

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS  
TAKE THE LEAD

Promising Approaches to Building  
Inclusive and Equitable Communities



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Promising Approaches to Building  
Inclusive and Equitable Communities

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# INTRODUCTION

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Community foundations have a rich history of community leadership: their work has long centered on raising awareness and fostering community dialogue, identifying and engaging donors, and helping to set the agenda for community stability and well-being.

They link local community-based organizations and nonprofits to grants and resources, but their impact reaches well beyond this role. Community foundations have deep knowledge about the needs and assets of the cities and towns in which they work. They are great conveners; they have the connections necessary to bring together diverse stakeholders to move an agenda forward. Many have established themselves among civic leaders and national networks as the source to turn to for information about the local context — the issues, challenges, key players, and strategies at work.

Community foundations are building on this leadership experience to become more effective change makers. Today, more and more community foundations are inspiring and shaping local dialogue about needs and solutions, bringing new ideas and knowledge to the table, and helping their communities address issues ranging from affordable housing to early childhood development. Across the country, in areas as diverse as the rural Deep South and the Northeastern inner city, community foundations are demonstrating their ability to move public opinion, engage key decision makers, make strategic investments, and work with others toward sustainable community change. In addition, because they are typically better connected to local and state decision makers than most national institutions, community foundations are becoming important partners as social issues, public policies, and solutions play out on the national stage.

The emerging role of community foundations as community leaders is critical — especially as our communities become more complex and potentially fragmented. The U.S. population is more ethnically, racially, and socio-economically diverse than ever before. From 1970 to 2005, first-generation immigrants in the United States more than doubled from 4.8% to 12.1% of the population. Over 13 million African Americans and over 12 million Latinos are currently part of the American middle class. Opportunities exist for women, ethnic minorities, and recent immigrants that were unheard of 30 years ago.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Migration Data Hub at Migration Policy Institute, [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org). Also see U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

However, even as the term “minorities” is fast becoming obsolete (by 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there will be virtually no ethnic majority in the United States), deep gaps and inequities among racial and ethnic groups persist. Recent reports suggest that on average African Americans, Latinos, and white women are paid approximately two-thirds what white men receive. In U.S. prisons, more than 60% of the prisoners are people of color. Approximately 42% of African-American children and 21% of Latino children under the age of 17 live in poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Recent community gains are often compromised by emerging xenophobia towards newcomers, broken public systems that disproportionately impact communities of color, and the growing wealth gap that threatens the day-to-day existence of community residents. Our communities are grappling with how to embrace and draw strength from diversity, while leveraging the resources diversity provides to help them thrive.

Community foundations are taking the lead to help their residents, leaders, and decision makers build diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities for the common good. As Cindy Sesler Ballard, Executive Director of CFLeads, observes, “Increasingly, community foundations are exercising the courage of their convictions by tackling issues rooted in inequality. Because they sit at the intersection of the public, private and nonprofit sectors, community foundations have the stature and vantage point to foster multi-sector solutions that reflect and respect the many voices within their communities.” Their efforts range from long-term support for community dialogues to strategic investments in public education, from nonprofit capacity building to community advocacy. Yet they share a commitment to the value of diversity and its ability to strengthen communities, and the importance of bringing people together to create and take part in a collective vision.

Here are some examples of community foundations that are taking the lead to build equitable and inclusive communities:

- > **The Minneapolis Foundation** convenes the Minnesota Meeting to focus attention on a single issue each season. The Minnesota Meeting was created in 1982 and became a program of the foundation



<sup>2</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Series PINC-05 at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); Bureau of Justice Statistics Criminal Offender Statistics, Summary Findings, retrieved 30 June 2007 from [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm); and U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1981 to 2004 Annual Social and Economic Supplements at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

in 2003. Recently, the Meeting has brought attention to the challenges of immigrant communities in Minnesota and the reality of racially disparate outcomes in the state.

- > **The Rochester Area Community Foundation** serves as an important ally in the success of the Mosaic Partnerships, one of the main tools for combating racism in Rochester, New York, and surrounding communities. The Partnership creates a network for community stakeholders across racial and class boundaries, placing an emphasis on the significance of social capital and networks to level the playing field for Rochester's under-served communities.
- > **The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region** hosts both The Common Ground Fund and The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants as part of a strategic effort since 2001 to take a leading role on social justice issues. The Common Ground Fund supports nonprofits that focus on social justice advocacy in communities of color, while The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants assists nonprofits providing services to emerging immigrant communities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.
- > **The East Bay Community Foundation** makes use of an internal change process — first implemented in 2002 as the Leading by Example Initiative — to increase its capacity to model equity, diversity, and inclusive practices within the foundation. Now in its fifth year, the Initiative aligns the foundation's internal practices with its goals for equity and inclusion in the East Bay region of California.
- > **The Denver Foundation**, through the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative, supports the nonprofit sector in metropolitan Denver, Colorado, to build volunteer, staff, and donor leadership that reflects the diversity of the area.
- > **The Community Foundation in Jacksonville**, in partnership with the public school system in Duval County, Florida, recently launched the Quality Education for All Initiative to improve educational outcomes for school-age children. The Initiative includes specific goals to address the gaps in achievement for low-income students and students of color.
- > **The Greater Cincinnati Foundation** is one of the lead conveners of Better Together Cincinnati, which focuses on issues related to police-community relations and criminal justice, economic inclusion, and educational achievement. With noted success, the foundation has spearheaded the work since racial tensions threatened to fragment Cincinnati's communities in 2001.



This publication, *Community Foundations Take the Lead*, highlights the work of these community foundations that are at the forefront of building democratic, equitable, and inclusive communities in partnership with their residents, civic leaders, and institutions. It also offers practical examples of how these innovative community foundations have begun to use their reach, influence, and resources to help their communities face difficult challenges together.

*Community Foundations Take the Lead* makes a special effort to feature the promising approaches of community foundations that work to assure racial equity in access, outcomes, and opportunity. It is, by no means, intended to be a comprehensive study on community foundations. Rather, the publication shares both the successes and challenges of several community foundations that have dared to lead on hard issues — such as immigration, racially disparate outcomes, and public education — and have changed their communities for the better in the process.

# THE SUCCESS EQUATION: THE CONTEXT FOR PROMISING PRACTICES AT COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

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A commitment to racial equity work often requires community foundations to think beyond responsive grantmaking and to develop disciplined, long-term strategies for understanding and addressing systemic issues that threaten community growth. While no two foundations in the following pages are alike, most of the featured foundations, on some level, share common factors that distinguish them as leaders in their community and in the philanthropic sector. The reality is that grantmaking is often a significant and necessary part of their success equation. However, over the long haul, the most successful foundations also use their spheres of influence — with nonprofits, local government, neighborhood groups, and donors — to shape the way an issue is framed and how the community comes together to identify solutions.

The profiles featured in this publication are significant because they not only provide rich stories of community leadership and community change, but they also highlight some building blocks that often shape community foundations' notable efforts to support racial equity.

