

OUR VISION IN ACTION: RACIAL EQUITY & SHARED LEADERSHIP

KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Understand how power dynamics operate in your work and within your organization.
- Invest in training and develop a shared understanding of racial equity and shared leadership within your organization.
- Co-create practices for inclusive meetings and ensure feedback loops exist to stay on track.
- Develop guidelines for how to distribute work across the organization. Remember to consider staff interest and capacity, purpose and structure of the project, timelines, decision-making protocols, and administrative needs.
- Revisit your organization's distributed leadership framework often to ensure it still meets the entire organization's needs.

RACIAL EQUITY & SHARED LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW

The Grove Foundation's staff and board thought about our racial equity approach for a few years before embarking on a formal learning and implementation journey in 2016. There was already an organizational commitment to racial justice, particularly at the program officer level, before it became an institutional priority.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

Staff and board engaged in a series of training sessions, including those on cultural proficiency, unconscious bias, and best practices for racial equity in philanthropy. These sessions led to a continuing process of developing internal and external priorities. Initially, these priorities included the following:

- Authoring an organizational statement of commitment to racial equity
- Developing internal practices around hiring and supporting a diverse team
- [Assessing the extent to which grant dollars were going to people of-color-led organizations](#)

GRANTMAKING ASSESSMENT & DEI DATA COLLECTION

We undertook a process to examine grantee portfolios as part of an intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) effort. We assessed the extent to which organizations are POC- and/or women-led, and explored measures of equity in their grantmaking to these organizations compared to those that are not POC and/or not women-led.

This includes exploring equity in grant amounts, types, and length grantmaking relationships, among others. [Learn more here.](#)

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Simultaneously, we focused internally, creating a distributed leadership model that would: **Honor our commitment to racial justice** by not hoarding power at the Executive and Board levels. **Acknowledge that white people were in positions of power** both at the board and executive levels. Yet we had an increasingly diverse staff, including program teams made up entirely of people of color. **Recognize that we would benefit from having a talented multi-racial team**, especially if we could surrender the traditional foundation approach of filtering all our work through white systems, and instead trust people of color to contribute and make decisions at all levels.

Staff have identified the following as being key to shared leadership practices:



1. **Budget Transparency & Staff Spending Authority** - Budget recommendations are developed by program and operations staff working in collaboration, then submitted to the Board for approval. Budgets are delegated to a committee and one board member approves grants. All staff have credit cards and spending authority.
2. **Program Officer Grant Approval** - Program officers make grant recommendations directly to a Board member (without ED involvement)
3. **Committee structure** - Many of the Foundation's work streams, including communications, data collection, and spenddown planning are led by staff committees. To facilitate this structure, the Grove team co-developed a document with guidelines for launching new projects intentionally.

We decided that, when taking on new work, we needed to determine the following:

- Staff's **bandwidth and desire** for specific projects
- The **purpose and structure of the project**, and who would take lead
- The **timeline** for completing the task or project
- A **decision-making structure** with opportunities for evaluation and feedback
- **Administrative needs** like calendaring, space, budget, etc.

Though the Foundation developed many of its shared leadership practices and resources organically, we have also engaged consultants and external resources as needed. For example, the Co-Executive Directors attended workshops with CompassPoint to learn how to facilitate inclusive meetings and find ways to be clear with their intent and process. As a result, our team began to incorporate more pair sharing, providing time during meetings for people to journal, and sharing thoughts around the circle to ensure everyone had space to be seen and heard.

Though we are proud of the hard work we have done to date, there is more work to be done. Not everything was resolved, and we know power dynamics are persistent and stubborn.

We remain committed to establishing a culture of trust, tolerance, generative conflict, and transparency.