REFLECTING A NEW NORM:

Evolving philanthropic practice to enhance the capacity of Black, Indigenous and People of Color in the Great Lakes and beyond

EGE²
EMPOWERING A GREEN
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
Delivering people-centered solutions to transform communities

NOVEMBER 2021

Research Team

This exploration was led by **Dr. Jalonne L. White-Newsome**, CEO/Founder of Empowering a Green Environment and Economy, LLC (EGE2). EGE2 is a certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) providing strategic consulting services dedicated to delivering people-centered solutions that will transform communities and the environment, nationally and internationally. EGE2 works to advance equity by creating solutions that will always prioritize the needs of people, challenge how corporations, organizations and institutions work so they can exceed their expectations and deliver optimal service to communities in order to adapt to changes in our natural and social environment. **Cheri Wright-Jones**, an independent consultant to EGE2, provided convening support for the project advisory team, and supported the qualitative investigation and data preparation.

Project Advisory Team

We want to extend our appreciation to our project advisory members that offered guidance, support and wisdom across the project lifespan. Their time, dedication and service to this field is invaluable.

Brenda Coley, Milwaukee Water Commons
Mila K. Marshall, Clean Water Advocate, Sierra Club
Ann McCammon Soltis, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
Alicia Smith, The Junction Coalition
Debra Taylor, We The People of the Detroit

Acknowledgements

We are also forever grateful to all of the community-based leaders, environmental and social justice advocates, teachers and artists that we interviewed for this report. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, honest advice, knowledge and the work that you continue to do in and for communities.

**Cheryl Johnson, Courtney Hanson, Olga Bautista, Eartha Borer-Bell,
Gwen Winston, Michelle Jackson, Hon. JoAnn Watson, Debra Taylor,
Alicia Smith, Rev. Edward Pinkney, Vincent Martin,
Jeff Mears, Tina Van Zile, Winona LaDuke, Kirsten Shead, Lamont Smith,
Deneine Powell, Antonio Butts, Sharon Adams, Tony Shields,
Sarah Noble, Fidel Verdin, Shalina Ali, Yvonne McCaskill,
Royce Stephens, Miguel Tucker, Vel Scott, Jannan Cornstalk**

EGE2's offices are situated on the Original Lands of the Potawatomie Peoples. We acknowledge that this work was conducted on these lands, and appreciate the sacrifices our ancestors made to allow us to do the work that we do.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this exploration was to understand how foundations can better support and expand the capacity of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led community based organizations (CBOs) that primarily work on environmental issues related to water quality, environmental justice, and other social justice issues. CBO leaders (27) and foundation leadership and staff (17) were interviewed to help answer three lines of inquiry:

- What approaches should foundations consider (e.g., direct grantmaking, re-granting through intermediaries, a hybrid or a new approach) that could

  o help build the capacity and infrastructure of Black, Indigenous and People of Color/ Tribal organizations in the Great Lakes Region and beyond, and

  o provide a new method of deploying more grants to Black, Indigenous and People of Color/Tribal organizations?

- Are there specific services – in addition to funding – that could help strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of Black, Indigenous and People of Color/Tribal led organizations in the Great Lakes Region and beyond?

- Are there ways to streamline current grantmaking processes to reduce unnecessary burdens on potential applicants?

Based on the conversations with CBO and funder leaders, we offer a brief set of reflections on these three lines of inquiry.

Funders need to consider doing their work differently

We heard that the most important shift foundations need to make is to take the time to understand the needs of communities (e.g., begin to build relationships with Community-based/Tribal Organization leaders, see their work in action, etc.) to ensure that the foundation's strategy is aligned with what is really happening on the ground.

There is also a need for foundations to take the time to understand the harm done through existing grantmaking practices, acknowledge it, and apologize. This can be accomplished by building awareness of cultural and systemic racism, and by engaging with its past and current grantees about their experiences. Ultimately, there is no secret method to getting grants to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Led organizations in ways that do not reinforce cultural and systemic racism. It is a combination of using the networks and connections you already have to help identify those organizations along with better grantmaking practices.

