate:** TCE staff is engaged from the inside to transform philanthropic practice and to have difficult internal conversations about our role as a health foundation in taking a stance against state sanctioned violence and exclusionary practices. Most recently, our President & CEO [used his voice](#) and TCE joined forces with numerous foundations and advocates and grantee partners [in a joint statement](#) to express outrage at the policy of separating children from families at the border and how this affects TCE’s mission and our work as a foundation. And earlier this year, following the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, given the implications to public health, our [Board committed](#) to scrubbing our stock holdings of any investments in gun manufacturing.
- **Ensuring that power is built and sustained in marginalized communities.** In the long-run, TCE has identified our North Star as “Building voice and power for a health and inclusive California.” Our work is not done until historically excluded adults and youth residents have voice, agency and power in public and private decision making to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps, so we prioritize supporting youth movements and governing for racial equity.

By all measures, the work of TCE is better and more attuned to communities because the foundation opened up its work to those who have traditionally been on the outside of philanthropy. As the first Vietnamese Chief Learning Officer, I am proud of my branded outsider, refugee status. This gives me the strength, inspiration, and empathy to do my best

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work in philanthropy and to re-envision the land of opportunity for my community and all Californians.

*--Hanh Cao Yu*

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## “Because It’s Hard” Is Not an Excuse – Challenges in Collecting and Using Demographic Data for Grantmaking

August 30, 2018

*Melissa Sines is the Effective Practices Program Manager at PEAK Grantmaking. In this role, she works with internal teams, external consultants, volunteer advisory groups, and partner organizations to articulate and highlight the best ways to make grants – Effective Practices. A version of this post also appears in the [PEAK Grantmaking blog](#).*

For philanthropy to advance equity in all communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color, it needs to be able to understand the demographics of the organizations being funded (and declined), the people being served, and the communities impacted. That data should be used to assess practices and drive decision making.

PEAK Grantmaking is working to better understand and build the capacity of grantmakers for collecting and utilizing demographic data as part of their grantmaking. Our work is focused on answering four key questions:

- What demographic data are grantmakers collecting and why?
- How are they collecting these demographic data?
- How is demographic data being used and interpreted?
- How can funders use demographic data to inform their work?

In the process of undertaking this research, we surfaced a lot of [myths](#) and challenges around this topic that prevent our field from reaching the goal of being accountable to our communities and collecting this data for responsible and effective use.

Generally, about half of all grantmakers are collecting demographic data either about the communities they are serving or about the leaders of the nonprofits they have supported. For those who reported that they found the collection and use of this data to be challenging, our researcher dug a little deeper and asked about the challenges they were seeing.

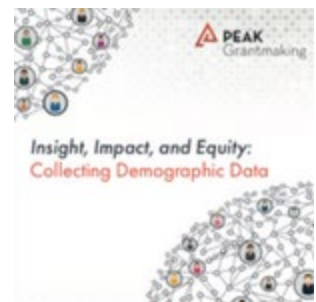
Some of the challenges that were brought to the forefront by our research were:

### **Challenge 1: Fidelity and Accuracy in Self-Reported Data**

Data, and self-reported data in particular, will always be limited in its ability to tell the entire story and to achieve the nuance necessary for understanding. Many nonprofits, especially small grassroots organizations, lack the capability or capacity to collect and track data about their communities. In addition, white-led nonprofits may fear that lack of diversity at the board or senior staff level may be judged harshly by grantmakers.

### **Challenge 2: Broad Variations in Taxonomy**

Detailed and flexible identity data can give a more complete picture of the community, but this flexibility works against data standardization. Varying taxonomies, across sectors or



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organizations, can make it difficult to compare and contrast data. It can also be a real burden if the nonprofit applying for a grant does not collect demographic data in the categories that a grantmaker is using. This can lead to confusion about how to report this data to a funder.

## ***Challenge 3: Varying Data Needs Across Programs***

Even inside a single organization, different programs may be collecting and tracking different data, as program officers respond to needs in their community and directives from senior leadership. Different strategies or approaches to a problem demand different data. For instance, an arts advocacy program may be more concerned with constituent demographics and impact, while an artist's program will want to know about demographics of individual artists.

## ***Challenge 4: Aggregating Data for Coalitions and Collaborations***

This becomes even more complex as coalitions and collaborative efforts that bring together numerous organizations, or programs inside of different organizations, to accomplish a single task. The aforementioned challenges are compounded as more organizations, different databases, and various taxonomies try to aggregate consistent demographic data to track impact on specific populations.

These are all very real challenges, but they are not insurmountable. Philanthropy, if it puts itself to the task, can tackle these challenges.

Some suggestions to get the field started from our report include

- Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Pilot systems for data collection, then revisit them to ensure that they are working correctly, meeting the need for good data, and serving the ultimate goal of tracking impact.
- Fund the capacity of nonprofits to collect good data and to engage in their own diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.
- Engage in a conversation – internally and externally – about how this data will be collected and how it will be used. If foundation staff and the nonprofits they work with understand the need for this data, they will more willingly seek and provide this information.
- For coalitions and collaborative efforts, it may make sense to fund a backbone organization that takes on this task (among other administrative or evaluation efforts) in support of the collective effort.
- Work with your funding peers – in an issue area or in a community – to approach this challenge in a way that will decrease the burden on nonprofits and utilize experts that may exist at larger grantmaking operations.
- Support field-wide data aggregators, like [GuideStar](#) or the [Foundation Center](#), and work alongside them as they try to collect and disseminate demographic data about the staff and boards at nonprofits and the demographics of communities that are being supported by grantmaking funds.

Grantmakers have the resources and the expertise to begin solving this issue and to share their learning with the entire field. To read more about how grantmakers are collecting and using demographic data, [download the full report](#).

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--*Melissa Sines*



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## Living Our Values: Gauging a Foundation's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

November 29, 2018

*Mona Jhavar serves as learning and evaluation manager for The California Endowment.*

The California Endowment (TCE) recently wrapped up our [2016 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Audit](#), our fourth since 2008. The audit was initially developed at a time when community advocates were pushing the foundation to address issues of structural racism and inequity. As TCE's grantmaking responded, staff and our CEO were also interested in promoting DEI values across the entire foundation beyond programmatic spaces. Over time, these values became increasingly engrained in TCE's ethos and the foundation committed to conducting a regular audit as a vehicle with which to determine if and how our DEI values were guiding organizational practice.



Sharing information about our [DEI Audit](#) often raises questions about how to launch such an effort. Some colleagues are in the early stages of considering whether they want to carry out an audit of their own. Are we ready? What do we need to have in place to even begin to broach this possibility? Others are interested to hear about how we use the findings from such an assessment. To help answer these questions, this is the first of a two-part blog series to share the lessons we're learning by using a DEI audit to hold ourselves accountable to our values.

While the audit provides a frame to identify if our DEI values are being expressed throughout the foundation, it also fosters learning. Findings are reviewed and discussed with executive leadership, board, and staff. Reviews provide venues to involve both programmatic and non-programmatic staff in DEI discussions. An audit workgroup typically considers how to take action on findings so that the foundation can continuously improve and also considers how to revise audit goals to ensure forward movement. By sharing findings publicly, we hope our experience and lessons can help to support the field more broadly.

It is, however, no small feat. The [audit](#) is a comprehensive process that includes a demographic survey of staff and board, a staff and board survey of DEI attitudes and beliefs, interviews with key foundation leaders, examining available demographic data from grantee partners as well as a review of DEI-related documents gathered in between audits. Having dedicated resources to engage a neutral outsider to carry out the audit in partnership with the foundation is also important to this process. We've found it particularly helpful to engage with a consistent trusted partner, [Social Policy Research Associates](#), over each of our audits to capture and candidly reflect where we're making progress and where we need to work harder to create change.

As your foundation considers your own readiness to engage in such an audit process, we offer the following factors that have facilitated a productive and learning oriented DEI audit effort at TCE:

### **1. CLARITY ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TO THE FOUNDATION**

The expression of our DEI values has evolved over time. When the audit started, several program staff members who focused on DEI and cultural competency developed a guiding

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statement on Diversity and Inclusiveness. Located within our audit report, it focused heavily on diversity although tweaks were made to the [statement](#) over time. A significant shift occurred several years ago when our executive team articulated a comprehensive set of [core values](#) that undergirds all our work and leads with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## 2. INTEREST IN REFLECTION AND ADAPTATION

The audit is a tool for organizational learning that facilitates continuous improvement. The process relies on having both a growth mindset and clear goals for what we hope to accomplish. Our [13 goals](#) range from board engagement to utilizing accessibility best practices. In addition to examining our own goals, the audit shares how we're doing with respect to a framework of institutional supports required to build a [culture of equity](#). By comparing the foundation to itself over time we can determine if and where change is occurring. It also allows us to revise goals so that we can continue to push ourselves forward as we improve, or to course correct if we're not on track. We anticipate updating our goals before our next audit to reflect where we are currently in our DEI journey.

## 3. ENGAGEMENT OF KEY LEADERS, INCLUDING STAFF

Our CEO is [vocal and clear](#) about the importance of DEI internally and externally, as well as about the significance of conducting the audit itself. Our executive team, board, and CEO all contribute to the audit process and are actively interested in reviewing and discussing its findings.

