

EQUITY AND EVALUATION:  
ADVANCING PRACTICE IN PHILANTHROPY  
LITERATURE REVIEW

*Summer 2017*



**jdcPartnerships**  
*integrating information for impact*



**Center for  
Evaluation Innovation**



**JOHNSON CENTER**  
AT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

## Overview

In recent years there has been a growing interest in equity in the philanthropic sector. Early adopters of an equity-focused approach to grantmaking have committed or recommitted their intentions to consider race, diversity and inclusion in all areas of their work. Advocates such as [Policy Link](#) and *the [Philanthropic Initiative to Advance Racial Equity](#)*, along with active voices that include the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](#), [D5 Coalition](#), and [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), have challenged philanthropy to move their definition of equity forward and do more to promote social justice through systematic change. This literature scan identifies some key policies and practices regarding equity work in the philanthropic sector. As well as, explores how the shift in thinking about equity in the evaluation sector has influenced how foundations use evaluation to advance their equity work.

The [Center for Evaluation Innovation](#), [jdcPartnerships](#), and the [Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning, part of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University](#), have come together to investigate current practices in equity work and the intersection of equity and evaluation in foundations as the next step to advance racial equity work. A scan of equity policies, practices and approaches in philanthropy revealed a typology of organization's equity frames. This typology of approaches then informed an investigation into how evaluation practices shift as a result of their equity approach and how intentional

efforts to focus on equity in evaluation can be used as a tool to advance the field of equity work.

## An Emerging Typology to Understand How Equity Manifests

The philanthropic sector has a long history of working to increase diversity and minimize inequities across racial groups. A typology was developed in order to understand the uses of an equity frame across different organizations in grantmaking. This typology identifies three broad categories of equity frameworks: structural integration, investment reflecting, and inactive. Within these categories, there are several approaches that further differentiate the practices of grantmakers focused on equity. The following table describes the three equity framework categories and their corresponding approaches.

	Approach	Description	What this looks like...
<b>Structural Integration of Equity Frame</b>	Institutionalized-equity Approach	Builds institutional structure from the outset or restructures organization to consider equity in all policies, practices, procedures internally and externally	Foundation structures (or restructures) aspects of their operation, from Board and Staff composition to communications, partnerships, and investments to reflect principles of equity in policies, practices, and procedures.
	Equity-add-on Approach	Engages in post-hoc decisions and actions to graft equity considerations and approaches onto existing (usually non-equity supporting) institutional framework.	Attach post hoc equity considerations as an “add-on” to existing institutional structure and processes. They change existing structures, policies, and procedures, and investments from the traditional and conventional ways of operating, to ways that respect diversity, anti-racism, etc.
<b>Investment Reflecting Equity Frame</b>	Institutionalized-Equity Approach*	Funding recognizes the problems of structural racism and systemic structural barriers with a focus on transformative, systems level change.	With a focus on significant impact that specifically addresses structural racism and systemic structural for communities of color via systems change approaches, investment includes groups deeply rooted in communities of color, providing flexible and multi-year funding to allow organizations to adapt to on the ground realities. With a focus on systems-level changes that advance equity, funding that includes advocacy, organizing and civic engagement is likely part of this approach.
	Cultural-matching Approach	Focuses on developing, implementing, and disseminating approaches that match, reflect,	Focus on funding community-based programs led by people of color and demonstration projects that develop and implement culturally appropriate methods, usually focused

