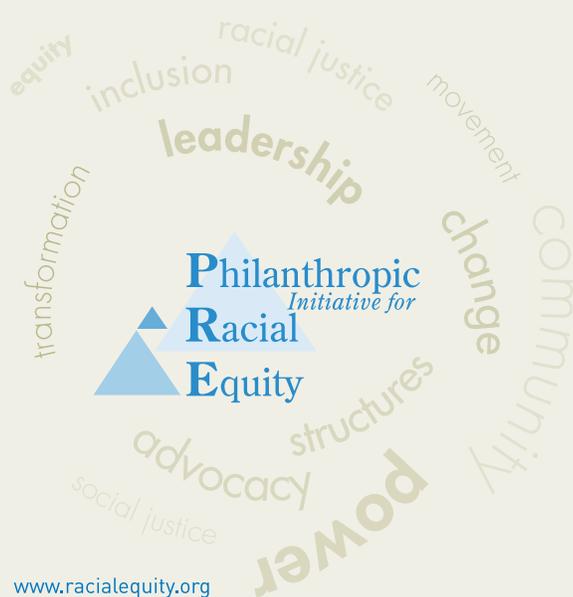


May 2009

# CATALYTIC CHANGE:

## Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment



[www.racialequity.org](http://www.racialequity.org)



**APPLIED RESEARCH CENTER**

*Advancing Racial Justice Through Research, Advocacy and Journalism*

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# FOREWORD

The Applied Research Center (ARC) and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) developed the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment following ARC's 2004 publication of *Short Changed: Foundation Giving in Communities of Color*. That report documented, as recent reports have confirmed, decreasing grantmaking with clear racial justice impacts, as well as decreasing support for organizations led by people of color. As foundation executives grapple with the meaning of racial disparities in philanthropy and how to remedy them, we hope that the ARC-PRE assessment will help all of us understand how foundations can advance racial equity more effectively.

The two organizations have focused consistently on establishing a racial justice lens in grantmaking, a task for which the foundation world has had too few guideposts and resources. The need for such benchmarks motivated us to create a clear set of definitions, questions and processes to help foundations assess their internal and external systems not only to support organizations led by people of color, but also to drive resources toward those groups that operate with an analysis likely to generate more systemic and racially just solutions.

ARC and PRE initially designed a survey/questionnaire to help foundations examine their inner workings as well as the public expressions of their commitments to racial equity. We received feedback on that tool from more than 50 funders and activists, including participants at the National Network of Grantmakers' People of Color Caucus meeting in Bellingham, Washington in 2006. We knew that the tool itself was unfinished, and began looking for foundations that might be interested in helping us test and refine it. Our initial audience was not foundations that needed to be persuaded that race mattered. Rather, we focused on foundations that were committed to addressing racial inequities, and that wanted to understand more deeply how their institutions were faring, and how they could improve.

We sincerely commend the courage and trust that the Consumer Health Foundation in Washington, DC and the Barr Foundation in Boston displayed by agreeing to pilot the assessment process with their boards, staff and grantees. They were particularly bold to take up the opportunity for deeper reflection using an untested process, and in the context of a heated national debate about race, diversity and philanthropy. We especially recognize the leadership of Margaret O'Bryon (President and CEO of the Consumer Health Foundation), Marion Kane (Executive Director of the Barr Foundation at the start of the process), and Patricia Brandes (Barr's current Executive Director, who finalized the process amidst the organization's leadership transition). We recognize the strong commitments of each of their boards for approving and contributing to the process, both as a whole and individually through interviews. The program staff at each foundation were incredibly generous with their time and input, thoughtfully reflecting on many established processes, and sharing so much about their personal roles in the grantmaking.

The unsung heroes of the assessment, as is so often true in much of the work of foundations, were the grants administrators and other administrative staff who assisted us with

“ The ARC-PRE assessment has resulted in the foundation using a racial justice lens on our strategy development for issues from the environment to education. This has sharpened our focus. It’s aligned us in the importance of being explicit in our communications. We are significantly bolder in both policies and practices. And it has given us a learning agenda to pursue. ”

—Patricia Brandes, Executive Director, Barr Foundation

hundreds of folders, related paperwork and appointments. While there were so many who put in time, Nivosoa Razafindratsitohaina, Grants Administrator at the Consumer Health Foundation, as well as Jane Joyce, Executive Assistant, and Kerri Hurley, Grants Manager, both of the Barr Foundation, were unfailingly gracious shepherds of this time-intensive process, amidst already hectic foundation schedules. Jacquelyn A. Brown, Program Officer for Communications and Outreach at CHF, and Stefan Lanfer, Associate for Strategy & Knowledge at Barr, also took extensive roles in coordinating and strengthening communication. With their participation, we were indeed able to test and refine the assessment to make it most useful.

We also thank the grantees of both foundations who took time from their critical work to respond to surveys or to participate in phone interviews or focus groups. We and the foundations were extremely mindful of the power dynamic implicated in saying no to such requests from funders (in spite of all the assurances of anonymity), and of the added stress of implied evaluation. We appreciated hearing grantees’ concerns or challenges to the inquiry’s premise, and we also took note when they acknowledged the foundations’ leadership in raising questions of racial equity. A few grantees let us know that the process had sparked important discussion internally and had helped them to focus on topics that were too often left unaddressed. Each of the foundations has a track record of supporting good work; nothing in this report is intended to dismiss their existing approaches or the contributions they have made.

At a time when foundations and nonprofits are increasingly engaging in discussions of legislatively mandated data gathering, criteria about percentages of grants to people of color-led organizations or to those that serve communities of color, calls for greater diversity among staff and board, and greater efficacy throughout, we would like to distinguish the ARC-PRE process from other kinds of assessments:

- It is not a diversity audit of either foundation’s staff, board,

or vendors, although we addressed aspects of the racial composition and operations of each.

- It is not an evaluation of any given portfolio nor of grantee impact.
- It is not an audit nor an exact count of either foundation’s racial justice grantmaking, although it recognizes subsets and patterns.
- It is not a longitudinal study of what has taken place historically at each foundation, nor a projection into the future. It is a snapshot of a particular moment in time and a baseline assessment connected to each foundation’s own goals.
- It does not set forth bottom line criteria that we expect all funders to consider or meet.

Even with these boundaries, we were able to understand and reflect back to the foundations the degree to which their grantmaking and other processes created racial equity outcomes, and to identify opportunities to strengthen that impact. We welcome the field’s feedback on this report, and are happy to engage with other foundations that might be interested in undertaking such an assessment themselves. While this is the story of only two foundations, we believe that others concerned with racial issues will find resonance in their lessons. ■

Rinku Sen  
President and CEO, Applied Research Center & Publisher,  
*ColorLines* Magazine

Lori Villarosa  
Executive Director, Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to share lessons learned from piloting a Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment developed by the Applied Research Center (ARC) and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) with two different foundations — the Consumer Health Foundation, a private foundation in Washington, DC; and the Barr Foundation, a family foundation in Boston, Massachusetts.

ARC and PRE designed the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment to help foundation staff and leaders understand the benefits of being explicit about racial equity, and to determine the degree to which their work is advancing racial justice. This report is based on the pilot process, and is intended to share insights into some of the barriers within the philanthropic sector that stand in the way of achieving racial justice outcomes. It is organized into five segments:

1. This introduction, which provides brief profiles of ARC and PRE, and of the assessment team;
2. A description of the assessment process, including definitions, assumptions, and methodology;
3. An overview of the assessments of the Consumer Health Foundation and the Barr Foundation, including brief profiles of each, summary findings, recommendations, and impacts to date;
4. Lessons learned from the pilot process by the ARC-PRE assessment team; and
5. Appendices with more detailed findings, recommendations, and initial impacts for each foundation.

## THE ARC-PRE ASSESSMENT TEAM

ARC and PRE collaborated closely to develop and pilot the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment. ARC is a racial justice think tank and home for media and activism. Founded in 1981, ARC uses rigorous research and new technology to popularize the need for racial justice, and to prepare people to fight for it. It investigates the hidden racial consequences

of public policy initiatives and develops new frameworks to resolve racially charged debates. ARC achieves this through the following programs:

- ***The Media and Journalism Program*** delivers stories that are not reported elsewhere, and moves people to action in support of racial equity.
- ***The Strategic Research and Policy Analysis Program*** exposes structural inequities through quantitative and qualitative research; produces reports and interactive tools for researchers, activists and policymakers; and builds the analytical foundation for racial justice campaigns across the nation.
- ***The Racial Justice Leadership Action Network*** trains journalists, community organizers and elected officials through popular education, convening, and mobilized action.
- ***The Facing Race Conference*** has become the national annual convening of organizers, activists, and intellectuals on race and politics.

PRE is a national multiyear project aimed at increasing both the amount and the effectiveness of resources to combat institutional and structural racism by convening, educating, and building the capacity of grantmakers and grantseekers. PRE carries this work out through the following strategies:

- Providing opportunities for grantmakers to learn and strategize about cutting-edge racial equity issues and how they apply to their work within various fields;
- Increasing grantmakers' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different racial equity efforts, and helping them to assess their own grantmaking;

- Engaging in internal assessments of foundations' institutional needs around racial equity and diversity, and coordinating or adapting tools to most effectively meet them;
- Consulting with cornerstone nonprofits that explicitly address issues of racism to strengthen their capacity, and to increase coordination and impact; and
- Assisting local community leaders and funders to identify and sustain effective approaches to achieve racial equity.

The ARC-PRE team consisted of the following staff and consultants, who collaborated on the design, research, and writing involved in piloting the ARC-PRE assessment:

**Co-Principal: Rinku Sen** is the President and Executive Director of ARC and Publisher of *ColorLines* magazine. A leading figure in the racial justice movement, Rinku has extensive practical experience on the ground, with expertise in race, feminism, immigration, and economic justice. Over the course of her career, she has weaved together journalism and organizing to further social change. She also has significant experience in philanthropy. Rinku is Vice Chair of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, and an Advisory Board member of PRE.

**Co-Principal: Lori Villarosa** is the Executive Director of PRE. She has worked in the field of philanthropy for more than 17 years. Prior to launching PRE, Lori was a program officer with

the C. S. Mott Foundation, where she was instrumental in developing the Foundation's U.S. Race Relations grantmaking portfolio, focusing on addressing institutional racism and on building appreciation of racial and ethnic diversity. She has worked closely with a broad range of grantmaking institutions including national, international, community, corporate, family, and progressive membership foundations.

**Project Manager: Maggie Potapchuk** is the founder of MP Associates, a consulting firm that works with individuals, organizations, and communities to build their capacities to address racism and to better understand privilege issues for building a just and inclusive society. Her work on racial equity includes the areas of program development, capacity building and organizational development, facilitation and training, evaluation and assessment, and research.