Staff engagement is critical throughout audit implementation, reflection on findings, and action planning as well. It's notable that the vast majority of staff at all levels feel comfortable pushing the foundation to stay accountable to DEI internally. However, there is a small, but growing percentage (23%) of staff who report feeling uncomfortable raising DEI concerns in the workplace suggesting an area for greater attention.

## 4. CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO ANY FINDINGS

Findings are not always going to be comfortable. Identifying areas for improvement may put the organization and our leaders in tough places. TCE has historically convened a cross departmental workgroup to consider audit findings and tackle action planning. We considered co-locating the audit workgroup within our executive leadership team to increase the group's capacity to address audit findings. However, now we are considering whether it would be best situated and aligned within an emerging body that will be specifically focused on bringing racial equity to the center of all our work.

## 5. COURAGE AND WILL TO REPEAT

In a sector with limited accountability, choosing to voluntarily and publicly examine foundation practices takes real commitment and courage. It's always great to hear where we're doing well but committing to a process that also raises multiple areas where we need to put more attention, requires deep will to repeat on a regular basis. And we do so in recognition that this is long term, ongoing work that, in lieu of having a real finish line, requires us to continuously adapt as our communities evolve.

Conducting our DEI audit regularly has strengthened our sense of where our practice excels—for example in our grantmaking, possessing a strong vision and authorizing environment, and diversity among staff and board. It's also strengthened our sense of the ways we want to improve such as developing a more widely shared DEI analysis and trainings for all staff as well

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as continuing to strengthen data collection among our partners. The value of our DEI audit lies equally in considering findings as well as being a springboard for prioritizing action. TCE has been on this road a long time and we'll keep at it for the foreseeable future. As our understanding of what it takes to pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion internally and externally sharpens, so will the demands on our practice. Our DEI audit will continue to ensure that we hold ourselves to these demands. In my next post, we'll take a closer look at what we're learning about operationalizing equity within the foundation.

--*Mona Jhavar*

# Improving Racial Equity

## Evolving Towards Equity, Getting Beyond Semantics

December 17, 2018

*Mona Jhavar serves as learning and evaluation manager for The California Endowment.*

In my [previous post](#), I reflected on The California Endowment's practice of conducting a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Audit](#) and how it helps us to stay accountable to intentionally integrating and advancing these values across the foundation.



We started this practice with a “Diversity and Inclusion” Audit in 2008 and as part of our third audit in 2013, The California Endowment (TCE) adjusted the framing to a “Diversity, *Equity*, and Inclusion” Audit. This allowed us to better connect the audit with how the foundation viewed the goals of our strategy and broadened the lens used through the audit process.

While this could be viewed as a semantic update based on changes in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, by 2016 [our audit](#) results reflected how TCE described both our [core values](#) that lead with principles of DEI and the ultimate outcome of our work that point towards [health equity and justice for all](#). And although we didn't make a corresponding change to reflect this shift in what the audit specifically assesses, select findings from our most recent audit highlight how not only diversity, but how equity is also being operationalized within the foundation.

### GETTING BEYOND THE NUMBERS

In some ways, the most straightforward entry point for DEI discussions is to first examine diversity by assessing quantitative representation within the foundation at the board and staff level, among our partners, contractors, vendors, and investment managers. Though it's a necessary beginning, reporting and reflection, however, cannot stop with counting heads. While our audit may have started as a way to gauge inclusion through the lens of diversity, it's become clear that collecting and examining demographic data sets the stage for critical conversations to follow.

Part of the inherent value of reflecting on diversity and representation is in service of getting beyond the numbers to discover what questions the numbers inspire. Questions such as:

- Who's missing or overrepresented and why?
- What implications could the gaps in lived experiences have on the foundation, the strategies used and how our work is conducted?
- What are the underlying structures and systems that shape the demographics of the foundation and of the organizations with which we partner?

It's these types of questions about our demographics and diversity that help move us beyond discussions about representation into deeper discussions about equity.

The audit has been a valuable point of reflection and action planning over the past several years. It's a comprehensive process conducted in partnership with evaluation firm, [SPR](#), that spans an extensive number of [sources](#).

### TOWARDS EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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As TCE pursues our health equity goals, we've been able to define and distinguish key differences between diversity, equity, and inclusion. While diversity examines representation, we define equity as promoting fair conditions, opportunities, and outcomes. We also define inclusion as valuing and raising the perspectives and voices of diverse communities to be considered where decisions are being made. For future audits, we're looking to refine our DEI audit goals to more explicitly focus on equity and inclusion across both our grantmaking efforts and to even more deeply examine our internal policies, practices, and operations. However, here are a few examples from our latest audit that highlight how equity and inclusion currently show up across the foundation outside of our grantmaking.

## Equity in hiring

- Recognizing the impact of structural racism and mass incarceration, TCE followed the lead of partners working to “ban the box” and the Executives’ Alliance for Boys and Men of Color to change hiring practices. TCE now utilizes a [Fair Chance Hiring Policy](#) that opens the door for hiring qualified applicants with a conviction or an arrest and shares open positions with anti-recidivism organizations.

## Inclusion and equity in investments

- In the spirit of inclusion, the criteria for our Program Related Investments (PRIs) integrate whether the PRI will engage the community it is intended to benefit as well as whether the investment will address a known health inequity or social determinant of health.
- In recognition of structural racism leading to higher rates of incarceration within communities of color, in 2015 [TCE announced](#) that we will no longer invest in companies profiting from for-profit prisons, jails, or detention centers.

## Equity in vendor selection

- Operationalizing equity also requires considering how facility operations align with organizational values. In line with our divestment from for-profit prisons, an RFP process identified a vendor-nonprofit team that encouraged hiring formerly incarcerated and homeless community members within our onsite café. We remain committed to this approach.

## THE WORK AHEAD

We've accomplished a great deal. At the same time, as we evolve towards becoming an equity organization there are areas where we need to put more of our attention.

To move beyond articulating values and to get to deeper staff engagement, audit feedback suggests more staff resources are needed to connect individual functions and roles to our DEI values, including through our performance review process, particularly among non-program staff.

Connected to developing a greater vision regardless of department affiliation, we will soon embark to engage staff across the entire organization to develop a more deeply shared racial equity analysis of our work. As part of this effort, our board is participating in racial equity trainings and adopted a resolution to utilize a racial equity lens as the foundation develops our next strategic plan. Building on what we're learning through our audits, in 2019 we'll launch

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this effort towards becoming a racially equitable health foundation that will intentionally bring racial equity to the center of our work and how we operate.

Finally, as we continue to partner with and support community to fight for equity, there are several unanswered, imminent questions we'll need to tackle. Within the walls of the foundation:

- *How do we hold ourselves to the same equity and inclusion principles that our partners demand of system leaders?*
- *How do we confront the contradictions of how we operate as an organization rooted in a corporate or hierarchical design to share power with staff regardless of position, increase decision making transparency, and include those impacted by pending decisions in the same way we ask our systems leaders to include and respond to community?*
- *With an interest in greater accountability to equity and inclusion, how do we not only tend to power dynamics but consider greater power sharing through foundation structures and current decision-making bodies both internally and externally?*

Herein lies our next evolutionary moment.

--Mona Jhavar

# Improving Racial Equity

## Philanthropy, Transparency, and Indigenous Relationships

February 28, 2019

*Kate Frykberg is a philanthropy advisor based in New Zealand, and trustee of the [Te Muka Rau Trust](#), a philanthropic trust with a specific focus on social cohesion, respectful relationships, and the central place of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) in Aotearoa New Zealand, where all feel confident and respected in their own cultures and heritage.*

I've been thinking about funder relationships with indigenous communities and the ways in which we get this wrong and right, and what role transparency can play in strengthening these efforts.

My cultural context is Aotearoa New Zealand and here the term most commonly applied to settlers is Pākehā – which usually (but not always) also implies that you are white. Indigenous people are Māori, or Tangata Whenua – People of the Land.



I am Pākehā, and a few years back I set myself on a journey to figure out what this means and how to be better at it. This has involved learning some [tikanga](#) (customs) and Te Reo Māori (Māori language) – why should all our interactions be conducted in the language of those who colonised the land? It has involved questioning my own identity and heritage. It has involved playing my part in addressing racism and inequity. And it has involved reflecting on and strengthening my relationships with Māori – in my work in philanthropy and in my personal life.

The thing is though, there are quite a few ways in which we Pākehā miss the mark in our relationships with Māori, often despite our best intentions. I'm not talking blatant racism, which sadly still exists, but that is a topic for another time. Instead I am talking about the wide spectrum of ways in which we try to do the right thing but then it just goes a bit wrong. Here are seven examples from my cultural context:

1. Unconscious bias – *“We would have liked to employ someone Māori but no-one who met our criteria applied.”*
2. Paralysis – *“I know I am pretty ignorant about things Māori and I'm scared of getting it wrong, so I will just try to avoid engaging.”*
3. Paternalism – *“I want to help those poor Māori people.”*
4. Tokenism – *“We've just appointed someone Māori to our board – phew – job done.”*
5. Idealising – *“Oh your culture is just so deep and spiritual – it's the answer to all the world's problems.”*
6. Smugness – *“I've been learning to speak Māori – I can't wait to show you how cool I am.”*
7. Cultural appropriation – *“I've found meaning in your culture – it's mine now too.”*

And, truth is, I think I've done all of the above at different times. So what might a better relationship look like?

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My friend and colleague [Marcus Akuhata-Brown](#) describes this insightfully: “Māori need to feel free to be Māori and to enjoy high-trust relationships with Pākehā without leaving our Māori selves at the door. Also Pākehā need to be able to share power – and sometimes cede power. That’s when the going can get tough.”