		integrate historical, cultural, and social needs and desires of populations of color	on behavioral interventions rather than policy or structural intervention. These models are then used to disseminate cultural learnings to a broader range of stakeholders to deepen their understanding of and improve their cultural responsiveness. Approach focuses on trust and matching intervention approaches to the norms and needs of a community.
	Missionary Approach	Funds needed services in traditional ways, targeted specifically to people of color, usually delivered by people of different ethnicity than population served	This approach funds needed services in traditional ways, targeted specifically to people of color, with services usually delivered by people of different ethnicity than the population served. Funding fills basic needs for some services in communities with limited resources, but could be strengthened into a cultural-matching approach by simultaneously developing a community-based pipeline to leadership of these programs.
	Diversity Approach	Includes people of color in defined aspects of funding decisions.	Default to a reliance on achieving “minority representation” also referred to as diversity, as their main equity intervention. There may be a limited understanding that the diversity must go hand in hand with power sharing and a flexibility to shift paradigms of action. One without the other is mere tokenism.
	Equality “Raise-all-boats” Approach	Focuses on improving systems of care for improved outcomes, with the expectation that improved systems will automatically impact all population groups	The conflation of equality and equity. Equality often focuses on funding to ensure programs and services that are delivered in the same way to all population groups. Generally, the “equal interventions” are designed based on the needs of more privileged groups and, even if delivered equally, do not make up for the deficits in resources and opportunity experienced by historically and contemporarily oppressed populations. Equality approaches may “raise all boats” equally, while maintaining existing disparities.
	Selective-equity Approach	Chooses selectively which population or inequity to address as sole programmatic focus, e.g, income inequality but not racial inequities; Latinas but not African Americans	May focus on any of the characteristic approaches that are described, but a decision is made to limit the focus of intervention to one group or one dimension of equity.
Equity Frame Not Active	Concerned, Non-action Approach	Knows that inequities exist, but does not know how to incorporate into strategic actions.	Know that inequities exist and are truly concerned. However, they may hold back and wait for structured guidance on how to approach equity within their programs.
	Low-awareness Approach	Conducts professional work in absence of recognition or consideration of need to address inequities	Do not accept that equity attainment is a part of their mandate.

The first category, structural integration of equity in a grantmaking organization, is when an organization structures or restructures itself to consider an explicit

commitment to equity in all of its policies and practices internally and externally. This approach can either be present in the organization from the beginning, or it can be adopted later. The equity add-on approach is when an organization restructures existing policies and practices to integrate equity framework into the structure of their organization. For example, the [Kalamazoo Community Foundation's](#) board of trustees approved a new vision statement and strategic plan in 2010 that adopted an anti-racist identity. This intentional commitment to equity was further revised in 2012 to communicate the foundation's intentions to grantees (Pickett-Erway, Springgate, Stotz-Ghosh, Vance, 2014). They examined every process to newly align with their equity focus. Structural integration of equity approach seeks to have the entire organization participate in the intentional and explicit shift to commit to equity. It is challenging and often uncomfortable for an organization to evaluate their internal diversity, equity and inclusion practices. It is much more common for an organization to invest in programs that help communities of color.

Many grantmakers fall short of structural integration of equity frame but instead invest in equity programs. They do not explicitly evaluate and restructure their internal practices to match their equity commitment. The second classification, investment reflecting equity frame, ranges from grantmakers who simply fund selective equity focused programs of one group, to organizations who work to end structural and systemic inequalities in their program funding. Organizations using the investment approach recognize the need to fund equity programs, but do not explicitly turn the examination inward to restructure their internal equity framework.

There are six approach types in this category of grantmakers: institutionalized-equity, cultural-matching, missionary, diversity, equality “raise-all boats” and selective-equity approach. A description and an example of each is listed in the typology table above.

The [Northwest Area Foundation](#) is an organization concerned with providing resources to disadvantaged communities in eight States (Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington) and 75 Native Nations. They are an example of the selective equity approach because they explicitly invest 40% of their new grant dollars to Native-Led organizations working to advance economic, social and cultural prosperity in the urban, suburban and reservation communities in their region. (Wilder Research, 2012). Even though they are concerned with ending all inequities, they chose to selectively focus on the Native American population with much of their grantmaking. Many grantmaking frameworks are in the category of investment approaches. Even though these organizations do not explicitly focus on structural integration of equity internally, they will still greatly impact systematic racial disparities.

Some foundations are concerned with diversity, inclusion and equity, but have not developed a grantmaking framework and fall into the third category, equity frame not active. This category does not mean that the grantmaker is not interested in ending inequality, they just may not know how to start, or are unaware of how disparities between groups affect their organization’s goals. These organizations may need guidance on how to incorporate equity measures in their grantmaking.

