

# Foundations Facilitate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

PARTNERING  
WITH COMMUNITY  
AND NONPROFITS



A research study prepared for the D5 Coalition  
Gerri Spilka, Vivian Figueredo, Georgia Kioukis  
OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Findings</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Eight Cross-Cutting Characteristics</b>	<b>20</b>
• Deep grounding in and respect for local context	
• Mission that explicitly or implicitly values DEI	
• Strategy that targets structural issues	
• Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align	
• Engaging nonprofits as partners	
• Building nonprofit partners' capacity to engage their communities	
• Convening nonprofit partners to discuss DEI	
• Using evaluation as a learning tool	
<b>Lessons for the Field</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>46</b>



OMG's mission is to create thriving communities for all people through smarter collective decision-making. Since our establishment in 1988, OMG has provided innovative, high impact solutions through evaluation and learning by blending new business and collaborative practice insights with the context of on-the-ground realities. Located in Philadelphia, our diverse professional team works with philanthropy, nonprofits and government across the US. [www.omgcenter.org](http://www.omgcenter.org)

# Foundations Facilitate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY AND NONPROFITS

**A research study prepared for the D5 Coalition**

Gerri Spilka, Vivian Figueredo, Georgia Kioukis

OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

More than a dozen organizations with connections to thousands of grantmakers came together to found the D5 Coalition to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy. Since then, the coalition has grown and continues to grow. For a complete list of allies and partners, please see the D5 website: [www.d5coalition.org](http://www.d5coalition.org). The founding coalition included:

Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy  
Associated Grant Makers  
Association of Black Foundation Executives  
Council of Michigan Foundations  
Council on Foundations  
Donors Forum  
Foundation Center  
Funders for LGBTQ Issues  
Hispanics in Philanthropy  
Horizons Foundation  
Joint Affinity Groups  
Minnesota Council on Foundations  
Native Americans in Philanthropy  
Philanthropy New York  
Philanthropy Northwest  
Philanthropy Ohio  
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors  
Women's Funding Network

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors serves as D5's program office.

Kelly Brown  
*Director*  
Hafizah Omar  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Meghan McVety  
Judi Powell  
*Program Coordination Consultants*

#### Co-Chairs

Stephen B. Heintz, *Rockefeller Brothers Fund*  
Dr. Robert K. Ross, *The California Endowment*  
Luz Vega-Marquis, *Marguerite Casey Foundation*

#### Funders & Advisors

Annie E. Casey Foundation  
The California Endowment  
David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund  
Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation  
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation  
Marguerite Casey Foundation  
The Prudential Foundation  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Rosenberg Foundation  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

#### D5 Leadership Team

Maricela Espinoza-Garcia, *AriGoio Communications*  
Carly Hare, *Native Americans in Philanthropy*  
Mae Hong, *Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors*  
Michael Litz, *Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers*  
Lawrence McGill, *Foundation Center*  
Kristopher Smith, *Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities*  
Sylvia Zaldivar-Sykes, *Maestro Cares Foundation*  
Ericka Plater-Turner, *Council on Foundations*

D5 thanks its funders, supporters, and colleagues. Opinions and conclusions presented in this report reflect those of the authors and not necessarily D5's funders, supporters, and colleagues.





# INTRODUCTION

THIS RESEARCH STUDY, COMMISSIONED OF THE OMG CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (OMG) BY THE D5 COALITION (D5) IN 2012, INVESTIGATES THE SYSTEMIC FACTORS IN THE PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR THAT FACILITATE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) IN GRANT-MAKING AND NONPROFIT PRACTICE. IN SPRING 2013, OMG CONDUCTED A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NINE FOUNDATIONS THROUGH IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH EXECUTIVES, PROGRAM OFFICERS, AND NONPROFIT PARTNERS.\*

\*See Methodology section for descriptions of the nine foundations and for more details on the foundation selection process.

## OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

The study confirmed that foundations *can*, in fact, facilitate DEI with their nonprofit partners, as well as among peer foundations and their nonprofit partners, through their grant-making practices. An analysis of these exemplar foundations revealed eight areas through which foundation practices can advance DEI:

- 1) By cultivating a deep understanding of the local contexts in which they invest.
- 2) By ensuring that their missions reflect the value of DEI, and that their leaders are strongly driven by the mission.
- 3) By targeting, through their strategy, the structural issues that limit opportunities for people in underserved communities, and by bolstering the capacity of grassroots organizations that serve those communities.
- 4) By selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align with their values of DEI.
- 5) By engaging nonprofits as partners, and forging long-term relationships with them.
- 6) By building nonprofit partners' capacity to authentically engage their communities.
- 7) By convening nonprofit partners to discuss DEI, and by encouraging authentic collaboration among nonprofit partners to tackle the structural issues that affect communities.
- 8) By using evaluation as a learning tool to improve their own—and their nonprofit partners'—practice of DEI.

In this report, we delve into these eight areas of practice, providing insights and recommendations from the philanthropic and nonprofit practitioners interviewed—in their own words. The report underscores the lessons for philanthropies on how to better partner with nonprofits to increase

the amount and quality of social interventions to address disparities of opportunity for diverse and underserved populations. As such, they are DEI facilitators. While the best practices that surfaced in this study relate primarily to race and ethnicity, they may prove useful to funders concerned with other dimensions of diversity, such as differential ability, gender, and sexual orientation, which reflect the parameters of D5's work.

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

America is growing more diverse, with African Americans and Latinos its fastest growing populations. By 2042, people of color will be the majority. Women now occupy more leadership positions than ever. And, as Americans become more aware of and responsive to inequities, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, and people with disabilities play central roles in society.

Yet, philanthropy has not kept pace. According to the D5 Coalition's 2013 *State of the Work*, a little over a third of program officers and about 10 percent of foundation CEOs and board members are people of color. Native Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders are severely under-represented on foundation boards and staff; women remain under-represented on Boards or as Trustees; and, little data exists on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender representation, and data about people of color is incomplete.

Philanthropy has not been particularly successful at targeting its resources to the communities and populations that need them most. For example, a 2004 study by Pitz & Sen for the Applied Research Center, a racial justice think tank now known as Race Forward, found that grants aimed at communities of color averaged only between nine and ten percent of all foundation funding in the 1990s. A 2009 Foundation Center study of New York City foundations found that only 16 percent had goals, guidelines, and practices regarding grant-making to organizations serving people of color.

These studies, among others that explore grant-making to various demographic populations, suggest that funding is not being targeted effectively to diverse communities and has not changed much over the years. However, it should be noted that in the absence of a standardized approach to collecting and sharing demographic data on grants, the conclusions that can be drawn from existing data are severely limited.

As a result of these demographic changes and gaps, in 2010, a group of concerned leaders in philanthropy formed the D5 Coalition, a five-year effort to grow diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy. D5 believes that a foundation is more effective when its staff reflects the life experience of a diverse America. It envisions a philanthropic sector in which foundations draw on the power of diverse staffs and boards to achieve lasting impact, forge genuine partnerships with diverse communities, and increase access to opportunities and resources for all people. Among the strategies to pursue this vision, D5 plans to enrich the field with quality data and research on DEI issues in philanthropy.

## STUDY FRAMEWORK

This research study investigates the systemic factors in the philanthropic sector that facilitate DEI in grant-making and nonprofit practice. For a discussion about the definitions of and distinctions between diversity, equity, and inclusion, see the report, *Analysis of Policies, Practices, and Programs for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, published by D5 in 2013. This report presents examples that illustrate the differences between the concepts, and the importance of distinguishing approaches that relate to each.

**Systems thinking**, which Peter Senge (1990) described as “a discipline for seeing wholes,” is based on the theory that the component parts of a system can be best understood in the context of their interrelationships, rather than in fragments and isolation. Systems thinking requires that, to fully understand why a problem occurs, it is important to examine the linkages and interactions between the various elements of a system.

In the philanthropic sector, interactions between foundations and nonprofit organizations form the backbone of the system (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1** System Interactions between Foundations and Nonprofits

### Organizational Factors

#### Foundation

- Staff and Board leadership
- Staff and HR
- Mission, culture, values, history
- Guiding strategy
- Assets

#### Nonprofit organization

- Staff and Board leadership
- Staff and HR
- Mission, culture, values, history
- Strategy, programming areas
- Funding sources and business model

Mutual Influence

### Grant-making Activities

#### Foundation

- Grant-making strategy development
- RFP development
- Grantee selection criteria and processes
- Communications and relationships with nonprofit partners and field
- Knowledge sharing (formal and informal)
- Technical Assistance (TA)<sup>1</sup>
- Evaluation and accountability

#### Nonprofit partners

- Program development
- Identification of funders
- Proposal development
- Program implementation
- Communications and relationships with funders and the field
- Knowledge sharing (formal and informal)
- Participation in TA
- Participation in evaluation and accountability activities (e.g., evaluation and report writing)

1. Technical Assistance refers to the provision of advice, assistance, and training to perform work more effectively.

While foundations and nonprofits function as independent organizations with distinct leadership and staffing structures, missions, strategies, and areas of focus, it is through their interactions that both sectors advance their social change agenda.

Foundations interact with and influence their nonprofit partners through grant-making activities, which include: developing RFPs, reviewing reports, sharing knowledge, providing technical assistance, evaluating programs and initiatives, and communicating with nonprofit partners. Nonprofit organizations, because of their understanding of what it takes to make change happen, can influence foundation practice by serving as the sector’s “eyes and ears” on-the-ground. The most direct channel for this influence is through activities associated with accessing foundation grants: developing proposals and reports, participating in evaluation activities, communicating with program officers regarding on-the-ground practice, and engaging in knowledge-sharing convenings.

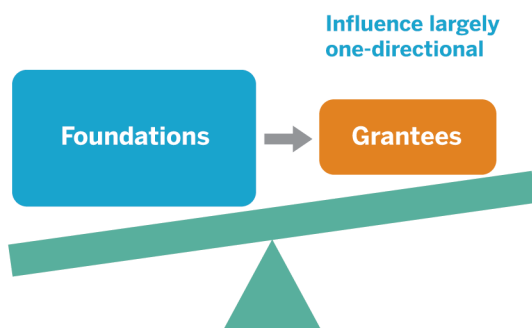
While all elements in a system naturally influence each other, **asymmetric power** relations between foundations and nonprofits prevail in the philanthropic sector. Peter Frumkin discusses

this dynamic in “Accountability and Legitimacy in American Foundation Philanthropy,” as do Ellie Buteau and Phil Buchanan in *Working Well with Grantees: A Guide for Foundation Program Staff*. Foundations’ control over financial and knowledge resources affords them great power over nonprofit organizations, with nonprofits sometimes having to adjust their own mission and goals to accommodate foundations’ grant requirements.

Power, simply, is the ability to influence the behavior of others. While all parties in a system have some power, the **balance of power** between them can be more or less equally distributed. In the case of the philanthropic sector, because foundations wield what social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven commonly refer to as “**reward power**,” the reality is that their influence over nonprofit partners is almost exclusively one directional (Figure 2). Reward power is the ability of the power wielder to confer valued material rewards on others. In the philanthropic sector, foundations award the money that allows nonprofits to stay in business, a weighty source of influence.