Notwithstanding the diversity of foundation size, assets, region, or staff, these common themes stand out:

- > **The presence of clearly articulated values across the organization to address structural racism, disproportionality, racial/ethnic disparities, exclusionary practices, or underrepresentation.** Some foundations actually make use of the term racial equity. Others don't. All, however, take a leadership role in naming the issues at play and communicating to their communities why they are compelled to take action.
- > **A baseline recognition that a community engagement component is critical to the work.** Foundation-led efforts with real traction often include nonprofit and community stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the work from the start.



- > **A focus on internal practices and how they are linked to what goes on *outside* of the foundation's walls.** Not only does this focus signal the depth of the foundation's commitment to the community, but it also helps the foundation think critically about what systems need to be in place internally to help the work take root.
- > **A worldview that extends beyond responsive grantmaking as the tool to move a racial equity agenda forward.** Successful community foundations move beyond a focus on grantmaking as the primary investment strategy, often gaining better insight on the big picture and coordination required to have a significant impact. Thus, responsive grantmaking is often complemented by funder collaboratives, capacity building, convenings, and a willingness to leverage their legal status as a public charity to invest and participate in public policy and advocacy.
- > **Collateral materials to share with the field.** The creation and dissemination of materials may seem like small actions yet these processes often build the knowledge base of the field in ways that add value beyond the geographic limitations of the community foundation's service region. The other benefit of collateral materials is that they — through the production process itself — often help the foundation's leaders clarify their goals internally.

# BEARING THE MESSAGE: A COMMITMENT TO TACKLE CRITICAL ISSUES THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

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## The Minneapolis Foundation

Minnesota is a state known for its strong civic participation and vibrant immigrant traditions. First settled by Native Americans and then European immigrants from Scandinavia and Germany, today it has a confluence of corporate wealth, farmers, small towns, urban challenges, and high numbers of new immigrants from around the world. Over the past several decades, thousands of immigrants have arrived in Minneapolis and across the state and made Minnesota their new home. Most have come for the same reasons that attracted immigrants in the past: opportunity, economic mobility, and a better life for their families.

The Minneapolis Foundation, a statewide community foundation founded in 1915, has played a leadership role in helping Minnesotans understand, value, and leverage the combination of factors that has contributed to the state's diversity. In recent years, it has taken the lead on an important state initiative, the Minnesota Meeting, to build awareness about difficult community issues.

The Minnesota Meeting's original incarnation 25 years ago focused on bringing high-profile national and international speakers to the state. Initially, several business leaders wanted residents to hear firsthand about national and global issues. The Minneapolis Foundation began managing the Meeting in 2003, and since that time has strategically used the platform to focus attention on themes that affect Minnesota residents directly, highlighting a single, critical issue each season. The Minnesota Meeting has provided information that citizens can use to influence policy and generate policy agendas. The foundation has targeted social issues that, if improved, could increase prosperity and living conditions for all Minnesotans, especially offering a platform for leaders in communities of color who may not ordinarily have a political voice.

In 2006, the foundation introduced *Racial Disparities in Minnesota* as the current Meeting theme — chosen after the issue became a dominant undercurrent in several community conversations held since 2003. Building on the success of earlier Meetings — including the previous season’s focus on immigration — *Racial Disparities in Minnesota* is organized around single-speaker and panel events over a two-year period that reach tens of thousands of Minnesota’s residents — hundreds through its live audiences and thousands more through webcasts and broadcasts on Minnesota public radio and television. Tickets to the Meeting events are relatively inexpensive (each of this season’s events is \$30 for individuals and \$275 for tables of ten), and one-third of the tickets are sponsored by corporate partners to encourage grassroots and nonprofit participation. The foundation intends for diverse voices to be heard, so it makes a special effort to include representatives from minority, new immigrant, and rural and small town communities.

#### THE MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION

Location: Minneapolis, MN  
 Established: 1915  
 Approx. Assets: \$650 million  
 Service Region: Minnesota  
 Website: [www.minneapolisfoundation.org](http://www.minneapolisfoundation.org)

#### Community Leadership Context

- > Total State Population in 2000: 4,419,479
- > Percentage of Immigrants: 5.3%
- > Largest Immigrant Group (2000): Asian/  
Pacific Islanders

Source: *Immigration in Minnesota: Discovering Common Ground (2004)*

The choice of speakers for the Meeting typically includes researchers and academics, as well as public officials and corporate leaders. The current season’s focus on racial disparities, for example, features lunchtime talks by leaders from the Brookings Institution and Georgetown Law School, as well as a dialogue on health disparities with Former Assistant U.S. Surgeon General Michael Trujillo. Each community event for the Meeting is anchored in objective data and aims to distinguish fact from fiction. The Minneapolis Foundation provides facts, data, and the “safe” space to enable the public and policymakers to develop opinions and take action.

Why focus on racial disparities in a statewide dialogue to shape a collective vision? Sandra Vargas, President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation, explains, “These gaps — if not recognized and addressed — could eventually erode what people often see as Minnesota’s competitive edge and could threaten the health of our economy. This is not just an issue for our communities of color. This affects everyone in the state.” Although Minnesota has a highly skilled workforce and a healthy per capita income on average, aggregate statistics often mask the realities for a disproportionate number of black, Hmong, Mexican, and other ethnic communities that call Minnesota home. When disaggregated, data highlight the issues that threaten the overall well-being of towns and cities in Minnesota.

In the Twin Cities region, for instance, Native American households earn a median income of \$35,489. Sub-Saharan African households earn a median income of \$26,736. Both lag behind white households, which earn a median income of \$56,642. Only 8% of the Hmong adult population has a college degree — compared to 19% of African Americans and 35% of whites. Unfortunately, disparities in educational

attainment often correlate with disparities in wealth and participation in the region's workforce.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, by supporting community conversations on potentially controversial issues like racial disparities, The Minneapolis Foundation has positioned the Meeting as an opportunity for residents and community leaders to recognize the challenges faced across communities and to actively support better outcomes for the state. The Meeting creates an environment in which multiple stakeholders have a vested interest in deciding what's best for community stability — and strategically nurtures this dialogue. In this way, not only is the content focused on inclusiveness but the nature of such a broad-based community leadership role is inclusive as well.

Under the leadership of The Minneapolis Foundation, the Meeting has emerged in recent years as a signature series across the state. Since 2003, the Meeting has had the most sustained participation in its 25-year history — no doubt due to the foundation's commitment to engage a broader community base and support the efforts of Minnesotans to chart their future together.

These gaps — if not recognized and addressed — could eventually erode what people often see as Minnesota's competitive edge and could threaten the health of our economy. This is not just an issue for our communities of color. This affects everyone in the state.

**SANDRA VARGAS**

*President and CEO, The Minneapolis Foundation*

### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

**Project Website:** [www.minnesotameeting.com](http://www.minnesotameeting.com)

***Opportunity for All: Closing the Racial Disparities Gap in Minnesota  
(2006-2007 Season Minnesota Meeting)***

***Immigration in Minnesota: Discovering Common Ground***

<sup>3</sup> Katz, Bruce. *Minding the Gap: Opportunities for All as a Strategy for Economic Success*. Presentation and speech at Minnesota Meeting, May 24, 2006. Retrieved June 28, 2007 from [www.minnesotameeting.com](http://www.minnesotameeting.com).

# BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL TO STRENGTHEN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

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## Rochester Area Community Foundation

July 1964 was a touchstone summer in Rochester, New York, as race riots broke out in the city to unmask inequitable conditions, racial tensions, and growing dissatisfaction in under-served communities. Almost 40 years later, the underlying causes remained largely unresolved, and Rochester's first black mayor, William A. Johnson, made it his priority to confront racism.

In 2001, as a Call to Action from the Mayor's Taskforce on Race and Ethnicity, the Rochester Mosaic Partnerships emerged as the community's main tool for combating racism and addressing racial tensions. Mayor Johnson formed a taskforce to determine how to effectively deal with racism in Rochester, and out of that directive came a conviction that personal relationships would be key. The timing was also related to Rochester's 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey developed by Robert D. Putnam, Harvard professor and author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. The survey showed a high degree of disconnectedness and distrust, especially among residents from different class and racial backgrounds. In response, the Rochester Area Community Foundation developed its civic engagement grantmaking program, which has since distributed more than \$1 million. One of its major grants was to form the Rochester Mosaic Partnerships.

The Rochester Area Community Foundation has been an active contributor to the Rochester Mosaic Partnerships, and its early endorsement was an integral part of getting people to commit to the work. The project attempts to facilitate the growth of relationships among leaders across race and culture. The goal is to get leaders to connect and then share their social networks. Participants commit to a year-long transformational journey with a community leader from a different cultural background. Through one-on-one social meetings and cluster gatherings of 20 people, facilitated by Idea Connection Systems, Inc., the Mosaic Partnerships process seeks to break down preconceived notions about differences to eliminate obstacles to building meaningful relationships.

The project began in Rochester with senior community leaders taking part. Later phases have involved emerging leaders, with plans to include members of the general community. It intentionally focused first on leaders with the goal of gaining their buy-in so that they would use their influence to spread the program. This approach has worked: Rochester Mosaic Partnerships has brought together more than 500 leaders in the area from various sectors of the community, including business, government, education, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations.

Outcomes have included friendships that have lasted beyond the year of the program, clusters that have continued meeting, and partners that have worked on community service projects together. One survey of participants found that almost every partnership planned to continue meeting after the program and that the level of trust built between partners was almost as high as trust in the participants' closest friends.<sup>4</sup> In one case, partners decided to replicate the program in the schools and among other community members within a neighborhood experiencing demographic changes and emerging racial tensions. In another, Danny Wegman, the owner of Wegmans grocery stores, worked with his Mosaic partner, city councilman Wade Norwood, to develop a mentoring program for youth at risk.

Jennifer Leonard, President and CEO of the foundation, states, "Mosaic Partnerships has helped community leaders in Rochester find a way to speak about — and address — race issues. Our evaluation findings show that a majority of Mosaic participants have actively connected their partners to business and/or family networks, breaking down the *de facto* segregation that continues to plague society. One local university president applied the program with such success that he was featured in two national magazines for educators of color."

The efforts of the Rochester Area Community Foundation in this process cannot be underestimated. Beyond the financial support that the foundation provided to seed this work, its board, staff, and executive leadership often worked behind the scenes to get community buy-in, engage key influencers, and provide some of the connective tissue that helped to make Mosaic Partnerships a well-known program in Rochester

## ROCHESTER AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**Location:** Rochester, NY  
**Established:** 1972  
**Assets:** \$225 million  
**Service Region:** Six counties in the Rochester area  
**Website:** [www.racf.org](http://www.racf.org)

### Community Leadership Context

*City of Rochester, NY, Population by Race:*  
 > 45.6% of Rochester's residents are white.  
 > 42.5% of Rochester's residents are black.  
 > 13.7% of Rochester's residents are Latino (of any race).  
 > 3.4% of Rochester's residents are Asian.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey*

<sup>4</sup> Idea Connections Systems, Inc. *Mosaic Partnerships, Transforming Our World Two People at a Time*, "Some Answered Questions" (2006).

and surrounding communities. It is also largely through the foundation that cities across the country have learned about the program and its success. Sharing the impact of the model with peers at other community foundations — often through downtime at conferences or informal networking — the foundation has helped inform other communities of the program’s potential to build social capital. Two recent community projects — in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin — are a result of that peer learning and exchange. With community foundation support, both programs have adapted the Mosaic Partnerships to suit their local needs.

In addition, by investing in the Mosaic Partnerships for Rochester, the foundation provided a glimpse of the innovative ways in which community foundations could make strategic investments that did not simply recreate the conventional grantee/grantor relationship. Jennifer Leonard reflects, “Here in Rochester we’ve had the chance to see the effects over several phases of the program. We knew how transformative the process could be and were excited to see what was going to happen in Greensboro and Milwaukee.” Thus, when Milwaukee and Greensboro expressed an interest in learning more about the social network framework of Mosaic Partnerships, the Rochester Area Community Foundation made itself available to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro to share its insight and perspective on the unique role that their respective leadership could play in the success of the program. It also shared its lessons learned around the value of community foundations taking steps to build social capital across diverse groups.

Mosaic Partnerships has helped community leaders in Rochester find a way to speak about—and address—race issues. Our evaluation findings show that a majority of Mosaic participants have actively connected their partners to business and/or family networks, breaking down the *de facto* segregation that continues to plague society. One local university president applied the program with such success that he was featured in two national magazines for educators of color.

**JENNIFER LEONARD**

*President and CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation*

The Rochester Area Community Foundation's network-theory model, with its emphasis on social capital, speaks volumes about how communities can learn from one another, bring projects to scale, and get to the heart of community challenges by investing in relationship building and strengthening its residents' social capital. As an example to peer institutions, its investment in the Mosaic Partnerships and other social networking activities demonstrates how tackling entrenched racism at its root is often in the simplest details: getting community residents to engage each other on a personal level, share experiences, and use the foundation of trust to establish common ground.

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

**Project Website: [www.rochestermosaic.org](http://www.rochestermosaic.org)**

**Mosaic Partnerships Program**

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# SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY: LEADING A COMMUNITY-WIDE AGENDA

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## The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

For decades, Washington, D.C., has been divided along racial and class lines with a mostly working-class, African-American population east of the Anacostia River and a mainly middle and upper-class white population in Northwest D.C. The Eastern section of the city has historically faced unrelenting inequities based on race and class — including inadequate housing, underemployment, educational achievement gaps, and limited access to quality health care. The economic boom of the 1990s created a gentrification process that has shifted some of the boundaries, with white wealth spreading and black poverty moving out of the city into the surrounding counties. The disparities have not changed though, just moved — and, in most cases, to suburbs in the inner ring.