This high-trust, respectful, power-sharing relationship between Māori and Pākehā is perhaps the kind of relationship envisaged in our country’s founding document, a treaty signed between Māori and the Britain called [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) (The Treaty of Waitangi). So how might this relationship play out in practice?

Philanthropy is dear to my heart – but most New Zealand foundations operate according to models imported from the US and Europe. Thinkers like [Dr. Manuka Henare](#) and [Dame Anne Salmond](#) have [questioned](#) this, and the small philanthropic trust my husband [Dave Moskovitz](#) and I set up over a decade ago is one of several funders trying to do things differently. Our very small foundation, [Te Muka Rau](#) has a specific focus on social cohesion, respectful relationships and the central place of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) in Aotearoa New Zealand. We transparently state our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi on our website and we are trying to run our trust as a partnership between Māori and Pākehā. So far this process has involved:

- Moving to a bi-cultural governance model with two Māori and two Pākehā trustees;
- Being gifted a new name Te Muka Rau, meaning “the many strands,” to replace the previous name of “Thinktank Charitable Trust;”
- Aligning the way we run trustee meetings with Maori tikanga;
- Experimenting with making small grants on the basis of a conversation between people requesting funding and our trustees, with the required checks and balances and paperwork managed internally;
- Not asking for written reports on grants and instead meeting face to face;
- Offering non-financial support like advice on fundraising and technology, writing articles in support of the causes we fund, and providing introductions to other funders;
- Considering the role of reciprocity in philanthropy to better align with giving in Te Ao Māori;
- Being transparent in who we are, how we work, where the money comes from, where it goes to - and being open and eager to learn from feedback. (We are proud to be the first New Zealand foundation to become a [GlassPockets](#) funder.)

These changes have enabled Te Muka Rau to fund Māori-led initiatives like a project where Māori young people interview and film established Māori leaders to gather learnings on authentic Māori leadership, and a project to reinstate and teach traditional food growing practices in local communities. Both of these projects are important for reclaiming cultural knowledge and practices, and it is unlikely that we would have known about either project before we changed how we worked. In fact, it is even unlikely that we would have been trusted to fund these projects. This is because there is an uncomfortable irony in seeking resources from the coloniser to reclaim knowledge lost under colonisation, but this is at least somewhat addressed when half the trustees are Māori.



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On the flip side, there have been some projects which looked good to our Pākehā trustees which we didn't fund – because our Māori trustees had insights into implications and unintended consequences that we would never have become aware of.

Te Muka Rau Trust has not yet gone far along the path to becoming a true partnership between Māori and Pākehā, nor am I very far on the path to being a better Pākehā. But, through being transparent and open we have started to build trust. By listening and learning we have started to build stronger relationships. And by consciously sharing power we have started to build partnership. I think this path is creating better outcomes for everyone involved, and I personally am finding the journey exciting, challenging and enlightening.

*--Kate Frykberg*

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## Invitation Only: Closing the Door to Equity?

November 15, 2019

*Claire Peeps is the executive director of the Durfee Foundation, a family foundation that focuses on investing in extraordinary people who are making a better Los Angeles.*

*This blog also appears in [Candid's GrantCraft blog](#).*

After more than 20 years of grantmaking in Los Angeles County, you'd think our staff at the Durfee Foundation would know all of the eligible nonprofits in our region. But we don't.



Not long ago, for example, we got a grant request from a car mechanic who had opened his garage to foster youth in the high desert, a couple of hours north of us. Aaron Valencia, founder of Lost Angels Children's Project, is now among the most innovative and talented leaders in our grant portfolio. But we would never have met him, had we employed an invitation-only application process. The lesson to those of us in philanthropy: you just don't know what you don't know.

Every time Durfee opens an application cycle, we meet eligible nonprofits that we've never heard of before. It hardly seems possible, but it happens, every time. Even with our lean staffing, we think it's increasingly important to keep the door open, so let me share with you why and how we do it.

As a generalist funder, our grantmaking lens is as wide and diverse as Los Angeles. These circumstances might explain why it would be hard for us to craft a list of ideal grantee partners. But even if we could, we would still prefer the open application process.

No matter how much time we spend on the ground, in the community, we can't possibly keep up with the goings-on of all worthy, high-performing nonprofits. Plus, we've heard from so many of them how much they appreciate the opportunity to put themselves forward, and to state their case directly to us. Nonprofit leaders are active change-makers, and they seek agency over their future.

We also hear rueful complaints by leaders who are frustrated by their inability to get in the line of vision of funders whose mission seems to align with their own. We field a lot of "do you know anyone there?" calls.

Which makes us wonder—what if we looked at the grantmaking process through an equity lens?

At a time when our field is focused on equity and inclusion, an invitation-only application process seems counter-intuitive. Or worse, it can project autocracy, instead of partnership—a sort of opaque "don't call us, we'll call you." Imagine what it would feel like to stand at the door of a windowless, locked building to which you seek entry, with no bell to ring. And yet, that's very often how foundations present to would-be grantseekers. Why?



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*"At a time when our field is focused on equity and inclusion, an invitation-only application process seems counter-intuitive."*

I recognize that sometimes, invitation-only makes sense. A place or issue-based initiative, with a specific goal and time horizon, might best succeed in a sustained, collaborative model with a set of close, expert partners. Or, grantmakers in spend-down mode might choose to bring their work to a close in a deliberate fashion with a select few longstanding colleagues. It can streamline limited resources, reduce the demand on nonprofit leaders' time while increasing their odds of being funded, and reduce the time foundation staff invest in application review.

While all of this seems great for the nonprofits who find themselves in a funder's favor, what about those who fall outside their line of vision?

## What Do Nonprofit Leaders Say?

The opinions above are my own, and I'm a grantmaker. Knowing that we alone shouldn't be the ones to decide about our process, the Durfee Foundation sent a survey to approximately 100 nonprofit leaders in Los Angeles to ask their opinion on the matter. The leaders surveyed are recipients of the Durfee Sabbatical Award and are arguably among the strongest nonprofit sector leaders in our region.

We asked two questions:

1. Do you prefer foundation application processes that are open, or invitation only?; and
2. Do you think "invitation only" processes help or hinder the work of your organization?—and, in both cases, why?

The results were mixed and thoughtful. Overall, 78% prefer open processes, an overwhelming majority. Not surprisingly, those who tilt in favor of invitation-only represent larger organizations, but even they recognized the challenge of achieving a spot in the inner circle. Almost all acknowledge the dilemma of a Hobson's choice – invitation-only is always preferable if you are offered an invitation.

"If I'm in," said one leader, "of course I prefer the invitation-only application because it increases my odds of getting the grants. But if/when I find myself in need of finding new foundations to fund our work, it seems the likely ones are invitation-only, so I'm stuck."

Other leaders expressed appreciation for the satisfaction they feel when they work in partnership with funders. "When we are on the 'inside,' it's of course great! The collaboration with a funder is very rewarding."

Those circling closed shops while looking for entry were incisive and blunt.

"Invitation-only applications further the funder as an all-powerful source," said one leader. "They exclude small community-based organizations who are doing great work, but don't have access to the privileged circles big funders run in. My organizations have been in the select group for some of the biggest foundations. It takes years of relationship-building, and the skill and ability to spend time doing that. Often those most impacted by the issues being funded do not have the time or ability to spend in that way. It's an equity issue."

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“The open process speaks to me about the receptivity of the foundation,” said another. “It tells me the foundation doesn’t think they know about everything that’s going on that might be mission-aligned.”

“Invite-only foundations can perpetuate income/gender/racial inequity in the same way as invite-only clubs,” said a third.

In addition to posing a challenge regarding equal access, some see invitation-only as limiting to experimentation: “Invitation-only, it seems, reduces the ability of the nonprofit organization to innovate and move in a new direction. If, say, our board has decided through strategic planning that we need to engage in green infrastructure when we are known for habitat restoration, how can we telegraph that to a funder that funds in this new area?”

## So What's a Funder to Do? Advice on a Hybrid Approach

The survey results yielded lots of practical suggestions, with nuanced perspective.

“More hybrid approaches are needed,” said one leader. “Open processes should still be focused and targeted. Before applying, I want to know if my organization’s work is a fit for the foundation. For those that are invitation-only, I would like to see more mechanisms for opening their processes, like polling current grantees for younger, smaller, newer organizations that deserve a ‘look.’ Another idea might be for grantseekers to have an exploratory interaction with the foundation, like an ‘office hour,’ a ‘meet and greet’ or a systematic process by which foundation officers actively seek out new groups to add to their portfolio.”

“I believe that an open process is perceived by the field as being more equitable,” said another, “however, I don’t think this is necessarily true. The ways in which the open applications are vetted is where real equity happens or doesn’t. Who’s making the decision? What are the guidelines? These are the real questions when it comes to equity.”

So, my fellow funders, let’s start there—with these simple and complex suggestions that emerged.

**Write Clear Guidelines.** This may be the most challenging, but essential practice of them all. Clear guidelines may enable a foundation to shift from invitation-only to open application, without opening the floodgates to impossible numbers of applications. Vague or imprecise guidelines generate vast numbers of unsuccessful applications, and waste valuable time for both grantseekers and reviewers. Clear guidelines help nonprofits take agency in determining whether they are a fit for a grant opportunity or not.

