

Advancing Racial Equity in Arts and Culture Philanthropy: Technical Report

The MacArthur Foundation: Chicago Commitment

August 2021

Evaluation & Learning Team

Crystal Jackson, PhD
Leslie Goodyear, PhD
Erin Stafford, MA
Sarah Gabriella Hernandez, PhD
Camille Lemieux, MA
Katrina Bledsoe, PhD
Debra Morris, MPH
Elissa West-Frazier, MAT, MA
Salma Shawa
Tony Streit



Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 1
 - Overview 1
 - Key Findings and Reflection Questions 1
- 1. Introduction 2
 - Chicago Commitment Overview and Context 2
 - Connection to the Just Imperative..... 2
 - How the Chicago Commitment Team Can Use this Report..... 3
- 2. Data Collection Approach..... 4
- 3: Key Findings 5
 - Finding 1: Funders are expanding what and who can be funded in their arts and culture portfolios..... 5
 - Broadening What Counts as Art 5
 - Broadening What Counts as Arts Organizations..... 6
 - Grantmaking In Service to Communities 6
 - Creating Space for More Stories to Be Told 7
 - Finding 2: Advancing racial equity through arts-focused philanthropy requires changing philanthropic practices..... 8
 - Prioritizing BIPOC-Led Grantee Organizations and Communities 8
 - Beyond The Optics of Advancing Racial Equity 9
 - Finding 3: Advance racial equity through networks, convenings, and participatory grantmaking.....10
 - Framing the Purpose of Networks and Convenings.....10
 - Engaging in Funder Networks Focused on Racial Equity10
 - Employing a Participatory Grantmaking Approach11
- 4: Questions and Implications13
 - In What Ways Is Power Considered to Be a Factor in the Chicago Commitment's Decision-Making?.....13
 - How Does This Inform Chicago Commitment’s Grantmaking and Other Activities?13



Executive Summary

Overview

This report summarizes learnings that can inform the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's (MacArthur's) Chicago Commitment's goal to advance racial equity in the Chicago region, specifically as it relates to the intersection with the arts and culture sector. Findings from this report are drawn from a data set that includes 16 semi-structured interviews with leaders from a cross section of local, regional, and national philanthropies with arts programs.

The report is divided into four sections. Section 1 outlines the context of the inquiry, connections to the Foundation's Just Imperative, and ways the report information can be used. Section 2 summarizes the methods, and Section 3 highlights key findings from the analysis. Lastly, Section 4 connects the findings to the landscape and poses questions for the Chicago Commitment team to reflect upon in preparation for discussion during an upcoming learning session.

Key Findings and Reflection Questions

The inquiry outlines three key findings. The first finding considers how arts-focused philanthropy work is expanding to include broader conceptualizations of art than have historically been funded across the sector. Additionally, this section of the report considers how, by expanding the conceptualizations of art, philanthropies are opening funding up to a more diverse range of arts organizations and artists that highlight intersectional aspects of their work in communities, such as art and community organizing.

The second finding outlines practices that organizations are adopting to advance racial equity through arts-focused philanthropy. These practices focus on factors such as assessing grantee demographics and prioritizing funding to BIPOC leaders and BIPOC-led organizations.¹ This finding also highlights the need for arts-focused philanthropy to consider deeper and more meaningful practices, such as giving grantees the power of self-determination in how to use funds, create their art, and advance racial equity in their communities.

The third finding considers how arts-focused philanthropies are reimagining existing mechanisms that support engagement and participation across peer organizations, grantees, and within communities and offers considerations and areas of reflection for the Chicago Commitment team.

¹ For the purposes of reporting findings, when interviewees referred to individuals from historically marginalized communities, they used the term BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). Throughout the findings, we have opted to use that term to best represent interviewees' voice. However, EDC recognizes the limitations related to using BIPOC as a general identifying term: it is less specific; it may potentially erase important differences between groups of people; and it is not often a term that represents an individual or community's preferred self-identification. For the purposes of this report, we use BIPOC only when interviewees used the term, and otherwise use the Culture, Equity, and the Arts team's preferred terminology *people from historically marginalized communities* or people from *African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) communities* in other sections of the report.