Adding to the dynamic has been a massive immigration wave since 1965, which ballooned in the 1990s. Nearly half a million new residents arrived during that decade. Prior to changes in the U.S. immigration laws in 1965, less than half of one percent of the regional population was foreign born. Thirty years later, 800,000 newcomers had arrived from over 200 countries.

This huge demographic shift has influenced almost every area of community life. It has also necessitated the rise of new organizations and programs to aid immigrants, educate residents, and enable diverse communities to bridge differences.

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, founded in 1973, stands out as a leader in helping the Washington, D.C., area value and leverage the contributions of immigrant and native-born residents alike. As one of the 50 largest foundations of any type in the country — located in arguably the best city for influencing social policies and investments — it takes its role and ability to shape community dialogue and public will seriously. With tenacity, the foundation has put forth a bold social justice agenda

across its grantmaking portfolios: ensuring equity, access, and opportunity for all. Of particular interest to the foundation are issues relating to the connection between education and workforce development for local communities. Lee Christian Parker, a program officer at The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, observes, “Social justice philanthropy is difficult yet important work that many foundations shy away from. The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region has not. We have boldly stated our agenda — change the existing social circumstances and institutions that facilitate racism, oppression, and/or the unequal distribution of power.”

As part of this effort, two of the foundation’s flagship initiatives, administered through the Community Leadership Fund, are The Common Ground Fund and The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants. Recognizing the challenges faced by under-served residents in the area, both projects work to ensure that minority and immigrant communities can contribute to and benefit from the prosperity often associated with the region.

The Common Ground Fund (originally known as The Initiative to Strengthen Neighborhood Inter-group Assets administered by the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation) was the community’s response in 1996 to rising tensions within diverse neighborhoods in the Greater Washington, D.C., area. The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region began managing The Common Ground Fund in 2001, and it has become one of the foundation’s most prominent examples of its commitment to social justice philanthropy.

The Fund aims to support nonprofit organizations and grassroots groups working to challenge issues that threaten the ability of communities to provide sustainable futures for their children and families — tackling problems in housing, education, and health services. Guided by a steering committee of volunteer and civic leaders with expertise in aligning a social justice framework to strategic investments, the Fund focuses on building the capacity of parents and residents to self-advocate and organize for community change.

The foundation leveraged the contributions of several national and local philanthropies for the Fund, including financial resources from many of the donor-advised and special project funds under its stewardship. Since its inception, The Common Ground Fund has granted more than \$2 million to drive an agenda around access for educational, housing, health care, and political equity. In the relatively short period since it began, the Fund’s reach has been extensive. It has supported efforts in traditionally

### THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

**Location:** Washington, DC

**Established:** 1973

**Assets:** \$360 million

**Service Region:** Greater Washington, DC, region

**Website:** [www.thecommunityfoundation.org](http://www.thecommunityfoundation.org)

#### Community Leadership Context

> 500,000 students enrolled in public schools in the foundation’s service region.

> By 2010, it is estimated that black and Latino students will make up 34% of the student population.

*Source: Parent Leadership: Investing in Children’s Academic Success (2005)*

disenfranchised communities throughout the D.C. area — including the city’s Shaw and Mt. Vernon neighborhoods and Prince George’s County in Maryland.

The foundation’s leadership on social justice philanthropy is also highlighted by the success of The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants. With foundation backing, the Partnership was established in 1997 as a loose group of local funders interested in immigration issues. The group became formalized with funding from the Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute to support the ability of immigrants to obtain U.S. citizenship. Since then, the Partnership has expanded to include a more comprehensive agenda to build strong regional leadership in immigrant communities in D.C.

Since its founding, the Partnership has awarded more than \$2.6 million in grants for improving public awareness of immigrant-related issues and for advocacy, leadership development, and organizational capacity building. Over time, with the foundation’s stewardship, the Partnership has developed into a public/private partnership that, despite its members’ institutional constraints and individual funding priorities, functions effectively as a collaboration leveraging multiple investments and public and private resources.

Furthermore, the Partnership’s way of doing business honors the voices and experiences of immigrant communities as it incorporates a big-picture framework around systemic change. While addressing issues at the community-based level such as citizenship status, the Partnership is simultaneously attentive to macro-level issues that affect the day-to-day lives of those in immigrant communities. At the grassroots level, it uses focus groups to learn what is important to immigrants. To raise awareness and educate emerging leaders and neighborhood residents, the Partnership organizes regular community events.

It has also commissioned research reports and produced issue briefs to inform the group’s strategies as well as provide the hard data that influences public policy. Two recent briefs, *Youth Leadership: Engaging Immigrant Youth for Social Change* and *Workforce English: Strengthening Lives and the Region’s Economy*, have examined critical aspects for engaging immigrant communities in areas of education, civic leadership, and workforce development. “Engaging funders, government representatives, and community stakeholders on issues critical to immigrant communities is most effective when we have real data to back us up,” says Benton Murphy, a program associate at The Community Foundation for the National

Social justice philanthropy is difficult yet important work that many foundations shy away from. The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region has not.

**LEE CHRISTIAN PARKER**

*Program Officer, The Community Foundation  
for the National Capital Region*

Capital Region. “Without these community engagement and awareness building efforts, the Partnership would not have seen quite the impact that it has over the past few years.”

Both The Common Ground Fund and The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants make use of grantmaking, awareness building, and convenings to ensure equitable access to community resources and fair practices for residents. Because the projects inform each other and cut across traditional grantmaking program areas, the work of these two projects provides opportunities for cross-cutting dialogue, exchange, and agenda-setting.

Terri Lee Freeman, President of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, notes, “With communities throughout the United States becoming increasingly diverse, it’s more important than ever that community foundations take the lead in fostering dialogue and relationship-building across lines of race, ethnicity, and class. This is the path toward achieving equity, access, and opportunity for all. We have made progress, but we all know that it will take unwavering commitment and perseverance to tear down barriers built over decades of our country’s history.”

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, understanding its role as leader and catalyst for community change, has been deliberate about nurturing the relationships and interactions across the Fund and the Partnership, their respective leadership, and the communities each project seeks to serve. Although this agenda to create dialogue between newcomers and more established residents is just beginning, initial steps in this direction prove promising. In 2005, The Common Ground Fund and The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants released a joint publication, *Parent Leadership: Investing in Children’s Academic Success*, which informed the foundation’s new grantmaking goals for helping minority and immigrant parents advocate for their children in public school settings.

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

***Parent Leadership: Investing in Children’s Academic Success***

***Workforce English: Strengthening Lives and the Region’s Economy***

***Youth Leadership: Engaging Immigrant Youth for Social Change***

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# LEADING BY EXAMPLE: ALIGNING INTERNAL PRACTICES WITH DESIRED COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

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## East Bay Community Foundation

In the fall of 2003, the State of California asked voters to consider a proposition that would ban the state from collecting any data based on race or ethnicity. This proposition — known as Prop 54 or the Racial Privacy Initiative — was a hot-button issue across California but especially in the Eastern region of the Bay Area, home to a “majority minority” population.