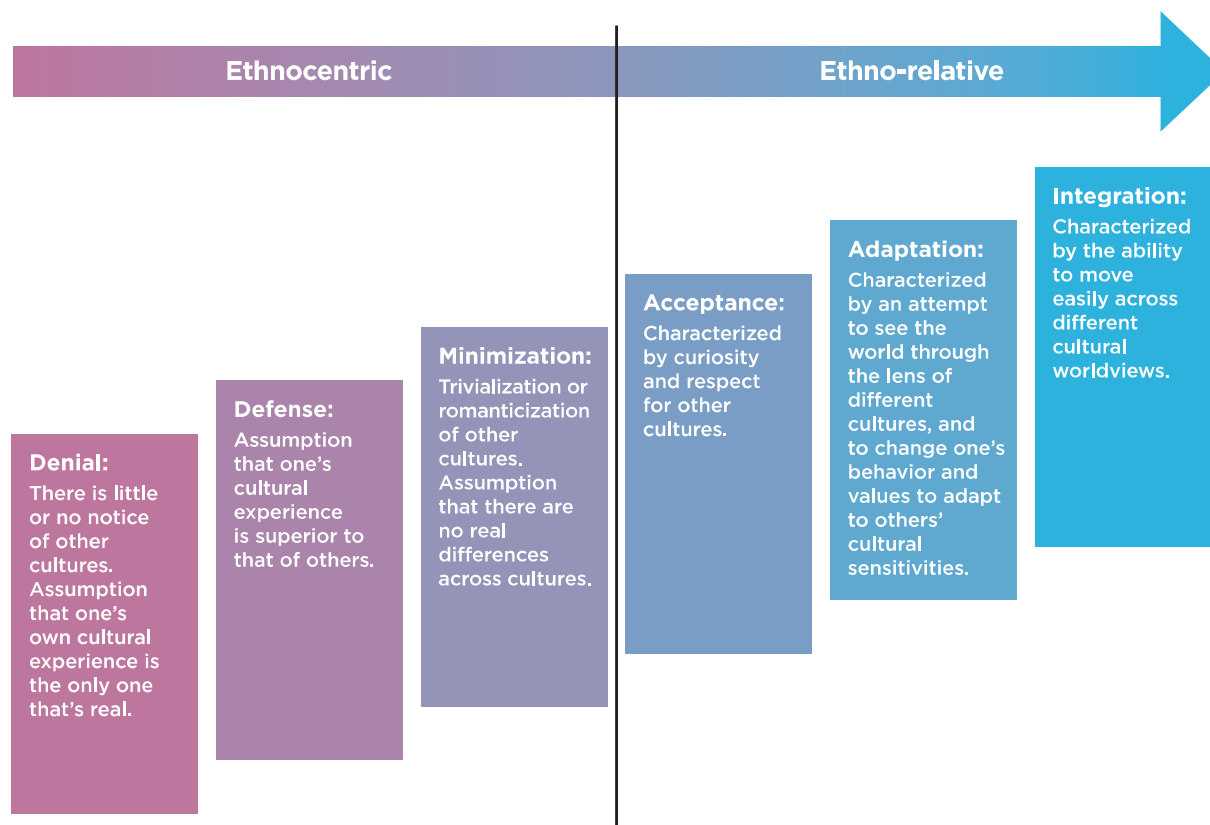
This asymmetry may be problematic in the context of DEI in the sector. According to authors Rebecca Stone and Benjamin Butler, in *Core Issues in Comprehensive Community-Building Initiatives: Exploring Power and Race and in Structural Racism and Community Building*, foundations may unwittingly perpetuate a **dominant worldview**, one that is highly racialized and often dictated by white European culture. In an organizational environment governed by the dominant worldview, individuals are prone to making decisions from an ethnocentric vantage point. According to Dr. Milton Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) Scale—a framework that has been used for more than 20 years in intercultural education and training curricula—there are six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural differences, falling under two broad categories: “ethnocentric” or “ethno-relative” (Figure 3). Under an ethnocentric view, individuals see their own culture as central to reality. Moving up the scale, individuals develop an increasingly ethno-

**FIGURE 2** The Prevailing Framework of the Philanthropic Sector



**Source of imbalance:**

Foundations hold reward power and represent dominant worldview

**FIGURE 3** The Continuum or Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

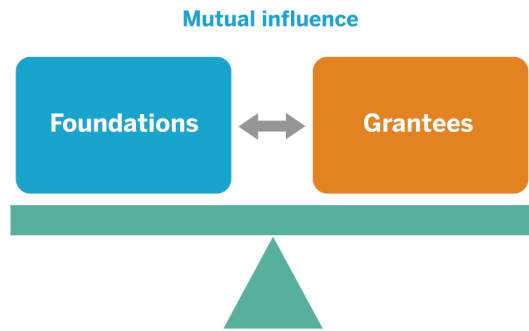
relative point of view, experiencing their own culture in the context of other cultures.

Functioning unintentionally under an ethnocentric worldview, foundations may inadvertently apply their own cultural lens in defining the needs of communities and populations, and in researching and offering solutions to these needs, or they may assume that there are no real differences across communities.

On the other hand, the foundations in this study function under an ethno-relative worldview, whether inherently or by conscious effort. They formulate implicit and explicit strategies to equalize the balance of power with their nonprofit partners. They actively support their nonprofit partners in achieving a balance of power between themselves and the communities and populations they serve. This framework is characterized by

a balance of power between foundations and nonprofit partners, and is influenced strongly by the communities and populations that are served by the system (Figure 4).

**While the degree to which foundations share power with nonprofit partners falls on a continuum, this study supports the notion that the more *balanced* the power between foundations and nonprofits, the more foundations and nonprofit partners can act as partners, rather than benefactor/beneficiary. And, when this balanced relationship is achieved, the system is more conducive to DEI in practice. This study indicates that foundations that are more apt to *share power*, also operate in an *ethno-relative worldview*.**

**FIGURE 4** An Alternative Framework of the Philanthropic Sector**Source of imbalance:**

Foundations develop appreciation of local communities and populations; share power with nonprofit partners; engage nonprofits as partners.

**METHODOLOGY****Foundation Selection**

To identify exemplar foundations for this study, OMG reached out to philanthropic and nonprofit leaders for recommendations, and consulted reports that featured culturally- and racially-responsive foundations. OMG reviewed reports from organizations including JustPartners, Inc., Foundation Center, Greenlining Institute, Council on Foundations, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Applied Research Center, Philanthropy's Promise, and the Convergence Partnership.

From a list of more than 150 foundations—an encouraging number signifying a sizable group of foundations, large and small, actively engaged in work to advance DEI—we narrowed the sample based on how frequently the foundation was cited. At the request of D5, OMG *did not* select those foundations most often cited, including The California Endowment, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, among many others. Instead, OMG looked for a sample of community, independent, and family foundations less frequently explored by researchers. In addition, because foundations involved in social justice grant-making—defined in the 2005 Foundation

Center report *Social Justice Grantmaking* as “philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations that work for structural change in order to increase opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically, and socially”—are typically attuned to values of DEI, it can be difficult to tease out a specific *DEI focus* from the much broader *social justice focus*. For this reason, OMG purposefully sought out foundations funding not only issues typically associated with social justice grantmaking, like community development and civil rights, but also those funding issues less obviously related, like the environment.

Finally, OMG selected the nine foundations (Table 1) to include in this study after reviewing the foundations' giving practices and their missions/values statements, aiming for a variety of foundation types and sizes serving diverse communities throughout the United States (Figure 5).

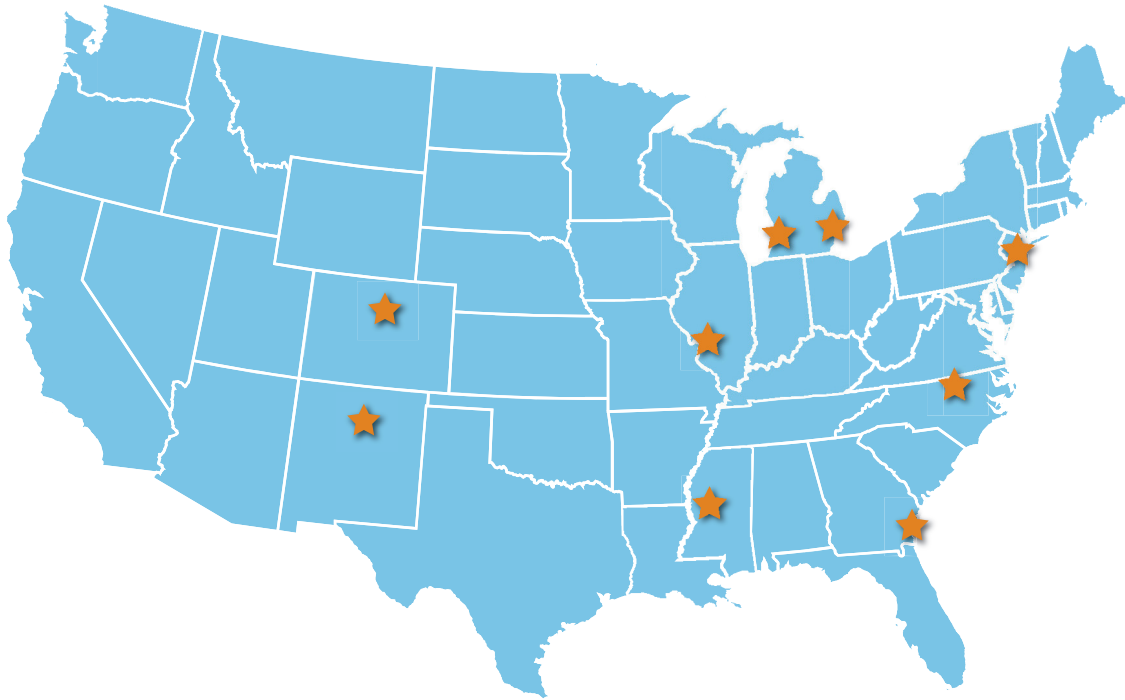
While many foundations doing exemplary DEI work were left out in favor of a smaller sample size, the tradeoff was necessary to allow us to deeply delve into each of the examples. OMG believes that the practices and lessons that these foundations shared will be of interest and value to the field.



**TABLE 1** “Exemplar” Study Foundations

<b>FOUNDATION<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>MISSION</b>
<p><b>Brett Family Foundation</b> Boulder, CO Independent Foundation - 2000 Total Assets: \$7,826,227 Total Giving: \$420,600 www.brettfoundation.org</p>	<p>The Brett Family Foundation supports caring communities by investing in organizations throughout Colorado working for social justice, and Boulder County nonprofits addressing the needs of underserved communities, primarily disadvantaged youth and their families.</p>
<p><b>Con Alma Health Foundation</b> Santa Fe, NM Independent Foundation - 2001 Total Assets: \$23,156,523 Total Giving: \$526,738 www.conalma.org</p>	<p>Con Alma Health Foundation is organized to be aware of and respond to the health rights and needs of the culturally and demographically diverse peoples and communities of New Mexico.</p>
<p><b>Foundation for the Mid South</b> Jackson, MS Community Foundation - 1990 Total Assets: \$17,444,093 Total Giving: \$1,459,260 www.fndmidsouth.org</p>	<p>The mission of the Foundation for the Mid South is to invest in people and strategies that build philanthropy and promote racial, social, and economic equity in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.</p>
<p><b>Incarnate Word Foundation</b> St. Louis, MO Public Charity - 1997 Total Assets: \$26,722,128 Total Giving: \$1,083,380 www.iwfdn.org</p>	<p>The Incarnate Word Foundation’s primary purpose is to support programs serving the poor and marginalized, and participate in any activity designed and carried out to promote the general health, rehabilitation, education, and social needs of the community.</p>
<p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation</b> New York, NY Independent Foundation - 1947 Total Assets: \$42,366,916 Total Giving: \$1,889,152 www.noyes.org</p>	<p>The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation supports grassroots organizations and movements in the United States working to change environmental, social, economic, and political conditions to bring about a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.</p>
<p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Kalamazoo, MI Community Foundation - 1925 Total Assets: \$313,557,731 Total Giving: \$16,895,461 www.kalfound.org</p>	<p>The Kalamazoo Community Foundation provides essential funding to programs that ensure all of our children have an equal chance for success in school, that nurture and prepare all of our young people for life beyond school, that support individuals and families from all walks of life, that enhance community prosperity in every corner of Kalamazoo County, and make life better for all.</p>
<p><b>Sapelo Foundation</b> Brunswick, GA Independent Foundation - 1976 Total Assets: \$32,492,613 Total Giving: \$1,038,044 www.sapelofoundation.org</p>	<p>The Sapelo Foundation serves as a catalyst for new practices and ideas and responds to other challenges or opportunities that are unique to Georgia. The Foundation is particularly interested in projects that involve multiple groups that work cooperatively toward common goals, accomplish systemic reform, and have a statewide impact. The Foundation gives special attention to low-resource regions in the state and innovative, community-based projects.</p>
<p><b>Skillman Foundation</b> Detroit, MI Independent Foundation - 1960 Total Assets: \$427,849,500 Total Giving: \$17,354,036 www.skillman.org</p>	<p>The Skillman Foundation is committed to providing resources to improve the lives of children in Metropolitan Detroit by improving their homes, schools, and neighborhoods.</p>
<p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation</b> Winston-Salem, NC Independent Foundation - 1936 Total Assets: \$379,674,104 Total Giving: \$14,903,958 www.zsr.org</p>	<p>The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation’s grant-making policies reflect the belief that organizational performance is greatly enhanced when people with different backgrounds and perspectives are engaged in an organization’s activities and decision-making process. The Foundation’s mission is to improve the quality of life of the people of North Carolina.</p>