1. Introduction

Chicago Commitment Overview and Context

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's (MacArthur's) Chicago Commitment invests in people, places, and partnerships to advance racial equity and build a more inclusive Chicago. In service to these goals, the Chicago Commitment aims to create conditions that enable all Chicagoans, particularly people from historically marginalized communities, to obtain, use, and benefit from civic, cultural, and economic opportunities. By fostering conditions for greater inclusion, the Chicago Commitment envisions that people from historically marginalized communities will have a stronger sense of voice, belonging, and influence.

Culture, Equity, and the Arts is one of three modules through which the Chicago Commitment focuses its institutional resources in service of advancing racial equity. This module builds on decades of the MacArthur Foundation's support of Chicago arts organizations that are part of the city's cultural fabric.

Two overarching premises guide the module's work. First, the Chicago Commitment team maintains that art produced by historically marginalized communities has not been recognized, promoted, or valued by the public at the level it deserves. As a result, important narratives and experiences are not always visible to wide audiences. This is particularly true in African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) identified communities. Second, the Chicago Commitment team acknowledges that stories that represent the rich diversity of Chicagoans have not been equally heard, documented, or valued in traditional arts spaces. Artistic and cultural activities occur in every neighborhood of the city, but financial support for these pursuits is not available equitably across the city's geographies or populations. In response, the Culture, Equity, and the Arts module is designed to bring greater attention and resources to practices and perspectives from historically marginalized communities in service of advancing racial equity in and through the arts.

Connection to the Just Imperative

The MacArthur Foundation's Just Imperative is grounded in the values of inclusion, diversity, and equity and embraces the full range of human characteristics, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, status, experience, ability and disability, age, religion, geography or national origin, ideology, class, perspective, and more.² In pursuit of inclusion and equity, the Chicago Commitment team acknowledges its responsibility to tackle the effects of historic and present-day racism and has centered its strategic focus on advancing racial equity in the Chicago region.

² John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. (2021). *The Just Imperative*. <https://www.macfound.org/about/how-we-work/just-imperative>

The Chicago Commitment team seeks to respond to this call through a variety of means, including amplifying the voices of nontraditional arts and culture organizations and their leaders and raising awareness of arts-centered organizations that serve and represent ALAANA communities. The intent is that these efforts will lead to an increase in culturally relevant and meaningful arts experiences that are more inclusive of, and more compelling to, historically marginalized and underrepresented audiences, communities, and artists. The Chicago Commitment is also employing participatory grantmaking as an approach that can bring forward the art and cultural experiences of these communities and help ensure that the artistic voices in these communities are represented, understood, and preserved. The team is also considering developing and supporting collaborations and networks in service of advancing racial equity in the arts.

How the Chicago Commitment Team Can Use this Report

By describing peer philanthropies' approaches to advancing racial equity in and through the arts, this inquiry seeks to support the Chicago Commitment team as it continues to develop its grantmaking strategies and other activities that enable the advancement of the module's overarching goal and associated short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes. In this report, we seek to provide information that can help the Chicago Commitment team accomplish the following:

- Refine its own definition of what constitutes *art* and *arts organizations* to be more inclusive of diverse creative expression and to continue broadening the eligibility criteria of arts and culture organizations
- Inform the module's focus, current grantmaking structures, and strategies for partnering with other philanthropies whose work advances the module goal
- Leverage its current or future partnerships to advance the Culture, Equity, and the Arts module goal
- Build a network and/or harness the collective power of arts and culture organizations to influence other sectors in service of advancing racial equity
- Assess and further refine its participatory grantmaking process



2. Data Collection Approach

This report includes information that EDC gathered and analyzed from 16 semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of leaders of local and national philanthropic organizations focused on the arts.

Building on prior data collection with philanthropies concerning their racial equity work, EDC proposed a list of philanthropic organizations based in the Chicago region that engage in grantmaking focused on arts and culture. The Chicago Commitment team, with the support of EDC and the Office of Evaluation, further developed the purposive list to include national philanthropies to better understand how their arts and culture work relates to or advances racial equity. Of these organizations, 19 were included in the sample.

Program officers contacted representatives from each philanthropy to request 60-minute interviews. Once individuals agreed to be interviewed, two members of EDC conducted the sessions. Interviewees were asked to describe their philanthropy's grantmaking and non-grantmaking work, such as collaborations and collective action. They were also asked for their reflections on the overall landscape of arts-focused philanthropy.

EDC staff conducted interviews over a four-month period from April to July 2021.