Proponents of Prop 54 argued that racial classification was divisive and irrelevant in a state where racial lines were increasingly blurred. Opponents argued that the proposition would not eliminate biases based on race but would, in fact, allow them to go unchecked as schools and health agencies no longer had access to data to identify and address problems prevalent in targeted groups.

Opponents defeated the initiative with help from a vocal leader on public policy issues: the East Bay Community Foundation in Oakland, California. The foundation used its influence in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties and across the state to educate the public on the negative impact of the measure, especially in communities of color.

Why did the foundation decide to take on such a controversial issue like Prop 54? The East Bay Community Foundation was already gaining a noted reputation for its success at public policy grantmaking but some attribute its ability to prioritize how it would deploy its energy and resources to an internal change process that prepared the way. “The key was our internal change focus under the Leading By Example Initiative,” suggests Diane Sanchez, a program officer at the East Bay Community Foundation. “It really clarified our priorities for us around that time.”

Beginning in 2002, the East Bay Community Foundation undertook an internal change process, called the Leading By Example Initiative, to align its values and goals for an equitable and fair community with its own internal practices. Over 20 months, this process was implemented as a partnership among four community foundations, convened by the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (now CFLeads), with technical assistance from the Oakland-based nonprofit California Tomorrow. In the fall of 2003, while participating in the internal change process, the foundation staff and board of directors chose to be a responsive part of the Prop 54 debate in which equity and inclusion were at stake.

#### EAST BAY FOUNDATION

**Location:** Oakland, CA  
**Established:** 1928  
**Approx. Assets:** \$285 million  
**Service Region:** Alameda and Contra Costa Counties  
**Website:** [www.ebcf.org](http://www.ebcf.org)

#### Community Leadership Context

- > Staff Members: 23
- > Board of Directors: 16
- > Staff Diversity: 48% represented by ethnic minorities
- > Board Diversity: 44% represented by ethnic minorities

After its successful campaign against Prop 54, the foundation took on the reform of juvenile justice systems in Alameda and Contra Counties to provide alternatives to early incarceration for disenfranchised and inadequately supported youth of color. In 2005, with the assistance of the Ford and JEHT Foundations, the East Bay Community Foundation spurred both counties to submit strategies to reduce racial disparities in incarceration. Those strategies were later approved for implementation by the California Corrections Standard Authority. As a result of the foundation's "incubation" work, the two counties have secured significant state financial assistance through 2009 to institutionalize juvenile justice reforms.

In recent years, the foundation has also played a critical role in shaping education public policy. In 2005, in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation led efforts to help the Oakland Unified School District restore fiscal and educational integrity in order to provide children in all neighborhoods with equal access to educational excellence.

The foundation is currently assisting the Oakland Unified School District in rebuilding relationships with students, parents, neighbors of school sites, the business community, and the general public so that reforms are transparent and so that public participation is inclusive. It has engaged a network of community organizations to increase public involvement with these reforms.

There is a long way to go, but the foundation's leadership feels that the staff and board are ready to take on the challenge.

"When you consider the foundation's evolution in the area of equity and inclusion, first getting our own house in order and building our own capacity, and then leveraging that capacity through external initiatives to make change, there is no doubt the key to success is internal preparation and alignment of values," observes Karen Stevenson, a veteran member of the foundation's board of directors who became

interim President of the East Bay Community Foundation during its search for a chief executive and has now returned to the board.

The foundation's momentum on equity and inclusion continues. With 48% of its staff and 44% of its board of directors represented by ethnic minorities, in July 2007, the foundation underscored its commitment to equity and inclusion by appointing Nicole Taylor as the new President and Chief Executive Officer. Former Managing Director of the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University, Taylor is the first African American to become the foundation's chief executive.

"I'm proud to continue the foundation's important commitment to and work in equity and inclusion," says Taylor.

Under Nicole Taylor's leadership, the East Bay Community Foundation has undertaken a new effort to reach out to communities of color by creating a long-term plan for engaging the Bay Area's communities of color in philanthropy.

**W**hen you consider the foundation's evolution in the area of equity and inclusion, first getting our own house in order and building our own capacity, and then leveraging that capacity through external initiatives to make change, there is no doubt the key to success is internal preparation and alignment of values.

**KAREN STEVENSON**

*Board Member, East Bay Community Foundation*

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

**Public Policy Grantmaking Toolkit: Proposition 54, East Bay Community Foundation**

*Leading by Example: East Bay Community Foundation*

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# SUPPORTING INCLUSIVENESS IN NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

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## The Denver Foundation

Demographic shifts taking place in metropolitan Denver, Colorado, are changing the makeup of the communities served by the nonprofit sector. In 1990, whites made up 77% of the population, with Latinos and African Americans comprising 11% and 5% respectively. By 2000, the Latino population had nearly doubled to 428,000 — 18% of the population in metro Denver. Although a recent survey indicates that many nonprofits want to embrace the demographic changes in the area, most feel ill-equipped to deal with the needs of an increasingly diverse community. Others express concerns about understanding how communities of color in particular experience their work.

In 2002, the Denver Foundation, Colorado's oldest and largest community foundation, made a proactive commitment to help Denver's nonprofits develop a better understanding of how they can enhance their effectiveness by becoming more inclusive of people of color. In response to a series of conversations, surveys, and research findings on the challenges of nonprofit work in the metropolitan area, the foundation launched the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII) as a tool to help the region benefit from an increased knowledge of and commitment to inclusiveness. The ENII, now in its fifth year, is led by a steering committee of community leaders from seven counties in the Denver metropolitan area. The Initiative targets the nonprofit sector specifically, recognizing that, although an entire industry has developed around diversity initiatives in the corporate sector, there are very few resources that meet the needs of nonprofits and their boards. It also operates under the guiding principle that when organizations' staff and leadership reflect and embrace the communities in which they are based, they can more effectively carry out their work.

The Initiative includes three critical components that support and nurture leadership development at the sector-wide, organizational, and individual levels: communication materials and community-based conversations that advocate the value of diversity and inclusion; workshops and toolkits to help nonprofits build inclusive organizations; and "pipeline" strategies to more actively engage leaders of color in the nonprofit sector.



The foundation has been intentional about producing publications, collateral materials, and Web-based resources that carefully draw a distinction between diversity and inclusiveness, and educate nonprofit leaders about why that distinction matters to their work. The Denver Foundation views diversity as “the extent to which an organization has people from diverse backgrounds and communities,” but suggests that an *inclusive* organization — as a “learning-centered organization that values the perspectives and contributions of all people” — is the end goal. The foundation’s communication materials and outreach strategies — in support of the learning needs of the nonprofit sector — provide a common language, value system, and agenda upon which Denver’s nonprofit community can ground its work.

#### THE DENVER FOUNDATION

Location: Denver, CO

Established: 1925

Assets: \$480 million

Service Region: Seven counties in the Denver area

Website: [www.denverfoundation.org](http://www.denverfoundation.org)

#### Community Leadership Context

> Latinos make up 18% of the population in metropolitan Denver.

> Only 13% of nonprofit staff members are Latino.

> Even fewer (7%) of nonprofit board members are Latino.