2. Total assets and giving figures for year ended December 31, 2011.

**FIGURE 5** Geographic Distribution of “Exemplar” Study Foundations

### Questions and Methods

OMG developed five overarching questions that the research team sought to answer through interviews:

- How do exemplar foundations express their goals to advance culturally-responsive and disparity-reducing practices among their nonprofit partners?
- In what ways do exemplar foundations leverage their grant-making activities to influence nonprofit partners' culturally-responsive and disparity-reducing practices?
- How do exemplar foundations use benchmarking, assessment, and evaluation to advance culturally-responsive and disparity-reducing practices among their nonprofit partners?

- How do exemplar foundations leverage opportunities to learn from nonprofit partners to strengthen their own ability to work in a culturally-responsive manner?
- What lessons from the policies and practices of exemplar foundations can be applied to the philanthropic field?

Guided by these research questions, OMG developed a semi-structured interview protocol for foundations and an interview protocol for nonprofit partners. In spring 2013, OMG conducted 33 semi-structured phone interviews with eight foundation executives, 10 program officers, and 15 nonprofit partners. The interviewees included seven men and 26 women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds: 10 African Americans, five Latinos, 17 Whites, and one Asian. Of the eight executives interviewed, three were of diverse backgrounds. Interviewees' responses were transcribed and analyzed using thematic codes.



The research team hypothesized that, in addition to supportive organizational factors such as committed leadership, exemplar foundations would engage in the following practices:

- In the development of program strategy, include specific DEI investment strategies that reflect an understanding of the ways inequities and disparities are produced and maintained for populations, and sound thinking about how these might be addressed.
- In requests for proposals, require explicit intervention strategies for how the nonprofit partner will advance DEI in programming for population groups of interest.
- In selecting nonprofit partners, include explicit criteria in the scoring of proposals to rate the quality of the DEI strategies advanced by the applicant.
- In communications and relationship-building with nonprofit partners, advance and maintain open dialogue about the goals of, and strategies for DEI, and solicit nonprofit partners' perspectives on these topics, as acquired through their on-the-ground practice.
- In knowledge sharing, seek out and promote resources and expertise that nonprofit partners and philanthropies can access to strengthen DEI in their practice. They view learning as a two-way street and strive to learn from nonprofit partners.
- In TA activities, help build capacity among nonprofit partners to enable them to advance DEI practice.
- In evaluation, systematically collect, disaggregate, and publish data on nonprofit partners' progress toward DEI indicators, both quantitative and qualitative. In reviewing nonprofit partners' narrative reports, require explicit reflection and data on nonprofit partners' approach to DEI.

This report highlights eight cross-cutting themes that emerged across the exemplar foundations that participated in this study, providing insights and recommendations from the philanthropic and nonprofit practitioners interviewed—in their own words. The report also underscores the lessons for philanthropies on how to better partner with nonprofits to increase the amount and quality of social interventions to reduce disparities of opportunity.

# FINDINGS

IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW FOUNDATIONS AND NONPROFIT PARTNERS INTERACT TO PROMOTE DEI, FOUNDATION EXECUTIVES, PROGRAM OFFICERS, AND THEIR NONPROFIT PARTNERS SURFACED EIGHT CROSS-CUTTING CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUNDATION PRACTICES THAT FACILITATE DEI AS PRESENTED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

## Eight Cross-Cutting Characteristics of DEI Facilitator Foundations

1. Deep grounding in and respect for local context
2. Mission that explicitly or implicitly values DEI
3. Strategy that targets structural issues
4. Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align
5. Engaging nonprofits as partners
6. Building nonprofit partners' capacity to engage their communities
7. Convening nonprofit partners to discuss DEI
8. Using evaluation as a learning tool

**1) Deep grounding in and respect for local context.** These foundations understand local needs from the point of view of local communities and populations. They demonstrate an *ethno-relative* mindset, characterized by acceptance, curiosity, and respect for local cultures; adaptation to local cultural norms; and integration with local cultures. In philanthropic practice, this mindset manifests itself in an approach that helps communities and populations find local solutions. In their conscientious attempts to put aside their own cultural biases and see the world through the lens of local cultures, these foundations approach communities with an attitude of humility that signals their willingness to engage with them as partners. Understanding the context not only demonstrates respect of local diversity, but is an important first step in developing strategies to pursue equity, which requires analysis of the complex dynamics that create conditions of inequality for certain groups of people.

**2) Mission that explicitly or implicitly values diversity, equity, and inclusion, with leaders who are strongly driven by that mission.** These foundations believe that focused interventions to improve DEI—while worthwhile values in and of themselves—ultimately improve outcomes for communities and populations. Internally, they strive for “authentic” diversity, that is, diversity

that conscientiously includes the opinions of diverse staff and board members in decision-making, as opposed to “token” diversity, which only makes a symbolic or superficial effort to increase diversity. They extend this commitment to inclusion to all of their philanthropic practices, from selecting proposals to fund, to providing technical assistance, to evaluating projects. In doing so, these foundations acknowledge the power they hold over nonprofit partners and communities, and they seek to equalize those power dynamics.

**3) Strategy that targets the structural issues limiting opportunities for people in underserved communities, and that bolsters the capacity of grassroots organizations serving those communities.** These foundations regularly include nonprofit partners and community members in identifying their own needs, and developing strategies to address them. Rather than funding programs that only focus on symptoms, they fund advocacy and policy change work aimed at achieving equity, and demonstrate their commitment to communities by making long-term grants. They provide general operating and capacity building grants, as well as technical assistance, considering these practices as critical to making lasting change by bolstering nonprofit organizations. They allow nonprofit partners to

pursue their own strategies and timelines that make sense given their local needs. They welcome new, creative ideas, and are open to risk and accepting change. By engaging nonprofit partners and community members in developing foundation strategy, and by allowing them the latitude to pursue the strategies they deem most appropriate for their communities, these foundations signal that they consider them partners and respect their opinions, thus helping to equalize the balance of power among them.

**4) Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align with the foundation’s own values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

These foundations select nonprofit partners that have support from their local communities and populations, and are responsive and sensitive to the cultural context of the communities in which the nonprofit partners reside. They ensure that their nonprofit partners practice inclusion and engage their communities meaningfully—sharing power with their communities—in the same way that the foundations engage their own nonprofit partners inclusively.

**5) Engaging nonprofits as partners, and forging long-term relationships with them, often beyond the life of the grant.**

These foundations spend time in the field visiting nonprofit partners in order to gain a deeper understanding of their communities. They approach their nonprofit partners with a spirit of humility—listening to them, learning from them, and viewing them as the true experts on the work. By acknowledging nonprofit partners’ expertise when it comes to implementing programs and working in local communities, these foundations form relationships characterized by shared power and influence.

**6) Building nonprofit partners’ capacity to engage their communities.** These foundations set clear and realistic expectations of their nonprofit partners to diversify board and staff, and to engage local communities inclusively. To help their nonprofit partners act on these expectations, the foundations provide general operating and capacity building grants, as well as technical assistance.

**7) Convening nonprofit partners to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion, and encouraging collaboration among nonprofit partners to tackle the structural issues that affect communities.**

Often viewing themselves as neutral facilitators, these foundations are sensitive to and manage unequal power dynamics that may prevent diverse individuals from participating in conversations, thus encouraging their full inclusion. They put issues of DEI on the table for discussion, and encourage nonprofit partners to work in pursuit of equitable outcomes.

**8) Using evaluation as a learning tool to improve their own—and their nonprofit partners’—practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

These foundations rely more on relationships with nonprofit partners than on formal reports or evaluations. They take a big-picture view of evaluation, and value qualitative data as much as quantitative data. They minimize the burden of evaluation on their nonprofit partners, showing respect for their time.

The table on the following pages provides a summary of primary examples that follow in the report.

Cross-cutting characteristics of DEI-facilitating foundations...	...and what those characteristics look like in practice
<p><b>1. Deep grounding in and respect for local context</b></p>	<p><b>Brett Family Foundation</b> Spends most of their time in communities getting to know local power dynamics, a key step in developing strategies for equity.</p> <p><b>Con Alma Health Foundation</b> Emphasizes preserving cultural and linguistic assets of New Mexico communities; is inclusive of all in strategy development, including members of the “dominant” culture.</p> <p><b>Foundation for the Mid South</b> Avoids alienating language around race; targets African American communities geographically, without drawing attention to a racial equity strategy.</p> <p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes</b> Conducts frequent site visits and local power analyses necessary to developing equity-focused strategies.</p> <p><b>Skillman Foundation</b> Educates other foundations on the local context, and attracts other investments in Detroit’s neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds</b> Conducts frequent site visits, starting in the proposal phase. Has frequent two-way conversations with nonprofit partners.</p>
<p><b>2. Mission that values DEI, and leaders who are strongly driven by the mission</b></p>	<p><b>Con Alma Health Foundation</b> DEI embedded in foundation’s bylaws, and everything it does revolves around the values set forth in them.</p> <p><b>Foundation for the Mid South</b> Strategic planning process identified equity as imperative to mission. Conducts diversity training for board and staff.</p> <p><b>Incarnate Word Foundation</b> DEI is included in foundation’s guiding principle. Internal diversity not an end in itself; more important is learning to be inclusive and really <i>listen</i> to diverse individuals.</p> <p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Adopted focus on diversity and inclusion, and added words <i>for all</i> to mission. Developed and shared definitions for <i>diversity and inclusion</i>. Guided by belief that DEI is central to outcomes and considers DEI in all practices.</p>
<p><b>3. Strategy that targets structural issues and bolsters capacity of grassroots organizations</b></p>	<p><b>Brett Family Foundation</b> Has an approach to strategy driven by nonprofit partners. Funds structural, equity-promoting solutions—advocacy, policy change, systems change—to structural problems. Makes long-term grant commitments (10-11 years).</p> <p><b>Incarnate Word Foundation</b> Makes long-term grants, and funds nonprofit partners over multiple grant cycles.</p> <p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes</b> Makes long-term commitments to nonprofit partners.</p>