**Invite a Letter of Interest.** Even if your foundation prefers to work with nonprofit partners by invitation only, offer a letter of interest option or an online platform for nonprofits to introduce themselves, and to get in your line of vision. Acknowledge that you have received the communication, and let them know what you will do with the information.

**Explain Your Selection Process.** If you are invitation-only, take the time to explain why. Whether you are open or by-invitation, let grantseekers know how decisions are made, by whom, by what timeline. If there are set opportunities to invite newcomers and expand your portfolio, share when and how.

Durfee uses a peer review process for most of its programs. We’ve found this an excellent way to expand the expertise of our small, generalist staff, and to offer some transparency to our process. Our peer panelists, usually alums of our award programs, bring deep community

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knowledge to our decision making, and subsequently serve as ambassadors in the field, clarifying and demystifying the foundation's process to their peers.

**Be Available by Phone.** In our digital age, this practice might seem old-fashioned, but we've found it's incredibly valuable at Durfee for building relationships. One compassionate, articulate staff person on the phone can right-size an applicant pool by helping applicants determine if they're a fit. When they're not, we find we can often point them in helpful directions, offer feedback, and provide a heartfelt thanks for the organization's work. This really can go a long distance. Regardless of the outcome, the cost of this simple strategy yields dividends in goodwill.

**List Board and Staff.** All grantseekers deserve to know who has decision-making authority at foundations, which are, after all, tax-exempt public entities. It's reasonable for nonprofit leaders to consider who's in the room before investing time in an application, so board and staff should always be listed on a foundation's website or in print materials.

**Acknowledge Funder Fragility.** Let's face it, it's a real thing. Whatever prompts funder fragility—uneasy power dynamics, concern about being overwhelmed by requests, disinclination to express rejection, deference to our boards, fear of criticism—we often work behind a buffer that separates us from the sector we serve. Most of our decision-making takes place behind closed doors, out of public view.

For those who truly seek anonymity in their grantmaking, a donor-advised fund might be a more appropriate giving vehicle than a foundation. Indeed, a more honorable one. If you choose to hang out a shingle—if you seek and are awarded IRS status as a private foundation—you owe it to the public to make your grantmaking process reasonably accessible and transparent. That's also one of the reasons that Durfee was an early adopter to participate in Candid's GlassPockets transparency initiative to encourage greater openness in philanthropy. We hope our [profile](#) there signals our ongoing commitment to working in a trusted and transparent manner.

*"If you choose to hang out a shingle—if you seek and are awarded IRS status as a private foundation—you owe it to the public to make your grantmaking process reasonably accessible and transparent."*

**Build Trust.** According to Southern California Grantmakers, only about 30% of its members currently offer an open, accessible application process. Let's collectively inch that number higher!

I'm hopeful that we are trending in that direction. The recently-launched Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, a national initiative spearheaded by the Whitman Institute, the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and the Headwaters Foundation, seeks to rebalance power in philanthropy by promoting trust-based relationships between nonprofits and foundations. Being responsive, streamlining paperwork and seeking and acting on feedback from nonprofits are among the pillars of best practice that they recommend. Other important endeavors, like California's Full Cost Project and LA's Nonprofit Sustainability Initiative, prize clarity and candor in nonprofit and funder exchange, and strive to put more strategic decision making in the hands of nonprofit leaders.

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It takes two to tango, as they say. But a trusting relationship between nonprofits and funders shouldn't begin on the dance floor, after funders have chosen their dance partners. It needs to begin much earlier, as they explore shared interests and skills.

And access to the dance floor? The building that houses it needs windows, and a front door with a bell that rings. Or better yet, an open door to a standing invitation.

*--Claire Peeps*

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## When Numbers Fall Short: The Challenge of Measuring Diversity in a Global Context

January 16, 2020

*Bama Athreya is the Gender and Social Inclusion Advisor at the C&A Foundation, a corporate foundation committed to making fashion a force for good and transforming the industry to be more sustainable and provide decent livelihoods.*



At [C&A Foundation](#) we believe many of the challenges we seek to tackle are rooted in social exclusion. We are on a journey to deepen our approach to [gender justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). As part of our own effort to learn, we recently undertook a demographic survey of our 60+ employees worldwide to find out how “diverse” we are as an organization and what it might imply for our efforts to create an equitable organization. It was a first for us and we learned far more than the numbers alone revealed.

The process itself was both eye-opening and humbling. It forced us to reflect on what really matters for our global organization when it comes to diversity and it revealed some of our own implicit biases.

***"We believe many of the challenges we seek to tackle are rooted in social exclusion."***

We worked with US-based consultants to prepare the survey—covering age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, disability, race, religion, and educational status. Unknowingly, the very act of selecting these categories imposed a US-centric world view, particularly with respect to our understanding of race and ethnicity.

For example, the category “Latinx” was used in the initial survey; this category is very relevant in the US, but reductive in Latin America, confusing in Europe, and irrelevant in South Asia. An important category for Europe—Roma—was not available for selection.

So we tried again, re-surveying our country offices in an attempt to create meaningful country-specific data. This proved far more useful in revealing what we should be considering as we seek to foster an inclusive workplace culture.

In Brazil, for example, race is a very salient concept and we are developing a much stronger understanding of why power dynamics around race may be the single most important thing we can address in that context. Less than half the Brazilian population is white —yet, political and economic structures are predominantly controlled by whites.

In Mexico, we need to consider the significant proportion of indigenous people and “mestizos” (mixed ethnicity). Although Mexicans of European descent are the minority there, they too remain a dominant political and economic class. In India, race itself is a problematic construct. Instead, caste discrimination has played a powerful role in reinforcing social group dominance and oppression for centuries. A dizzying array of ethno-linguistic groups suggests diversity but masks the real and sometimes violent social exclusion based on caste and religion. While historically disadvantaged “scheduled” castes and tribes make up around 25 percent of India’s population, they are significantly under-represented in the country’s economic life.

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And throughout South Asia, religion is a political and social flashpoint. This applies to Bangladesh, a majority Muslim country where Hindus and Christians face increasing sectarian violence, as well as India, where, as recent events show, laws and policies excluding Muslims reflect rising Hindu nationalism.

Since C&A Foundation always aims to be open and transparent, it is our practice to openly share what we learn from our research, and this exercise was no exception. However, in the end, due to the importance of country and cultural context, the only demographic categories we felt were appropriate to include in our [annual report](#) were gender, disability, and migration status. Age is another context-neutral category we might report globally in the future. But for our 60 staff people spread across the world, we realized that inclusive hiring, promotion and retention policies needed to do more than just look at the numbers, even for these categories.

So what did we learn, and what do we suggest to other foundations undertaking similar surveys?

First, generic global surveys aren't the best way to tackle region-specific diversity and inclusion challenges. Instead, start with a social inclusion assessment that looks at the local context. Who has power? Who is marginalized? From there you can craft context-specific demographic questions for your employees or your partners.

Lesson two: don't just play the numbers game. With, at most, a dozen staff in any given country office, we found there is limited value in trying to add them all up to some global statistic on diversity. However, it is important to look at who's *not* present in your workplace. For example, in Brazil, we've taken affirmative steps to recruit more Afro-Brazilians by hiring a consultancy specialized in searching for Afro-Brazilian professionals. And we are looking carefully at how to create more inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities across all of our country offices. For us, this kind of targeting does more to address diversity than a broad-brush effort.

***"It is important to look at who's not present in your workplace."***

Finally, another value of this approach is that you are leading by example to your grantees since you likely ask them to provide you with their own demographic data. Just as we realize the limitations to what we do with this data, we can understand and respect the variety of approaches that our grantees may take to tackle their own specific diversity, equity and inclusion challenges. At C&A Foundation we see our efforts to address inequality as another means to encourage our local grantees to prioritize and embrace their own equity and inclusion agendas. This is where our broader influence may lie—and offers a further compelling reason to continue our own internal journey.

*In 2020, C&A Foundation `s work in fashion will become part of Laudes Foundation - a new, independent foundation designed to support brave initiatives that will inspire and challenge industry to harness its power for good. The organization will work both to influence capital so that investment encourages good business practices, and through industry to tackle its deep and systemic challenges.*

*Laudes Foundation is a part of the Brenninkmeijer family enterprise, next to the [COFRA](#) businesses and the family's other private philanthropic activities, including Porticus, Good Energies Foundation, and Argidius Foundation.*



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## Is the Environmental Movement Still #SoWhite? Learning from the 2019 Green 2.0 Transparency Report Card

March 12, 2020

*Whitney Tome is the executive director of Green 2.0, which advocates for improved diversity, equity, and inclusion in the mainstream environmental movement.*



As environmental disasters from the recent wildfires in Australia and California to the growing intensity of tropical storms increase, environmental work takes on heightened urgency. We know that crises such as wildfires, rising sea levels, poor water, and air quality disproportionately impact people of color and vulnerable communities, so it's important that the movement for improving our environment be accessible, welcoming, and open to all.

Since its inception in 2014, Green 2.0 has pioneered accountability measures for the #DiversifyGreen movement writ large. Through our annual Transparency Report Cards, we've exposed some of the worst actors within the top 40 environmental NGO's and foundations while praising those who've demonstrated true commitments to diversity with their hiring practices. Our work has been instrumental in putting the spotlight on the glaring diversity issues within the environmental movement, and as a consequence, we've seen folks make substantive progress.