**Research Associate: Emma Taati** is a research funding consultant specializing in African Diaspora Studies, Cultural Studies, and Gender & Sexuality Studies. Her professional background is in foundation relations and strategic communications.

**Research Associate: Megan Izen** is the Executive Assistant to the President and Executive Director of the Applied Research Center. Her writing has been published by *ColorLines*, *Race-Wire*, *alternet.org*, and *New America Media*. ■

ARC and PRE define *racial justice* as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

# HOW THE ASSESSMENT WORKS

ARC and PRE developed the assessment to help foundations evaluate how well they are achieving racial justice outcomes.

It is important to note that the assessment is based on admittedly high standards for doing racial justice work, and is intended to help those funders that have already made some commitment to reducing racial disparities and to advancing the well-being of their full communities. While the criteria are admittedly aspirational and challenging, all foundations can use the assessment to make incremental progress toward advancing racial justice more effectively.

In piloting the assessment with two different foundations, ARC and PRE pursued the following goals:

- To strengthen each foundation's understanding of racial justice work;
- To assess each foundation's overall grantmaking using a racial justice lens;
- To analyze how well the various mechanisms for community change at each foundation—like grantmaking, capacity building, organizational partnerships, and communications—were achieving racial justice outcomes;
- To provide resources, tools, and training to enhance each foundation's capacity to apply racial justice values and principles to all of its work; and
- To capture lessons learned from using the assessment, and to share them with the broader philanthropic sector.

## WORKING DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Without a clear definition of racism, its historic functions and contemporary manifestations, we cannot address the root causes underlying persistent racial disparities in education, health, housing, and other arenas. Establishing a common definition is especially important because explicit public discourse on matters of race rarely takes place in the United States. While race is always present and often central to public policy debates, it tends to lie hidden under the surface, cloaked beneath coded language or universal frames that can conceal the existence of racial inequities. When race *is* explicitly discussed, it is usually confined to a single issue, community, or moment in time, masking the real-life, cumulative effects of past and present policies in communities of color.

Most efforts to address racism are limited to individual and interpersonal racial prejudice. While these efforts take an important step toward addressing racial disparities, they too often fail to tackle the larger and more complex institutional and structural forces that keep racism in place. The ARC-PRE assessment focuses on institutional and structural racism, because addressing racism at this level holds the greatest potential for leveraging meaningful and lasting change, and because it is a neglected strategy.

**Institutional racism** refers to the discriminatory treatment; unfair policies, practices and patterns; and inequitable opportunities and impacts in single public- and private-sector entities.

**Structural racism** refers to the cumulative impact of the racism of multiple societal institutions over time. It encompasses: (1) history, which lies beneath the surface providing the foundation for white racial advantage in this country; (2) culture, which serves to normalize and replicate racist images and ideas; and (3) interconnected institutions and policies that perpetuate and reinforce racial power disparities.

**ARC and PRE define racial justice as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.** This definition includes the following assumptions:

- Racial justice is not the same as racial diversity, which only requires the presence of people of color in an organization. However, racial diversity is a component of racial justice.
- Racial justice requires an *analysis* and a *strategy* for addressing racism in institutions.
- The presence of people of color does not necessarily lead to a racial justice organization or program, even though these individuals may be providing needed services to a community of color.
- Racial justice work specifically targets institutional and structural racism through a continuum of activities that can include research, education, organizing, advocacy, and movement building.

A structural analysis implies that change agents must build cross-issue alliances, advocating for new policies and practices in multiple institutions simultaneously. For example, advocates for education must recognize how their interests intersect with the concerns of those working on housing segregation, which affects the tax base for schools; and with the issues of others focused on immigration policy, which threatens to deport undocumented families and incites fear among immigrant students. A structural racism approach would build effective alliances to target not only school boards, but also neighborhood planning councils, zoning and development agencies, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, and other institutions, to ensure educational equity.

Addressing structural racism also demands being *explicit* rather than *implicit* about race. Public discourse touting universal policy solutions can do harm in communities of color if it

fails to acknowledge both the existence and the root causes of racial disparities. Put simply, the argument for universal solutions, that a rising tide lifts all boats, might falsely assume that everyone has a boat. If the assumption is incorrect, then the solutions applied based upon this analysis threaten to leave the most vulnerable people under water. Being explicit helps to unveil false assumptions, by shifting the conversation away from such frames as economics, opportunity, or universalism that hide the particular impacts of public policies and practices in communities of color, and that often obscure the most effective solutions.

Taking the issue of education as an example, the following grid illustrates the differences between efforts to address racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels. It also shows the implications of addressing racial equity implicitly versus explicitly.

	IMPLICIT FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY	EXPLICIT FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY
<b>Strategies that address Individual Racism</b>	<p><i>Training new teachers' aides</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> kids get immediate help, including some in communities of color</p> <p><b>Con:</b> communities of color might get left out</p>	<p><i>A program that selects 10 students of color at each school to receive intensive assistance to improve their performance in standardized testing</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> engages students of color; proactive intervention in potential racial dynamics</p> <p><b>Con:</b> might not achieve scale</p>
<b>Strategies that address Institutional Racism</b>	<p><i>Advocate for legislation to create incentives for smaller class sizes</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> movement in one local institution</p> <p><b>Con:</b> could create unintended consequences of attracting qualified teachers in urban districts to move to better-off suburban schools, decreasing teacher supply in poorer areas.</p>	<p><i>Support a lawsuit naming racial disparities in education funding as a violation of equal protection clause</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> clear racial imperative</p> <p><b>Con:</b> law requires proof of intent to discriminate vs. evidence that the outcome disproportionately harms people of color</p>
<b>Strategies that address Structural Racism</b>	<p><i>Coalition fights to end real estate tax structure</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> addresses root cause of poor education; possibly maintains white support</p> <p><b>Con:</b> does not disrupt the coded racism that feeds anti-tax sentiments</p>	<p><i>Coalition demands school funding formula based on racial impact; also works to expand Children's Health Insurance to immigrant kids.</i></p> <p><b>Pro:</b> addresses racial conflict at start; attracts communities of color</p> <p><b>Con:</b> may alienate whites</p>

“ When tackling health inequities in communities of color, it is important to look at the root issues of those inequities, and structural racism is one of them. To look those issues in the eye, understand how they affect what we’re after in terms of improving life and health outcomes, and to do so in a way that fully engages our board is exciting. And because it’s new and cutting-edge work for us, we’ve learned a lot and we continue to learn even more. It’s not easy. But if you want to lead, this is a great issue to lead on, because it crosses so many boundaries. ”

—Margaret O’Byron, President and CEO, Consumer Health Foundation

Using these definitions and assumptions, the ARC-PRE Racial Justice Assessment offers foundation program officers and executives a way to evaluate and strengthen their current programs and portfolios, and to integrate racial justice into all aspects of a foundation’s work.

## METHODOLOGY

The ARC-PRE assessment is a six- to nine-month process that analyzes a foundation’s grantees, its internal and external communications, and its overall operations to gauge the explicitness of racial justice language and actions, and the degree to which the foundation addresses structural racism. The methodology includes:

- A review of internal and external foundation documents – including strategic plans, theories of change, websites, grant application materials, and reports.
- Interviews with staff and board members<sup>1</sup> to determine whether the foundation uses explicit and consistent language to talk about racial justice, and how well it integrates racial justice into its overall work.

- A review of recent grant proposals, grantee websites and other available public communications, staff grant recommendation write-ups, and grantee interim and final reports;
- Input from a representational subset of grantees (based on different organizational sizes, geographic areas, and grant portfolios) using surveys, focus groups<sup>2</sup> and phone interviews;
- Categorization of grantees into three levels—low, medium, or high—reflecting the degree to which they were explicit about racial justice in their descriptions of their organization, programs and strategies; and
- Interviews with technical assistance providers and capacity-building intermediaries to determine the extent to which they were explicit about racial justice. ■

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1 Interviewed subset of past and current board members for CHF; did not interview Barr Foundation board members.

2 Conducted set of focus groups with Barr grantees only.

# THE PILOT PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW

This section provides brief organizational profiles for both foundations, snapshots of their readiness for racial justice work at the time of the assessment, summary findings and recommendations, and a short description of the progress that the foundations have made to date. The CHF assessment took place from May to October 2007, with a board presentation in March 2008. The Barr assessment took place from October 2007 to June 2008.

## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

With roots in a health justice movement that led to the formation of a worker-led health maintenance organization in 1937, today the **Consumer Health Foundation** (CHF) makes grants to grassroots organizations to improve the health status of Washington, DC-area communities. Within its mission, CHF focuses on reducing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health inequities. Over the past decade, it has granted approximately \$14 million to more than 70 community-based groups throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

**The Barr Foundation** is a private family foundation with a mission to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Boston, Massachusetts. The foundation anonymously grants approximately \$45 million per year to nonprofit organizations

in the Greater Boston region. It uses a systems, knowledge, and network-based approach to its vision of a city that is deeply connected to nature, and a community with rich cultural expression and hopeful futures for its children. To support this vision, Barr's primary grantmaking is to education, environment, and arts nonprofits in Boston. The Barr Foundation also devotes a small portion of its giving to a broad array of organizations that make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the city, and has a Fellowship program that focuses on networking diverse leaders in Boston's nonprofit sector.

The following grid provides a quick look at both foundations at the time of the ARC-PRE assessment. For each item listed in the left column, the grid illustrates each foundation's capacity in that area.

