

Three Foundation Tools for Activating a Racial Equity Lens

How does a foundation make racial equity a priority – and do it consistently? One approach is to introduce policies that get people thinking and talking regularly about race and ethnicity through activities such as collecting diversity data from applicants or, at a deeper level, discussing diversity objectives with grantees. For a more systemic approach, foundations may create tools that encourage reflection on racial equity when considering program strategy.

The tools shown here demonstrate what three foundations have done to establish routines that help everyone get on the same page and build a common understanding and practice. Although not a recipe for racial equity grant making on their own, tools like these (and others listed on page 19) can promote explicit discussion of race – an important first step, said many grant makers, in taking up a racial equity lens.

Table for Collecting Diversity Data

THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

More and more foundations are routinely collecting data on the diversity of current and prospective grantee organizations – an activity that invites exploration even if it doesn't necessarily lead to explicit racial equity grant making. The San Francisco Foundation, for example, asks organizations intending to apply for funding to supply information on the race or ethnicity of people to be served by the project they have in mind, people served by the organization as a whole, and the organization's staff and board. The data inform the application process and help the foundation keep current with the diversity of the local nonprofit sector and its constituencies.

	# people served by project	% people served by project	# people served by organization	% people served by organization	# people on staff	# people on board of directors
RACIAL / ETHNIC						
African American/Black						
Asian American						
Hispanic/Latino						
Native American						
Pacific Islander						
White (Non-Hispanic)						
Other						
TOTAL						
GENDER						
Female						
Male						
Transgender						
TOTAL						

Protocol for Discussing Diversity with Grantees

FORD FOUNDATION

The Ford Foundation articulates its commitment to diversity in terms of the quality it seeks to achieve, both in desired results and the “talent pools” from which it draws. In reviewing proposals, program staff work through a set of open-ended questions with potential grantees on a case-by-case basis to clarify the connection between diversity and quality. Grant makers may also take certain steps, including providing additional support, to help grantees meet diversity goals.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What forms of diversity (gender, racial, cultural, religious, immigrant/refugee background, linguistic, etc.) do you think are important for strengthening the quality of the work proposed and why? Does your organization’s staff and governance reflect this diversity?
- How do you propose to draw upon diverse perspectives in the community or field that the proposed work will serve?
- What diversity challenges does your organization face in its work overall?
- What progress has your organization made to increase its diversity in the last two to three years?

MENU OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES

- Establish specific goals for increasing the representation of underrepresented groups in the organization’s board or staff
- Ask the organization to form a project advisory committee that better represents underrepresented groups
- Make a linked grant to an organization that better represents underrepresented groups to promote its participation and involvement in the project
- Provide support for staff and board recruitment activities designed to improve the diversity of the organization
- Work with other grant makers supporting the organization to establish expectations and support work to improve the diversity of the organization
- Condition subsequent grant payments on progress toward diversity goals
- Involve senior foundation leadership in discussions with the organization to highlight the importance of diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented people in foundation-funded work

Racial Equity Programming Check-up

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

To build a commitment to racial equity into their work, grant makers at the Annie E. Casey Foundation routinely rate aspects of their programming for alignment with the foundation’s overall commitment to eliminating disparities in children’s well being. The ratings help the foundation develop thoughtful policies, which in turn enable staff to design programs and make individual grants that address racial and ethnic disparities.

On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

- We have *access to data* on racial/ethnic disparities to guide our work and investments in this area (that is, the data on relevant indicators of well being are broken out by race).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- There is an explanation and/or *theory of change* regarding disparities specific to the intent of grant making in this area.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- Our grant making in this area incorporates *investment strategies* that address disparities specifically based on the theory of change (for example, close the gap, gap plus, race-based strategies, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- Our grant making includes *performance measures* to determine how well our investments are addressing racial disparities. (Please list the performance measures used.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- Our grant making includes *people* (grantees, TA providers, etc.) with specific skills or experience in reducing disparities. (Please list who they are.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7