Though the [diversity statistics for 2019](#) are encouraging, it is far too premature to declare victory. Some of the top foundations and organizations in this space who claim to be major, influential players, perpetuate a double standard—asking their grantees for their data and equity efforts while not providing their own.

This kind of hypocrisy is not just a glaring weakness, but it needs to be understood as an obstacle to making the kind of progress and impact these organizations seek to make.

***"Opportunity, accountability, and intentionality are three pillars that funders and nonprofits alike must stand on."***

Let us be clear—opportunity, accountability, and intentionality are three pillars that funders and nonprofits alike must stand on. Environmental leaders cannot afford to lose sight of the significance of diversity at a time when this movement needs greater unity and coordination of resources than ever before. There is [too much at stake](#). Especially for our [most vulnerable communities](#).

Inaction is inexcusable. And data can move people to action. This is why we publish these diversity statistics each year. With the critical support, leadership, and thought-partnership of Guidestar by Candid and Dr. Stefanie K. Johnson, our report cards and data analysis are produced with great care and efficacy because these organizations, like every organization, must be held accountable.

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Based on our 2019 findings, we urge leaders in the environmental movement to adopt the following recommendations:

1. **More organizations in the funder sector of the movement need to report their data.** As it stands, so few foundations have reported that [Dr. Stefanie K. Johnson](#) simply could not make an apples-to-apples comparison of which sector is excelling more rapidly. It is clear that NGOs excel in reporting data and are making strides, and while we assume foundations are making less progress due to lack of commitment to even report data, we simply cannot know for sure. What is clear is that data reporting signals external commitment and reinforces internal resolve to remove barriers to diversity that exist in persistently white organizations.
2. **Leaders must be thoughtful about how the opportunity to diversify manifests differently at different levels of their organizations.** For example, while senior staff numbers have increased slightly in this year's report, leaders have to consider whether that is sustainable if C-Suite professionals stay longer and their organizations are not expanding the number of senior staff positions. When senior positions do open, pushing search professionals to deliver truly diverse slates is an urgent necessity, and underscores the importance of having good data to back up the need. Evidence for the importance of tracking demographic data and using it to advocate for greater inclusion can be seen in the growing diversity of boards noted in this year's report.
3. **Listen to young people.** As we've seen, despite their lack of representation in the public sphere, [young people](#) are already building separate lanes of influence on climate change. Their leadership, messaging, and organizing strategies are noticeably more inclusive and racially diverse than the institutions that comprise the wider movement. They are nimble and rapidly responsive, in part, because they are the communities they are trying to save.

***"Inaction is inexcusable. And data can move people to action."***

While we have faith that the longstanding, mainstream environmental movement will challenge itself to push the envelope on inclusivity, we implore the recalcitrant organizations to step forward and pledge to do better today. Not tomorrow. Not next year. Because many brown and Black communities just don't have the time.

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## Coronavirus Heightens Importance of Being a Transparent and Flexible Foundation

March 24, 2020

*Janet Camarena is director of transparency initiatives for Candid, and serves as a member of the board of directors for PEAK Grantmaking.*

In a week's time, life has changed in unimaginable ways as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Predictable routines of work and school have been upended as we "shelter in place" and shift work to home offices shared in many cases with spouses and newly homeschooled children. Meanwhile local services and businesses have limited hours or are completely shuttered.



Nonprofits on the front lines of serving vulnerable communities and addressing new needs stemming from the magnitude of this public health and economic crisis will be tested in unexpected ways. All while adjusting budgets to a reality in which fundraising galas, revenue-generating programs, and conferences have come to a grinding halt. In such a perfect storm of calamity, philanthropic institutions must also depart from business as usual to continue to be effective community partners.

As a result, there is a growing recognition that foundations must be accessible and flexible to mount an effective response. For example, some funders are participating in a new effort to act with urgency and agility in support of nonprofit partners and communities as part of a new Council on Foundations [Pledge](#). And even prior to the crisis, PEAK Grantmaking had issued new "[Principles for Peak Grantmaking](#)" calling on philanthropy to align practices with values, and make grantmaking practices efficient and equitable. Efforts like these are trying to identify ways to ease the burden on grantees, which is more important than ever, at this critical time.

**"Foundations have a lot of power at their disposal to ease restrictions, timelines, and reporting burdens on their grantees."**

To better understand how foundations are departing from business as usual, and to surface some good options, here at Candid we conducted a scan of Coronavirus-related announcements on the websites of the [102 GlassPockets foundations](#)—grantmakers that have committed to operating their philanthropy in open and transparent ways. Our scan revealed some promising practices in how some foundations are publicly declaring changes to their grantmaking policies to meet this moment.

**How are foundations communicating a departure from business as usual during this crisis? What are some of the more proactive approaches to being flexible that foundations are offering, and how are funders trying to mitigate the stresses on grantees and communities?**

So far, 46 of these 102 participating foundations have already issued some kind of publicly shared statement related to the foundation's response to the coronavirus, demonstrating that a crisis like this heightens the importance of transparency and accessibility. You can access the full list at the end of this post. To add your response announcement to this list, send it [here](#).

# Improving Racial Equity

The following approaches illustrate the different ways in which some foundation leaders have announced that they are adapting to this new reality:

- **Grant flexibility** on adjusting grant goals, payments, and reporting deadlines
- Willingness to **repurpose funds intended for conferences and convenings**
- Assurances around foundation finances and **ability to meet existing grant commitments and sustain budgeted grantmaking levels**
- **Establishment of new response funds** to address the crisis
- Keeping **equity and vulnerable populations in mind**
- **Pointing to relevant information and knowledge** the foundation has collected
- **Open invitations for ideas and suggestions** about how the foundation can be most helpful

These are very challenging and unexpected times with no playbook or instruction manual for any of us to follow. So, here are examples of how some foundations are implementing these strategies that may serve as a model for others.

## GRANT FLEXIBILITY

Foundations have a lot of power at their disposal to ease restrictions, timelines, and reporting burdens on their grantees. Here are a few specific ideas that could be scaled across the field for greater impact:

- **Re-think grant agreements, payment schedules, and reports:** In a [reassuring message from its CEO](#), Jim Canales, the Barr Foundation provides grantees the opportunity to revisit grant objectives, timelines, and terms, which is fairly consistent with what other foundations that have announced flexible options have described. The Barr Foundation also has similar flexibility about the possibility of accelerating payments or adjusting reporting deadlines and deliverables. Most notably, Canales' message shares that the foundation is also ***"open to alternative formats for such reports, such as taking them verbally, by phone or video conference."*** Because grant reports are often time-consuming and lengthy, having the opportunity to satisfy reporting requirements via a conversation is a helpful solution that could have great impact if it were a scaled practice across the field.
- **Implement automatic grant reporting extensions:** In addition to general flexibility on grant terms, the [McKnight Foundation](#) announced that ***due to the impact of the coronavirus, all existing grantees will automatically receive a three-month extension on all grant reports.*** No phone calls or emails needed! Automatic report extensions are a great way to honor the time of both grantee partners and foundation staff by saving all concerned the time to reach out, discuss, and grant an extension. After all, if the IRS can do it, so can foundations!
- **Convert project grants to general operating support:** [The Ford Foundation's](#) executive vice president of programs, Hilary Pennington, announced a number of flexible approaches the foundation is taking. In addition to adjusting grant objectives, deliverables, and timelines, Pennington also offers: ***"For grantee partners receiving project support, we are open to converting your current***

# Improving Racial Equity

***project grants to general support, so that you have maximum flexibility to respond to COVID-19.*** This kind of flexibility is a real way to acknowledge that we are all facing a very different reality than the one in place at the time the project was designed.

## CONFERENCES, GATHERINGS, & CONVENINGS

**Allow repurposing of conference dollars:** Several foundations that have announced a willingness to loosen grant restrictions are specifically pointing to flexibility around funds intended for conferences and convenings. The [Barr Foundation](#) and [Ford Foundation's](#) messages both include allowances for such circumstances. Additionally, [The Walter and Elise Haas Fund](#) is among those announcing that: ***"To those of our nonprofit partners who planned events and conferences that now need to be canceled, to minimize the negative financial impact, our general policy, with some exceptions, will be to allow the organizing organization to retain the Fund's registration fees as a donation, and to not request a refund."***

## OPENING UP ABOUT FOUNDATION FINANCES

Underscoring that often transparency is an act of empathy, some foundations understand that their grantee partners may be understandably worried about a foundation's finances in light of daily headlines about the toll the pandemic is having on stock values. Such funders are including reassuring information in their messages about the foundation's intent to sustain its budgeted grantmaking levels, ability to meet future grant commitments, and commitment to fund multi-year, general operating support.