3: Key Findings

The findings are organized around three key claims. Each finding is described in the section that follows.

Finding 1: Funders are expanding what and who can be funded in their arts and culture portfolios.

This section describes how other arts funders—both locally and nationally—are changing how they think about what counts as art and what types of organizations and artists they fund.³

Broadening What Counts as Art

While responses varied, most interviewees indicated they were in the process of shifting away from what they perceived as conventional definitions of art and opening space for grantees to define art on their own terms. When asked specifically about how their philanthropy defines art for the purposes of its grantmaking and other activities, interviewees described how they are seeking to promote an inclusive stance and give grant applicants the opportunity to self-define their work as art or their identity as artists. Some interviewees define art loosely, including a wide breadth of art forms, such as visual arts, dance, performance, classical music, and theater. Notably, several interviewees endorsed this broad definition of art but did not further specify the art forms. Other philanthropies funded arts-focused work both locally and across states and considered art forms such as vogueing or bomba, which they felt were underrepresented in arts funding. Specific examples of definitions included the following:

- Storytelling that happens through visual arts, dance, and performance
- Visual, performing, and multidisciplinary art

Moving to expand their definitions of art provided opportunities for interviewees to adopt an intersectional lens in their grantmaking process. For example, one interviewee shared that creating space for grantees to define their own art has led to an arts portfolio that includes activities such as community organizing and caretaking of the land as art. Another interviewee shared that integrating intersecting values in their work meant not having to disentangle their art from their activism.

Interviewees shared how broadening definitions of art are leading them to re-evaluate some of their own practices related to grantmaking and their grantees. For example, interviewees shared that in their grant applications, instead of using the term *art professionals*, some are now using language that reflects a broader field of artists and creatives, such as *cultural workers* and *accomplished practitioners*. Additionally, many foundations are shifting away from judging “art quality” to judging “technical merit and depth.”

³ For the purposes of reporting findings, when interviewees referred to grantee organizations of their arts programs, they used the term *arts organization*. EDC opted to use this term throughout the Findings Section to represent interviewees’ voices more authentically. In other sections of the report, we use the Chicago Commitment teams’ preferred terminology such as *arts and culture organizations*, including arts-centered organizations.

Broadening What Counts as Arts Organizations

Interviewees expressed a commitment to broadening what they consider as an arts organization, therefore expanding the funding pool to include organizations that may not have been eligible previously. For example, some of the types of organizations mentioned included the following:

- Social service organizations that do arts programming
- New media organizations
- Labor justice organizations
- Museums and botanical gardens that were not exclusively focused on art

Across our interviews, we found that the foundations that encouraged self-determination in defining art also asked organizations to self-identify regarding their status as an arts organization. One interviewee shared that they removed the definition of *arts organization* from their website; now, if an applicant checks the arts organization box, then they are eligible for arts-related funding.

Interviewees perceived that creating space for grantees to self-define was an affirmative and inclusive act that could lead to more diversity in the kinds of organizations that apply for and receive grant funding, thus empowering arts organizations that have been historically left out. Notably, several funders emphasized the importance of grants supporting practicing artists and art-making that elevates diverse stories and “artists that produce art that may not hang on the wall.”

Although most foundations we interviewed seemed to be shifting toward being more open, a few still defined their grantees in narrower, more specific terms, such as *theater* and *music organizations* or *arts education organizations*. Still other interviewees suggested that they look to their strategy and grant guidelines directly to inform their decisions about what people and organizations they will fund.

Grantmaking In Service to Communities

Additionally, our analysis of the interviews suggested that the move to create space in their grantmaking process for self-definition—of art, artists, and arts organizations—helped these interviewees as funders more fully understand the ways in which organizations use art to serve their communities. For example, some grantees embarked on art projects that were collaborations with nonprofits, city government, and local artists to address a significant civic need in the grantee organizations’ community. Another example included a grantee that created an arts fellowship for rural farmers and teachers as artists in their communities who can best speak to local needs. Funders explained that they believe grantees know how best to serve their communities, and that was certainly true for arts organizations or artists that intentionally framed their art as intersectional or across sectors.

Following are some examples of intersectional work shared in one interview:

- Art to address illegal dumping in a Black community in an urban city. This was a city beautification project that involved a partnership with the city government, a local university, and a nonprofit organization.
- Art to address immigration and to elevate voices of people in one city in the United States and another across the border in Mexico. For this project, an artist worked directly with the

cities to create visual installations that centered the experiences of Latinx immigrant people.