Cross-cutting characteristics of DEI-facilitating foundations...	...and what those characteristics look like in practice
<p><b>3. Strategy that targets structural issues and bolsters capacity of grassroots organizations</b></p>	<p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Allows nonprofit partners flexibility to “course-correct” based on what they learn during implementation. Builds trust with nonprofit partners, facilitating honest conversations.</p> <p><b>Sapelo Foundation</b> Funds progressive systems-reform efforts in support of equity for vulnerable populations.</p> <p><b>Skillman Foundation</b> Makes long-term grant commitments (10 years), and funds nonprofit partners over multiple grant cycles.</p> <p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds</b> Makes long-term commitments to nonprofit partners.</p>
<p><b>4. Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align with foundation’s own values of DEI</b></p>	<p><b>Con Alma Health Foundation</b> Looks for evidence that nonprofit partners are mindful of the cultural requirements of New Mexico’s Native American communities.</p> <p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes</b> Asks prospective nonprofit partners to describe who makes up their board and staff; interested in funding communities of color and organizations led by people of color.</p> <p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Moved away from a “checkbox” approach to gauging diversity among nonprofit partners, and toward more meaningful indicators of inclusion. Shares their diversity statement with potential nonprofit partners.</p>
<p><b>5. Engaging nonprofits as partners, and forging long-term relationships with nonprofit partners</b></p>	<p><b>Foundation for the Mid South</b> Believes site visits are necessary to truly understand what the community needs to achieve equitable outcomes, and to provide relevant advice to nonprofit partners.</p> <p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Believes foundations must approach nonprofit partners with humility and teach the value of DEI through example.</p> <p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds</b> Believes site visits are a way to balance the power dynamic between funders and nonprofit partners, signaling to nonprofit partners that <i>their</i> time is as important as the funder’s time.</p>
<p><b>6. Building nonprofit partners’ capacity to engage communities</b></p>	<p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Developed tools and offers technical assistance and capacity building grants to help nonprofit partners work with diverse communities and include diverse stakeholders in their decision-making.</p> <p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds</b> Practices a “carrot and stick” approach to move nonprofit partners toward the inclusion of communities.</p>

Cross-cutting characteristics of DEI-facilitating foundations...	...and what those characteristics look like in practice
<p><b>7. Convening nonprofit partners to discuss DEI, and encouraging collaboration among nonprofit partners</b></p>	<p><b>Brett Family Foundation</b> Is active in the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable. Has nonprofit partners work together as a way to leverage its limited funding for greater impact.</p> <p><b>Foundation for the Mid South</b> Encourages nonprofit partners to collaborate, believing it necessary to tackle the structural issues affecting communities to achieve equity.</p> <p><b>Incarnate Word Foundation</b> Leads local, inclusive forum on issues of DEI to encourage open discussions about race in a segregated city.</p> <p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation</b> Tries to bridge gap between its nonprofit partners and the broader philanthropic community.</p> <p><b>Sapelo Foundation</b> Promotes inclusion through efforts to balance the power dynamics between larger and smaller organizations present in convenings.</p> <p><b>Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation</b> Held series of convenings to facilitate conversations on DEI among its nonprofit partners.</p>
<p><b>8. Using evaluation as a learning tool to improve their own—and their nonprofit partners’—practice of DEI</b></p>	<p><b>Brett Family Foundation</b> Collects DEI metrics in a database developed by the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable, and places equal value on qualitative data.</p> <p><b>Incarnate Word Foundation</b> Relies more on relationships with nonprofit partners than on formal reports or evaluations to assess its investments.</p> <p><b>Jessie Smith Noyes</b> Sees evaluation reports as opportunities to not only learn whether nonprofit partners are being successful, but why.</p> <p><b>Kalamazoo Community Foundation</b> Has experimented with ways to share evaluation data across nonprofit partners to facilitate greater learning.</p>

# EIGHT CROSS-CUTTING CHARACTERISTICS

- 1 Deep grounding in and respect for local context.
- 2 Mission that explicitly or implicitly values diversity, equity, and inclusion, with leaders who are strongly driven by that mission.
- 3 Strategy that targets the structural issues limiting opportunities for people in underserved communities, and that bolsters the capacity of grassroots organizations serving those communities.
- 4 Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align with the foundation's own values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 5 Engaging nonprofits as partners, and forging long-term relationships with them, often beyond the life of the grant.
- 6 Building nonprofit partners' capacity to engage their communities.
- 7 Convening nonprofit partners to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion, and encouraging collaboration among nonprofit partners to tackle the structural issues that affect communities.
- 8 Using evaluation as a learning tool to improve their own—and their nonprofit partners'—practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



# 1. Deep grounding in and respect for local context

DEI-facilitating foundations—or “DEI facilitators”—understand local needs from the point of view of local communities and populations. They demonstrate respect for local cultures, and adapt to local cultural norms. In philanthropic practice, they help communities and populations find local solutions. In their attempts to put aside their own cultural biases and see the world through the lens of local cultures, DEI facilitators approach communities with an attitude of humility that signals their willingness to engage with them as true partners. Understanding the context not only demonstrates respect of local diversity, but is an important first step in developing strategies to pursue equity, which requires analysis of the complex dynamics that create conditions of inequality for certain groups of people.

## GROW ROOTS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The foundations in this study have strong roots in local communities. Whether their investment is focused on one neighborhood (the Incarnate Word Foundation in St. Louis, MO); in a city (the Kalamazoo Community Foundation in Kalamazoo, MI and the Skillman Foundation in Detroit, MI); across a state (the Brett Family Foundation in Colorado, the Con Alma Health Foundation in New Mexico, the Sapelo Foundation in Georgia, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in North Carolina); a region (the Foundation for the Mid South); or the nation (the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation); these foundations seek to understand local needs from the point of view of local communities, and to respond to these needs through their philanthropic practices.

**Understanding the context not only demonstrates respect of local diversity, but is an important first step in developing strategies to pursue equity, which requires analysis of the complex dynamics that create conditions of inequality for certain groups of people.**

Tracey Dorsett, Program Officer at Z. Smith Reynolds, a North Carolina foundation strongly rooted in its state, describes how understanding local needs happens on the ground: *“Each time a proposal that is appropriately aligned with the Foundation comes in, the first thing we do is schedule a site visit. We have a series of questions that we ask them, and they have questions that they ask us. We tell them it is a conversation, a*

*two-way conversation. We do these visits so we can honor the organization and the place where they do work.”* By the simple gesture of engaging nonprofit partners in a two-way conversation, this funder signals their equality; by taking the time to visit and demonstrate interest in the local context, the funder shows respect for them and their communities, and develops an understanding of the local dynamics that allows for the development of equity-promoting strategies.

Where it may be uncommon for national foundations to work on the ground with local communities, Jessie Smith Noyes demonstrates that understanding how the local context affects their nonprofit partners’ work can be very fruitful. A family foundation headquartered in New York City with a decidedly progressive bent, Noyes supports grassroots organizing groups across the country, often in very conservative areas. Wilma Montañez, a longtime Program Officer at Noyes, explains how important it is for foundations to be sensitive to local context, particularly when funding controversial issues like reproductive

## PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

### Deep grounding in and respect for local context

- Grow roots in local communities
- Build on communities’ assets by knowing who’s who
- Define diversity inclusively
- Educate others on the context



Con Alma Health Foundation

rights: *“People funding this type of work in rural or very conservative communities need to be brought up to speed on the local realities. If you are in a small town, and people have guns and they are against abortion or LGBT rights, it can be a very dangerous environment for organizers to work in. We need to understand that and help them develop ways to do this work while being mindful of the sensitivities of the people in those communities.”*

Despite the large physical distances separating their investments, Noyes’ program officers frequently visit nonprofit partners to learn the strengths, assets, and issues facing the communities in which they invest. Kelly Weigel, Executive Director of the Western States Center, a training and support nonprofit organization that works with community organizations in eight states, describes her relationship with Wilma Montañez, her Noyes program officer: *“Of course, there is a little of the East Coast-West Coast challenge, but Wilma comes to visit whenever she can. She wants to get to know us, and what it’s like to work in [our communities].”*

**“It would be really great if national foundations had authentic local partners. They could say, ‘We want to address this issue; let’s work together.’ We could benefit from their national dollars and expertise, and they could benefit from our on-the-ground knowledge and connections.”** —LESLIE WINNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Z. SMITH REYNOLDS FOUNDATION

Leslie Winner, Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, echoes this recommendation, and acknowledges that there can be some tensions when local foundations see national foundations coming into their communities and surmising they are bringing solutions without truly understanding the context. Winner believes that partnerships characterized by open conversations and joint problem-solving could mitigate these tensions and benefit all involved: *“It would be really great if national foundations had authentic local partners. They could say, ‘We want to address this issue; let’s work together.’ We could benefit from their national dollars and expertise, and they could benefit from our on-the-ground knowledge and connections.”*

#### **BUILD ON COMMUNITIES’ ASSETS BY KNOWING WHO’S WHO**

In their philanthropic practice, DEI facilitators use an asset-based approach, which helps communities and populations identify, value, and build on local assets. The Con Alma Health Foundation, serving the health rights and needs of diverse communities in New Mexico, places a heavy emphasis on preserving and strengthening the cultural and linguistic assets of its nonprofit partners and the communities they serve. Con Alma has as one of its goals: *“To nurture and preserve local communities and their assets—particularly culturally diverse, rural and tribal communities.”*

The foundations in this study appreciate the cultural, political, and economic dynamics of the communities in which they work. For example, program officers at the Brett Family Foundation, a small social justice foundation investing in Colorado, spend much of their time in local communities. As Miriam Peña, Executive Director of the Colorado Progressive Coalition, and a longtime Brett nonprofit partner, attests: *“The Brett Foundation understands the issues that we face on the ground; they have a strong understanding of the Colorado landscape and how all the groups here work together, or don’t work together.”*

The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation conducts formal power analyses before investing in any strategy, and understands the broad range of stakeholders. Victor De Luca, President of the Noyes Foundation, explains: *“If you have a group in a state that is trying to change the economic livelihood of farmers, you need to analyze: Who has power? Who doesn’t? Who do you need to include? Who will be affected if we implement this? Sometimes it’s not so clear. Of course, the farmers you help out will benefit, but you may also benefit inner city people living in food deserts, who may not be receiving fresh food right now because of what’s happening to the farmers.”*

**“We are predominantly a black/white region, but race is what people want to talk least about. But we don’t let that hold us up completely. We actually work on racial equity while talking about economic equity instead.”**

—IVYE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, FOUNDATION FOR THE MID SOUTH

Southern foundations in this study look for ways to address racial inequities without using alienating language. For example, the Foundation for the Mid South, whose mission is to promote racial, social, and economic equity in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, understands that, in the South, conversations around race can be polarizing. In working to improve economic indicators and equity, many of those communities are,



Foundation for the Mid South

indeed, predominately African American but the foundation does not focus on these communities simply for their racial makeup. President Ivye Allen acknowledges that conversations around race may still make the foundation’s board, staff, and grantees uncomfortable. For this reason, the foundation has found ways to work within this context while remaining true to its values by targeting economic issues surrounding these specific geographic areas that are predominantly African American without necessarily identifying it as a racial equity strategy: *“We are predominantly a black/white region, but race is what people want to talk least about. But we don’t let that hold us up completely. We actually work on racial equity while talking about economic equity instead.”*

James Gore, Program Officer at Z. Smith Reynolds, shared that DEI efforts related to race do not involve only people of color; whites also play a critical role: *“We often talk about needing more diverse leaders, but in North Carolina we also need committed white leaders. Oftentimes, the expectation is that only people of color are interested in these issues. Having a white person or white group take on this issue helps deepen their understanding of how race impacts their community and makes racial equity discussions accessible to different audiences. White people tend to listen to white people on the issues.”*



## DEFINE DIVERSITY INCLUSIVELY

These foundations often define diversity inclusively in order to garner broad support for their philanthropic strategies. In many instances, they consider the viewpoints and interests of the dominant culture along with those of their target communities.