For example, the [Ford Foundation's announcement](#) includes helpful details about how the foundation's approach is designed to "weather crisis." Pennington begins by explaining how the foundation has shifted its grantmaking from mostly program to now mostly general operating support, then shifts to sharing helpful investment information: ***"We take a balanced approach to investing and protecting our endowment, reducing risk and providing a potential cushion for economic downturns. In 2015, we changed our budgetary policies to apply a three-year rolling average of the endowment value to determine our spending each year. In doing so, we insulate our grantees because the foundation's spending does not fall off a financial cliff."***

[The Weingart Foundation](#) also asserts its continuing commitment to making unrestricted support available. ***"We currently plan to maintain this commitment to providing Unrestricted Operating Support in the upcoming fiscal year. Nonprofit partners have long shared that unrestricted, multi-year grants are the most effective form of funding. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, we saw first-hand how groups used our unrestricted dollars to maintain essential infrastructure and sustain support to communities. The COVID-19 crisis requires the same approach, and we have urged our foundation colleagues to adopt or increase operating support grantmaking."***

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## NEW CRISIS RESPONSE FUNDS

**Give grantees extra support:** Foundations also have flexibility to respond to this moment by creating new funding opportunities. Given sudden unexpected financial hits, such as canceled conferences or the expense of new infrastructure to support remote work, the [Heising-Simons Foundation](#) has already created a Rapid Relief Fund for its grantees that's designed to **"offset unexpected costs incurred for disruptions to operations as a result of the coronavirus outbreak."** The fund will give grantees up to \$25,000 to mitigate such losses. It's clear these unprecedented times of forced physical distancing will take a great financial toll on nonprofits that rely on event-based revenue generation, so there is lots of room for other foundations to follow the Heising-Simons Foundation's lead by making such emergency-related support available.

Community foundations are also mobilizing their resources to establish regional response funds. These funds are largely designed to address the needs of vulnerable communities in the regions served by the foundation. [The Cleveland Foundation](#) frames its crisis response in a historical context. Since the foundation dates back more than a century to 1914, the foundation's message reminds us it has addressed similar challenges, including the flu pandemic of 1918. [The Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund](#) "will begin by deploying resources to address the urgent health, basic human services and economic needs of disproportionately impacted communities and individuals." Though the fund was very recently mobilized, the foundation transparently provides a detailed plan of action, including short- and long-term goals, target beneficiaries, fund structure, and strategy.

These are just a couple of examples of hundreds of funds that have been established nationally to help regions around the country respond to the crisis. Candid is tracking these funds and making information about response grantmaking publicly accessible on our [Funding for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) pop-up webpage.

## RESPONSE FUNDS & RACIAL EQUITY

An important aspect of some of the new crisis funds is to ensure racial equity and inclusion for communities most affected by the crisis. For example, the [San Francisco Foundation's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund](#) addresses worker support, preventing homelessness and providing renter protection/housing security, ensuring food security, and addressing racial bias. Racial equity as a priority is deeply embedded throughout the San Francisco Foundation's work, so this is a good example of how a foundation extends a racial equity lens into all aspects of its work, including crisis response, to ensure that historically disadvantaged populations are not left behind.

***"An important aspect of some of the new crisis funds is to ensure racial equity and inclusion for communities most affected by the crisis."***

[The California Endowment](#)'s new \$5 Million COVID-19 Response Plan also prioritizes an equitable approach to serving the needs of the most vulnerable communities. Shawn Ginwright, a professor of African American Studies at San Francisco State University and chair of The California Endowment board of directors, explains **"We look forward to engaging California's public and private sectors as partners standing strong together to protect the public health and safety of our families, neighbors, communities of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientation and identities."** The fund supports "public

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health efforts and the immediate social and health services needs of highly vulnerable Californians, including farm workers/day laborers, the homeless and undocumented individuals."

To learn about other examples focusing on equity, [United Philanthropy Forum](#) has recently started an effort to encourage foundations to "keep equity at the forefront in philanthropy's response to the Coronavirus." Its [open letter](#) to philanthropy encourages donor-serving organizations to sign on and pledge to mitigate the ways in which the virus may worsen existing inequities.

## INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Foundations that have expertise in public health, education, or working with specific regions or populations may have helpful resources and information to share. These types of foundations are often including space in their coronavirus response messages to point to such tools.

Because of [Creative Capital](#)'s expertise in supporting individual artists, its website has a very helpful and comprehensive [resource list](#) of emerging funds to help artists respond to the crisis. As individual artists lose work from canceled performances, gigs, and exhibits, the need for such dedicated funds is high. Jamie Allison of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund underscores this point in a recent blog: ***"And it is troubling to recognize how disproportionately and direly the arts community is being affected—as that community is dependent on people coming together. If we cannot infuse artists with support, we risk many arts organizations closing their doors for good."***

Another knowledge sharing example comes to us from the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#), which is one of the few foundations with a deep bench of experience supporting the fight against infectious diseases globally. As a result, its Coronavirus coverage focuses on sharing hard won knowledge gained from investing in this global threat. One of the resources shared includes an informative New England Journal of Medicine [article by Bill Gates](#) about how donors and governments can work together to more effectively respond to this pandemic. Other knowledge shared includes [expert perspectives](#) on topics such as what it will take to accelerate COVID-19 self-testing, investing in therapeutics, and the role of technology. Transparency related to knowledge sharing is too often a missing piece in how foundations open up their playbooks, yet as Gates' insights demonstrate, we have a lot to learn from one another.

## WELCOME SUGGESTIONS

In recognition that foundations don't have all the answers, some are also making space in their messages to announce a means for stakeholders to provide ideas for consideration. In a quickly evolving crisis such as this one, encouraging participation from community voices is an important means to creating inclusive and effective responses.

The [Walter and Elise Haas Fund](#) very quickly developed and issued a short survey to its grantees to help guide the development of its coronavirus response. In a blog from executive director Jamie Allison, she shares the survey's results, explaining that the needs fell into the following five categories: funding; togetherness; flexibility; technical assistance; and policy. Since the survey findings can be helpful to other funders, both the quantitative results and foundation analysis are available via the [blog](#).

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In the case of the [REACH Healthcare Foundation](#), a request for ideas comes directly from foundation president & CEO Brenda Sharpe, who lists her own email address for such suggestions. She urges grantees to contact her to discuss concerns and clients' specific needs as they relate to COVID-19 response. Typically requests for such suggestions and open-ended comments are relegated to generic email addresses in which one is unsure who is on the receiving end, or how frequently it's monitored, so including this call for ideas in a personal request from the CEO heightens both the urgency and sincerity of the request.

Inviting community input also emphasizes that we are in this together, which seems a particularly important message for a social sector in the age of social distance. Compiling this list is one-way Candid is trying to do our part to bridge the distance and help us learn from one another. Toward that end, as your foundation surfaces new ideas and ways of working that would benefit others, please let us know so we can highlight it. You can reach us in the comments below or send your comments [by email](#).



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## Sample Foundation Coronavirus Statements

- [Arkansas Community Foundation](#)
- [Barr Foundation](#)
- [Brazil Foundation](#)
- [Bush Foundation](#)
- [California Community Foundation](#)
- [The California Endowment](#)
- [California Healthcare Foundation](#)
- [Carnegie Corporation](#)
- [Cleveland Foundation](#)
- [Commonwealth Fund](#)
- [Creative Capital](#)
- [Ford Foundation](#)
- [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#)
- [GHR Foundation](#)
- [Give2Asia](#)
- [Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund](#)
- [Walter and Elise Haas Fund](#)
- [Heising-Simons Foundation](#)
- [William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#)
- [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#)
- [Lumina Foundation](#)
- [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#)
- [McKnight Foundation](#)
- [MetroWest Healthcare Foundation](#)
- [Meyer Memorial Trust](#)
- [C.S. Mott Foundation](#)
- [Community Foundation of Napa Valley](#)
- [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#)
- [Ian Potter Foundation](#)
- [Kenneth Rainin Foundation](#)
- [Rasmuson Foundation](#)
- [REACH Healthcare Foundation](#)
- [Rockefeller Foundation](#)
- [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#)
- [Russell Sage Foundation](#)
- [The San Diego Foundation](#)
- [The San Francisco Foundation](#)
- [Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County](#)
- [Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)
- [Alfred P. Sloan Foundation](#)
- [Surdna Foundation](#)
- [Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago \(aka VNA Foundation\)](#)
- [The Wallace Foundation](#)
- [Walton Family Foundation](#)
- [Weingart Foundation](#)
- [The Zellerbach Foundation](#)

--Janet Camarena

# Improving Racial Equity

## COVID-19 Response: Which Changes in Grantmaking Practice Should Be Here to Stay?

May 19, 2020

*Melissa Sines is Programs and Knowledge Director at PEAK Grantmaking, and Janet Camarena is Director of Candid Learning.*

*Recently PEAK Grantmaking and Candid teamed up on a Community Conversation as part of an ongoing PEAK series designed to provide a forum for peer learning and knowledge exchange on COVID-19 response practices. Melissa Sines, Programs and Knowledge Director for PEAK Grantmaking and Janet Camarena, Director of Candid Learning, hosted the session at the end of April, to invite grants management professionals to reflect on what they are learning from changes made to streamline grants processes that may inform how they hope to improve overall practices post-pandemic. Here we share highlights of the take aways from the session. A complete re-cap of the full program appears on the PEAK blog [here](#).*



In the weeks since the crisis began, we all have been learning what it's like to bring our humanity to our work. Barriers to communication and collaboration that seemed insurmountable just a month ago have been erased. More funders are embracing practices that are allowing them to narrow the power gap, drive equity, and build strong and trusting relationships with their grantees.



### MORE TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

Program participants report that they are adopting streamlined and flexible workflows, which are freeing them up to be more available to connect with grantees. During phone calls to check in on needs and progress, stronger relationships are being forged, leading to greater empathy and understanding about which adjustments might be most helpful. For example, many funders have started to repurpose existing project grants to unrestricted support, as well as to allocate a larger portion of their overall budgets to general support.