- Art to address a food access project in a southern city. This project involved creating art installations at the state capital to highlight historic laws that keep people from accessing fresh food in the city, while also showing opportunities such as increasing access to organic farms and providing food in local parks.
- Art to commemorate the Tulsa massacre. This project used art to surface current data points regarding Black wealth in Tulsa that was historically rooted in the Tulsa massacre. Art was the communication mechanism that inspired the founding of an economic initiative that aims to economically uplift the Black community in Tulsa and reduce the disparities between Black and white economic wealth in Tulsa.
- Art to advance changes within the criminal justice system
- Art to organize a solar-based grid and infrastructure in a culturally sensitive manner

Creating Space for More Stories to Be Told

Interviewees explained that they believe when arts funders broaden their criteria to include self-definition and self-determination, they create space for more stories to be told, and these stories can increase the visibility and inclusion of art and culture work that has been historically underrepresented. One interviewee emphasized that arts organizations have been working on racial equity projects longer than grantees in other sectors and that philanthropy's role should be to make space for these organizations to drive racial equity work that reflects their own communities.⁴

Taken together, interviewees suggested that there are cascading effects related to the sector's advocacy for changing the terms and conditions under which artists and arts organizations are supported by grantmakers. As philanthropy's conceptions of art change, so too do philanthropy's conceptions of artists themselves. Likewise, interviewees suggested that changing ideas about who gets counted as an artist opens the door to new ways that art can be leveraged to create change, especially in communities that continue to experience disproportionate effects of persistent structural and systemic inequalities.

Finally, interviewees agreed that arts organizations can tell stories and address complex social and historical topics (e.g., race relations, geographic differences, understanding of history) in ways that other types of grantees may not. One interviewee spoke to how they understood their role in the sector to be "movement funders" in that their approach to grantmaking considers how art can shift narratives, policies, and ways of being to build and sustain power in BIPOC communities. With this in mind, interviewees suggest the need to respect grantees' knowledge of how best to (1) use funding in service of their art or mission, (2) create their art, and (3) engage with their communities.

⁴ For this specific finding, the data do not distinguish whether this interviewee's perspective was rooted in their own philanthropy's experience or from their perspective about the arts and culture sector more generally.

Finding 2: Advancing racial equity through arts-focused philanthropy requires changing philanthropic practices.

This section describes how other arts funders are thinking about advancing racial equity work through their grantmaking and non-grantmaking practices. How does a focus on advancing racial equity show up in their work? Interviewees stated that their racial equity work manifests in ways that are sometimes indirect or inexplicit. Instead, philanthropies that center racial equity in their mission, vision, or values suggested that racial equity was embedded throughout their work or that it “flowed through it.” These arts funders recognized that their understanding of racial equity work was evolving as they continue to learn from their grantees and the field and improve their practices.

Prioritizing BIPOC-Led Grantee Organizations and Communities

Prioritizing BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving arts organizations was the most prevalent racial equity effort that interviewees endorsed. In addition, we found that each foundation was at a different stage in their racial equity journey and used different approaches to show how this priority manifested for their arts programs.

When asked how racial equity specifically manifests in arts funders’ grantmaking, interviewees shared that they request demographic information from applicants and prioritize funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations and work that serves BIPOC communities. Some examples of these practices follow:

- Using grant criteria that focused on organizations led by BIPOC individuals as well as people underrepresented in the sector, namely people with disabilities, women, and people in the LGBTQ+ communities.
- Prioritizing stories in film that have not been told and those that have a social justice lens.
- Prioritizing multi-year general operating support for BIPOC-led arts organizations, recognizing there has been historical inequities in arts funding for these communities.
- Examining the demographics of the people and organizations they fund to determine the extent to which they fund BIPOC-led organizations.
- Asking applicants about the makeup up of their organizations’ leadership, board, staff, teaching artists, and ensemble artists so that they can assess whether an organization has strong BIPOC representation.

Several foundations had specific goals related to increasing the percent of BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving arts organizations in their portfolio. Interviewees shared the following examples related to grantmaking goals:

- Prioritizing funding arts education in schools that do not have arts education resources and have a high proportion of students of color.
- Committing to giving bigger grants (from \$800,000 to \$2 million) to BIPOC-led organizations that have historically received less money from philanthropy. This particular foundation also committed to giving 65% of their grants to what they called BIPOC “groups.” They are now giving 85% of their grants to these groups.