The Con Alma Health Foundation strongly champions inclusiveness, and routinely seeks the perspective of the traditionally dominant culture. Given that New Mexico is a majority-minority state, where half of the population is made up of non-Hispanic whites, Con Alma leaders routinely seek out diverse opinions, sometimes from stakeholders that may be considered members of the “dominant” culture. While this practice makes some stakeholders uncomfortable, ultimately it pays off, as stakeholders begin to recognize their common interests: *“When we were drafting an implementation plan for healthcare reform for New Mexico, we wanted to make sure to include businesses and government agencies, along with advocacy and community groups, in order to get multi-sector and multi-field perspectives,”* says Con Alma’s Executive Director, Dolores Roybal. *“At first, as I would approach each group, some didn’t want to sit at the table with the others. But I invited everyone, anyway; and they all came, and found that they agreed on more than they disagreed!”*

## EDUCATE OTHERS ON THE CONTEXT

While these exemplar foundations seek to understand the local context, they also strive to educate others—philanthropies, nonprofits, businesses, government agencies—about the nuances of the local context, and engage them as partners in supporting communities.

Tonya Allen, Chief Executive Officer of the Skillman Foundation, which aims to improve the lives of children in Metropolitan Detroit, describes how her foundation attracts other foundations to invest in Detroit’s neighborhoods by engaging them, together with the communities, in seeking common solutions: *“We decided about six or seven years ago to be an embedded foundation. We engage deeply with our communities; we are connected to the issues, and we work with foundation partners, corporate investors, and other stakeholders to invest in these communities, to be part of the solution. We are trying to use capital—not only financial, but also our relational and political capital—to leverage our investment, to really get to the change that we want to see. We have gotten a lot of support; now we see foundations investing in these communities who had not done so before.”*

**We engage deeply with our communities; we are connected to the issues, and we work with foundation partners, corporate investors, and other stakeholders to invest in these communities, to be part of the solution. We are trying to use capital—not only financial, but also our relational and political capital—to leverage our investment, to really get to the change that we want to see.”**

—TONYA ALLEN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION

## 2. A mission that explicitly or implicitly values diversity, equity, and inclusion, with leaders who are strongly driven by that mission

DEI facilitators believe that focused interventions to improve DEI ultimately improve outcomes for communities and populations. Internally, they strive for “authentic” diversity that conscientiously includes the opinions of diverse staff and board members in decision-making. They extend this commitment to inclusion to all of their philanthropic practices, from selecting proposals to fund, to providing technical assistance, to evaluating projects.

### EMBED ORGANIZATION WITH DEI

The nine foundations in this study have explicit organizational mandates, often stated in their mission and values, to advance principles of DEI that permeate their organizational culture, and guide all of their practices.

“Our bylaws are a living document, and everything we do revolves around the values set forth in them. Every activity, every level of our foundation reflects these values—we fund policy and system-level activities because we understand the socio-economic determinants of health; we promote community involvement, collaboration, and partnerships. That has always been our model.” —DOLORES ROYBAL,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CON ALMA

Con Alma's Executive Director Dolores Roybal describes how these values play out in the organization's practice, from what they fund (policy and advocacy), to how they fund (through community involvement, collaboration, and partnerships): “Our bylaws are a living document, and everything we do revolves around the values set forth in them. Every activity, every level of our foundation reflects these values—we fund policy and system-level activities because we understand the socio-economic determinants of health; we promote community involvement, collaboration, and partnerships. That has always been our model.”

For some of the foundations in this study, DEI principles have been integral to their values since their founding. For the Incarnate Word Foundation,

a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, the values of DEI are part of what defines the foundation's guiding principle, active spirituality. As Incarnate Word's Executive Director Bridget McDermott Flood explains: “The goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion are an outgrowth of our spirituality. We are called to see our work through the lens of human dignity, of how we relate to other people. If that's your view of the world, then you believe that everyone has the same intrinsic value, and diversity, equity, and inclusion come naturally to you.”

The Foundation for the Mid South and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation focus on DEI with a more intentional approach. From 2003 to 2005, the Foundation for the Mid South conducted a strategic planning process, in which it identified racial, social, and economic equity as imperative to ensuring the best outcomes for children and families in their region. As priority areas in the quest for equity, the foundation settled on K-12 education, health and wellness, wealth building, and community development. According to President Ivey Allen, through reflection and conversations during its strategic planning

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Mission that explicitly or implicitly values DEI

- Embed organization with DEI
- Acknowledge DEI as a means to improve outcomes
- Begin with diversifying internally
- Apply DEI in philanthropic practices

process, the foundation came to see racial and economic equity as *necessary for improving outcomes* in communities: *“We asked ourselves, ‘How do we lift up the region?’ And the answer we came up with was, ‘Invest in people and strategies that promote racial and economic equity.’”*

Similarly, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, one of the oldest community foundations in the country, adopted a focus on diversity and inclusion, and added the words “for all” to its mission. President/CEO Carrie Pickett-Erway explains: *“Our mission is to enhance prosperity in Kalamazoo County, and make life better for all. Adding those two words (for all) obligated and inspired us to really think about how we were impacting those living at the margins of our community.”* In thinking about how to talk about

**“ We asked ourselves, ‘How do we lift up the region?’ And the answer we came up with was, ‘Invest in people and strategies that promote racial and economic equity.’”**

—IVYE ALLEN, PRESIDENT, FOUNDATION FOR THE MID SOUTH

and foster the values of diversity and inclusion, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation developed specific definitions for terms like diversity and inclusion that are understood by and relevant to their internal and external stakeholders. Says Pickett-Erway: *“We define diversity as recognizing the various talents and backgrounds present in whatever context we are examining, whether it be on our board, across our pool of nonprofit partners, or among our donor base. Inclusion we define as not only diversity being present, but also having those diverse individuals be fully engaged and equal partners, whatever the forum might be.”*

**ACKNOWLEDGE DEI AS A MEANS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES**

DEI facilitators share the belief that the values of DEI can ultimately improve outcomes for their communities.



Kalamazoo Community Foundation

Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh, Vice President, Community Investment at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, describes his foundation’s core values of excellence, integrity, diversity, and inclusion as central to improving outcomes: *“Our strategic plan identified two goals: improving high school graduation rates, and moving from “minimization” to “acceptance” level on the DSMI intercultural sensitive framework. The two are tied together because we don’t think we can sustainably increase high school graduation rates without addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion.”*

**BEGIN WITH DIVERSIFYING INTERNALLY**

DEI facilitators view internal diversity as a necessary first step to lay the groundwork for DEI in foundation practice. For instance, a diverse board brings people to the table that are knowledgeable about the communities in which the foundation invests.

**“ We define diversity as recognizing the various talents and backgrounds present in whatever context we are examining, whether it be on our board, across our pool of nonprofit partners, or among our donor base. Inclusion we define as not only diversity being present, but also having those diverse individuals be fully engaged and equal partners, whatever the forum might be. —CARRIE PICKETT-ERWAY, PRESIDENT/CEO,**

KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Miriam Peña, a Brett Family Foundation nonprofit partner, reflects on this topic: *“Foundations can and should be intentional about who they put in power. It takes a lot of time to be intentional about diversifying board and staff, and to provide one-on-one leadership development for diverse board and staff members. It is hard work, but it is necessary if foundations are truly going to represent the people they serve.”*

But by no means do these foundations consider staff and board diversity as an end in itself. In fact, interviewees frequently cautioned against “token” diversity—judging the extent of diversity simply in terms of numbers of diverse persons on a board or staff without considering the extent of their inclusion in decision-making. Some interviewees cautioned that tokenism could impede a true understanding of local needs and structural barriers to equity, as it may give organizations an exaggerated sense of their own level of diversity and inclusion.

**“People talk about needing to have people of color in meetings, but what they really need is to listen. People from the majority culture think they listen, but they really don’t.”**

—MCDERMOTT FLOOD, INCARNATE WORD

Incarnate Word’s McDermott Flood describes the issue of tokenism as placing an emphasis on quantity or numbers, without focusing on quality and without really listening to diverse individuals: *“People talk about needing to have people of color in meetings, but what they really need is to listen. People from the majority culture think they listen, but they really don’t.”*

Instead, the interviewees spoke of the importance of “authentic diversity”—explicitly and inclusively seeking and considering the opinions of diverse staff and board members in making decisions. Denise Ellis, Grants & Technology Manager at the Foundation for the Mid South, describes her foundation’s process for achieving such diversity: *“We made sure we had a diverse board and staff, and we made everyone go through diversity*

*training. We implemented a practice of routinely conducting diversity sensitivity training internally to make sure people know how to work with all kinds of people, and really listen to all of the voices.”*

As part of an ongoing process, the foundation conducts diversity training for board and staff, with an emphasis on learning how to listen to diverse voices.

Leaders of the foundations in this study are committed to applying DEI in all of their philanthropic practices. Beyond diversifying board and staff, these foundations try to diversify their pool of nonprofit partners, volunteers, donors, and vendors. They also ensure that their grant-making practices, from selecting proposals, to providing technical assistance, to evaluating projects, reflect these values.

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation’s Carrie Pickett-Erway, describes how her foundation considers issues of DEI in all of its practices: *“One of our big goals over the next five years is to help our staff and volunteers become more adept at understanding people from all different backgrounds. We are also trying to diversify the make-up of our vendors. Also, our grantee pools—Who are they, and how diverse are they? How diverse are our donors? What about our volunteers? We look at who we are missing from the broader pool of folks in our community, and we push ourselves to increase that diversity.”*

Applying DEI philanthropic practices requires acknowledging the power a foundation may hold in its community. Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation reflects on the power structure between funders and nonprofit partners: *“This [power structure] impacts our interactions with our communities. We are now developing the competency not to impose our own cultural points of view on others. We realized we were bringing our own views to the table. So we are examining our own practices, and how our practices perpetuate the dominant power systems, even though that is not our intent.”*



### 3. A strategy that targets the structural issues limiting opportunities for people in underserved communities, and that bolsters the capacity of grassroots organizations serving those communities

DEI facilitators include nonprofit partners and community members in identifying their own needs, and developing strategies to address them. They fund advocacy and policy change work aimed at achieving equity, and demonstrate their commitment to communities by making long-term grants. They provide general operating and capacity building grants, as well as technical assistance, considering these practices as critical to making lasting change by bolstering nonprofit organizations. They allow nonprofit partners to pursue their own strategies according to the timelines that make sense given their local needs. They welcome creative ideas, and are open to risk and accepting of change.

#### INCLUDE COMMUNITY IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Many of those interviewed described their approach to developing strategy as “bottom-up” or “grantee-driven.” As Claire Gilbert, a Program Officer with the Brett Family Foundation explains, it is *“the people who are impacted by social inequities should be the ones working to eliminate these inequities, as opposed to the top-down approach typical of philanthropy.”* One of the Brett Family Foundation’s nonprofit partners, the Colorado Progressive Coalition, embodies this approach by working on a broad scope of social justice issues in low-income communities and communities of color, and empowering people from these areas to develop and promote social policies supporting equity.

“The people who are impacted by social inequities should be the ones working to eliminate these inequities, as opposed to the top-down approach typical of philanthropy.”