We also heard that providing direct grant funding is preferred by organizations and funders alike. Interviewees acknowledged that there are times when organizations are in need of a fiscal sponsor (i.e., the organization does not have 501c3 status or is fairly new and does not have the infrastructure yet to receive grant funding), and in these instances using an intermediary is tolerable if the funded organization is acknowledged and able to speak and report directly to the funders, versus the intermediary speaking on behalf of the CBO and Tribal organizations.

Approaches to build capacity

Both funders and CBOs named many services – beyond funding – that could ultimately strengthen organizational capacity, such as training on long-range planning, grant-writing and financial management. Additionally, having

flexible funding that supports general operating costs for multiple years, can allow staff to grow, develop and mentor the future leaders of the organization. Providing back-office support for free to grantees – such as finance, legal, communications – either temporarily or through an entity established in the community are valuable resources that can serve to strengthen capacity and infrastructure of organizations. Foundations need to not just give programmatic dollars, but dollars to help build the capacity and infrastructure so organizations can become independent and self-sustaining beyond the intermediary and/or the foundation's initial investments.

Expanding, encouraging and maintaining a vibrant network of CBOs – both with other grantees and potential funders – was identified as a desire as well (i.e., to learn from each other, and mitigate 'network poverty', which refers to having a personal network including merely or mostly resource-poor people and, thus, lacking ties to resources such as knowledge, wealth, skills, power and information). Such networks often result in partnerships and strengthened relationships between community organizations where complex, intersectional issues can be addressed more effectively through aligned advocacy.

Methods to streamline grantmaking applications and reporting

Both funders and CBOs offered multiple existing and innovative ways to reduce the burden on applicants. Some of the most common themes from CBOs revolved around: burdensome reporting that has tight timelines taking up 'precious programming time'; unclear deliverables and outcomes; requiring partnerships when it is not appropriate with large, mainstream environmental organizations ("Big Greens" that have never spent any time in the community); and providing support for application development. They also noted several foundations that have done it well or could serve as a model do things such as: eliminate unnecessary, lengthy applications; allow grantees to use applications and budgets generated for other funders for multiple applications; and learn from existing, innovative processes that have worked (e.g., Kataly Foundation and Mosaic).

Ways to Operationalize these Findings

There is no dearth of reports and research that speak to the inequities in funding and support of Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations and Tribal organizations. The intent for this work is to synthesize the wisdom and learnings from CBOs and Funders and provide a quick reference and guide for Funders and other institutions that desire a transformational and transparent relationship with the communities their organizational mission seeks to serve. While we encourage you to read the entire document, we appreciate the limitations of time. Hence, we provide a quick reference for specific queries or topics that are of high interest to readers based on what we learned from our research and experience in our support and work in foundations and nonprofit settings. Note: the pages mentioned are not the only reference to some of the topics, but a starting point.

QUESTION	SECTION/PAGE #
How can I find Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations to fund?	APPENDIX
How can I build a better relationship with my grantee partners?	16
What ways can foundations make our grantmaking process more accessible?	12-13
How has racism and colonialism impacted the work of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations?	9, 17
Are there ways I can change my grantmaking practice to be in service to the communities I am trying to support?	16, 20
Are there any institutional models I could review and glean best practices?	22 - 27
Where does my foundation stand on the spectrum of institutional commitment?	22 - 23
What other types of supports are needed to build the capacity of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color led organizations?	19 - 20
What are the institutional and cultural changes we should consider to better support Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations?	20, 25-27
How can I streamline our grant reporting process?	11, 31-33

INTRODUCTION

Water is life in the Great Lakes Region. Being one of the world's largest surface freshwater ecosystems, it contains over 84% of North America's freshwater, encompassing parts of the United States and Canada. As the primary water source for over 40 million people, the threats to the Great Lakes Ecosystem are numerous - invasive species, agriculture, pollution, habitat destruction and climate change, just to name a few. Many people across the 8 states and Canada that share the Great Lakes - Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New York – depend on the Great Lakes and its broader water ecosystem. However, the variety of water challenges – impaired drinking water quality, groundwater contamination, water affordability and flooding – are impacting Black, Indigenous and People of Color disproportionately. Hence, community-based organizations (CBOs), including those that focus on environmental justice, youth development and others led by People of Color and Tribal Governments are working on these issues, some with appreciable capacity and resources, others with far less.