### STREAMLINED AND FLEXIBLE WORKFLOWS

As the world continues to adjust to the ongoing strains of sheltering in place and the stress of the extended public health and economic crisis, philanthropy is beginning to understand how its own practices can help or hurt the situation. And the burden you lift may be your own, as several participants reminded us that streamlined application and reporting processes and workflow shortcuts are reducing burden not only for nonprofit partners but also for grantmaking staff.

*“Barriers to communication and collaboration that seemed insurmountable just a month ago have been erased.”*

**In Applications:** There is increased attention to the labor standard foundation applications require, greater scrutiny on which information is really needed in order for funders to make

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decisions, and questioning whether the work of collecting that information should fall to the grantee or to the funder. Some funders have started taking on more of the due diligence burden, using a variety of sources readily available to them, such as organization information already available in their own databases; grantee websites; and websites like Candid's [GuideStar](#) profiles to find the information they need. They're also taking applications via phone—asking questions of the grantee verbally and recording answers in their grants management system. Some are also taking applications created for another funder or banding together in funder collaboratives to agree on one application and one report format and submission for emergency response grants. As one funder put it, they are “short on what we ask from the nonprofit—long on us documenting what we know about the nonprofit.”

**In Decision-making:** Grantmakers are convening decision-making bodies (staff, boards, grant review committees) in creative ways. Online meeting software is being utilized to convene decision makers, work through decisions, and rapidly deploy funds. Detailed grant summaries and packages are being reduced to quick emails and spreadsheet overviews that actively prompt in-depth questions and discussions that engage decision makers in meaningful work and promote good decisions. These quick meetings in virtual environments could be a great way to democratize the grantmaking process by utilizing a more participatory grantmaking structure.

**In Agreements and Payments:** As one of our participants declared: “We moved to electronic checks and electronic award letters and we are NEVER going back!” For many grantmakers, this crisis has led them to embrace electronic processing in place of printing and mailing agreements and checks. One funder reported that they had been advocating for wire payments for a year and a half, and now as a result of the crisis they had it up and running within a few weeks. Award letters, grant agreements, and grant modifications are all being accepted in simplified formats such as a short email, electronic signature software, or a phone call. Another funder reported that using electronic signature software had resulted in over half of signed grant agreements being returned within thirty minutes.

*“Philanthropy is beginning to understand how its own practices can help or hurt the situation.”*

**In Reporting:** On the reporting side, funders are accepting quick updates via email or phone, extending reporting deadlines for interim and final reports, even suspending reporting altogether. Some are adjusting evaluation plans and reducing report requirements. Education funders are realizing they will need to entirely rethink evaluation for their grantees given the disruption in that part of the sector.

## Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Call participants admitted to feeling a lot of stress around quickly implementing and iterating these rapidly changing practices and processes, but also say that overall, they're actually amazed at what they've been able to accomplish in just a few weeks. Specific takeaways from participants making such changes include:

- Streamline applications and reporting processes and use conversation to build stronger relationships with your grantees.
- Closely examine all pieces of information that you ask of applicants to make sure you are using this information.

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- Take on more of the burden for doing the homework and due diligence about your grantees.
- Consider eliminating the use of customized narrative and budget templates and encouraging applicants to submit applications used for other funders.
- Move to mobile-friendly, accessible, online applications if you haven't previously, and make accommodations for people with disabilities.
- Take the leap and go electronic for grant agreements, payments, and reports.
- Change mindset on general operating support by increasing its frequency of use.
- Consider the role of participatory grantmaking in how philanthropy might shift the power now to traditionally under-served and under-represented groups.
- Reconsider evaluation and data requirements and remove requirements for advertising or brand opportunities that require a certain threshold of participation.
- Consider which metrics and decision-making frameworks should be used to guide decision making now, and whether you can use an equity or values-based framework to make better decisions.
- Remember, operationalizing and standardizing all of the changes is a lot of work, so write down how you're making decisions and why you're making specific decisions. It's not easy, but it will help you document changes for your board and for the auditors.
- Change can be intimidating and you may likely encounter resistance. So make the case that this is a pilot or part of iterative change, and it can always be changed back or changed again in the future if it's not working. Framing in this way can help get the experiment going.

Which changes are you implementing? Which of them would you like to see carried forward to make your future grantmaking more efficient, equitable, and effective?

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## Action & Accountability: Why Demographic Data Matters Now

May 28, 2020

Every day we wake up anxiously to frightening new data. The number of cases. The number of deaths. Which country has surpassed another? Who's flattening the "curve." And... that the pandemic's impact is shockingly disproportionate across race, age, gender, and geography. Due to the living legacies of oppression baked deeply into our social, economic, and political systems, we are seeing that the folks most negatively affected by the crisis are more likely to be Black, Brown, and Native. In the US especially, we are also seeing a backlash of xenophobia towards Asian and Pacific Islander communities due to efforts to racialize the virus. Add in other intersecting identities like gender identity, age, sexual orientation, immigrant status, justice-system impacted, disability status, and socio-economic class and it becomes clear that those most affected will likely face greater challenges to accessing aid or meeting eligibility requirements for existing support and recovery packages.



*Melissa Sines*



*C. Davis Parchment*



*Kelly Brown*



*Carly Hare*

Although the scale here is unprecedented, the narrative is a familiar one to us. Prior to the pandemic, [CHANGE Philanthropy](#), [PEAK Grantmaking](#), [D5 Compass](#), and [Candid](#) were partnering to raise awareness about the importance of collecting and sharing demographic data. As COVID-19 continues to disproportionately affect our most vulnerable communities and philanthropy mounts a large scale response to growing needs, we encourage foundations and nonprofits to consider these recommendations in an effort to accurately account for the reach and impact of philanthropic dollars and use this data to address funding gaps to communities most impacted by the crisis.

### OUR CHALLENGE FOR YOU:

- Review your response strategy with an equity lens.
- Move the money simply and equitably.
- Track your grants' intended impact and community reach.
- Be transparent by sharing your giving and program data.

### REVIEWING YOUR RESPONSE STRATEGY WITH AN EQUITY LENS

[Billions of dollars](#) are being mobilized to support what will become a lengthy and multi-stage response to both the pandemic and a devastating economic downturn. How they will be invested, and to which organizations and communities, will shape the legacy of philanthropy's response during this historic crisis. A survey in 2018 by PEAK Grantmaking and Frontline Solutions found that 56% of funders had a formal equity statement. Yet, when PEAK conducted

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a flash survey of its members it found that so far only around 10% of funders are reporting that they are collecting any demographic data for the leaders or nonprofits or the beneficiaries they serve as part of this rapid response.

This represents an opportunity for foundations to not only to walk the talk around embedding equity into practice, but also to show it. As funders continue to distribute aid addressing COVID-19, it will be imperative for them to document the intended beneficiary community, demographics about the leadership of grantee organizations, and how the organizations are addressing community needs. This kind of focus on demographic data is essential if philanthropy truly wants to assess and improve its track record on equity and inclusion.

## MOVE THE MONEY SIMPLY AND EQUITABLY

As the calls for more responsive and streamlined philanthropy grow around the current crisis, grants management professionals—the people inside grantmaking organizations who are managing technology systems, application, and reporting processes, grant agreements, and payments—are leading organizational efforts to adapt grantmaking processes, procedures, technology, and communications. At PEAK Grantmaking, many members have reported that they are already adding fields to their grants management systems to collect data around how money is being spent during this crisis.

As decision makers are called on to make quick determinations in new settings (many have hosted or attended their very first virtual grant review committee meetings in just the last two months!), it becomes even more important for them to have data to inform their deliberations, ensure that philanthropy's response is equitable, and take into account communities that have been marginalized or left out of traditional grantmaking practices. It is in these moments of crisis response and recovery that we must make some changes in practice, otherwise, we will default to the philanthropic practices that have only exacerbated inequity.

## TRACK YOUR GRANTS' INTENDED IMPACT AND COMMUNITY REACH

Instead of building systems that satisfy the information needs of the few while overshadowing the needs of the system as a whole, we recommend improving transparency and data collection efforts by sharing data that can be accessed by everyone to help inform both crisis response and recovery efforts.

Nonprofits can easily share key details about [who they are, whom they serve](#), and any specific COVID-19 response through the [GuideStar Profile Update Program](#). Consider asking all applicants to complete the Demographics section. There, organizations can share leadership, board, and staff demographic information as well as equity strategies. [The demographic survey](#) was [updated](#) last year in partnership with CHANGE philanthropy and Equity at the Center to revise the language and approach to collecting and sharing demographic information. This data can help to inform grantmaking and be integrated later in reporting grant details.

It sounds counter-intuitive but tracking data about grantees need not be at odds with streamlined, rapid response processes. Common standards, taxonomies, and practices are the bedrock for comparability, analysis, and insight. The fierce independence of our sector often works against our goals to effect large-scale change with disparate actors who frequently are reticent to share information using common standards. By adopting [existing taxonomies](#) and standards foundations can bypass the time it takes to create custom systems, and ensure comparability with peers.

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## BE TRANSPARENT BY SHARING YOUR GIVING AND PROGRAM DATA

Now is the time for foundations to go beyond the details they disclose on annual IRS reporting forms (990-PF) and share current, complete, and accurate giving data, especially on COVID-19 response work and specific populations that are intended to benefit from that work.

Candid is actively tracking [philanthropy's response](#) to the coronavirus pandemic. The public-facing website includes funding opportunities, an interactive map listing awarded grants and grant descriptions, a directory of rapid response funds, and related news items all updated daily at [candid.org/coronavirus](https://candid.org/coronavirus). Though this effort is currently tracking more than \$10 billion in grants, it is incomplete without your data.