—CLAIRE GILBERT, BRETT FAMILY FOUNDATION

#### ADDRESS STRUCTURAL SOURCES OF INEQUITIES

DEI facilitators are likely to make investments to address the structural sources of inequities by funding advocacy and policy change initiatives that may take many years to accomplish. Most of the foundations interviewed for this study believe that funding advocacy, policy change, or systems change work is critical to promoting equity and addressing the needs of historically marginalized communities. In the words of Claire Gilbert of the

Brett Family Foundation, *“Social justice problems can’t be solved just by throwing money at them. Philanthropy’s role should be to build constituents’ capacity to advocate for themselves, and to seek structural solutions to structural problems.”*

Georgia’s Sapelo Foundation funds progressive systems reform to serve vulnerable populations, such as juveniles going through the criminal justice system. Julia Neighbors, Project Manager of JUSTGeorgia, a Sapelo Foundation initiative which worked to pass a fair and equitable juvenile justice code in Georgia, describes Sapelo’s support: *“Sapelo understands that in order for change to happen, they have to support the bigger-picture folks doing advocacy. Those who are on the ground doing direct service may be doing great work, but they have no time to do advocacy. You have to invest in both kinds of organizations—“the on-the-ground” and the “bigger-picture” folks—to really make a difference.”*

#### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

##### Strategy that targets structural issues

- Include community in strategy development
- Address structural sources of inequities
- Make long-term commitments
- Support infrastructure of nonprofit partners
- Trust nonprofit partners’ choices



“ Sapelo understands that in order for change to happen, they have to support the bigger-picture folks doing advocacy. Those who are on the ground doing direct service may be doing great work, but they have no time to do advocacy. You have to invest in both kinds of organizations—“the on-the-ground” and the “bigger-picture” folks—to really make a difference.” —JULIA NEIGHBORS, JUSTGEORGIA

### MAKE LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

DEI facilitators demonstrate their commitment to addressing and reducing disparities in communities by making long-term grants, and funding nonprofit organizations over multiple grant cycles. Interviewees note that such long-term commitments allow nonprofit partners the space and time they need to engage their communities in developing appropriate strategies and to achieve policy and systems-level change. For instance, to help disenfranchised populations in North St. Louis begin to take control of their own destinies, the Incarnate Word Foundation funds and supports nonprofit partners “for the long haul,” says Executive Director Bridget McDermott Flood. Carol Goss, former President and CEO of the Skillman Foundation, echoes the sentiment: “Our commitment to nonprofit partners is for 10 years. We are working together with stakeholders and partners to get to good outcomes for kids. It’s a longer-term effort.”

Interviewees view their long-term commitment as an important indicator of their trust in their nonprofit partners, which they believe helps cement partnerships that, in the long-run, will help improve outcomes for communities and populations. “We fund most of our civic engagement nonprofit partners for 10-11 years,” says Mike Brewer, Senior Advisor of the Brett Family Foundation. “Advocacy and policy work is labor intensive. If you are funding this type of work, your Program Officers have to be willing to take the time to engage with nonprofit partners in a collaborative, non-hierarchical way.”

Kelly Weigel, a Jessie Smith Noyes nonprofit partner, appreciates the foundation’s long-term commitment, which enables her organization, the Western States Center, to be visionary and bold in its work. Associate Director Margaret Newbold of the Conservation Trust of North Carolina, a Z. Smith Reynolds nonprofit partner, expresses a similar view: “The foundation has been very clear that conservation is a continued priority. They have really stuck with it over the years. They know that this is not fast work. It is long, slow work. If you only fund it for a year, you just won’t get the results you want.”

Advocacy and policy work is labor intensive. If you are funding this type of work, your Program Officers have to be willing to take the time to engage with nonprofit partners in a collaborative, non-hierarchical way.

—MIKE BREWER, SENIOR ADVISOR, BRETT FAMILY FOUNDATION

### SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE OF NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Many foundations shy away from funding nonprofit partners’ general operating expenses or capacity building efforts, preferring to fund direct service programs with tangible outcomes. The foundations in this study, however, hold quite a different attitude. They view general operating and capacity building grants, as well as technical assistance, as critical to creating lasting change in supporting DEI practices.

### TRUST NONPROFIT PARTNERS’ CHOICES

DEI facilitators allow nonprofit partners great latitude to pursue the strategies and the implementation timelines that make sense given their local needs. The foundations welcome new and creative ideas, and demonstrate openness to risk. Rather than hold nonprofit partners accountable to rigid benchmarks and milestones set before implementation, these foundations are flexible to change, encouraging nonprofit partners to adjust their work plans based on lessons emerging from implementation.



Kalamazoo Community Foundation

Michael Evans, Director of Literacy Services of the Kalamazoo Literacy Council, a nonprofit partner of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, describes how the foundation pushes nonprofit partners to find solutions from what they are learning, and allows the nonprofit partners to “course-correct” and make adjustments during program implementation: *“The Foundation is aware that what is written in a grant proposal is different from what happens in reality during implementation. The foundation recognizes that expertise comes from the community, and they’re open to the notion that what works in Kalamazoo may be different from what a national best-practice model may call for. Of course what you do should be evidence-based, but it should also be informed by what works in a specific community.”*

**“The Foundation is aware that what is written in a grant proposal is different from what happens in reality during implementation. The foundation recognizes that expertise comes from the community, and they’re open to the notion that what works in Kalamazoo may be different from what a national best-practice model may call for. Of course what you do should be evidence-based, but it should also be informed by what works in a specific community.”**

—MICHAEL EVANS, DIRECTOR OF LITERACY SERVICES, KALAMAZOO LITERACY COUNCIL

Mr. Evans notes that this flexibility, together with an eagerness to understand nonprofit partners and their context, encourages a degree of honesty between the nonprofit and the foundation that is often absent in grantee-funder relationships: *“If foundations were more open, or if they were willing to provide true guidance and build the capacity of organizations, nonprofit partners might be more honest about their opportunities and challenges, rather than write fictional versions [in their reports or proposals] of what will happen based on what they think the foundation wants to hear.”*

Sam Lealofi, Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Center for Youth and Community, a Kalamazoo Community Foundation nonprofit partner, expresses a similar sentiment, noting the level of trust between her organization and her Community Foundation program officer allows for honest conversations: *“I feel like we are on a level playing field. The continual, open conversations with them really eliminate that temptation to just tell the funder what they want to hear. They allowed us to tell them what our challenges were, and what our strengths were. They really wanted to know. When a grantee can call a program officer and share not just the good stuff with them, that is a very special thing.”*

## 4. Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align with foundation's values of diversity, equity, and inclusion

DEI facilitators select nonprofit partners that have support from their local communities and populations, and are responsive and sensitive to the cultural context of the communities in which the nonprofit partners reside. They ensure that their nonprofit partners practice inclusion and engage their communities meaningfully—sharing power with their communities—in the same way that the foundations engage their own nonprofit partners inclusively.

### SELECT NONPROFIT PARTNERS RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

DEI facilitators seek out nonprofit partners serving diverse communities, but they do not stop there. They identify those that can demonstrate support from and inclusion of communities, and that are responsive to their cultural requirements and sensitivities. The Con Alma Health Foundation, for example, looks for evidence that nonprofit partners are mindful of the cultural requirements of New Mexico's Native American communities. According to Executive Director Dolores Roybal: *"If a grant seeker proposes a project or initiative aimed at Native Americans, we will not fund it unless they have received the formal approval of the tribal leader/governor. We have to make sure that the tribe is supportive and welcoming of any intervention."*

**“If a grant seeker proposes a project or initiative aimed at Native Americans, we will not fund it unless they have received the formal approval of the tribal leader/governor. We have to make sure that the tribe is supportive and welcoming of any intervention.”**—DOLORES ROYBAL, EXECUTIVE

DIRECTOR, CON ALMA HEALTH FOUNDATION

In proposals, foundations look for evidence that nonprofit partners engage communities to identify their own needs, and that they are open to learning from their communities. They look to ensure that their nonprofit partners are engaging their communities inclusively—sharing power with their communities—in the same way that the foundations engage nonprofit partners.

### LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF “AUTHENTIC” DIVERSITY

While DEI facilitators aim to diversify internally, they also support nonprofit partners' efforts to diversify. In considering the diversity of nonprofit partners' boards and staff, the foundations look for evidence of “authentic” diversity, versus “token” diversity. While they may review the numbers of representatives from diverse communities on boards and staff, this is only a first-cut analysis. What they truly seek is evidence that nonprofit partners are including their diverse staff and board members in leadership and decision-making. In addition, they look for evidence that nonprofit partners are training board and staff members on how to weave DEI into their practice, as this enables program staff to better communicate, understand, and serve their communities.

The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation asks prospective nonprofit partners to describe who makes up their organization's board and staff, because they are interested specifically in funding communities of color and organizations led by people of color. Noyes' President Victor De Luca explains: *"We want more diversity simply because it reflects the real world. When our portfolio reflects diversity of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, then we know that we are funding what is going on out there in the country."*

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Selecting nonprofit partners whose missions align

- Select nonprofit partners responsive to community needs
- Look for evidence of “authentic” diversity

**“We want more diversity simply because it reflects the real world. When our portfolio reflects diversity of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, then we know that we are funding what is going on out there in the country.”**

—VICTOR DE LUCA, PRESIDENT, JESSIE SMITH NOYES FOUNDATION

By funding these groups, the foundation believes that it is developing the capacity and leadership skills of people of color. *“We want to see a commitment from the organization’s leadership, a recognition that bringing in diverse racial and cultural experiences is an important part of being a successful organization,”* says De Luca. And nonprofit partners sense Noyes’ genuine interest in diversity, as nonprofit partner Kelly Weigel notes: *“I often feel that foundations can’t really articulate well how race fits into their agenda. It is important for foundations to say, ‘We are asking you these questions because we believe that racial inclusion is important to this work, and here’s why...’ And Noyes Foundation does this, and it can be very powerful in helping organizations more comfortably talk about why race matters.”*

**“I often feel that foundations can’t really articulate well how race fits into their agenda. It is important for foundations to say, ‘We are asking you these questions because we believe that racial inclusion is important to this work, and here’s why...’ And Noyes Foundation does this, and it can be very powerful in helping organizations more comfortably talk about why race matters.—KELLY WEIGEL**

Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh, Vice President, Community Investment of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, describes his foundation’s movement away from a “checkbox” approach used to gauge diversity among nonprofit partners, and toward qualitative indicators that allow the nonprofit partners to be more reflective: *“We ask nonprofit partners a series of questions that gives them a sense of how we define diversity, that help them reflect on and prompt new thinking about who they are including. We ask, for example, ‘Do you include the same kinds of people in the planning of your project as those you are serving?’ We now articulate for them why this is important, how diversity, equity, and inclusion are relevant to their work.”*



Kalamazoo Community Foundation



## 5. Engaging nonprofits as partners, and forging long-term relationships with nonprofit partners, often beyond the life of the grant

DEI facilitators spend time in the field visiting nonprofit partners in order to gain a deeper understanding of their nonprofit partners' communities. They approach their nonprofit partners with a spirit of humility—listening to their nonprofit partners, learning from them, and viewing them as the true experts on the work. By acknowledging nonprofit partners' expertise when it comes to implementing programs and working in local communities, these foundations form relationships characterized by shared power and influence.

### SPEND TIME IN THE FIELD WITH NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Visiting with and listening to nonprofit partners demonstrates respect for nonprofit partners' time, and signals that the foundation is accessible, and not just funding them from afar. Z. Smith Reynolds' Program Officer James Gore believes that visiting a nonprofit partner is a way to mitigate the power dynamic between funders and nonprofits, and signals to nonprofits that their time is as important as the funder's time.