With at least 50 foundations and funders that support the Great Lakes Region, there is an opportunity to understand how philanthropy can better support and enhance the capacity of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations. For example, The Great Lakes Funder Collaboration (GLFC) is composed of more than 50 funders that annually grant more than $50 million to advance work on Great Lakes issues in the United States and Canada. GLFC's data mapping initiative shows that about $6.1 million went to programs and organizations that focus on people and community to promote environmental justice and public/environmental health).   And while every foundation has its unique geography of interest, strategies and ways of grantmaking, our hope is that this exploration will help us not only answer the question of how philanthropy can better support these organizations, but also to:

· Create a heightened institutional awareness and curiosity that will drive Foundations to examine potentially harmful past grantmaking practices and commit to better serving underinvested community organizations,

· Provide a living resource with practical ways grant makers in the Great Lakes Region and beyond can better support Black, Indigenous People of Color led organizations, and

· Result in more funding that meets the unique needs of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations.

Additionally, at the end of each section, we offer specific questions for reflection that Foundation staff and leadership can use to begin to examine their own practices. We also provide some specific steps and practices Foundations can engage in immediately or consider in strategy development processes.

https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/facts-and-figures-about-great-lakes

PROJECT OVERVIEW & METHODS

Guiding this exploration of how foundations could better support and build the capacity of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations, the research team at Empowering A Green Environment and Economy developed three lines of inquiry;

- What approaches should foundations consider (e.g., direct grantmaking, re-granting through in termediaries, a hybrid or a new approach) that could (1) help build the capacity and infrastructure of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations in the Great Lakes Region and beyond and, (2) provide a new method of deploying more grants to Black, Indigenous and People of

  Color/Tribal led organizations?

- Are there specific services – in addition to funding – that could help strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of Black, Indigenous and People of Color/Tribal Government Led organizations in the Great Lakes Basin?

- Are there ways to streamline the current grantmaking process to reduce unnecessary burdens on applicants and grantees?

To address these research questions, we undertook the following process:

- Assembled a small advisory team of Black, Indigenous and People of Color community leaders to provide guidance for this exploration and suggest potential interviewee contacts. Our initial goal was 5 to 10 funder interviews, and 10-15 community-based organizations. We completed exceeded that goal completing a total of 44 interviews between August and September 2021 (27 CBOs/Tribal Governments, 17 funders).

- Using feedback from our advisory team, we crafted a set of unique interview questions for two groups of interviewees: (1) Funders that are focused on the Great Lakes Region, and (2) Community-based and Tribal Governments working in the Great Lakes Region. (see Appendix for interview protocols)

- All interviewees were invited for an interview and provided a project overview sheet and the questions beforehand. Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and were conducted via Zoom and recorded, with the interviewees permission. All CBO/Tribal Organization interviewees were provided an honorarium for their time.

- Professional transcripts were generated from each interview and used by the research team to support the coding process, where all responses were categorized and organized based on common themes. The results of this thematic coding process provide the foundation for this analysis.

We present our findings in two sections based on each type of interviewee - CBO leader and Funder leader. In each section, we discuss themes identified through our qualitative analysis of interviews, and offer questions and actions for leaders to consider as they work toward supporting the ecosystem of environmental and water leaders from Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations.

