

Living Our Values: Support for Equitable Data Practices in Foundations & Nonprofits

Nearly all funders and nonprofits value equity, yet their practices can reinforce existing oppressive and exclusionary patterns, with predictable results.

Paradigm-shifting work by groups like the Center for Effective Philanthropy, Equitable Evaluation Initiative, We All Count, and the Trust-Based Philanthropy Project have lit a bright path forward for the sector. It is time to hold ourselves accountable for true change.

While data alone doesn't change practice, we can use information to hold ourselves accountable to live up to our equity-informed values. Public Profit offers practical supports to help funders and mission-driven organizations move from just *collecting* data to *using it to create change* in pursuit of more equitable practices and outcomes.

Paradigm shifts affecting funders and mission-driven organizations create opportunities to use information differently.

The mission-driven community is revisiting longstanding assumptions about how funders and grantees interact, who should be funded and how, and how success is defined and measured. The racial reawakening in summer 2020 led many funders and nonprofits to make their commitment to “do better, do different” more public than ever before. Funders committed billions to race equity-focused initiatives, and mission-driven organizations pledged to shift their practices.

Our definition of equity includes race equity, gender equity, and socioeconomic equity.

Information-rich ways to support this shift can include:

- **Theory of philanthropy** – describe how the funders’ mission and priorities translate into tactical decisions around grant structure, identifying potential grantees, making funding decisions, and setting reporting requirements.
- **Grant portfolio analysis** – explore the distribution of grants based on grantee size, leadership composition, organization focus; compare restricted and unrestricted funding and length of grants, based on grantee characteristics.

Building capacity to look at data through an equity lens enhances transparency and builds trust.

When funders and mission-driven organizations demonstrate transparency and accountability for their commitments, they build trust with their staff, funders, and stakeholders. Sharing evidence of practice change demonstrates a concrete commitment to organizational values, which helps to retain and attract highly qualified team members. Public Profit can support organizations with:

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging survey**– solicit employee input about their perceptions and experience of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the organization. (With Change Cadet.)
- **Community of practice** – build organizational culture and technical capacity to examine client and staff data through an equity lens, and to take action based on the findings.

About Public Profit

Public Profit helps mission-driven organizations deepen their ability to learn from data, make great decisions, and improve the effectiveness and quality of their services. We create opportunities for our clients to come together to interpret data, to create brave spaces to discuss what's working and what can be better, and to make future decisions with confidence and in line with their goals. We provide evaluation, strategic program design, capacity building, and data visualization services.

We are committed to equity and inclusion for our team, our clients, and the communities we serve. We believe in the power of elevating diverse perspectives, using community-based and human-centered approaches, and listening to understand in order to better empower and serve our clients and communities.

Data and evaluation have historically been weaponized against marginalized communities, using the cover of objectivity and rigor to justify inequitable and harmful policies. We attempt to interrupt these longstanding patterns.

Many of the issues faced by the communities we serve are the result of systemic oppression that disproportionately affects people along racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic lines. We come to this work from a position of privilege and recognize that it is our responsibility to actively confront our own biases and the systemic injustices we hope to change.

Ready to start? Contact Corey Newhouse
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