RACIAL JUSTICE CAPACITY AREA	CONSUMER HEALTH FOUNDATION	BARR FOUNDATION
<b>INTERNAL OPERATIONS</b>		
Inclusive policies and practices	●	●
Racially diverse board	●	○
Racially diverse program staff	◐	●
Staff and board development on issues of race, diversity, cultural competency and/or equity	◐	◐
Strategic Plan and/or Theory of Change reflects racial equity analysis	◐	◐

KEY: ○ = None, ◐ = Some, ● = Yes

	CONSUMER HEALTH FOUNDATION	BARR FOUNDATION
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**GRANTMAKING AND GRANTEE RELATIONS**

Capacity-building for emerging organizations in communities of color	◐	◐
Use of intermediaries with racial equity analysis	◐	◐
Systematically collect board/staff demographic data from grantees	○	○
Collect demographic data about populations served by grantees	◐	◐

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Shared explicit racial justice language and analysis among staff	○	○
External communication includes racial equity terms and explicit racial equity analysis	◐	○

KEY: ○ = None, ◐ = Some, ● = Yes

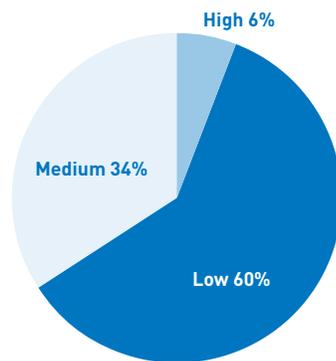
**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

While CHF and Barr are very different from each other in many ways, some clear themes emerged from the ARC-PRE assessments with both foundations. Following is a broad summary of the findings:

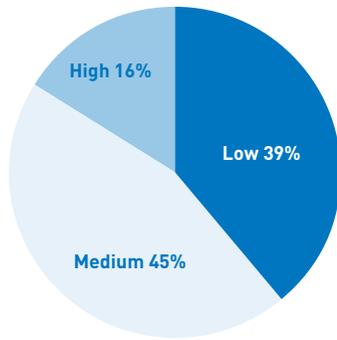
- At both foundations, diversity was the dominant framework for conversations about race, even when some foundation staff and board members thought they were focused on racial justice work.
- There was no consistently shared and explicit language to talk about race, racism, and racial justice at either foundation. Most references to race, racism, and racial justice in the communications of both foundations were implicit rather than explicit – using coded terms like “underserved,” “vulnerable,” “diversity” and “low-income.”
- Both foundations were using technical assistance providers and intermediaries to support internal foundation strategy and planning and to help grantees improve their work. Although some of the providers had adopted cultural competency, diversity and, to some extent, explicit racial justice analysis, others had not, and equity ideas were unevenly applied especially with the grantees.
- Both foundations had made moral and financial arguments for why organizations should be inclusive of people of color (e.g., “because it’s the right thing to do” or “because it’s a requirement for receiving a grant”). The Consumer Health

Foundation had begun to advance a structural racism analysis among their grantees and in their public communications. However, both foundations had work to do to define and put forward clear strategic reasons for using a racial justice framework that might open up new potential, strategies, solutions, and outcomes.

- When analyzing the degree to which grantees used an explicit racial justice approach or framework, most grantees at both foundations were in the **low** or **medium** categories. Many of these grantees tended to equate outreach to communities of color or diversity concerns with racial justice. Very few grantees were intentional and explicit about racial equity in defining the problems they were addressing, their strategies, and their organizations.



CHF GRANTEES



BARR GRANTEES

Note: The graphs above reflect the strength of an explicit and organizational racial justice analysis among a *sample* of grantees from each foundation. In the case of both foundations, the evaluation included a review of grantee folders, a survey, and interviews as well as focus groups for the Barr Foundation (see Appendices for more information).

It is important to note that the graphs do *not* reflect the organizational *diversity* of these grantees. In fact, the percentages shown belie the fact that CHF has a strong record of funding people of color-led organizations. Within the CHF sample, 62% of grantees had majority people of color staffs, and half had majority people of color boards. However, while grantees that were explicit about racial justice were likely to be led by people of color, the reverse was not true. Likewise, the Barr Foundation appeared to be funding organizations with more diversity and more leadership of color than the national averages<sup>3</sup>. Still, the assessment revealed that many Barr grantees were not using explicit racial justice approaches. The lesson is that foundations should not assume that funding people of color-led organizations is the same as funding racial justice.

- Organizations that were more intentional and explicit about racial justice were more likely to engage in racial justice policy advocacy and coalition building, even if direct service was a component of their work. Those with relatively weak racial justice frameworks tended to be more exclusively direct-service oriented.

- Grantees stated that they limited their use of explicit racial justice language, analyses, and strategies mainly due to discomfort and a lack of familiarity with questions of race, a desire to deflect racialized attacks, or because they understood their organizational missions to be either broader or narrower than race. All of this reflects common societal misunderstandings of racial justice, and an underestimation of its ability to unify stakeholders and advance an organization's mission.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a broad summary of the recommendations that the ARC-PRE assessment team made:

- ***Move Beyond Diversity to Racial Justice:*** Each foundation should establish a shared understanding of race and racism, and come to agreement on racial justice as a core part of its mission, goals, and strategies. This requires moving far beyond a diversity framework, toward a more explicit acknowledgment of the roots of structural racism, its implications for the foundation's mission, and organizational strategies to advance racial justice.
- ***Bring Communications into Alignment:*** Once a shared language, analysis, and strategy is built, each foundation should refine internal and external communications to bring them into alignment with a racial justice framework. This includes strategic plans, theories of change, newsletters, websites, grant application materials, etc. It also includes orientation and training processes for board and staff, as well as language that the program staff use to communicate the foundation's goals to existing and potential grantees.
- ***Revise the Grantmaking Process:*** It was recommended that both foundations revise their grantmaking processes using a racial justice lens. This work includes agreeing on racial justice expectations of grantees, as well as accountability measures. It requires each foundation to establish ways to surface an applicant's racial justice analysis and strategy, through questions on application materials and by collecting and evaluating organizational demographics.

<sup>3</sup> The ARC-PRE assessment did not directly evaluate the organizational demographics of Barr Foundation's grantees. Instead, a separate survey that was already being conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) asked about the demographics of board and senior management of Barr grantees and was shared with the ARC-PRE team. Based on the results of the CEP survey, which we compared to national data collected by the Urban Institute in 2005, the Barr Foundation appeared to be funding organizations with greater diversity than national averages.

## The lesson is that foundations should not assume that funding people of color-led organizations is the same as funding racial justice.

This area of work also includes providing technical assistance for grantees on racial justice policies and practices, ensuring that technical assistance providers share the foundation's racial justice values.

- ***Provide Leadership in the Philanthropic Field:*** This recommendation suggested that each foundation evaluate its role in donor collaboratives and alliances to strengthen its position in advocating for racial justice, and to share lessons learned with the field of philanthropy.

### INITIAL IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS

Since completing the ARC-PRE assessment, following is a brief summary of the racial justice work that CHF and the Barr Foundation have done:

#### CHF

- Continued and expanded the public leadership that CHF had already begun to provide prior to assessment, including featuring information on the process in their 2008 annual report under the headline “Walking Our Talk,” and highlighting structural racism as a clear component of the social determinants of health equity in their annual meeting of members, grantees and other funders;
- Held board and staff meetings specifically designed to establish a common racial justice understanding and language, including the use of consultants and the viewing of documentary films like *Race: The Power of Illusion* and *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*
- Developed and issued a new Advocacy for Health Justice Request for Proposals<sup>4</sup>, marking a shift from implicit individual behavior change interventions to a clear priority placed on health justice organizing and advocacy (while CHF had been funding advocacy prior to the assessment, its separate advocacy-related grants tended to support predominantly white organizations, while grants to organizations led by people of color tended to support direct services);
- Created a Futures Task Force at the board level to revise

the foundation's strategic plan, mission, vision, core values, and theory of change to reflect an explicit commitment to health justice and racial equity;

- Joined a new regional funding collaborative, Partnership for Equity, that provides capacity building support for leaders of color and their organizations explicitly focused on social justice and racial equity; and
- Started planning a health justice retreat with three youth of color advocacy organizations.

#### Barr Foundation

- Developed and conducted a board-level presentation and is providing ongoing education;
- Sent an email to grantees, to other Boston-area funders, and to city leaders, including a link to the board presentation<sup>5</sup> and the assessment findings on the foundation's website;
- Made major revisions to the grantmaking process in time for the first round of 2009 proposals, including a requirement for organizational diversity forms illustrating an applicant's staff and board composition, explicit racial justice questions, and new space on the template that program officers use to describe grant proposals to indicate the racial justice implications of each proposal;
- Working to reshape the foundation's environmental portfolio, which previously had only one discrete theory of change explicitly mentioning race in the area of environmental justice, but which will now have an explicit racial analysis across the entire portfolio;
- Reworking all theories of change memos to use more explicit racial justice language;
- Convened nonprofit leaders from the Barr Fellows program to train them on structural racism analysis and to apply it to concrete issues; and
- Held joint staff meetings to share knowledge and to learn together with other Boston-area funders that take an explicit racial justice approach to their work. ■

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<sup>4</sup> The Consumer Health Foundation's 2009 Request for Proposals Advocacy for Health Care Access and Health Justice. [www.consumerhealthfdn.org/2009-Request-for-Proposals.184.0.htm](http://www.consumerhealthfdn.org/2009-Request-for-Proposals.184.0.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Barr Foundation Racial Justice Analysis – Presentation [www.barrfoundation.org/usr\\_doc/Barr\\_Foundation\\_Racial\\_Justice\\_Analysis\\_-\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.barrfoundation.org/usr_doc/Barr_Foundation_Racial_Justice_Analysis_-_Presentation.pdf)

# LESSONS LEARNED & IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

Given the growing momentum behind conversations about diversity within the philanthropic sector, ARC and PRE felt it was important to share some key lessons learned from the pilot process.

Following is a description of three lessons that are most likely to be relevant to other foundations.

**1** *Foundation leaders are not investing enough time and deliberation into internal discussions about race and racism at all organizational levels. Understanding structural racism requires a significant investment of time and intellectual energy. Without sufficient discussion, competing definitions of racial justice can take root and frustrate efforts to generate new outcomes, such as a reduction in racial disparities.*

One of the main insights from the pilot process is that foundations simply dedicate too little time and too few resources toward building a shared understanding of racial justice. When conversations about race do take place at foundations, they are usually confined to the staff level. They also tend to focus on increasing outreach or services to communities of color, on supporting grantees of color, or on diversifying staff within predominantly white grantee organizations or sectors, rather than on creating structural change in communities. This is one of the most significant barriers to promoting racial justice in the field.

The absence of an explicit and organization-wide understanding of structural racism leads to confusion and inconsistency among staff, board members, and grantees about what racial justice is and why it matters. As a consequence, foundations risk propagating the dominant societal notions about race through inertia. It is tempting to limit the application of an explicit racial justice analysis to a foundation's grantmaking programs. While this is obviously a critical component of any foundation's mission, the integration of racial justice as a framework for *all areas* of a foundation's operations – from strategic planning to communications, from data collection to capacity building – ensures

that a foundation's racial justice goals are clear, consistent, and broadly understood by stakeholders at all levels.

Pat Brandes, Executive Director of the Barr Foundation, acknowledged the lack of an organizational racial justice framework prior to the assessment. "We weren't articulating our racial justice aspirations in any coherent or intentional way," she said. "We simply had them mostly as staff, and we had not really worked on becoming intentional about looking at racial justice through a whole foundation lens."

The ARC-PRE assessment provides an opportunity for foundations to think critically about prevailing concepts of race, as an essential step toward building a racial justice analysis and agenda. The assessment challenges the widely held idea that in order to achieve racial justice, it is enough for organizations to be more inclusive of people of color, or that racism is an interpersonal problem that has little to do with "real" mission-related problems like poverty or the environment.

Challenging these dominant assumptions is not easy. It requires careful planning and a great deal of patience. Even within the most progressive institutions, it is critical to take sufficient time to explore the historical roots of structural racism, how it is kept in place today, and what it means for a foundation's mission.