## Philanthropic Definitions of and Approaches towards Equity

Current definitions of equality in foundations tend to use diversity and equal access as measures for social justice outcomes. An approach focused on equity however, acknowledges that equal opportunities and access does not account for certain groups that are starting from historically disadvantaged conditions. The article [Integrating Racial Equity in Foundation Governance, Operations, and Program Strategy](#), shows a transformation of [Consumer Health Foundation's](#) definition of health equity. They began investing in improving access to health care for all in 1998, they then progressed to an equity focus by identifying disadvantaged populations due to institutionalized and historic inequalities. The foundation has taken steps to promote system changes in order to progress toward their goal of health equity. Health equity is defined as a journey toward a future where an individual's race is not a determinant of their health outcomes (Yanique Redwood, Christopher J. King, 2014). Funders and social change agents who wish to implement an equity focused framework must first examine the historic systems of inequality and unconscious social norms that favor some groups over others.

The [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](#) follows a similar approach by suggesting that grantmakers in education should focus their investment on the needs of marginalized students, in order to benefit the community as a whole. (Kevin Welner and Amy Farley, 2010). John Powell, uses the term “targeted universalism” to describe this approach. “Targeting within universalism means

identifying a problem, particularly one suffered by marginalized people, proposing a solution, and then broadening its scope to cover as many people as possible (John A. Powell, Stephen Menendian & Jason Reece, 2009).” This approach rejects the common assumption that universal approaches will benefit everyone. Working to create solutions that help disadvantaged communities of color is not new to the field, however the progression of equity frameworks used across funders is varied.

Two foundations, [Consumer Health Foundation](#) and [The Barr Foundation](#), who have strong racial equity initiatives underwent an assessment by the [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity](#) (PRE). A summary of their findings and recommendations for the field is found in, [Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment](#). The assessment was broken into three racial justice capacity areas, internal operations, communications, and grantmaking and grantee relations. The Barr Foundation reported that the shift in their racial justice focus also resulted in changes to their grantmaking evaluation process (Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, 2005). The Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment helped the foundation recognize how equity was present in their organization and the areas they needed to continue to address.

A similar study, [Internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audit](#), was conducted by [Social Policy Research Association](#) on the [The California Endowment](#) in 2008 and again in 2011 to track their progress. The audit focused on a number of foundation practices to promote DEI internally, including adopting a shared vision, engaging the board, increasing staff diversity, developing diversity data tracking, and collaboration



and leadership in the philanthropic sector (Social Policy Research Associates, 2013). The California Endowment was able to work on each area and make considerable progress in the three years between the audits. Yet when the 2011 audit concluded, they identified areas where there was still more work to do. DEI work is a continuous process of learning and progressing, not an end goal. Another study describes the steps [The Saint Paul Foundation](#) took toward structurally integrating equity in their organization. They have worked hard in their commitment to equity and have celebrated many milestones in their journey since they first identified themselves as an anti-racist organization in 1998. However, the study concludes that possibly the most important accomplishment they made over the last ten years is the Foundation's increased ability to open up and share their challenges, difficulties, and achievements honestly. The organization was able to evaluate and adjust their practices in order to collaborate with the field and make meaningful changes (The Saint Paul Foundation, 2008). Evaluation is a critical tool for organizations to learn from themselves and continuously improve their equity work.

### **Equity in Evaluation Practice**

A focus on integrating equity in an organization does not stop at just programming and staffing considerations, it spreads through the organization to incorporate equity in evaluation methods. In recent years, funders have demanded an increase in evaluation of grantmaking organizations in order to measure the impact of their investments. It is easy for community builders and funders to look for short term progress in order to track the impact of their investments. However, the impacts of

programs that dismantle historic and institutionalized inequalities are often complex and difficult to measure because systematic change is gradual (Center for Assessment and Policy Development, MP Associates, Inc., 2005). There is not a consistent framework for evaluation of equity programs in the philanthropic sector. The fifth case in the [Diversity in Philanthropy Project \(DPP\)](#), discusses how a diversity lens in philanthropic evaluation can be applied to inform effective work. This case refers to an “evaluation gap” caused by techniques that are inconsistent across foundations or non-existent due to small staff or limited budget (Millet R.A., 2008). The gaps in effective evaluation with a diversity lens are between what is defined as change, how outcomes are measured, and the impact of results on future programs.