- Allocating at least 50% of their arts funding to BIPOC-led or BIPOC-serving organizations.
- Increasing funding of “cultural equity groups” from 18% to 30% over the course of several years.

In prioritizing BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving arts organizations, an unanswered question remained regarding how philanthropies fund white-led or “legacy” arts and culture organizations within a changing context. Several interviewees wrestled with this tension and stated that they will remain committed to continuing to fund white-led arts organizations and, in some instances, gradually reducing the amount and number of these organizations that they fund. Other interviewees spoke from a more critical lens and posited that more authentic racial equity work means discontinuing funding for white-led organizations. They recognized that this shift was much more challenging for some foundations and that each was at a different stage in their racial equity journey.

Beyond The Optics of Advancing Racial Equity

Although we heard a commitment to advancing racial equity from most of those we interviewed, some expressed that philanthropy’s current practices are not sufficient to authentically and meaningfully advance racial equity in the arts sector. Some interviewees felt that racial equity goals related to increasing the percentage of BIPOC-led arts organizations were “surface level” and felt like “optics” of racial equity work, even if their foundation currently set goals for itself. Other examples of “checking the boxes” included releasing statements on racial equity without pairing the statements with concrete actions and convening grantees around racial equity for the sake of convening only and not with an end goal in mind (i.e., as one interviewee stated, “convening for convening’s sake”).

Two interviewees spoke of the danger of seeking to advance racial equity through hiring more BIPOC leaders without appropriate organizational support. This example was shared in reference to both a grantee practice to improve an arts organization’s own demographics as well as a practice in philanthropy. Interviewees stressed that racial equity work requires going beyond hiring to really considering the setting in which these BIPOC leaders will work and whether they will be supported. These interviewees felt that advancing racial equity cannot happen if an organization does not work to change inequitable and racist structures and systems in place that underlie the cultures within an organization.

In addition to giving grantees agency in defining their arts and culture work as discussed in the section above, interviewees offered specific recommendations for ways philanthropies could support more authentic racial equity work:

- Fund staff salaries for individuals who work specifically on racial equity in the arts
- Prioritize general operating grants
- Support grantees for longer periods of time
- Support grantees’ power to convene with each other on topics they determine
- Provide grantees with capacity-building and technical assistance to manage large grants
- Provide grantees with access to the social capital and national relationships that larger foundations offer

Finding 3: Advance racial equity through networks, convenings, and participatory grantmaking.

This section describes how other arts funders are thinking about networks, convenings, and grantmaking practices in service of engaging grantees and communities.

Framing the Purpose of Networks and Convenings

Interviewees described working in collaboration, either through networks or collaboratives, as one way some foundations engaged in their racial equity work. At the same time, arts-focused funder networks, collaboratives, and grantee convenings were described by other interviewees as “naturally covering equity topics.” Yet interviewees did not share specifics of the framing of these activities, or the equity topics addressed. Some examples of equity-related networks and their convening topics included the following:

- Advancing racial equity in the arts and culture sector
- Advancing policy related to arts education in public schools
- Promoting urban and rural connections in the arts and culture sectors, in which equity issues emerge through conversations about place
- Addressing pay equity in the arts and culture sector, specifically about arts internships

Some interviewees felt that actively participating in networks that included funders and arts organizations could be a practice that goes beyond “checking the boxes” of racial equity work. They suggested that opening space in these types of networks and convenings for organizations to determine the racial equity agenda is a more meaningful philanthropic effort to advance racial equity than just prioritizing funding for BIPOC-led grantees in their foundation strategies or programs. Interviewees shared that these convenings and collaborative efforts offered opportunities for philanthropies and grantees to share learnings and resources with each other and to facilitate conversations about grantee needs, including but not exclusively related to racial equity. Most of the examples shared by interviewees described funding or hosting convenings or participating in advocacy or policy-related networks that brought together funders and other stakeholders to advance change.

