

# Fundraising with an Equity Lens

Equity is important to many organizations and this extends to the areas of fundraising and philanthropy. While many organizations and/or campaigns have been successful in obtaining funding to “address equity,” few organizations are clear about what funders actually mean. Similarly, funders have not been explicitly clear about what they mean when funding equity, leading to a trend of organizations chasing funding aimed at addressing equity with varying approaches and success and ultimately, it becomes unclear whether the needle on equity is moving at all. This presents an opportunity for grant seekers to be more discerning when seeking funds to ensure equity goals and considerations are aligned.

At its core, equity is about leveling the playing field for individuals or communities that have been disenfranchised, either historically or through a set of systems that have not been advantageous to the disenfranchised community. To advance equitable outcomes, they must be able to be measured, so we must be explicit about what equitable outcomes we are aiming to address (i.e., racial, health, environment, income or financial equity).

## How an Equity Lens Works

The equity lens brings into focus the ways race, ethnicity and health disparities shape experiences with power, access to opportunities, treatment and outcomes. As an organization or campaign seeking funds from a variety of funding sources, an equity lens helps sharpen the focus on equitable outcomes.

The equity lens involves many components, including:

- o Analyzing data and information about race, ethnicity and health disparities
- o Understanding disparities and learning why they exist
- o Looking at problems and their root causes from a systemic perspective
- o Explicitly naming race, ethnicity or health disparities when talking about problems or solutions

## Applying an Equity Lens When Fundraising

An equity lens in fundraising helps advocates and funders focus on equitable outcomes. It also allows space to uncover and understand inequities and provides the opportunity to implement innovative strategies. An equity lens separates symptoms from causes. More specifically, a race equity or health equity lens reveals the relevancy of inequities to all groups.

The equity lens challenges the current approaches to fundraising by allowing the prospective grant/fund seekers to explore critical questions when seeking to obtain funds.

**Questions those seeking funding should explore when identifying potential funders or funding opportunities while using an equity lens are:**

- **How does the funder’s thinking about equity inform how it funds programs or campaigns?**
- **How is a commitment to equity reflected in the mission, values and goals of the organization?**
- **Is the diversity of grantees transparently available and are there existing efforts to continue to diversify the grantee pool?**
- **Is the funder comfortable and skilled in talking about race, ethnicity, and/or health disparities?**

As advocates who aim to make sustainable change in disinvested communities, we must ensure foundations and philanthropic donors understand the value in funding the advocacy work that leads to equitable outcomes. Using an equity lens ensures that we are challenging the status quo and advancing an equitable approach to a sustainable campaign.

### **Glossary:**

#### **Equity**

*The distribution of resources according to the needs of recipients (sometimes not equal).*

#### **Racial equity**

*Racial equity occurs when a person is no more or less likely to experience society’s benefits or problems because of skin color. Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing.*

*Racial equity is described as the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted how one fares. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce different outcomes predicted by race.*

#### **Health Inequities**

*Systemic differences in the health status of different population groups. These inequities have significant social and economic costs to both individuals and society.*