Evaluation is a tool that is most commonly used to track and measure the impact of an organization's work. Organizations often use evaluations to determine which investments have the highest return and which should be discontinued. Evaluation that is focused on equity does more than measure program outcomes though, it is actually a device for supporting equity efforts. For example, an evaluation conducted by [ClearWay Minnesota](#), on their [Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy \(TTEP\) initiative](#) is summarized in the article, [Designing an Evaluation of a New Initiative: A Practical Approach to Ensure Evaluation Use](#). This summary overviews how evaluation helped the organization support equity in their programming. The mission of the TTEP initiative is to reduce commercial tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure on Native American Reservations. Instead of starting their evaluation process by requesting evaluation proposals, ClearWay started with a year long

evaluation planning process before they collected any data. They brought on a consultant who helped the organization work through a unified theory of change and evaluation framework specific to their work. These steps helped TTEP to define and unify their expectations about what effective change would look like in a realistic timeline. The planning process acknowledged how the effectiveness of programs that were successful in reducing commercial tobacco use for other cultures would need to be tailored to the Native American culture, history, and traditions. For example, the traditional use of tobacco in sacred Native American religious rituals. They intentionally included community members in the planning process in order to understand the culture, eliminate power dynamics, and give the community a stake in the work TTEP was doing (Bosma, Matter, Martinez, Toves, and D'Silva, 2010). The evaluation process helped TTEP support their equity work and structurally integrate equity in their organization.

### **Evaluation Field: Considerations and Commitment to an Equity Frame**

Recently, the field of evaluation witnessed an increase in the number of evaluators focused on equitable practices. The American Evaluation Association communicated their commitment to social justice through their [Cultural Competence Statement in 2011](#) and their 2014 Annual Conference theme, [Visionary Evaluation for a Sustainable, Equitable Future](#). Their statement on cultural competence is an example of the evaluation sector's effort to be more inclusive and responsive to diverse communities. The statement maintains that evaluators that do not implement culturally competent theories risk being unconsciously biased and inaccurate in their findings (American

Evaluation Association, 2011). Many organizations and people in the evaluation sector have made conscious efforts to adopt more equitable practices in their work.

Evaluations that do not consider equity, risk being implemented and interpreted incorrectly. [The National Science Foundation](#), [Colorado Trust](#), The American Association of Evaluation, and [Community Science](#) have communicated in separate papers that the validity of evaluation requires culturally competent evaluators. The Colorado Trust supported in, [The Importance of Culture in Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Evaluators](#), “multicultural validity ensures that the information gathered by the evaluator is authentic and not based on false assumptions and data (Colorado Trust, 2012).” This guide is a resource for evaluators to consider the impact of culture on their research. The case examples provide a tangible account of ways in which failing to incorporate equity in the evaluation could falsify the results. The National Science Foundation came to a similar conclusion in an earlier report, [A Guide to Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations](#), which explained, “To ignore the influence of culture and to be unresponsive to the needs of the target population is to put the program in danger of being ineffective and to put the evaluation in danger of being seriously flawed (The National Science Foundation, 2002).” Foundations must pay explicit attention to the impact of culture on the effectiveness of a program and the validity of the evaluation.

The American Evaluation Association also concludes that an equitable evaluation accounts for cultural context and is responsive to the subject community. Culturally competent evaluators make sure they understand the target community and

collect and record data in a more accurate data (American Evaluation Association, Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation). The Colorado Trust warns evaluators to be aware of efforts that apply majority or dominant culture assumptions to a community by default. Evaluations that assume the culture, language, values, and emotions of the group will find there are mistakes in the implementation and interpretation of evaluation ([The Colorado Trust, Guidelines and Best Practices for Culturally Competent Evaluations, 2002](#)). One example from The Colorado Trust displays how a lack of cultural understanding in the interpretation of an evaluation could completely miss the intended results. In a study on marital interactions, researchers used a coding system to track conflicts in the couple's discussion. They found that, "Observers who were not of Asian heritage observed no conflicts among Asian couples. However, an observer who was brought in from the Asian community perceived numerous indications of conflicts that those outside the culture were unable to detect (The Colorado Trust, Guidelines and Best Practices for Culturally Competent Evaluations, 2002)." This shows how easily an evaluation can be invalid due to overlooking cultural differences. Another example from the report shows how important it is to infuse equity in interpreting results in a different culture. They found that "anger is a trait that correlates highly with adolescent alcohol abuse in the Caucasian population, whereas in the American Indian population the expression of anger inversely correlated with alcohol abuse. Within this population, anger is a positive factor that can keep adolescents in school and help them stay motivated to

improve the lives of their community members (The Colorado Trust, Guidelines and Best Practices for Culturally Competent Evaluations, 2002).”