Source: *Inside Inclusiveness* (2003)

Most nonprofit leaders who participate in ENII make special note of its tools that offer practical, step-by-step approaches to getting started. Maureen Farrell, Executive Director of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, which is funded by ENII to engage in an inclusiveness initiative, observes, “We’ve always agreed with the importance of inclusiveness and diversity. It was the how-to-get-started question that stopped us from being more proactive. The Initiative’s tools made all the difference.” *Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Nonprofit Organizations*, for example, is one of the foundation’s signature tools that includes a workbook and 18-month planning process to assist nonprofits in their efforts to become more inclusive. The workbook offers a pre-test for organizations to assess their state of readiness, eighteen “modules” or organizational development sessions, and a checklist to help nonprofits keep track of their successes and areas in need of improvement. At the completion of the 18-month process, successful organizations are expected to have an “inclusiveness blueprint” for their organization and begin the implementation process.

The Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative also distinguishes itself through its ability to learn from and grow with Denver’s nonprofit sector. Over the years, it has been nimble enough to both guide a community process and make adjustments to meet the evolving needs of participants and the communities they seek to serve. The Initiative has expanded from a three-year leadership grant made by the foundation to an investment that is in its fifth year with no plans to scale back on the size and scope of the goals.

In many ways, whether ENII remains an initiative of the foundation or not, it has become a key component of how the foundation approaches its work and grantmaking in communities. Not only did the foundation take the lead to make sure that the Initiative supported the work of Denver’s nonprofit community, but it also used its own internal change process to inform the Inclusiveness at Work framework. Before vetting the

Initiative with the field, the foundation engaged in an organization-wide process that institutionalized inclusiveness as a core value of the foundation.

Further, each stage of the Initiative has informed next steps. When graduates of the Inclusiveness at Work process felt that they were ready to become more inclusive in their outreach and engagement of communities of color, there was a recognition that many stakeholders in communities of color were not aware of their work or actively engaged in the nonprofit sector. In particular, several barriers existed to encouraging emerging leaders in communities of color to increase their involvement as board members, staff, and donors to nonprofit organizations in the metropolitan area.

To help connect nonprofits to leaders in communities of color and vice versa, the foundation has recently worked to round out the ENII through a focus on “building the pipeline,” which seeks to engage stakeholders at the individual level. This new work began in 2007 — after a series of conversational meetings and surveys with young nonprofit professionals in communities of color and the foundation’s Neighborhood Leadership Development Program — and includes toolkits for getting involved, trainings for nonprofits working to engage leaders of color, and an internship program at the Denver Foundation for students from underrepresented communities. The “pipeline” strategies bring the work full circle: the nonprofits have the commitment and know-how to build effective and inclusive organizations, while communities of color have enhanced opportunities to bring their skills, talents, and perspectives to strengthen the Denver metropolitan community.

**W**e’ve always agreed with the importance of inclusiveness and diversity. It was the how-to-get-started question that stopped us from being more proactive. The Initiative’s tools made all the difference.

**MAUREEN FARRELL**

*Executive Director, Colorado Center on Law and Policy*

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

**Project Website: [www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org](http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org)**

***Inclusiveness at Work***

***Report from the Pipeline***

**Connecting to Opportunities Workshops**

# ADDRESSING RACIALLY DISPARATE OUTCOMES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## The Community Foundation in Jacksonville

In Jacksonville and other parts of Northeast Florida, deindustrialization coupled with rapid population growth have placed a strain on working-class communities that have been slow to adjust to the increasingly global economy and market demand for technical skills. Most living-wage jobs in this metropolitan area require post-secondary education. Yet in Duval County, of which Jacksonville is a part, close to half of the adult population did not continue its education beyond earning a high school diploma, and current high school graduation rates are at an all-time low.

The challenges to acquiring the skills for successful participation in the job market are even more apparent when race comes into play. Its public school system, despite efforts to prepare all of Jacksonville's youth for future success, faces a significant educational achievement gap between white students and students of color — even when these children have similar economic backgrounds.

Race, place, and poverty often dictate an even bleaker reality. Youth of color from low-income families, especially in the urban and rural North and West sections of Duval County, on average attend low-performing schools and have more limited access to the resources, people, and opportunities that are often critical to educational success. Their disparate outcomes in the educational environment are strong predictors of the challenges they will later face as they leave school to earn income, raise families, and build assets.

Given the entrenched problems often associated with public school systems, few community foundations across the country stand out for their willingness and ability to lead an agenda that aims to improve public education and academic success for children and youth. The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, however, stands out for not only building awareness about the educational needs of its children and youth to succeed in a 21st century context, but also for working in partnership with the community and area school district to implement an action plan for improved outcomes by 2015. Under the leadership of its

president Nina Waters, the foundation has established the Quality Education for All Initiative to improve the performance of all public school students through a 10-year investment that offers direct funding to public schools, emphasizes the “public” involvement in public education as important to the Initiative’s success, and addresses racial disparities in academic outcomes head-on.

The Initiative includes three critical elements: community learning, direct investment, and a strategic emphasis on policy and advocacy. The foundation currently serves as a convener in the community to inform residents, officials, and other stakeholders of the state of public education and solutions for helping youth succeed. In 2006, as part of its direct investment strategy, it made grants totaling \$60,000 to six middle-school classrooms, in an attempt to test the waters and get a better understanding of how to fund interventions administered by the school district. Middle schools have become an initial focus of the Quality Education for All Initiative, as research on Duval County students shows that there are specific factors at play which negatively influence the performance of children as they enter the sixth grade.

Realizing that public will ultimately impacts the success or demise of any policy agenda, the foundation has strategically started its policy work by performing a baseline study on public opinion to understand community-wide attitudes toward public education in Duval County. It plans to make use of the study’s findings to assess how public will changes over the 10-year period of investment; and to identify the local and state policy proposals that might have the support base in Duval County to succeed.

Quality Education for All is an initiative to improve the performance of *all* public school students in Duval County, with particular attention to the gaps in achievement between poor and non-poor students, and minority and majority students.

Administered by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, Learning to Finish includes Jacksonville as one of its current demonstration sites. The foundation, local government, and civic leaders are working with the

### THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN JACKSONVILLE

**Location:** Jacksonville, FL  
**Established:** 1964  
**Assets:** \$130 million  
**Service Region:** Five counties in Northeast Florida

#### Community Leadership Context

- > 1 out of 4 elementary school students reads below grade average in Duval County.
- > 2 out of 3 high schoolers read below grade average in Duval County.
- > Duval County’s high school graduation rate ranks 57 out of the 67 counties in Florida.

*Source: Quality Education for All Case Statement*

One thing that makes The Community Foundation in Jacksonville unique is that, as a relatively medium-size community foundation, it has been able to leverage national partnerships to meet its local goals. The Quality Education for All Initiative is complemented by a new community partnership with Learning to Finish, a national effort that works with communities to respond to the growing percentage of young adults who are leaving high school without a diploma.

Pew Partnership for Civic Change to invest in evaluation efforts to measure success, identify community resources available to help youth stay in school, and involve community voices in finding solutions to the dropout epidemic.