"It's long, hard work. It requires long, deep, sustained commitment to keep up the conversation with the board and the staff," said Margaret O'Bryon, President and CEO of CHF, noting the challenge of establishing a shared racial justice language. "What's the difference between equity and justice and equality? ... What does the language mean, and what does it mean for how you work? There's no room for jargon."

Without developing a strategic rationale for racial justice work, organizations will continue to see diversity as the end goal, and will miss out on the potential to advance racial justice solutions that further their missions.

Even foundations that have explored the structural roots of racial inequities find that some work generates the need for more work. CHF, for example, had already begun a public discussion through its annual meetings explicitly focused on structural racism. Program Officer Julie Farkas noted, however, that while these events deepened the foundation's understanding, figuring out how to integrate that information into the foundation's programs has been challenging. "That context is so critical. But then how do you operationalize that in your grantmaking? How do you integrate the social determinants into your grantmaking, and still remain a health funder at some level? That's the challenge that we're looking at now."

In particular, how and when to involve a foundation's board is a critical question. Foundation leaders should take care not to overestimate or underestimate the readiness of their board members to embrace racial justice as a central part of the foundation's work. "The quality of the communication with trustees is critical," said Brandes. "Crafting what staff have spent months working to understand into a deep and concise communication for a quarterly board meeting is challenging."

At Barr, the assessment process began among staff members who first educated themselves on the theory of structural racism, and then took time to construct a presentation to their board. The board presentation illustrated the roots and implications of structural racism, and made the case for abandoning some of the most popular and problematic ideas about race and diversity—such as a race-blind, "rising tides lift all boats" frame. Perhaps most importantly, it used carefully tailored language and arguments that took into account the foundation's culture and history.

Foundations that adopt racial justice as an organizational framework should anticipate pushback from some staff, board members, grantees and others who may not share the same perspective. This is one of the key reasons to make sure that stakeholders at every organizational level are well-equipped with a shared racial justice language and analysis.

**2** *Foundations are not using mission- and strategy-driven arguments for racial justice when communicating with their grantees. Instead, they use moral arguments to encourage diversity, and overemphasize outreach and inclusiveness as measures of organizational effectiveness. These approaches*

*are limited in making the case for how racial justice can advance the missions and goals of grantee organizations.*

Approaching racial justice as a mission-driven framework and strategy needs significant work in the field. Foundations and their grantees focus mainly on diversity, and tend to use moral arguments for why it matters (e.g., "It's the right thing to do"). This leads to an overemphasis on outreach and inclusion, which are by and large *tactical* measures, and not on racial justice strategies. Without developing a strategic rationale for racial justice work, (e.g., "Racism contributes to suburban sprawl") organizations will continue to see diversity as the end goal, and will miss out on the potential to advance racial justice solutions that further their missions.

Even when foundations adopt an explicit racial justice focus, if it is not applied holistically, it can create confusing inconsistencies within the organization. For example, a foundation could be using a structural racism framework and language in its external communications and in its grant application materials, but it might not be selecting technical assistance providers that share this framework. Because the capacity-building field, like the rest of society, is dominated by popular notions of race and diversity that fail to consider the roots of structural racism, it is possible for a foundation to encourage grantees to embrace a structural racism analysis on the one hand, while on the other providing technical assistance that reinforces diversity as the central imperative.

In evaluating both CHF and Barr Foundation grantees, it became very clear that even those grantees that had embraced the diversity goals of both foundations had many unanswered questions about how to achieve them, and about what diversity had to do with fulfilling their missions.

Illustrating the typical disconnect between an organization's understanding of its mission and its view of racial justice, one grantee commented, "We have had formal discussion [about racism] at staff meetings, but somehow it gets pushed to the bottom... The core mission takes precedence." Likewise, another grantee implied that having a predominantly people of color client base implicitly meant that the organization was addressing racism: "We don't use [the term] 'racism' directly. It's implied by the fact that we serve 90% African American and Latino communities. It can be deduced."

“We’re definitely much more comfortable talking about [race] and spending more time talking about it, which then leads to more cross-learning and sharing of strategies.”

—Mariella Tan Puerto, Senior Program Officer at the Barr Foundation.

“It was helpful to see that with the exception of a handful of our grantees, race wasn’t really taken into account,” said CHF Program Officer Jacquelyn A. Brown. She noted the importance of understanding racial justice as it connects to a grantee’s health-related mission, and summed it up this way: “Apparently there is something about being a person of color living in the United States that is detrimental to your health. And not because there’s something wrong with *us*, but because there’s something wrong with the way we distribute resources, because of the way society is set up such that opportunity has been hindered on various levels, from health to education, housing, and all of these issues... At the root of it, structural racism is what causes inequities across all of these indicators.”

The Barr Foundation operates in the Boston area, where people of color comprise nearly half the population. Given these demographics, getting organizations to understand the importance of diversity is not difficult. It is only right that organizations reflect the communities they serve. However, encouraging organizations to take on racial justice *strategies*, which involve shifting power, is a different challenge altogether.

“If it were just from a ‘Who are we serving?’ perspective, then it’s all very obvious,” Brandes said. “But if you are trying to get at the underlying structural racism, the policies that have created the disparities and so forth, then it upsets the status quo and requires a complex and sophisticated analysis, not to mention an aptitude for risk.”

A key benefit of having a mission-driven focus on racial justice is that it allows foundation staff to be bolder and more visionary in pursuing racial justice work. Understanding the strategic importance of racial justice gives staff members permission to have frank and difficult conversations about race internally and externally, and to think creatively about how best to achieve racial justice outcomes.

“We feel it’s such a central piece of what we’re doing,” said Mariella Tan Puerto, Senior Program Officer at the Barr Foundation. “I’ve taken the liberty and have been empowered to look at all of my grantmaking with a racial justice lens... We’re definitely much more comfortable talking about [race] and

spending more time talking about it, which then leads to more cross-learning and sharing of strategies.”

As a result of the assessment, the Barr Foundation is now much more explicit about its racial justice focus, and about its expectations of its grantees. Not only has this shift affected how staff communicate with existing and potential grantees, it has also led to changes in the foundation’s grantmaking evaluation tools and procedures.

Program Officer Klare Shaw noted that the revised application process had already led to constructive dialogue with grantees. “There are some people who have written us back and said, ‘We always thought we were doing this, but in having to put together answers for Barr Foundation, we’re being more reflective and making some changes,’” she said. “Another grantee shared a very honest self-criticism, saying, ‘We are really aware that we aren’t where we wanted to be. Being a predominantly white organization isn’t helping us meet our mission.’”

But, not all interactions are so positive. Program officers need to be prepared to have frank conversations. Some nonprofits do acknowledge that it is mission critical to diversify their staff and leadership, and to inform their work with an explicit racial analysis. But, many do not. Some might even resent the suggestion that they need to make changes. In these situations, Shaw notes that, “the important thing for us is to be clear and consistent that we are serious about this. When I get pushback, I let grantees know that while we don’t have hard and fast rules about how integrated organizations need to be, we do expect them to grapple with these questions, and to demonstrate progress over time.”

At CHF, a significant first step has been to roll out a new, open Request For Proposals (RFP) specifically to support community organizing and advocacy with two goals: health justice and access to care. Farkas is quick to point out that the RFP’s access to care component is not focused on individual access to healthcare.

“Our access lens is really about creating and supporting an infrastructure... so that there is a regional, patient-centered, community-based system of care in this area,” she said. “It’s looking at it more from a structural level than an individual level.”

“ Within our local philanthropic community, race and racism affects so much of our work. ”

—Margaret O’Byron, President and CEO of the Consumer Health Foundation

She cited one example of a recent CHF grant to a group advocating to bring a large grocery store into the Southeast Washington, DC area, to provide an affordable source of fresh fruits and vegetables in a neighborhood that had previously only had small corner stores. While the end goal is to facilitate healthier lifestyles, the approach addresses the structural barriers preventing people of color and poor people from eating healthier food. “The strategy is through community organizing and advocacy,” Farkas said.

These changes could not have been achieved without an explicit and mission-driven commitment to integrate racial justice as a core strategy throughout the foundation’s operations.

**3** *An explicit focus on racial justice provides a strategic lens that can open up new strategies, opportunities, and solutions.*

ARC and PRE believe that the most effective way to achieve racial justice outcomes is for foundations to have an *explicit* analysis of racial justice, because being explicit unveils the often coded forms of structural racism. This process, in turn, opens up new space to identify strategies, opportunities, and solutions that might otherwise remain invisible.

Working with the ARC-PRE assessment team helped the Barr Foundation staff and board deepen their understanding of race as a key factor in shaping the institutions, policies and practices that affect people’s lives. As a result, Barr is now being much more explicit about its racial justice analysis across its different programs. This has given rise to a stronger sense of purpose across program areas. Brandes reflected that explicitness has opened the foundation to new knowledge and strategies at every level. “It has given us a certain boldness in terms of both policies and practices, and it has given us a learning agenda to pursue,” she said. “As we look at issue areas, we now very much take a racial justice lens to them. We’re re-looking at all of our theories of change through a racial justice lens.”

Barr Foundation staff are now working to move from theory to practice. They recently convened a daylong gathering of 36 nonprofit leaders from the Boston area, working with a

consultant who uses an explicit structural racism analysis. The group took the whole morning to learn about structural racism, and then spent the afternoon using a structural racism lens to analyze the economic stimulus package.

Barr Program Officer Puerto reflected on how being more explicit has sparked conversations about new strategies and issue areas: “It’s opened us up to considering funding in areas which maybe historically we have not funded in the past, and which at first blush might not seem on point in terms of strategy.”

One example of this is the upcoming Census. In the past, the Barr Foundation would not have had an analysis for understanding the importance of the Census to its mission, and would have likely dismissed it as a funding opportunity. The Census does not fit neatly into any of the foundation’s issue areas, but the staff has acknowledged its enormous and long-term relevance to the foundation’s greater interests. “We’re thinking more broadly,” said Puerto, “whereas in the past we would have said, ‘No, this is not our issue, we don’t fund civic engagement.’”

For CHF, in addition to hosting forums like its foundation’s annual meetings, an important aspect of the foundation’s racial justice commitment is the practice of routinely sharing its own lessons learned with its partners. CHF talks explicitly about racial justice as an active participant in various philanthropic coalitions.

“Within our local philanthropic community, race and racism affects so much of our work,” said O’Byron. She noted that there were several opportunities to collaborate with other foundations, including a working group at the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers that focuses on social determinants of health equity. “A lot of people are having this conversation, and people understand it more,” she said. “Nationally, Grantmakers in Health is all over the social determinants issue in a really good way.”

Likewise, Brown reflected on the fundamental organizational shift taking place at CHF: “I believe that this work is going to be institutionalized into the fabric of CHF. It was always there in a less explicit way, but now we are really bringing it up to the fore and being bold with it.” ■

# CONCLUSION

Even foundations that have been using a racial lens can fall into unconscious patterns of addressing only the individual or interpersonal elements of racism, rather than the institutional or structural impacts.