These examples show what many other organizations have concluded about cultural competency and validity. Community Science presents three dimensions of multicultural validity in, [\*The Importance of Culture in Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Evaluators\*](#), soundness of logic across cultures, (methodological validity); acknowledgement of the evaluator’s and the community’s cultural lens, (interpersonal validity); and impact of the evaluation on future actions, (consequential validity)(Community Science, 2012). Focusing on these three dimensions, methodological, interpersonal, and consequential validity are possible when equity is purposely infused in the evaluation process. Programs and evaluations cannot be considered valid if they do not consider culture in implementation and interpretation.

### **Cultural Competence as a Central Capacity**

The National Science Foundation defines culture as the result of all of the learned and shared experiences, behaviors, values, languages, customs and beliefs specific to a certain group or society (The National Science Foundation, A Guide to Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations, 2002). An individual’s worldviews, communication style, and group identity are all dependent on their cultural background. The American Evaluation Association’s *Statement on Cultural Competence* lists some of the factors that indicate culture, race/ethnicity, religion, social class, language, disability, sexual orientation, age, and gender. Moreover, socioeconomic situation and location shape

culture as well (The American Evaluation Association, Public Statement on Cultural Competence, 2011). There are so many varying factors that make up an individual's culture, such that no two communities or individuals are perfectly alike.

A common misinterpretation of cultural competency is that it is a state of knowing everything there is to know about a certain culture. Since the factors that make up culture are so complex, this would be nearly impossible and not practical when working within multicultural communities. Cultural competence is the ability to hold back judgement, ask the right questions and be open to differences (Community Science, 2012). It is a process of reflection and learning about one's own identity and comparing it to other's world view. Cultural competence is a skill that is developed over a lifetime, that results in mindful and respectful interactions with people from different cultures (American Evaluation Association, 2011). The Colorado Trust's *Guidelines and Best Practices for Culturally Competent Evaluations* recommends the first step to cultural competency is to reflect on personal experiences, perspectives, and biases and compare them to the culture of the community to be evaluated. It is necessary to understand differences in culture to perform equitable and valid evaluations (The Colorado Trust, Guidelines and Best Practices for Culturally Competent Evaluations, 2002). An organization and individual evaluators must understand what culture is and how to adapt to different communities needs in order to be effective.

### **Inclusivity as an Underpinning of Cultural Competency**

The best way to achieve cultural competence in an evaluation team is to include members of the community. Resources from The Colorado Trust and [Public Policy Associates](#) indicate that the evaluation team should not all be from the same background. A diverse group of evaluators allows for the influence of multiple perspectives to shape the evaluation methods. Team members who have similar experiences, and an understanding of the group being evaluated help to shape an equitable evaluation (The Colorado Trust, 2002) (Public Policy Associates, 2015). The [Center for Assessment and Policy Development, MP Associates, INC.](#), believes that two ways to ensure there are a variety of views represented in a team are to “...broaden the range of people who are considered evaluators (privileging experience and insight as much as academic credentials) and working to bring more people of color into the “professional” evaluation world (Center for Assessment and Policy Development, MP Associates, Inc., *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*,\_\_\_).” Giving a voice to members of the target community and culturally competent individuals will help ensure multi-cultural validity. Evaluation can be used as a tool to measure outcomes and inform future action.

## **Conclusion**

With the growing interest in equity in the philanthropic sector over recent years this literature scan identifies some key policies and practices, presents an emerging typology, provides examples of early adopters of an equity-focused approach to grantmaking, and explores how the shift in thinking about equity in the evaluation



sector has influenced how foundations use evaluation to advance their equity work. Further, it outlines a few ways an organization can infuse equity into evaluation by training culturally competent evaluators, empowering minority groups to participate in the evaluation, and implementing a strategy and framework with equity at its core. It underscores that evaluation that is equitable acknowledges and dismantles power dynamics, and produces multi-culturally valid results.