Further, the foundation has taken the lead to put the issues of racial and economic disparities on the table as it engages administrators, local officials, and parents in the county's education reform effort. The Quality Education for All Initiative does not attempt to gloss over the realities of structural racism and economic inequity but instead makes sure that its vision for tackling these issues is embedded in the Initiative's mission statement itself. Nina Waters puts it bluntly, "It's true that the academic achievement gap in low-income communities and communities of color is seen across the nation. But this shouldn't breed acceptance. We plan to do our part." In its roll-out of the Initiative, the foundation acknowledges that, although legal sanctions have sought to eliminate biases based on race and class, these biases often still define how children experience school and what educational opportunities are available to them. Changing that reality requires the commitment of the entire community.

For this reason, the Initiative seeks to improve outcomes for all youth, recognizing that, in doing so, strategic interventions must be put in place to level the playing field for low-income and minority communities in its school districts. Through participation in an informal learning community on Structural Racism and Youth Development, first convened by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, The Community Foundation in Jacksonville has been able to integrate issues of race and class in the Initiative's mission and goals — and in the process, set reasonable benchmarks for progress.

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

*[Quality Education for All: One Year Report](#)*

*[Quality Education for All: Survey Results](#)*

*[Learning to Finish: Dropout Crisis Discussion Guide](#)*

*[Creating Opportunity, Taking Action: Next Steps in Quality Education for All](#)*

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## BRIDGING THE RACIAL DIVIDE

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### The Greater Cincinnati Foundation

Precipitated by the death of Timothy Thomas, an unarmed young man who was the fifteenth African-American male shot by police in five years, civil unrest broke out in Cincinnati in 2001 and resurfaced the racial tensions that had erupted five times in the past 60 years in 1941, 1944, 1955, 1967, and 1968 respectively. Previously identified problems had never been fully corrected, including poor police-community relations, inadequate housing options, and poor job prospects for the working-class, primarily African-American, residents in the inner city. This time a group of municipal, business, and civic leaders responded immediately to the mayor's Call to Action and created a partnership to identify solutions. Later, their initiative, called Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN), evolved into a longer-term effort led by The Greater Cincinnati Foundation to figure out how to confront the racial divide in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The newly coined effort, Better Together Cincinnati, was established in 2003 after some strategic work and visioning through the Cincinnati CAN project. It marked an important milestone for The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, a tri-state community foundation that has supported the nonprofit sector in Cincinnati and surrounding areas since 1963. In 2001, few inner-city residents and regional leaders in the African-American community knew that The Greater Cincinnati Foundation existed. And, few in Cincinnati saw the foundation as the "go-to" place to help the city deal with the racial problems that threatened to tear the city apart. "The year 2001 was a wake-up call for us — that is, for the community and for our foundation," observes Kathryn Merchant, the President and CEO of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation. "At the foundation especially, it became clear to us that there was a vacuum in community leadership to address what was going on. And, it became obvious that, despite our best intentions as a community resource, we needed to do a better job of providing leadership and being part of the solution."

The Greater Cincinnati Foundation took its role seriously — especially as the community worked together to make sure that the events of 2001 and previous years would not immobilize the city again. A major part of this leadership role for The Greater Cincinnati Foundation meant making sure that other area funders understood the importance of supporting the work and remaining actively engaged in the implementation of the community plan. The result was Better Together Cincinnati, a network of funders who

collectively made a \$6.6 million commitment over a five-year period to support a limited number of priorities identified by Cincinnati CAN. Better Together Cincinnati focuses on issues related to police-community relations and criminal justice, economic inclusion, and educational achievement. In 2006, to remain accountable and focused on action, Better Together Cincinnati issued a report to the community, entitled *Cincinnati in Black and White 2001-2006*, which gauged its success against a set of indicators. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation manages the program on behalf of the 16-member funders' collaborative.

Perhaps as important, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation has made a concerted effort to ensure that its internal grantmaking strategy reflects what it has learned since 2001. Part of being an effective community resource means being an institution that understands the value of listening to residents and community-based organizations about their needs and acting on that feedback. In 2002, the foundation conducted a "community listening" process to guide its grantmaking strategy — one that paralleled its collaborative work with other community leaders on Cincinnati CAN. This community listening process included over 50 volunteers who conducted interviews with more than 300 community leaders in eight counties. The information, combined with reviews of regional data in over 40 reports, provided materials for the Future Direction II report that outlines the foundation's rationale and recommendations for new strategic initiatives. As a direct response to its conversations with the community in 2002, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation committed more than \$2 million over a five-year period to four new initiatives. This was a funding commitment over and above the \$500,000 invested in Better Together Cincinnati, and was intended to begin to address racial and economic disparities in each of the foundation's major programmatic areas.

Its efforts to play a more proactive role in its hometown seem to be paying off for The Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Kathryn Merchant observes, "Although The Greater Cincinnati Foundation may not be a household word in any part of our community, we have slowly, steadily, and surely increased our profile and improved our reputation — especially as a leader on racial equity issues. Because of this leadership, we are beginning to build some strong partnerships to tackle issues like education in collaboration with decision makers, leaders in the civic arena, and grassroots groups."

The spate of racial violence in Cincinnati in 2001 may have jumpstarted the racial equity work of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, but it is the dedication of the foundation's leadership, in partnership with key stakeholders in Cincinnati, that has set an example for the role community foundations can play to face and address race matters. The foundation has not only changed how it is perceived in the community, but

#### THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION

**Location:** Cincinnati, Ohio  
**Established:** 1964  
**Assets:** \$396 million  
**Service Region:** Greater Cincinnati region of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana  
**Website:** [www.greatercincinnati.org](http://www.greatercincinnati.org)

#### Community Leadership Context

- > Total Population in Cincinnati: 287,540
- > Population percentage by race:
  - 48.8% of Cincinnati's residents are white;
  - 46% of Cincinnati's residents are black.
- > Median Household Income: \$38,763 per year

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey*

The year 2001 was a wake-up call for us—that is, for the community and for our foundation...It became clear to us that there was a vacuum in community leadership to address what was going on. And it became obvious that, despite our best intentions as a community resource, we needed to do a better job of providing leadership and being part of the solution.

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**KATHRYN MERCHANT**

*President and CEO, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation*

it has also helped to change some of the structural barriers to economic mobility and educational success that undergirded problems experienced in Cincinnati in 2001. One corporate leader, noting the foundation's work, commented that the foundation is not just a grantmaker but a "civic institution."<sup>5</sup>

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### TAKE THE LEAD TOOLKIT LINKS

***Race and Equity: The Role of Community Foundations***

***Cincinnati in Black and White: 2001–2006***

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<sup>5</sup> "Race and Equity: the Role of Community Foundations," *Connect: The Newsletter of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation* (Fall/Winter 2004), p. 1.