Operating on a deep and expansive definition of racial justice is difficult work. Societal inertia often leads organizations and foundations to treat the racial dynamics of our economic, education, and political systems as ancillary issues, rather than as forces that shape their missions and strategies. Even foundations that have been using a racial lens can fall into unconscious patterns of addressing only the individual or interpersonal elements of racism, rather than the institutional or structural impacts. For the two foundations that agreed to serve as test cases, a systematic assessment of their work through a racial justice lens revealed gaps in language, standards, definitions, and ways of working. In both cases, the assessment led foundation executives, staff, and trustees to new internal discussions and programmatic opportunities. Numerous grantees and fellow grantmakers praised the foundations for their courage in taking on racial equity issues.

As the philanthropic world looks at the issue of race in different ways, much of the focus has been on diversity audits, advancing the argument that diversity enhances organizational effectiveness. While we welcome many of these discussions, we hope that the ARC-PRE assessment will help foundations raise and answer racial equity questions at every level, moving beyond organizational diversity to ask whether their grantmaking strategies are truly advancing racial justice. ARC and PRE have learned a great deal from the Consumer Health and Barr Foundations about what it means to pursue racial equity analysis in such an unstable economic and political climate. At heart, the assessments surfaced new possibilities for the kinds of issue development, alliance building and constituent organizing that ultimately reduce racial disparities in the world, as well as in our philanthropic institutions. ■

# APPENDIX 1

## The Consumer Health Foundation: Detailed Findings and Recommendations



### ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

With roots in a health justice movement that led to the formation of Group Health Association, a worker-led health maintenance organization, in 1937,

today the Consumer Health Foundation (CHF) makes grants to grassroots organizations to improve the health status of Washington, DC-area communities. Within its mission, CHF focuses on reducing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health inequities. Over the past decade, the Foundation has given approximately \$14 million in grants to more than 70 community-based groups throughout the Washington, DC region.

For CHF, the call to address race and racism explicitly came directly from the community. In 2004 and 2005, the foundation convened a series of five “Community Health Speakouts” to gather public input on solutions to the region’s healthcare crisis. In 2006, CHF released *Speaking Up and Speaking Out for Health: A Community Call to Action to Improve Health and Health Care in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Region*, which laid out six recommendations that emerged from the gatherings. One of these recommendations was to “engage in community-wide health equality dialogues that address racial and ethnic health disparities, particularly the impact of structural racism on the health and well-being of communities of color in the region.”

When the foundation invited ARC and PRE to speak at its 2006 annual meeting, it had already built significant momentum toward addressing racial health inequities more boldly and explicitly, as a result of both the Speak Outs and the foundation’s internal staff leadership. When Rinku Sen, ARC executive director, mentioned the availability of the grantmaking assessment tool while speaking on a CHF panel, Foundation staff welcomed the opportunity to move from dialogue to action.

### ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The ARC-PRE assessment of the Consumer Health Foundation took place over a period of approximately six months, and included an in-depth analysis of the foundation’s grantees, its

own staff and board, and its internal and external communications. The methodology included:

- A review of internal and external foundation documents including grant program committee minutes, a report from a capacity building survey, the strategic plan, and the logic model;
- A review of all 70 staff write-ups of recent grant proposals, and then a closer examination of 21 groups representing organizations of different sizes, geographic areas, portfolios, and levels of explicit racial equity language;
- An online survey of all strategic renewal grantees, with a 73% return rate, and a subsequent selection of 13 grantees for interviews, again representing a diversity of organizational size, geographic scope, portfolios, and levels of explicit racial equity language; and
- Interviews with former and current Foundation staff and board members, as well as with technical assistance providers.

### FINDINGS ON THE FOUNDATION

The assessment team found that CHF had a strong commitment to racial justice, and one that had deepened and become more integrated into the foundation’s policies, practices, and culture in recent years. However, significant work remained to be done to establish and institutionalize the foundation’s racial justice analysis and language at all levels of the organization.

CHF had already done a significant amount of work to help develop a structural racism analysis of health issues in the field through the Speak Outs and other convenings, and to some extent through its publications. In addition, the foundation played an important leadership role in the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG) Health Funders Group, consistently talking about structural racism as a social determinant of health. The foundation also had certain organizational assets in place, including board and staff diversity, and social justice investment policies.

However, when evaluated as a whole, the assessment team found that CHF’s external communications used varying degrees of racial justice language. More recent communications tended to be more explicit about racial inequity and racial disparities, but

some coded or racially implicit language (e.g., “underserved”, “vulnerable”, “diversity” and “low-income”) remained. Internally, documents like the strategic plan made implicit acknowledgment of racial inequity, but veered away from explicit references to racial equity, racial disparities, or racism.

Despite sophisticated levels of understanding structural racism among certain stakeholders at the foundation, staff and board conversations about race and racism ranged widely, and in general were dominated by a focus on diversity rather than on racial justice. Discussions and documents tended to focus on questions of access, diversity, and cultural competency rather than structural transformation. Not surprisingly, the perception of CHF among grantees likewise varied in terms of the degree to which CHF used a racial justice frame. Most believed that the Foundation used racial justice frames often, although sometimes using coded language. Due to the different levels of explicitness in the foundation’s racial equity language, grantees were able to see themselves fitting into the foundation’s priorities wherever they felt most comfortable. Those who felt comfortable with explicit racial justice language could find it, and those who preferred more implicit language could find that as well.

Another important finding was that although CHF supported organizations engaged in policy advocacy as well as those providing direct services, it did not have an organizational understanding of the racial justice implications of either advocacy or direct service provision as *strategies*. Moreover, in certain internal documents the foundation’s advocacy grants were framed around the need to improve the consumer’s ability to advocate for change, rather than focusing on how to impact systems and structures. Related to this finding, CHF grantees that were funded to do advocacy tended to be predominantly white organizations, while organizations that were majority people of color tended to be supported to provide direct services. Because the foundation’s communications tended to focus on diversity and access rather than on structural racism and health justice, conversations about race regarding advocacy and direct service organizations tended to emphasize outreach and inclusion – tactics, and not strategies.

CHF had many critical pieces in place to advance racial justice more effectively. The biggest barrier to doing so was the absence of an explicit and organization-wide understanding of structural racism and its effects on health. Establishing this

analysis would allow the Foundation to create strategies, as well as organizational policies and procedures, to push forward a clear racial justice agenda.

## FINDINGS ON GRANTEES

### Explicit Racial Justice Language and Diversity

To evaluate CHF’s grantmaking portfolio, the assessment measured the degree to which different grantees articulated *explicit racial justice issues* and an *explicit racial justice approach* to their work. It also examined staff and board demographics. It is important to note that there were limitations to this process, since the first step was to review the documents that each grantee had shared with the Foundation. The level of racial explicitness in the information that a grantee presents to a foundation is often based on how that foundation communicates its own commitment to racial equity, and how the commitment is perceived. Therefore, some grantees that were initially placed in one category based on a review of their documents were later shifted to a different category, based on additional information gathered through interviews. In the end, the grantee survey respondents were categorized as follows in terms of their level of explicitness about race:

- **Low:** 60% of grantees surveyed did *not* use race and ethnicity to frame their grant projects or to describe their organizations. These organizations have limited discussions about race, and specifically about racial equity. To the extent that these organizations address race and ethnicity, discussions are either informal or are limited to specific topics like equity in outreach or in hiring. Many see their mission as being broader than race. Respondents to the survey said they typically did not use any of the terms listed in the survey (“racial disparities,” “racial equity,” “discrimination,” or “racism”) in their external communications.
- **Medium:** 34% of grantees surveyed mentioned race and ethnicity in their grant descriptions, but typically only in terms of their clients and/or constituent bases. While some of these organizations have had formal discussions and/or trainings on issues like cultural competency, diversity, racial disparities, or anti-racism, these discussions and trainings have mainly targeted staff. Only occasional, informal discussions occurred at the board level. These organizations said that they typically used all of the terms listed, *except* “racism.” Their staff and board compositions are generally more diverse than groups in the category above.

- **High:** Only 6% of grantees surveyed were intentional and explicit about racial equity in their definitions of the problems they were addressing, in their strategies, and in their organizational descriptions. These groups said they used all of the terms listed in the survey in their external communications. They also had staff and board compositions that were predominantly people of color.

The assessment found that CHF had a strong record of supporting people of color-led organizations. Among the grantees that responded to the survey, 62% had majority people of color staffs, and half had majority people of color boards. In this respect, CHF was doing a good job of supporting racially diverse organizations. However, in evaluating racial justice explicitness, the assessment found that the majority of grantees were not using racial justice frames in their work. Grantees that were doing so were likely to be led by people of color, and to intentionally develop people of color leadership. However, the reverse was not true. Organizations led by people of color were not necessarily using a racial justice analysis. This illustrates an important lesson — that foundations should not assume that funding people of color-led organizations is the same as funding racial justice.

### Grantee Patterns in Addressing Racial Justice

The assessment team also interviewed a diverse subset of the grantees that responded to the survey. These interviews gauged the degree to which grantees included racial justice in their communications and program planning, and uncovered the logic behind those decisions — or indeed, whether a decision had been made, or a pattern simply held through inertia.

The assessment found two main reasons why CHF grantees limited their use of a racial justice analysis and of racial justice language, even if they had a strong structural racism analysis:

- Organizations lacked familiarity with and were made uncomfortable by racial questions.
- Organizations understood how public discourse on issues of race often resulted in the vilification of communities of color (e.g., as criminals), and avoided being explicit out of a desire to deflect racialized attacks. They spent significant time advocating for their clients' issues and resource needs, and felt that integrating racism into the public conversation was too great a risk.

Among grantees in the **low** category, interviews revealed a tendency to equate racial equity with diversity, and the notion that

serving a population of color, or having a staff of color, removes the need for any explicit analysis or action. When these organizations do address race, they most often frame it as “cultural competency.” When asked why they do not use explicit racial justice language, one-third did not respond, and 22% said the focus of their work was not on race and/or equity.

Among those grantees in the **medium** category, most are aware of the racialized dimensions of healthcare, but do not make it central to their work. These organizations think of race as either too narrow or too broad, and generally incompatible with other organizational frames. Comments revealed a strong sense that discussions of racism are loaded with excessive and divisive historical baggage. Few of the groups in this category had a clear view of the ways in which an institutional racism analysis could unify communities and generate positive attention to their issues. One interviewee said, “We prefer racial disparity because racism... implies a deliberateness that doesn't exist.” Comments like this reveal a belief that racism requires intentional discrimination, when in fact most discriminatory treatment, especially in healthcare, results from implicit bias and structural segregation in housing and labor.