“We need to change our thinking from ‘giving’ something to grantees, ‘giving’ something to poor communities, to seeing them as strong and valuable partners. The top-down relationship that program officers have historically had with grantees can change if they will consider this new values proposition.”

—TRACEY DORSETT, Z. SMITH REYNOLDS FOUNDATION

Dwanda Moore, Program Officer at the Foundation for the Mid South, explains the importance of site visits for the foundation to truly understand what the community needs, and to provide relevant advice to grantees: *“One of our grantees was providing leadership training workshops in their community and noticed the low turnout from men. Because all of the meetings were facilitated by women, we suggested they offer a training session led by men for men. Sure enough, they did a training solely for men, and suddenly more men start coming to the meetings. These are the types of suggestions we give to our grantees when we do site visits.”*



Jessie Smith Noyes

### ENGAGE NONPROFITS AS PARTNERS

Each foundation in this study considers nonprofit partners as the true experts in their work. They make a practice of inclusion, listening to nonprofit partners and asking questions to increase their understanding of the community. Carrie Pickett-Erway, President/CEO of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, believes it is important for foundations to approach nonprofit partners with humility, because embracing and embodying DEI is a difficult and iterative process that takes

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Engaging nonprofits as partners

- Spend time in the field with nonprofit partners
- Work with nonprofits to jointly solve problems

time to develop. By sharing their own struggles with embodying DEI, foundations can also help nonprofit partners embody these values: *“We share the tools and techniques and strategies that we’re aware of and that have been helpful to us. We know we don’t have all of the answers, and we tell them so. This really helps to put us on equal footing.”*

Tracey Dorsett, Program Officer at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, sees this open and humble approach to grantees as a way to equalize the power dynamics between foundations and grantees: *“We need to change our thinking from ‘giving’ something to grantees, ‘giving’ something to poor communities, to seeing them as strong and valuable partners. The top-down relationship that program officers have historically had with grantees can change if they will consider this new values proposition.”* Equalizing these power dynamics allows the foundation to be inclusive in carrying out its strategies. By listening to nonprofit partners, foundations may learn about incorrect assumptions they may have about their nonprofit partners, especially when working across broadly diverse communities.



Foundation for the Mid South

## 6. Building nonprofit partners' capacity to engage their community

DEI facilitators set clear and realistic expectations of their nonprofit partners to diversify board and staff, and engage local communities inclusively. To help their nonprofit partners act on these expectations, the foundations provide general operating and capacity building grants, as well as technical assistance.

### BUILD CAPACITY OF NONPROFIT PARTNERS TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES

DEI facilitators actively help their nonprofit partners to engage communities. They encourage nonprofit partners to include the community in program design, hoping to ensure that programs and services are of value to the people they seek to aid. The Kalamazoo Community Foundation developed tools and offers technical assistance and capacity building grants to help nonprofit partners work with diverse communities and include diverse stakeholders in their decision-making.

These foundations understand that input from communities is time consuming, and they allow their nonprofit partners the space and time necessary to engage their communities. According to Kalamazoo Community Foundation nonprofit partner Sam Lealofi: *"Usually funders want us to move right into action. But the Foundation allowed us the space to go out into the community and build relationships. They allowed us time for inquiry, so we didn't have to go into the community and say, 'we have an after school program, and this is what we are going to do.' We were able to go out and start talking to parents and kids. We asked kids, 'What do you want for yourself?' We asked parents,*

**“ Among some environmental grantees there was a sense that if you clean up the state's environment then you're improving the quality of life for everyone. They didn't see race as an issue. We encouraged them to dig deeper and to explore ways in which communities of color suffer disproportionately from environmental pollution or are systematically disconnected from green infrastructure.”**—HAWLEY TRUAX,

Z. SMITH REYNOLDS FOUNDATION

*'What do you want for your kids?' We wouldn't have been able to do this without that leeway from the foundation."*

Z. Smith Reynolds practices a “carrot and stick” approach to move grantees toward the authentic inclusion of communities. For example, because DEI issues may not be on the radar of environmental organizations, the foundation has been especially deliberate in its work with these groups: *"Among some environmental grantees,"* explains Program Officer Hawley Truax, *"there was a sense that if you clean up the state's environment then you're improving the quality of life for everyone. They didn't see race as an issue. We encouraged them to dig deeper and to explore ways in which communities of color suffer disproportionately from environmental pollution or are systematically disconnected from green infrastructure."*

The Z. Smith Reynolds' DEI efforts continue to evolve. Early on, the foundation simply asked grantees to report on the racial and gender diversity of their board and staff. Over time, the foundation found that that simple numbers were insufficient to gauge levels of inclusion. Leslie Winner, Executive Director of Z. Smith Reynolds, explains the evolution of the foundation's approach: *"When we asked grantees why their board diversity was not representative of the community they served, many groups found it very difficult to move beyond token diversity. As*

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Building nonprofit partners' capacity to engage their community

- Invest in organizational development

*a condition for funding, some groups were required to submit a diversity plan. Although some groups were making progress, others had a hard time getting to authentic inclusion of diverse voices. So one year we explicitly asked in site visits how they include diverse voices in their decision-making. Their answers showed us that we really needed to do more to help them understand what authentic engagement is and how to do it. In addition, we wanted to move beyond inclusion to having grantees apply a racial equity lens to their work. We partnered with a group called Open Source Leadership on a series of convenings with our grantees to help them see how the concepts of diversity, inclusion, and equity apply to their particular work. These were very powerful conversations and led us to providing technical assistance grants to a group of grantees that wanted to go further in working on inclusion and equity.”*



Skillman Foundation



## 7. Convening nonprofit partners and other stakeholders to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion, and encouraging collaboration among nonprofit partners to tackle the structural issues that affect communities

Often viewing themselves as neutral players, DEI facilitators are sensitive to and manage unequal power dynamics that may prevent diverse individuals from participating in conversations, thus encouraging their full inclusion. They put issues of DEI on the table for discussion, and encourage nonprofit partners to partner with each other to tackle structural issues that affect communities to pursue equitable outcomes.

### CONNECT AND CONVENE NONPROFIT PARTNERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Each foundation in this study considered connecting and convening nonprofit partners, as well as community stakeholders across private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and government sectors, as one of its most important functions. The foundations view themselves as neutral facilitators of conversations, often describing themselves as a “bridge” linking different players in the community. By including a more diverse group of community stakeholders, these funders bring different voices to the table that may develop into unexpected partnerships.

In convening nonprofit partners and stakeholders across the community, DEI facilitators are sensitive to the unequal power dynamics that may prevent individuals from underrepresented groups or those without formal authority from participating fully in conversations. For example,

“There are vast differences in large, Metro Atlanta-based organizations and smaller rural ones. Some feel it is a natural inclination to think that the small ones are not as important, or that their voices don’t matter as much, but they do. They bring a depth of knowledge and experience from areas of the state that the large Metro organizations lack and, honestly, do not know how to access. The Sapelo Foundation works to bring these two diverse interests together so they can learn from each other.”

—PHYLLIS BOWEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE SAPELO FOUNDATION

to ensure that all voices are heard equally in convenings, the Sapelo Foundation tries to equalize the power dynamics between the larger and smaller organizations present: Sapelo’s Executive Director Phyllis Bowen states, “*There are vast differences in large, Metro Atlanta-based organizations and smaller rural ones. Some feel it is a natural inclination to think that the small ones are not as important, or that their voices don’t matter as much, but they do. They bring a depth of knowledge and experience from areas of the state that the large Metro organizations lack and, honestly, do not know how to access. The Sapelo Foundation works to bring these two diverse interests together so they can learn from each other.*”

The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation tries to bridge the gap between its nonprofit partners and the broader philanthropic community. According to Program Officer Wilma Montañez: “*I have a couple of nonprofit partners that I work with to help them feel more comfortable with philanthropies. There are 70,000 foundations in the country, and there are 70,000 ways they approach their funding. Some of our nonprofit partners are very small; they*

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Convening nonprofit partners to discuss DEI

- Connect and convene nonprofit partners and other stakeholders
- Put DEI on the table
- Encourage authentic collaboration among nonprofit partners

aren't as savvy around proposal writing or they may not have the know-how to develop relationships with funders. I know a lot of these players, and the power dynamics that go on. I'm in a good position to share that knowledge with my nonprofit partners, to help open doors to other funding opportunities for them."

#### PUT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ON THE TABLE

DEI facilitators use their convenings to put DEI issues on the table for open discussion to advance their salience in the field. In 2011, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation began a series of convenings to facilitate conversations on DEI among its grantees, spurred by grantees' desire to move beyond token diversity. Program Officer James Gore describes the sessions: "We brought together grantees whose work ranged across the spectrum of diversity, equity, and inclusion to engage in dialogue. We organized four convenings to create a common language around these issues, and with the help of consultants, provided grantees with useful tools to go back and develop additional strategies in their organizations."

As its nonprofit partners became more interested in exploring these issues in depth, the foundation initiated a capacity building grant program. Jenn

**Our foundation regularly facilitates discussions about race. We invite politicians, business leaders, academics, foundations, and nonprofits. St. Louis is a highly segregated city, and we're trying to break down those barriers between people.**—BRIDGET MCDERMOTT FLOOD,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INCARNATE WORD

Fry, Associate Director of Democracy-NC, a recipient of a grant, shares her perspective on the convenings: "We were able to connect with other nonprofit partners and talk about our challenges with racial equity and bounce ideas off each other. Afterwards, they invited nonprofit partners to submit an LOI to continue to work on racial equity. We applied and got a grant of \$8,000. We hired a consultant to do an organizational assessment, and now we are addressing the issues that came out of that assessment."

Several foundations in this study, the Brett Family Foundation and Incarnate Word among them, lead or participate in local, regional, or national forums on issues of DEI. Bridget McDermott Flood, Executive Director of Incarnate Word, explains how her foundation tries to encourage open discussions about race in a segregated city:



Incarnate Word Foundation

*“Our foundation regularly facilitates discussions about race. We invite politicians, business leaders, academics, foundations, and nonprofits. St. Louis is a highly segregated city, and we’re trying to break down those barriers between people.”*

The Brett Family Foundation has been active in the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable, a permanent convening body of 43 non-partisan nonprofit groups in Colorado who share a commitment to civic engagement and who are dedicated to achieving an “inclusive, engaged, just, and equitable state for all Coloradans.” This involvement has allowed Brett to contribute to and learn from the experience of other foundations dedicated to DEI.



Sapelo Foundation

## **ENCOURAGE AUTHENTIC COLLABORATION AMONG NONPROFIT PARTNERS**

DEI facilitators encourage nonprofit partners to partner and collaborate with each other, as they consider this practice as necessary to tackling the structural issues producing inequities for communities. Denise Ellis, Grants & Technology Manager for the Foundation for the Mid South, says: *“For us to lift up our community, we must sit down and work together.”* Similarly, Mike Brewer, Senior Advisor for the Brett Family Foundation, explains: *“We truly believe that social justice is not accomplished by organizations working in silos, but by organizations coming together around a shared agenda.”*

For Brett, a small family foundation, having nonprofit partners work together is also a way to leverage its limited funding for greater impact: *“My role as a program officer is to encourage advocacy organizations to come together, to engage with and collaborate with other organizations,”* says Program Officer Claire Gilbert. *“We try to be a bridge, connecting like-minded organizations to amplify our impact. We only grant about \$500,000 a year, so we really try to leverage that by having our nonprofit partners work together.”*

## 8. Using evaluation as a learning tool to improve their own—and their nonprofit partners’—practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion

DEI facilitators rely more on relationships with nonprofit partners than on formal reports or evaluations. They take a big-picture view of evaluation, and value qualitative data as much as quantitative data. They minimize the burden of evaluation on their nonprofit partners, showing respect for nonprofit partners’ time.