## TAKING THE LEAD IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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**A**cross the country, community demographics continue to change as new immigrant groups arrive, people rediscover once-abandoned inner cities, and American suburbs experience new pockets of both economic growth and poverty. These changes present a challenge but an opportunity as well — a fact that many institutions and civic groups may feel ill-equipped to convey to their communities.

How, then, are the community foundations profiled in these pages bringing such fresh energy and optimism to this community leadership work? Perhaps by their nature, community foundations attract leaders and staff that believe in their power to create community change. Those featured here stand out for an optimism supported by an intentional and strategic approach to building inclusive and equitable communities.

There's no one road to providing community leadership on equity and inclusion but some steps can help along the way. Sometimes leadership takes the form of a strategic initiative or grantmaking program to build community assets. At other times, it requires that community foundations are out front and vocal on real-time issues when their communities face a crisis.

The following checklist, based on the work featured in this publication, is designed to help your community foundation think about how it can be more effective in its various efforts to help communities understand, value, and leverage diversity.

### STEP 1. GATHER KNOWLEDGE

- ✓ **Study history.** Review what has been attempted in the past. In Rochester, the Mosaic Partnerships experienced some resistance because of frustration with past efforts and thus made use of the foundation's influence to get community buy-in.
- ✓ **Study policy.** Learn about policies (official and unofficial) that could hinder or help change. The East Bay Community Foundation paid attention to local and state policies that could have an impact on its community investments in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

- ✓ **Learn from your community about its interests and concerns.** The Greater Cincinnati Foundation's work was more effective because it understood that being a community resource meant listening to residents and organizations and acting on their feedback.
- ✓ **Talk to other community foundations.** Your colleagues are often addressing similar issues. Talking with them can inspire and inform your thinking. The East Bay Community Foundation, for example, took advantage of a partnership with three other community foundations committed to an internal change process. Because of its early investment in the Mosaic Partnerships, the Rochester Area Community Foundation served as a resource for community foundations with an interest in bringing the program to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Greensboro, North Carolina.
- ✓ **Talk to others in general.** Most of the foundations highlighted here have used insights from others to generate ideas. The Community Foundation in Jacksonville participated in an informal learning community, convened by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, to share ideas and stay up-to-date on best practices.

## STEP 2. DEVELOP BROAD GOALS

- ✓ **Synthesize key concerns.** Based on the knowledge gained in Step 1, determine the major issues to be addressed, examine cross-cutting issues, and prioritize. The Rochester Area Community Foundation made an intentional decision to support the Mosaic Partnerships because of lessons learned from past efforts, emerging research on social capital, and an understanding of what projects would be sustainable in its community.
- ✓ **Balance visionary leadership with achievability.** The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, for example, set out to improve public education for all students — a high aspiration anchored by their consideration of the achievement gap, middle school challenges, and the high school dropout problem.
- ✓ **Build consensus with as many stakeholders as possible.** In Washington, D.C., The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants and The Common Ground Fund developed their goals (and carry out their programs) through a steering committee with a range of representatives, including those from local and regional governments, unions, nonprofits, and other foundations.
- ✓ **Align goals with or integrate them into the foundation's strategic priorities.** To be most effective and more likely to weather changes over time, incorporate goals into the foundation's strategy and gain board support. Include the whole organization — including staff and board — in developing goals and ways to measure them, as the East Bay Community Foundation did during its internal work on equity and inclusion.

### STEP 3. ASSESS READINESS

- ✓ **Determine organizational will.** Is the foundation board committed to decreasing racial disparity and increasing inclusiveness? Are its members willing to hold the foundation accountable for these goals? In Cincinnati, for example, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation's leadership made it clear that it wanted to be an integral part of the solution for bringing the community together.
- ✓ **Determine community partners interest and commitment.** The East Bay Community Foundation's work on juvenile justice reform and The Community Foundation in Jacksonville's efforts to improve public schools were guided by key questions: Are the needed community stakeholders (depending on the focus, these could be the Mayor's office, police department, school board, housing authorities or others) willing to do what it will take to make progress, including providing adequate resources? How important are the issues to the leadership of the essential partners? What needs to happen to make a program sustainable beyond the current leadership period?

### STEP 4. DESIGN YOUR INITIATIVE

- ✓ **Include community stakeholders.** Bring needed partners to the table to design the initiative, as The Minneapolis Foundation did with its Minnesota Meeting. Your effort could be through a series of meetings or by forming a steering committee or advisory board to guide the work.
- ✓ **Focus on outcomes.** Learn from community foundations like The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region and others that were able to use their broad goals to determine a subset of intended outcomes, especially to address racial and class disparities. Tie each element of the program to specific outcomes.
- ✓ **Use the knowledge gained in Step 1.** Use information about partner interests, historical contexts, policy, statistical data, and model programs to inform the initiative's design. In Denver, the foundation used early feedback from the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative's participants and a community survey to develop a new strategy to "build the pipeline" and engage young professionals of color at the individual level.
- ✓ **Determine a quick win.** When thinking about the initiative's components, having an element that leads to early success can generate enthusiasm and motivate stakeholders. For example, in Cincinnati, a focus on community policing led to some early agreements.
- ✓ **Build in evaluation capacity.** Develop a system up front for collecting measurable and anecdotal data to use in managing, improving, and assessing the program. The Denver Foundation and The Community Foundation in Jacksonville were intentional about using their evaluations to take stock in their progress and shared the results of their evaluations with others.

## STEP 5. CONDUCT OUTREACH

- ✓ **Publicize the initiative through community partners.** Leverage the networks of those involved in designing the program to begin implementation. In places like Cincinnati and Rochester, community-wide initiatives gained traction because local leaders and institutions became trusted and respected ambassadors of the work.
- ✓ **Be strategic.** Advocacy may involve very targeted meetings — similar to The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region’s outreach to residents in immigrant communities. Publicity campaigns may need to be carefully focused on the right audiences. Find ways to measure outreach success.

The challenges to creating equitable and inclusive communities are many and real. But community foundations are poised to take the lead and support solutions that embrace and value diversity. There is dire need for a long-term commitment to this work. The community foundations featured in this publication are pathfinders and are eager to share what they are learning. Reach out to them or CFLeads to find out more.

## FURTHER READING

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## ABOUT CFLEADS

CFLeads (formerly the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth) connects community foundations to their peers and other sources of knowledge and expertise as they take on crucial leadership roles to build thriving communities. Since 1991, hundreds of community foundations have participated in CFLeads peer networks, learning activities, group site visits and conferences, strengthening their ability to influence public policy, change systems, increase equity and inclusion, and address underlying issues in their own home communities. For more information, visit [www.CFLeads.org](http://www.CFLeads.org).

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LM Strategies Consulting provides consulting services to grantmaking institutions and philanthropic networks that are committed to strengthening their diversity, inclusion, and equity practices. Services include strategic planning, leadership program design, facilitation, and network building to support community investments and partnerships. For more information, visit [www.lmstrategies.net](http://www.lmstrategies.net).

## SPECIAL THANKS

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**C**Leads thanks the following philanthropic leaders for sharing the work of their community foundations in this publication. We encourage you to reach out to staff of the featured community foundations to learn more.

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