The organizations in the **high** category had substantial organizing and advocacy strategies, even if they also provide some level of individual services. These organizations have been driven to be explicit about race as a way of reflecting the realities facing their constituencies, although they do not use racism as their exclusive frame. When asked how they came to the decision to use explicit language one interviewee said, “It's the truth. It comes from our members and the reality of their experiences. Race is the modality that class is lived in.”

### Advocacy and Alliances

The assessment found that organizations that are more intentional and explicit about their racial justice analysis and strategy were more likely to engage in racial justice policy advocacy and coalition building. While a vast majority (89%) of all CHF grantees surveyed reported being involved in some type of advocacy, most organizations in the **low** or **medium** categories cited public education and outreach as the primary forms. In contrast, the organizations in the **high** category said they were engaged in advocacy through lobbying, outreach, and community organizing. Likewise, while 75% of all survey respondents said they were currently involved in an alliance or coalition on health issues, organizations with high levels of explicitness said

they were leaders within their coalitions, intentionally building them to be racially explicit.

### **Grantee Interest in Racial Justice Capacity Building**

More than 60% of all grantees surveyed expressed great interest in learning more about conducting a power analysis, measuring racial indicators to spur change, assessing community readiness and what strategies may work, and creating an inclusive and equitable process to recognize race and power dynamics.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHF**

Based on these findings, ARC and PRE made the following recommendations:

- ***Align formal and informal communications:*** As a first step, the foundation should affirm the degree it wants to make racial justice central to its strategy and how explicitly it wants to craft its message. This recommendation then suggests aligning written and oral communications to reflect this degree of explicitness, to ensure that CHF's commitment to health justice and racial equity gets broadcasted consistently. It also calls for racial justice training for staff and board members, and discussions of racial justice in board recruitment and orientation processes. The foundation should ensure that staff have the highest level of consistency in their use of racial justice language, anecdotes, tone, definitions, and examples. While some degree of coding is inevitable, the Foundation should clarify who it means by "vulnerable" and "underserved." In addition, the Foundation should clarify and communicate more clearly its view of the role of advocacy and direct service organizations can play in advancing racial justice.
- ***Revise the Grantmaking Process:*** CHF should begin to track demographic data from grantees, revise grant guidelines to include explicit language and questions reflecting racial justice goals, determine racial equity accountability and expectations of grantees, and support grantees with technical assistance on racial justice policies and practices. It should also learn more about technical assistance providers' racial equity analysis, staff and board demographics, and their work in communities of color, to gauge whether a provider would advance or hinder the foundation's racial justice goals. The Foundation should also ask grantees to share their level of satisfaction with providers regarding cultural competency and their racial justice analysis.
- ***Increase the Foundation's leadership in the region by sharing its values, practices and racial equity commitment and by shaping the field of healthcare grantmaking:*** While

CHF has already played a significant role in lifting up issues of the impact of structural racism on racial health inequities in communities of color among colleagues in philanthropy, it should strengthen this role even further by reviewing its participation in donor collaboratives and local alliances with the specific goal of advocating for racial justice, and by sharing its lessons learned in establishing a stronger racial justice framework with other foundations. This recommendation also suggests that CHF help start a Black-led health justice organization in the Washington, DC area. During the assessment, several multiracial grantees said that having such an organization that could partner with them in health justice coalitions would create tremendous new organizing opportunities. The foundation could identify a Black-led organization with the potential to become a leader in the health field, and commit resources in the form of ongoing funding and technical assistance, to help the organization develop its advocacy and organizing capacity.

### **INITIAL IMPACTS AND NEXT STEPS**

CHF had already begun to do racial justice work in several important areas by the time the ARC-PRE assessment took place. "The assessment was part of a convergence of intelligence and new information that we received," said CHF President and CEO Margaret O'Bryon. "It was another tool for us." Since the Board presentation about the assessment findings and recommendations in March 2008, the foundation has made significant progress, particularly in the area of grantmaking.

Program Officer Jacquelyn A. Brown noted that the findings on CHF's grantees, as well as on the Foundation's own communications, were especially useful in determining next steps, following on the heels of several powerful community-wide conversations about the relationship between race and health. "The ARC-PRE report really came right on time. It was instrumental in helping us to see where our grantees were, where we were, and how we could move ahead in being more explicit about the impacts of racism on health."

Perhaps because of the way the Speak Out questions were framed – for example, asking participants to respond to real-life scenarios illustrating the experiences of people seeking health services in the Washington, DC area – they were a window into how low-wage jobs, poor access to transportation, inadequate schools, and other challenges were interrelated. They provided current and concrete examples of how structural racism worked. However, moving from understanding to institutionalizing structural racism as an organizational frame were two different things. "We were at a place where we had had enough

conversation around this,” said Senior Program Officer Julie Farkas. “We have a really bottom-up approach anyway, but that doesn’t always mean that it’s racial equity grantmaking.”

In time for its Spring 2009 cycle, CHF developed a new Request for Proposals titled *Advocacy for Health Care Access & Health Justice*, marking a shift from implied individual behavioral change to a clear priority placed on health justice organizing and advocacy for structural changes. CHF had been funding advocacy prior to the assessment. However, its separate advocacy grants tended to support predominantly white organizations, whereas its grants to people of color-led organizations tended to support direct service. The new RFP reflects a more cohesive approach of supporting advocacy for racial equity. The RFP states:

*The focus is on creating local, state and regional policy change and systems reform that will benefit low-income communities of color in the Metropolitan Washington, DC region... The Foundation believes that in order to improve health and eliminate racial, ethnic and socioeconomic inequities, we must address the social and economic conditions that shape the health of a community. Low-income communities of color in our region need access to good schools, jobs that pay a living wage, reliable public transportation, affordable housing, grocery stores selling fresh fruits and vegetables, and safe places to walk and exercise. These are the conditions that promote and sustain the health and wellness of individuals and their communities.*

The new RFP also requires applicants to provide information on the demographics of their organizations at the staff and board levels.

In creating the RFP, the foundation had to grapple with language, to try to make their racial justice funding goals as clear as possible. Staff underwent an exercise to define health justice in simple, easy-to-understand terms. CHF has also held board and staff sessions specifically focused on establishing common racial justice language and definitions, making use of consultants and watching documentary films like “Race: The Power of Illusion” and “Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?”

O’Byron noted that establishing explicit and easily understandable language was critically important. “What’s the difference between equity and justice and equality?” she asked. “The language is really important, and it has to be clear. What does the language mean, and what does it mean for how you work? There is no room for jargon.”

Like so many foundations, CHF has been negatively impacted by the economic crisis. Staff acknowledged that the effects

would undoubtedly hurt communities of color that were already underfunded, and saw this as a strong argument for foundations to approach grantmaking reductions using a racial justice frame – “to think as strategically as possible about what you’re doing,” as Farkas put it. “Now more than ever, community organizing and advocacy are needed, because we know who’s going to get the short end of the stick – poor people and people of color,” she said. “It lifts up the issue all the more of needing to address structural changes.”

Knowing that it would have less to give in 2009, CHF could have simply limited the overall amount of funds available for a regional approach to the new RFP’s health justice component – or it could have eliminated that component altogether. Instead, it has maintained its health justice strategy, incorporated it into a broader advocacy RFP, and added the structural access to care component.

“In addition to our health justice RFP, we’re sponsoring a youth health justice retreat in June for youth of color-led and –focused organizations operating in Wards 7 and 8, which have the highest health and social inequities,” said Brown. “We’re also providing direct technical assistance on social determinants of health equity to the organizations’ project directors. One of the key goals is to educate and activate youth of color in addressing the impact of structural racism on the health of their communities.”

The foundation also created a Futures Task Force at the board level to revise the foundation’s strategic plan, mission, vision, core values, and theory of change to reflect an explicit commitment to health justice and racial equity. It has also continued to play a strong leadership role in raising issues of racial justice among its peers in the foundation world.

“If you want to lead, this is a great issue to lead on,” said O’Byron, “because it crosses so many boundaries. It enables people to be bold... Structural racism is one of the social determinants of health. We are using this upstream approach to see if we can move the needle in terms of people’s health. That’s what it’s about.” ■

#### [Download Related Documents](#)

- [The Consumer Health Foundation’s 2009 Request for Proposals Advocacy for Health Care Access and Health Justice.](http://consumerhealthfdn.org/2009-Request-for-Proposals.184.0.html)
- [2007 Annual Report, Illuminations: 10 Years of Perspective](http://consumerhealthfdn.org/fileadmin/img/2007_CHF_AR.pdf)

# APPENDIX 2

## The Barr Foundation: Detailed Findings and Recommendations

### BARR FOUNDATION

Using KNOWLEDGE, NETWORKS and FUNDING  
to Build a Better Boston for All

#### ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The Barr Foundation is a private family foundation whose mission is to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Boston, Massachusetts. The foundation anonymously grants approximately \$45 million per year to nonprofit organizations in the Greater Boston region. It uses a systems, knowledge, and network-based approach to its work, and to date has focused on three critical challenges:

1. **Providing Quality Education:** Emphasizes the Boston Public School system, alternative educational approaches, early education, and out-of-school programs.
2. **Making a More Livable City:** Concentrates on increasing the quality and quantity of open space and water resources, developing environmental citizenship, supporting environmental justice, and facilitating regional development planning and urban design.
3. **Enhancing Cultural Vitality:** Focuses on cultural projects that enhance the foundation's educational or environmental goals, support major and mid-sized institutions, promote diversity, or foster civic engagement and community cohesion.

In addition to these three programs, the Barr Foundation devotes a small portion of its giving—through the Annual Community Support (ACS) program—to a broad array of organizations that make a positive contribution to the quality of life in Boston. The foundation also has a fellowship program to honor the contributions of distinguished and diverse leaders in Boston's nonprofit sector.

Prior to engaging in the ARC-PRE assessment, the foundation was known for its leadership role in advocating for cultural competency and inclusiveness in the Boston Area. However, staff members sought to deepen the foundation's understanding of race and to identify ways to integrate racial justice more fully throughout the foundation's work.

#### ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The ARC-PRE assessment team spent nine months reviewing

internal foundation materials and conducting four levels of analysis:

- Reading 35% of staff write-ups of grants recommended to the trustees in 2005-2007;
- Reviewing 22% of grantee folders;
- Inviting 14% of current grantees to participate in a focus group or interview, and also to complete a survey; and
- Reviewing the foundation's internal materials (theories of change memos for each portfolio, cultural and racial inclusiveness report, intermediary survey, information about the Barr Fellows program, etc.).

The assessment team selected a diverse group of grantees representing each portfolio, different levels of explicitness in racial justice approaches, and various organizational sizes, as well as a small sample of grantees where the majorities of staff were people of color. We also interviewed select intermediaries.