Some interviewees shared that they convene grantees as part of their grantmaking. Rather than “convening for convening’s sake,” these convenings are designed to address topics of importance to the specific program’s or strategy’s grantees and respond to their expressed needs. For example, one funder convened grantees to share approaches to community-driven artmaking in historically underserved communities. These meetings afforded BIPOC-led or BIPOC-serving arts organizations the opportunity to connect with peers and colleagues, break the silos of working in isolation, and engage in joint learning.

Engaging in Funder Networks Focused on Racial Equity

Those we interviewed suggested that funder networks created opportunities to advance racial equity efforts more broadly. Following are examples of funder networks:

- Donor collaboratives, such as America’s Cultural Treasures and the Mosaic Fund, which pool funds to strengthen and stabilize organizations of color impacted by the pandemic.
- Other advocacy efforts, such as the Black Seed grant program through the Mellon Foundation, which brought together a group of funders to give \$20 million dollars to small theaters of color across the United States.

These funding efforts provided general operating support to sustain arts-focused organizations as community-based anchors in neighborhoods serving BIPOC communities.

Interviewees most frequently mentioned Enrich Chicago, Arts Work Fund, and Grantmakers in the Arts as networks in which they participate and that have been influential regarding racial equity work. Several local interviewees specifically referenced the work of Enrich Chicago and how its trainings help foundations discuss internal and external changes needed to advance racial equity. Others mentioned how ongoing conversations about racial equity within Arts Work Fund and Grantmakers in the Arts are helpful experiences for funders seeking to engage in advancing racial equity; they appreciated the opportunity to share about their work together and not operate alone.

Finally, interviewees shared that some funder networks viewed racial equity as a core value rather than a goal, whereas others viewed it as an imperative to ultimately advance racial justice. Other networks did not exclusively name racial equity, but instead included it within other areas related to equity more generally, such as addressing pay equity or education inequities.

Employing a Participatory Grantmaking Approach

Data from these interviews provides peer perspectives on how participatory grantmaking is perceived and implemented, particularly in service of advancing racial equity and shifting power from grantmakers to others in the field.

Most interviewees’ foundations do not employ participatory grantmaking. However, almost all of those we interviewed shared that their foundations were interested in participatory grantmaking and were actively learning about it. In addition, although most did not use participatory grantmaking, several interviewees in the Chicago region were involved in the Arts Work Fund collaborative, which employs a participatory grantmaking approach. Several interviewees, therefore, had direct experience⁵ with the process and regarded it very positively.

In contrast to positive experiences and impressions about participatory grantmaking that most interviewees shared, others shared apprehensions or misgivings about it. Concerns included the following:

- Participatory grantmaking can create a system that feels more competitive for grantees than the traditional process.

⁵ Interviewees did not specify the specific participatory grantmaking structure of the Arts Work Fund, nor their specific role in the process, beyond sharing that they had directly participated. It is therefore unclear the degree of decision-making power arts funders or non-philanthropic participatory grantmakers had in the process or any specific details regarding the structure of the Arts Work Fund’s participatory grantmaking process.

- Participatory grantmaking removes decision-making power from program officers, who, because of their role engaging with many different arts organizations, can be perceived to bring more comprehensive arts and culture sector knowledge to their decision-making than participatory grantmakers.
- Those who serve as participatory grantmakers can be perceived as having a much more limited set of experiences as they often represent a comparatively narrower perspective from one arts organization or one type of arts background. From this perspective, participatory grantmakers' decisions could therefore be misinformed.

One interviewee, who was not apprehensive about participatory grantmaking, reflected on a potential rationale for the mixed findings: participatory grantmaking could be perceived as threatening to some foundations because it involves giving up power. The interviewee connected the idea of philanthropic institutions preserving their power as the ultimate decision-makers to the maintenance of white supremacist systems.

Finally, one interviewee rejected the term *participatory grantmaking*. They felt that it did not fully acknowledge the complexities of arts and culture work, suggesting that the process of including non-philanthropic voices in grantmaking was much more complex, nuanced, and important than the term may imply. The foundation instead wanted to engage in relationship building more broadly with their grantees. Participatory grantmaking activities were just one aspect of what that relationship could entail, so therefore, participatory grantmaking as a sole practice was not a goal for the foundation because it felt limiting.



4: Questions and Implications

Based on the findings, this section describes key questions and implications for the Chicago Commitment team to consider as they engage in discussions related to the Culture, Equity, and the Arts module and the Chicago Commitment strategy. This section is designed to inspire further discussion and to inform actions that the team may consider in advancing racial equity.