### TAKE A BIG-PICTURE VIEW OF EVALUATION

DEI facilitators use evaluation to advance their DEI values. In reporting forms, they often ask for diversity metrics—for example, diversity of clients served, geographic diversity, or internal board/ staff diversity. The Brett Family Foundation places as much—or even greater—value on qualitative data as it does on quantitative data, as do all of the foundations in the study. Says Brewer: *“Because changing policy takes a long time, we look for markers along the way. So we’ll look not only at how many people the organization is interacting with in a particular community, but also at the quality and method of that interaction. We may also look at how well the organization is collaborating with other organizations.”*

**“Because changing policy takes a long time, we look for markers along the way. So we’ll look not only at how many people the organization is interacting with in a particular community, but also at the quality and method of that interaction. We may also look at how well the organization is collaborating with other organizations.”**—MIKE BREWER, SENIOR ADVISOR, THE

BRETT FAMILY FOUNDATION

DEI facilitators tend to rely more on relationships with nonprofit partners than on formal reports or evaluations to assess their investments. *“We don’t require as much evaluation as other foundations,”* explains Incarnate Word Foundation Program Associate Margaret Eigsti. *“We do ask for a written report at the end. But we feel that, if we are in contact with grantees enough, if we allow them to be honest with us along the way about what is working and what isn’t, then we don’t really need to rely on that report. We will already*

*know what’s happened through our conversations. The Foundation’s leadership has intentionally chosen not to require grantees to conduct rigorous evaluation. Rigorous evaluation takes a lot of money, and it would be extremely demanding on our nonprofit partners. The questions on our report ask grantees to report on key outcomes that they are already tracking for other funders as well as their greatest successes and challenges.”*

Given that many of these foundations make longer-term investments in advocacy and policy change, they tend to take a big-picture view of evaluation, and may ask more reflective questions than questions dealing with outputs. For Jessie Smith Noyes, evaluation reports are an opportunity to not only learn whether their nonprofit partners are being successful, but why their nonprofit partners are being successful or not.

### EMPHASIZE LEARNING OVER COMPLIANCE

DEI facilitators use evaluation more for learning than for compliance. They understand that nonprofit partners’ compliance with grant requirements does not necessarily equate with achieving outcomes. These foundations expect nonprofit partners to adapt their own projects based on what they are learning during implementation, but they also use evaluation findings and feedback to adapt their own philanthropic practices.

### PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE

#### Using evaluation as a learning tool

- Take a big-picture view of evaluation
- Emphasize learning over compliance





Skillman Foundation

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation has been experimenting with ways to share evaluation data across nonprofit partners in order to facilitate greater learning among nonprofit partners and by the foundation. Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh, Vice President, Community Investment, describes a recent idea the foundation implemented: *“We always hear from nonprofit partners that they want to see what our evaluation data says, and we struggle with how to share data back to them. It’s really been an opportunity to consider how to improve our customer service to our nonprofit partners. We had this idea to have a convening at which grantees would bring their data and share what they’ve learned with each other. It was great to see nonprofit partners having authentic conversations around the data. We really want to keep moving evaluation away from compliance and toward learning.”*

Michael Evans, Director of Literacy Services at the Kalamazoo Literacy Council, reflects on the experience from a nonprofit partner’s perspective: *“The foundation is not only interested in our results, but also in how we achieved those results. They don’t let themselves be blinded by numbers. In lieu of a final report, they brought together nonprofit partners and their program staff in a convening to discuss outcomes and best practices. The convening exceeded my expectations—it was a genuine learning experience for the nonprofit partners and for the foundation. There were also a lot of practical observations, and conversations among nonprofit partners about where our work can intersect, and how we can help each other’s efforts.”*

# LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

- ADOPT AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY •
  - LOOK WITHIN •
- ENGAGE WITH NONPROFIT PARTNERS •
  - BUILD CAPACITY •

The examples offered by the nine foundations in this study demonstrate how foundations, through their daily grant-making practices, can facilitate DEI among their nonprofit partners and other stakeholders. Large and small foundations, of every type and in every region of the country, are assuming the role of DEI facilitators. Below we present a few lessons that the philanthropic field can take from their examples:

## Adopt an attitude of humility

Foundations offer knowledge and resources with the best of intentions, yet at times they may presume to know what is best for the communities they seek to impact. Instead, foundations ought to adopt an attitude of humility, putting aside their biases in order to see the world through the community's lens. Foundations ought to support people and communities in identifying, valuing, and building on their assets, and finding solutions to locally identified needs.

## Look within

Upholding DEI principles requires not only talking about their importance, but also modeling it for other foundations and nonprofit partners. While many foundations begin the process by diversifying the membership of staff and boards, they ought to strive for “authentic” diversity—conscientiously including the opinions and viewpoints of diverse persons in leadership and decision-making—as opposed to “token” diversity, which only makes a symbolic effort to increase diversity.

A true commitment to DEI requires finding ways to apply these values in all philanthropic practices. In developing strategy, foundations might consider how they could—within the confines of their own missions—address the structural issues that limit opportunities for people in local communities. Could they, for example, fund advocacy and policy change work, or demonstrate their commitment to communities by making longer-term grants? Could they better support the infrastructure of grassroots nonprofits by providing general operating or capacity building grants? In selecting nonprofit partners, they might look for organizations that are responsive and sensitive to the cultural contexts of their local communities. In assessing their investments, foundations might ensure that evaluation can be used as a learning tool for

themselves and their nonprofit partners; and they might show respect for their nonprofit partners' time by minimizing the burden of reporting and evaluation.

## Engage with nonprofit partners

To embrace DEI to their utmost, foundations must acknowledge the level of influence they bring to relationships with nonprofit partners as a result of holding the power to confer rewards (in the form of grants). Recognizing this imbalance of power can remind them to approach nonprofit partners with humility, to acknowledge them as true experts on the work, and to make a practice of listening to and learning from them. In doing so, foundations can form relationships with nonprofits as partners, relationships characterized by shared power and influence. They can trust nonprofit partners to pursue the strategies that make sense given local needs and according to the timelines required by local realities. Engaging nonprofits as partners lends foundations the credibility to ask nonprofits to engage their communities as partners, in turn.

## Build capacity

Foundations must be prepared to support nonprofit partners and others—in adopting and acting on DEI values. It is not sufficient for foundations to ask nonprofit partners to adopt these principles; they must also build nonprofit partners' capacity to do so—sharing tools, providing technical assistance, and holding workshops. They might spread the word further by convening nonprofit partners and other stakeholders—business leaders, local government workers, or fellow philanthropists—to discuss DEI openly. They might seek to tackle the structural issues that limit access to opportunities by encouraging collaboration among nonprofit partners.

In conclusion, this study confirmed that foundations can facilitate DEI with their nonprofit partners, as well as facilitate DEI among peer foundations and their nonprofit partners, through their grant-making practices. Clearly, many foundations are doing good work. In selecting nine cases for our study, we were forced to exclude over 150 other foundations that

had surfaced as promising exemplars; and these 150 probably represent but a fraction of what a deeper dive might have uncovered. We hope that the example of the nine foundations we chose to explore provides a roadmap for others interested in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in their own work.



## WORKS CITED

- Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (revised). In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, Me: Intercultural Press.
- Buteau, E., & Buchanan, P. (2013). *Working Well With Nonprofit Partners: A Guide for Foundation Program Staff*. The Center for Effective Philanthropy.
- D5 Coalition. (2013). *State of the Work: Inspiration & Ideas for Advancing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Philanthropy*. D5 Coalition.
- D5 Coalition. (2013). *Analysis of Policies, Practices, and Programs for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. D5 Coalition.
- The Foundation Center. (2009). *Benchmarking Diversity: A First Look at New York City Foundations and Nonprofits*. The Foundation Center.
- French, J. R. P., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright and A. Zander (Eds.), *Group Dynamics*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Frumkin, P., (2006). Accountability and Legitimacy in American Foundation Philanthropy. In K. Prewitt, M. Dogan, S. Heydemann, & S. Toepler (Eds.), *The Legitimacy of Philanthropic Foundations*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Pitz, W. & Sen, R. (2004). *Short Changed: Foundation Giving and Communities of Color*. Oakland: Applied Research Center.
- Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline*. New York: Random House.
- Stone, R., & Butler, B. (June 2004). *Structural Racism and Community Building*. The Aspen Institute.
- Stone, R., & Butler, B. (February 2000). *Core Issues in Comprehensive Community-Building Initiatives: Exploring Power and Race*. Chapin Hall Center for Children.

## APPENDIX: INTERVIEWEES

**Ivy Allen**, *President*, Foundation for the Mid South, Jackson, MS

**Melanie Allen**, *Conservation & Diversity Coordinator*, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Raleigh, NC

**Tonya Allen**, *President & CEO*, Skillman Foundation, Detroit, MI

**Phyllis Bowen**, *Executive Director*, Sapelo Foundation, Brunswick, GA

**Mike Brewer**, *Senior Advisor*, Brett Family Foundation, Boulder, CO

**Cynthia Brown**, *RCP Specialist*, The Conservation Fund, Chapel Hill, NC

**Diana Bustamante**, *Executive Director*, Colonias Development Council, Las Cruces, NM

**Victor De Luca**, *President*, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, New York, NY

**Margaret Eigsti**, *Program Associate*, Incarnate Word Foundation, St. Louis, MO

**Denise Ellis**, *Grants & Technology Manager*, Foundation for the Mid South, Jackson, MS

**Michael Evans**, *Director of Literacy Services*, Kalamazoo Literacy Council, Kalamazoo, MI

**Jenn Frye**, *Associate Director*, Democracy North Carolina, Durham, NC

**Claire Gilbert**, *Program Officer*, Brett Family Foundation, Boulder, CO

**James Gore**, *Program Officer*, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC

**Carol A. Goss**, *Former President & CEO*, Skillman Foundation, Detroit, MI

**Gary R. Grant**, *Director*, North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, Tillery, NC

**Tracey Dorset**, *Program Officer*, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC

**Michelle Gutierrez**, *Program Officer*, Con Alma Health Foundation, Santa Fe, NM

**Kelly Kemp-McLintock**, *Chief Advancement Officer*, The Jones Center, Springdale, AR

**Sam Lealofi**, *Executive Director*, Kalamazoo Center for Youth and Community, Kalamazoo, MI

**Bridget McDermott Flood**, *Executive Director*, Incarnate Word Foundation, St. Louis, MO

**Wilma Montañez**, *Program Officer for Reproductive Rights*, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, New York, NY

**Dwanda Moore**, *Program Officer*, Foundation for the Mid South, Jackson, MS

**Julia Neighbors**, *Project Manager*, JUSTGeorgia, Atlanta, GA

**Margaret Newbold**, *Associate Director*, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Raleigh, NC

**Miriam Peña**, *Executive Director*, Colorado Progressive Coalition, Denver, CO

**Carrie Pickett-Erway**, *President/CEO*, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Kalamazoo, MI

**Dolores E. Roybal**, *Executive Director*, Con Alma Health Foundation, Santa Fe, NM

**Mikki Sager**, *Vice President and Director of the Resourceful Communities Program*, The Conservation Fund, Chapel Hill, NC

**Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh**, *Vice President, Community Investment*, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Kalamazoo, MI

**Hawley Truax**, *Program Officer*, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC

**Kelley Weigel**, *Executive Director*, The Western States Center, Portland, OR

**Leslie J. Winner**, *Executive Director*, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC

*Note: The list reflects the positions held at the time of the interviews in 2013.*





**D5 Coalition**

980 N. Michigan Ave.  
Suite 1120  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-324-0744