#### FINDINGS ON THE FOUNDATION

Leading up to the ARC-PRE assessment, Barr was seen as a leader on diversity and inclusion issues in Boston. It had conducted trainings on diversity with its staff and grantees, and had increasingly emphasized the importance of racial diversity in staff conversations with grantees. It had diversified the ACS portfolio to include more immigrant/refugee organizations, most of which are of color; and was supporting a diverse group of leaders through the Barr Fellows program. However, the foundation had yet to develop a contemporary theory of how race works in Boston; how race issues play out in the city's power dynamics, distribution of resources, policies and institutional practices; and how a clear understanding of these dynamics might change the structural solutions that groups pursue.

Without a clearly defined vision of a racially equitable Boston, the foundation risked creating messages that were counterproductive, especially in asserting that traditional, predominantly white organizations should reach out to communities of color. In Barr's publications, on its website, and through other forms of communication, the foundation made two arguments for diversifying organizations. The first was a moral one, that including people of color is simply the right thing to do. Without an understanding of the historical roots of racism, and an analysis of race and power, this argument can become

paternalistic, presenting inclusion as a simple matter of the haves sharing with the have-nots. The implication is that the organization will change the lives of people of color, but they will have no reciprocal effect on the organization.

The second argument for diversity focused on organizational self-interest. In its external communications, the foundation asserted the need for groups to become diverse in order to perpetuate themselves, because demographics were rapidly changing. While there is nothing wrong with these notions on the surface, they fall short of describing and arguing for a new set of social, political and economic arrangements in which communities of color have the power to actually change institutions.

Focusing the foundation's messages on diversity and cultural competence encouraged implicit rather than explicit approaches to racial justice. The assessment team found that both internal and external communications needed a clearer structural analysis. Foundation staff identified the need for more cohesion and clarity about what is meant by codes such as "cultural competence," and whether and how they can make a structural argument for diversity to grantees. The foundation's communications about its racial equity interests were largely implicit, which created too much room for confusion and for the reinforcement of existing power dynamics and structures. While in a few instances, Barr program officers were beginning to send out the message that having staff of color was a requirement for receiving a grant, even they were unclear about how boldly they could assert that bottom line.

Beyond the foundation's grantmaking portfolios, the Barr Fellows is an innovative program that has provided significant opportunities to leaders of color in the city. In funding the fellowship, Barr was acting on its own network theory – that a tightly knit, diverse group of contemporary leaders would become an influential planning and political force in the city's future. However, like the other elements of Barr's work, the fellowship does not address racial inequity or justice goals explicitly. Likewise, its Annual Community Support portfolio, which responds to needs and interests beyond the foundation's stated funding strategies, does not include any explicit focus on racial justice, although staff members have worked to prioritize more refugee and immigrant serving organizations, as well as organizations led by people of color.

## FINDINGS ON GRANTEEES

### Explicit Racial Justice Language and Diversity

The assessment placed grantees into categories based on how explicitly they incorporated a racial equity analysis and language in their work:

- **Low:** 39% of grantees assessed (through surveys, focus groups, or interviews) fell into this category. Race and ethnicity is not on these organizations' radar screens based

on how they frame their grant projects and describe their organizations' work. If language regarding race and ethnicity is used, it is either in the broadest frame or through coded language: *under-represented*, *at-risk* etc. Most of these organizations have limited discussions about race or diversity. Typically they do not use any of the terms — *racial disparities*, *racial equity*, *discrimination* or *racism* — in their external communications. A minority of the organizations use the terms *racial disparities* (25%) and *racial equity* (33%). When asked why they do not use explicit racial language, 60% said the focus of their work is broader than race and 20% said the focus of their work is not on race and/or equity.

- **Medium:** 45% of grantees assessed were placed in this category. These organizations mention race and ethnicity in their grant descriptions, typically in terms of the clients/constituents with whom they work on the project. Most organizations focus on representational diversity and in some cases discuss the importance of cultural competency. Some mentioned equity work while even fewer defined the work with a racial disparity lens. The terms they use most are *racial equity* (60%) and then *racial disparities* (40%). Only 27% of these organizations use the terms *racism* and *discrimination*. When asked why an organization is not using the terms, 47% indicated "the focus of our work is broader than race," and 30% did not respond. Comments included: "[race is the] underlying subtext of our work but we focus our messages on broader, more concrete issues," and "our work requires pulling people together."
- **High:** 16% of grantees who participated in the assessment fell into this category. These organizations are explicit about equity in their definition of the problem, the strategies used for the grant project, and their organizational descriptions. All of these grantees regularly have informal discussions and had some formal training about racial equity and/or diversity issues. Most of these organizations' trainings use an anti-racism approach and/or an equity analysis. The two terms that these grantees use the most are *racism* and *discrimination* (both 80%) and *racial disparities* (60%). They all checked "other" in explaining their reasons for choosing their terminology: some organizations said they used *ethnicity* rather than *race*, one group talks about *justice vs. equity*, and another explained, "We let our work speak for us rather than words."

### Grantee Patterns in Addressing Racial Justice

- Barr grantees focus more on creating the conditions for diversity and inclusion internally rather than achieving racial equity in the larger society. There is a widespread assumption that having a staff, constituency, or clientele of color will automatically bring in a racial analysis.
- Among those grantees with an *implicit* approach, the most

common response to why they did not use explicit language was that their scope of work was either broader or narrower than race. Many Barr Foundation grantees felt that an explicit racial analysis would be divisive. Some did not respond to the question about why they did not use racially explicit terms. There is a strong possibility that these organizations simply do not know that organizational and societal inertia have marginalized racially explicit language, and that these grantees have accepted that status quo rather than attempting to change it. If organizations are focused on issues like poverty, the environment, or gender, and do not see their connection to race, this might point to a lack of understanding about how race, class and gender systems reinforce each other. While race is a factor in most systems, grantees clearly need help in identifying its role in those systems.

- There was significant feeling that the pool of skilled people of color is too limited to meet the diversification needs of grantees. Some groups are pushing for pipeline strategies to grow that pool.

### **Grantee Interest in Racial Justice Capacity Building**

Several grantees expressed interest in building their capacity to go beyond diversity. Grantees would like the foundation to play even more of a convening role, given that Barr has been a catalyst and connector for several partnerships, collaborations, and organizational relationships in the past.

### **Intermediaries**

In addition to grantees, the assessment team interviewed five intermediaries that Barr funds to support grantees. Several important themes emerged from the interviews. The providers themselves use a great deal of implicit race language. They themselves struggle to maintain diverse organizations. They also felt that progressive and liberal non-profits are resistant to addressing racial issues, and more complacent about their performance in this area than in the commercial sector. In general, they felt that racial equity and diversity work attracted too few resources. These intermediaries used explicit racial terms even less frequently than grantees did. Four intermediaries who were interviewed responded “no” on all terms; the remaining organization responded “yes” on all terms. All noted that the terms were only used in specific contexts. Several indicated using stand-in words such as *justice* and *social justice* along with euphemisms for communities of color such as *underserved communities*, and *communities with less access*.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BARR FOUNDATION**

- ***Move Beyond Diversity to Racial Justice***: This shift includes reworking the foundation’s theories of change to more explicitly address the role of race and racism in creating or blocking social change processes; and building

the capacity of grantees to create effective collaborations to address structural racism, beginning with trainings on how to identify the role of race in the systems in which grantees work and on how to participate in advocacy projects. The foundation should also consider making racial justice questions an explicit part of grantee convenings and the Barr Fellowship program.

- ***Refine the Grantmaking Process***: This recommendation suggests that Barr create a consistent grantmaking system across all programs and staff that establishes clear expectations and accountability measures. This change includes adding questions to the grantmaking process to identify an organization’s understanding of race dynamics and how they influence the systems in which the organization works. It also includes creating a method of collecting demographic data on all grantees as well as sharing the foundation’s theories of change to ensure that grantees understand their role in systems change.
- ***Review Grantee Convenings and Capacity Building***: The foundation supports intermediaries that help to build the capacity of its grantees in the field. This recommendation includes setting racial equity standards for both grantees and intermediaries that are aligned with Barr’s own, to ensure that grantees are receiving strong and consistent support for racial justice work from the foundation and from technical-assistance and capacity-building organizations.
- ***Align the foundation’s internal and external communications to be more explicit***: The foundation first needs to determine how it wants to centralize a racial justice strategy, and how explicitly to craft its message. The alignment of messages involves creating consistency between internal and external communications, creating a set of racial equity principles to guide the work, and taking time to evaluate racial justice language and framing throughout the foundation’s communications.

## **INITIAL IMPACTS AND NEXT STEPS**

Since the board presentation on the ARC-PRE assessment findings in May 2008, the Barr Foundation has been moving forward on various recommendations. Barr Executive Director Patricia Brandes described how using explicit language has opened the foundation to new knowledge and strategies at every level. “It has given us a certain boldness in terms of both policies and practices, and it has given us a learning agenda to pursue,” she said. “As we look at issue areas, we now very much take a racial justice lens to them.”

Following the assessment, the foundation completed major revisions to their grantmaking process in time for the first set of 2009 proposals. All grantees are now being asked to submit organizational diversity forms. Sensitive to the time and effort

that nonprofits dedicate to grant applications, the foundation asked grantseekers to use an already existing form that was part of a general application from Associated Grant Makers, a regional association of foundations. Staff has also revised grant proposal questions to invite grantees to be explicit about whether and how racial justice analysis affects their work. The template that program officers use to write up grant descriptions for trustee review also now includes space for information and reflections on the racial justice implications of proposals.

Following is a new question that the foundation asks of its grantees:

*The Barr Foundation's mission is, "to build a better Boston for all." For Barr, this includes confronting inequities, especially those related to race. We asked you to submit an Agency Diversity Data form because Barr is committed to diversity and inclusion. Yet, we recognize that greater diversity and inclusion is only a first step. To truly "build a better Boston for all"—a Boston in which distribution of resources, opportunities, and burdens is not determined or predictable by race—we also need to influence and change the institutions and structures that perpetuate racial inequity. We hope to learn from those, like you, in the field. How does your thinking about racial equity inform how you develop and implement programs?*

On the recommendation to move from diversity to justice, Barr is now exploring major revisions to its environmental portfolio, rethinking the opportunities to support environmental work using a racial equity lens. "This is an example of how the assessment really brought racial justice to the forefront," said Program Officer Mariella Tan Puerto. "We could have just said 'climate change is the big issue we need to work on, so let's focus our strategies on whatever interventions have the biggest impact on reducing greenhouse gasses.' Instead, we decided that racial justice had to be an integral part of the analysis. This helps us focus our resources on interventions that address climate change, while also meeting needs and creating opportunities for communities of color."