In What Ways Is Power Considered to Be a Factor in the Chicago Commitment’s Decision-Making?

The findings from this inquiry aim to create learning opportunities for the Chicago Commitment team related to how arts and culture funders structure grantmaking and other activities to address racial equity. Importantly, through these interviews we learned that racial equity work in the arts and culture sector is often understood as a negotiation of power. In this inquiry, the negotiation of power begins with how art itself is defined by and within philanthropy. Interviewees tied the ideas of broader definitions of art and arts organizations to inclusion and specifically to increased representation of artists and arts organizations from or serving historically marginalized communities. Several interviewees felt that philanthropy’s role was to create space for artists and arts organizations to tell their own stories and to do art and culture work that reflected their experiences and oftentimes held tangible results for their communities.

Yet some foundations struggle with redistributing or giving up their power. They suggested that this is particularly challenging within philanthropy’s existing (and historic) structure. Consistent with the findings from the *Racial Equity in Philanthropy Technical Report*, interviewees in this inquiry shared the desire for arts funders to go beyond “optics” or “checking the boxes” to engaging in deeper racial equity work. For some interviewees, deeper engagement means moving beyond activities such as one-time convenings, reporting grantee demographics, or making public statements to acknowledging the viability of nontraditional arts and culture projects to advance racial equity. Using a self-determination lens to define art can create conditions for philanthropy to support arts and culture projects that have racial equity “baked in” to their presentation and outcomes. Creating conditions for this kind of work to move forward can substantiate shifting power dynamics and more broadly introduce opportunities for the sector to adopt new perspectives and practices that can advance racial equity.

How Does This Inform Chicago Commitment’s Grantmaking and Other Activities?

The Chicago Commitment team, through its Culture, Equity, and the Arts module, is engaging in several practices that those we interviewed regard as important for advancing racial equity. These examples include broadening criteria for what qualifies as an arts and culture organization and implementing participatory grantmaking. Moving forward, the Chicago Commitment team may want to consider how it can build upon its momentum. For instance, the Chicago Commitment may be positioned within the philanthropic landscape to share learnings related to how funding arts-

centered organizations can promote inclusion and advance racial equity. It may want to consider setting goals for the types of organizations it funds and for the number of individuals who lead those organizations. Similarly, the MacArthur Foundation's commitment to funding BIPOC-led organizations may create natural opportunities to learn more about the types of relationships necessary to support grantees' needs. By documenting its grant craft and highlighting the work of BIPOC grantees, the team can promote better understanding of how artists are working within and across communities in Chicago to advance racial equity. Sharing this kind of information can contribute to dialogues and may strengthen already existing funder networks.

We heard from interviewees that arts-focused philanthropies have a clear commitment to increasing funding to BIPOC artists and non-traditional arts organizations that serve BIPOC communities. By doing so, philanthropies aim to broaden definitions of art – particularly through self-determination – and amplify art produced by artists from historically marginalized communities which has not been recognized, promoted, or valued by the public at the level it deserves. Yet, interviewees are concerned with whether increased access to philanthropy is doing enough to advance racial equity in the arts or in BIPOC communities more broadly.

For some philanthropies, shifting more support to BIPOC artists and arts-centered organizations has coincided with funding artists whose work is centered on racial equity; just as their art reflects lived experiences of BIPOC communities, it is also “movement-based” or activist in nature and therefore intends to shape narrative and policies that impact those communities.

These nuanced approaches to funding in the arts can impact grantmaking practices differentially. For example, movement-based art may require philanthropic organizations to engage a broader range of stakeholders, or even coalition building to advance a particular project. This is different than grantmaking efforts that focus solely on increasing funding to BIPOC artists. Because advancing policy change takes time to achieve, funding movement-based work may also require other considerations such as multiple-year funding or renewable grants. Funding art-driven movement-building may also introduce opportunities to develop cross-cutting initiatives in philanthropic organizations.

These interviews surfaced important considerations related specifically to arts philanthropy, and these considerations may have implications for advancing racial equity across philanthropy more broadly. These findings set the stage for rich conversations that can be facilitated within philanthropy and with grantee communities and the arts community as well.



770 N. Halsted, Suite 205
Chicago, IL 60642

Boston | Chicago | New York | Washington, D.C.

Web: edc.org