Here are some tips to maximize the impact of this reporting:

1. If your organization has already funded efforts related to the crisis, please [share information on this grantmaking](#) with Candid. Knowing where the money is going and how, and having the latest information from organizations, facilitates thoughtful collaboration and decision making in times of crisis.
2. If your organization has established a coronavirus response fund, please [let Candid know](#) so we can include it on the [list of funds](#) we're curating.
3. If you have never shared grants data before, we recommend using the [simplified eReporting template](#).
4. Provide detailed grant descriptions. This is the best way to ensure your data will be accurately coded to capture the **subject, population, geographic area served, and support strategy** you intended and, ultimately, mapped correctly.
5. For additional information or assistance with [eReporting](#), email: [egrants@candid.org](mailto:egrants@candid.org).

## IN CLOSING...

We already know that the impact of this pandemic is tragically inequitable. Let's take this moment to embed intentionality around demographic data collection and reporting and bake it into our recovery funding practices. These tools and strategies will allow us to be more transparent and accountable about the reach of our pandemic response grantmaking. If practiced, they will strengthen the field, our ability to analyze the impact, and help future philanthropists understand how to invest in community-based solutions. By combining equitable action response with timely and accurate data collection, philanthropy can avoid past patterns of excluding historically under-served communities from much needed support.

## About the Authors

***Melissa Sines** leads PEAK Grantmaking's work to identify effective, efficient, and equitable philanthropic practices and advocate for their adoption by grantmakers. She currently serves as Programs and Knowledge Director at PEAK Grantmaking.*

***C. Davis Parchment** has long worked to support a social sector driven by better data, research, and analysis. Currently serves as Director of Partnerships-West where she is*

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*responsible for elevating and expanding the reach of Candid across the western region by building partnerships and strategies that help to strengthen the social sector.*

**Kelly Brown** is principal consultant at Viewpoint Consulting, which provides program design, research, and analysis to organizations and individuals investing resources to strengthen underserved communities. Previously she led the D5 Coalition, a five-year effort to advance philanthropy through diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Carly Hare** (Pawnee/Yankton) strives to live a commitment to advancing equity and community engagement through her professional and personal life. Carly serves as the Coalition Catalyst/National Director of CHANGE.



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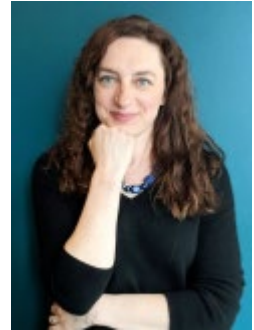
## Confessions of a DEI Data Junkie

October 7, 2021

—Eva Nico (*she/her*) is Senior Director of Profile Management at Candid.

I am going to start with what may seem like a brag and not a confession.

In pursuing our mission to “get you the information you need to do good,” Candid receives and moves vast quantities of digital information in the social sector on more than 1.8 million active US-based nonprofits. As part of that work and over the past 7 years, we’ve been actively and systematically collecting and sharing demographic data – information about race & ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and dis/ability status. There are now over 22,000 organizations actively sharing demographic information via Candid’s profiles.



The point of these facts isn’t to brag; rather, it’s to show that we have some hard-won experience to share. In fact, I am going to do the opposite of brag. In this blog, I’m going to give concrete examples of a few of our own mistakes and surprises in collecting and sharing demographic data.

Why confess these at all?

We want to share the mistakes we’ve made – so you don’t have to repeat them. We want to share them so you can learn from our experience in collecting this information systematically over the past seven years. We want to share, because we need your help. We ask that your organization advocate for a Gold Seal of Transparency and demographic data via Candid.

There are sensitive and important questions our sector struggles to understand: Who leads and works at nonprofits? Who is served by nonprofit organizations? Which organizations are supported by philanthropy (or not)?

By asking your grantees, members or peers to participate on Candid, you are working toward answers to these important questions. You are also doing so in a way that is respectful of the time and effort organizations need to go through to provide these answers. Instead of hundreds of custom, one-off surveys between foundations and grantees or associations and members—we can work together toward a collective understanding of diversity in the social sector. That’s the real promise of Candid and of “having information you need to do good.”

### TRUE CONFESSIONS

**Confession: We knew asking about identity would be hard – but we underestimated how hard it would be.**

Identity is not simple. But to keep the burden of data collection low and to analyze trends easily, the questions about identity and methods for data collection and reporting need to be. It’s a constant balancing act.

On the GuideStar nonprofit profile, organizations can report on four dimensions of diversity: race & ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and dis/ability status. Our “[How to Collect and Share DEI Data](#)” guide is a resource for the field and has been written with nonprofits who want to start collecting their organization’s data in mind.

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The questions and choices of answers have been carefully considered with our expert partners – [CHANGE Philanthropy](#), [Equity in the Center](#), and [RespectAbility](#). We also re-visit the questions based on feedback and by analyzing the data contributed by organizations.

An analysis of data shared by more than 22,000 organizations provides a clear example of how challenging questions about identity can be. We provide an open-response option that invites people to “Please specify” their race and ethnicity. And to date people have specified over 100 ways of describing their identity beyond the structured choices we’ve provided. Some with the intent to educate about their primary identity– by sharing “Middle Eastern” and “Jewish.” Some with the intent to protest the question (e.g. by answering “Human”).

So what can you learn?

- **Adopt standards where possible.** The Census questions are a kind of standard, as are Candid’s questions shared in the [How to Collect and Share DEI Data](#) guide.
- **Consult with experts and evolve the standard.** We are open to feedback on Candid’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) questions and we receive comments through our support channel.
- **Keep the balance.** Respect for identity vs. the burden of collection, depth of data vs. utilization.

## **Confession: We collected data we couldn’t interpret.**

When GuideStar (now Candid) launched the DEI data collection, the balancing act was even tougher, as many organizations did not see the need for these questions on the profile. In our attempts to make the data collection simple, we compromised on how the data was collected to the point where it became difficult to make sense of it.

For example, we did not validate that the number of staff or board members identified within a demographic category totaled to the overall board and staff count. In the course of the data collection, we received some feedback from people trying to use the data. Feedback like:

“Basically ... we need further guidance to clean up the data we received. For example, in some cases, the number of staff who checked each category box do not match the total number of staff the organization has.”

We’ve corrected this, of course, in the newest iteration of the data collection launched in August 2019. We also made sure that each demographic question had explicit options to “Decline to state” and for “Unknown” responses (to account for non-responders to surveys of board and staff). These were significant changes that have improved the quality of the collected data tremendously.

So what can you learn?

- **Collect data you can use** – by actually trying to use it.
- **Include best practice response options** like “Decline to state” (for those who decline to identify themselves explicitly) and “Unknown” (to account for non-responders to surveys of board and staff).
- **Learn from the responses** you get.

# Improving Racial Equity

## **Confession: We assumed nonprofits had the data to share.**

In the early days of DEI data collection, we noticed that adoption among nonprofits was rather slow. There are many hesitations in collecting and sharing this data but one we identified early on was that some nonprofits did not have this data to share in the first place. Or perhaps they did have the data but in different categories and formats.

In response, we created the [How to Collect and Share DEI Data](#) guide to take the guess work out of collecting DEI data. The guide includes introductory text, questions and definitions.

So what can you learn?

- **Create resources and offer grant support** to help nonprofits collect the data.
- **Build DEI into your application process.**
- **Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good** – acknowledge challenges with missing data and move forward with the analysis.

## **Confession: The variety of reactions and feedback surprised us.**

If your organization advocates for the collection of DEI data – be prepared for a variety of feedback. We've received many comments over the years both positive and negative.

Some of the feedback will be negative:

“We hire employees based on experience, skills and heart, not to fulfill a social-political agenda.”

“I'm offended at the profile questions. I am not going to ask employees what their sexual orientation is nor am I going to be made to feel guilty because my staff is all white (because our community is white).”

Some might be heart-breaking, for example when the questions you ask might not do justice to someone's identity:

“I just wanted to let you know there's a few issues with terminology on the demographics piece for orgs to fill out. As someone [who is] non-binary, I'm not cis but I also don't identify as trans.”

What can you learn?

- **Respond to all** and let them know how much you appreciate their feedback.
- **Collect constructive input** and consider for the next iteration of revisions.

## **What's next?**

We started recognizing organizations for sharing demographic data about their leader with a Gold Seal of Transparency in October 2020. Since then, we've seen tremendous growth in the number of organizations doing so via Candid's profiles – from just over 6,000 in October 2020 to now over 22,000 organizations and counting. But there is more we can do together.

With more than 1.8 million active nonprofits and almost 200,000 with at least one full-time employee in the US alone – there is a lot of room to grow participation and we need your help.

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We ask that your organization advocate with your peers, members or grantees for a Gold Seal of Transparency and demographic data via Candid.

Organizations like the [Jessie Ball duPont Fund](#), the [Charles Stewart Mott Foundation](#), and the [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#) have already done so. In their message to grantees, the Mott Foundation said why: “to promote a just, equitable and sustainable society compels us to strive to do the best we can to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in our grantmaking.”

With the unprecedented level of resources and attention on diversity, equity, and inclusion in our own sector – we are poised to make real and lasting progress – but only if we are willing to work together and hold ourselves accountable to the data.

—*Eva Nico*