The changes to Barr's grantmaking process are accompanied by changes in how staff communicate the foundation's racial justice priorities to grantees. Program Officer Klare Shaw described a conversation with one grantee from an organization that was not very integrated. "In these situations," says Shaw, "I let grantees know that while we don't have hard and fast rules about how integrated organizations need to be, we do expect them to grapple with these questions, and to demonstrate progress over time."

There are also some instances where grantees are interested in changing. "In one case, the organization was thinking about how to come back to us with a stronger racial justice analysis," Puerto said. "Clearly, they are thinking about it, and they're

reaching out to different networks to help them craft a more intentional approach to racial justice."

The foundation is also in the process of reworking its theories of change to use more explicit racial justice language, and will then further shift its capacity building and technical assistance work with grantees to focus explicitly on racial justice.

Recently, Barr convened a daylong gathering of 36 nonprofit leaders from the Boston area, working with a consultant who uses an explicit structural racism analysis. The group took the whole morning to learn about structural racism, and then spent the afternoon using a structural racism lens to analyze the economic stimulus package.

There is also a plan for ongoing internal training to develop specific racial justice skills (e.g., how to do a racial justice analysis of an organizational budget) and ongoing work to create a process for evaluating and making use of the new incoming data and information about racial justice from grantees. The foundation is also partnering with another local funder that has taken on racial justice, to share lessons learned, best practices, etc.

Indeed, Barr's new racial justice framework is transforming how it engages with its peers in the foundation world. In addition to partnering with a fellow local foundation, Barr staff are speaking explicitly about racial justice within various philanthropic circles. At a conference of funders invested in smart growth, for example, Puerto was invited to talk about Barr's work on green jobs. "I wanted to talk about our racial justice lens without turning people off with jargon," she said. "So, as I spoke about the issue, I shared data on the ways people of color are disproportionately cut off from opportunities and suggested that foundations and society at large should consider allocating resources to address the conditions that create those imbalances."

Brandes also described changes to how the Foundation talks about its identity. She offered the example of revising the PowerPoint presentation about the Barr Foundation. "We used to have a whole piece in our presentation on being inclusive of diverse voices, and we just had a meeting to talk about how we change that to be more about racial justice." ■

#### [Download Related Documents](#)

- [Barr Foundation Racial Justice Analysis – Executive Summary](http://barrfoundation.org/usr_doc/Barr_Foundation_Racial_Justice_Analysis_-_Executive_Summary.pdf)
- [Barr Foundation Racial Justice Analysis – Presentation](http://barrfoundation.org/usr_doc/Barr_Foundation_Racial_Justice_Analysis_-_Presentation.pdf)

# APPENDIX 3

## Assessing Our Grantmaking for Its Racial Justice Potential

In 2004, the Applied Research Center produced a report entitled *Short Changed: Foundation Giving and Communities of Color*, which discusses ways that foundations concerned with social justice support communities of color, civil rights, and social action organizations. In recent years, foundation support for racial justice work appears to have declined. There is a lack of consensus among funders about what racial justice work is, and funders vary in their commitment to be more explicit and strategic in their support for racial justice.

This tool is designed to guide program officers and foundation executives in conducting such an assessment, regardless of the approach they take. The first common approach is to outline an issue area that strongly implies the need for racial analysis, such as poverty or environmental justice. Another approach is to dedicate funding to support a specific community, for example, to help an emerging Vietnamese refugee community meet its needs. A third, and most ambitious approach for these purposes, is to establish a funding program explicitly devoted to racial justice organizations. This tool should work for foundation executives funding in any of these approaches.

Please keep in mind that the tool is based on the highest standards for doing racial justice work. Even organizations and foundations that meet few of the criteria expressed in these two exercises can make incremental progress toward addressing the effects of institutional racism. The important thing is to use the tool to have the discussions and take the steps that move you closer to supporting racial justice effectively.

**Racial Justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all. Embracing this definition of racial justice also has a few key underlying assumptions:**

1. Racial justice is not the same as racial diversity, which only requires the presence of people in an organization. Racial diversity is a component of racial justice;
2. Racial justice requires an analysis and strategy for addressing racism in institutions;
3. The presence of people of color does not necessarily mean that you have a racial justice organization or program, even

though they may be providing needed services to a community of color; and

4. Racial Justice work specifically targets institutional and structural racism through a continuum of approaches that may include research, education, organizing, advocacy, and movement building.

“Defining justice work around issues of race is important, and advancing this language is crucial to developing more commitment to racial justice” –*Short-Changed: Foundation Giving and Communities of Color* (Applied Research Center)

### PART ONE: ASSESSING A PORTFOLIO

If your foundation has a racial justice category, skip to *Reflection Questions*.

If your foundation has no racial justice category, start here –

#### 1. Seeking evidence of commitment to racial justice

Central to establishing a commitment to racial justice is a mandate for the work in a foundation’s guiding language. Examine the documents, speeches and discussions that ground your foundation’s work. What are the pieces of language that implicitly or explicitly acknowledge race as a key societal factor?

#### 2. Coding and counting your grants

Most foundations code grantees by demographics, geography, and issue area, but there is very little consistency in this coding. Nevertheless, it is useful for straightforward equity reasons to gather grant data by the codes that you already use, then to consider coding grants based on the racial justice criteria in the next section of the assessment.

- a. Determine how you’re doing on simple demographics. How many grants are you making to organizations located in and serving communities of color?
- b. Next, code by the identity of the leaders and the constituency, both professional and volunteer, to determine how many grants you are making to organizations of color. What is the comparative size of the grants to people of color-led institutions vs. white-led institutions?
- c. What are the types of grants being made to people of

## Are there patterns of funding organizations of color at smaller levels, or with project support rather than general purposes funding?

color-led institutions vs. white-led institutions – general support, project support, or capacity building support?

- d. Finally, determine what percentage of your grants are being supported through the three categories – communities of color, people of color led, and size and type of grants.

### 3. Count and compare grantees in a single portfolio and across portfolios to look particularly for:

- a. What are the patterns of funding organizations that are not of color to work in communities of color?
- b. Are there patterns of funding organizations of color at smaller levels, or with project support rather than general purposes funding?
- c. What are the patterns of funding organizations, of all colors, without a racial analysis? With racial analysis? (Is this analysis stated or unstated? Does the analysis lead to individual or institutional solutions?)
- d. What are the patterns of funding groups that do not espouse racial justice goals? With racial justice goals? Are these goals stated or unstated?

## PART ONE: ASSESSING A PORTFOLIO REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Given this data, what is our pattern of grantmaking on racial justice? How are we doing?
2. How did this pattern come to exist? Which institutional decisions contributed to the pattern historically and contemporarily? What new decisions would take us closer to racial justice grantmaking?
3. If the pattern is due to a characteristic of the field in which our grantees work, what steps can we take to support racial justice grantseekers? Do we need to provide technical assistance for emerging organizations and communities to apply for our grants, or make it clear that we are open to racial analysis in applications?

4. If we are satisfied with our own patterns of funding, how can we bolster that? For example, do we communicate the accomplishments of our grantees effectively to colleagues internally and externally? To other grantees? To other funders? To the media?

## PART TWO: EXAMINING A SPECIFIC GRANT TO DETERMINE ITS RACIAL JUSTICE POTENTIAL

This section includes questions to ask, based on ARC's working principles for racial equity and guidelines for developing an organization that supports racial justice. Please review these principles and guidelines attached.

### BEING EXPLICIT

1. **Addressing Race:** Does the applicant focus explicitly (not necessarily exclusively) on racial justice as a core element of their work?
  - a. Do they include a racial analysis in their statement of problem?
  - b. If yes, what is their analysis of racial dynamics?
    1. *How does the organization address race in the work?*
    2. *How does race affect outcomes of the work?*
    3. *How does the work attempt to remove disparities or inequitable outcomes?*
2. **Awareness and Communication:**
  - a. How do they define racial discrimination?
  - b. Are they aware of effects of racial discrimination?
  - c. Do they speak openly about the effects of racial discrimination, inequities, or tensions internally?
  - d. Are there opportunities for staff and board to engage in collective dialogue, learning or training around developing an analysis around race?
  - e. If so, how is it operationalized? Is this reflected in the mission, values, principles that guide the organization's work?

### 3. Building and Expanding Leadership:

- a. Do they systematically develop new leaders who can articulate and act upon a racial analysis?
- b. What is their leadership development program or approach? At what levels of the organization do these leaders work?
- c. What is the system of support for emerging and current leaders?

### 4. Challenging the Rules:

- a. Are they aware of and willing to challenge unspoken rules against talking about race explicitly in policymaking? This could include internal policies, local governmental systems, or state and national policies and laws.
- b. Do they have an internal education plan and an external communications plan?

### 5. Spreading the Word:

- a. Among their stakeholders, are there mechanisms to communicate issues of racial discrimination?
  1. If yes, list examples from newsletters, speeches, campaign flyers and other materials:
- b. How do they make the case or inform the community of a racial analysis and its importance?
- c. Do they have a strategy for deflecting external demands to prove that discrimination is intentional by focusing more on impact than intention. For example, do they have systems for collecting and disseminating relevant data?

*List the systems here:*

### **DIRECTED ACTION AND ADVOCACY:**

**Institutions vs. Individuals:** Does the applicant take action for or against specific institutional policies and practices, both public and private? If yes, please answer the following questions:

- a. Do they recognize that institutional behavior is set in a variety of ways: legislative, regulatory and practical (unspoken rules and patterns)?
  1. Which items do they identify as needing improvement?
  2. How easily can they identify the power dynamics within the institutions that affect their community?
- b. Do they explicitly articulate the role of government in relation to race and private institutions?

*List examples:*

- c. Do they generate new policy or regulatory proposals, or propose new frameworks for approaching problems on a local, state, or national level?

*List the proposals:*

- d. Are the proposed solutions designed explicitly to eradicate racial disparities? How do they monitor the implementation of policies to determine whether the new policies are working?

### **STRATEGIC ALLIANCES:**

Is the group interested in building alliances based on a litmus test that emphasizes shared analysis and strategy rather than solely on the basis of shared identity?

- a. Do they have a clear analysis of how institutionalized racism interacts with other systems including class, gender and sexuality?
- b. Do they give significant attention to interacting with other constituencies and organizations to build reciprocal supportive relationships? If they do not, is this reflected in their long-term planning?
- c. Do they have both tactical allies focused on specific short-term goals, and strategic allies based on a shared worldview and long-term goals?

*List the tactical:*

*List the strategic:*

- d. How do they ensure that all parties in an alliance have equal power and participation? How does each party in the alliance develop its own capacity to contribute base, money or contacts?
- e. How do they sustain their alliances structurally (campaign meetings, one-on-ones, annual retreats, shared infrastructure)?
- f. What are the joint projects grounding their alliances? ■

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*The views and opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors.*



**BARR FOUNDATION**  
*Using KNOWLEDGE, NETWORKS and FUNDING  
to Build a Better Boston for All*

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