Part 1:

Reflections on philanthropy, racism, funding practices & opportunities : Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led Community Based Organizations and Tribal Organizations

Community-based organizations and Tribal organizations working primarily on environmental issues and water in the Great Lakes Region were interviewed to provide input that will guide how philanthropic organizations can better serve Black, Indigenous and People of Color led and Tribal organizations through their grantmaking practice. For our purposes, we define community-based organizations (CBOs) as those that are embedded in the community providing multiple supports – education, outreach, advocacy, support services - to individuals in that specific community. The goal for each interview was to garner a better understanding of the expertise, experience and advice from CBOs and Tribal Governments working primarily in the environmental, environmental justice or social justice fields about how the institution of philanthropy can address systemic and institutional racism, as well as address the disparities in funding and other supports to their organizations and others. Our 27 interviewees shared guidance and advice for Foundations, organized around four themes:

Theme 1
Understanding the Impacts of Racism and Settler Colonialism on community-based organizations

Theme 2
Grant Development & Fundraising: Addressing Existing Capacity & Challenges

Theme 3
Creating Transformational vs. Transactional relationships

Theme 4
Providing innovative support

(Note: throughout the document, we will refer to the community-based organization leaders that were interviewed as "leaders"; and the Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations as "organizations".)

Theme 1:
Understanding the Impacts of Racism and Settler Colonialism on community-based organizations

Racism, lack of cultural competency and the imbalance of power can make CBOs working on environmental and social justice advocacy challenging, particularly when the staff and leadership of foundations are unaware of how these dimensions directly impact the overall investments and philanthropic dollars that reach – or fail to reach - communities. Historically, the organizations with lived experience and expertise on a range of environmental, water and other issues have not been sufficiently funded to do their work. As one leader shared, the system (i.e., philanthropy) was not built to benefit certain people:

"How organizations operate and receive funding was built with racism, embedded in the system of philanthropy. BIPOC organizations are not resourced in the same way as White lead organizations are. Working within the system to change the system, but also relying on resources of the same system, won't work"

The lack of cultural competence and/or interest in understanding cultures is another form of racism, in which groups with power – the capacity of an individual to influence actions and beliefs - carry out systemic discrimination through philanthropic policies or practices that minimize the value of Traditional Indigenous knowledge and the lived experience of CBO leaders. Leaders suggested that one approach to enhancing funder knowledge of environmental justice and other concerns was to develop an in-house training led by Black, Indigenous & People Color/Tribal led organizations where foundation staff and leaders are being educated by front-line, community experts and provided a stipend.

Leaders noted the imbalance and misuse of power has also limited access to water for many communities. Tribal Government leaders shared that White colonialism has affected the use of water and all water related resources. In times of water crisis in cities like Flint and Detroit where emergency managers were brought in to have direct power over contracts, resources and city assets, this transfer of power has often made situations worse for people of color. This imbalance of power and lack of funding to Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations ensures that Whites continue to make decisions that are in their best interest and not in the best interest of the environment or Native Americans or Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

However, leaders noted that the murder of George Floyd has influenced foundations to make more efforts to address racism, build their cultural competency and acknowledge the imbalance of power.   This influx of funding from what leaders termed "Funder guilt" has led to more support. However, some leaders shared this additional support could also have unintentional consequences for these organizations.

"For the funders and white people, they are giving away guilt money. Unfortunately, organizations are basing their budgets off this and they will not be able to pay since they are creating a budget based on income they will not' be able to sustain"

****

Questions for Reflection:

- *What are the ways that my foundation can learn from our existing grantees or Black, Indigenous and People of Color Organizations we want to begin to build relationships with?*

- *Does the staff have a clear understanding of racism and settler colonialism and how it plays out in our grantmaking practice?*

Lessons to share/Practices to consider:

- *Resource Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations at comparable levels to White-led organizations.*

- *Take the time to learn and appreciate the stories and lived experience of Tribal leaders and other community experts to help shape strategy. Acknowledge and showcase their assets, resilience, and brain trust.*

  - *"Foundations often ask for BIPOC expertise about strategy or programmatic solutions but fail to fund those same organizations. If I am good enough to provide advice, I am good enough to be supported by your foundation" (CBO leader)*

- *Be aware of the power imbalances that foundations can perpetuate between community-based organizations and larger mainstream environmental organizations that often garner more of the funding, more of the credit, while community-based organizations do most of the work.*

Theme1

Theme 2:
Grant development & fundraising process: Addressing existing capacity & challenges

The Grantmaking process that Foundation's shepherd can be mysterious, inaccessible and overwhelming, particularly for Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations that do not have a staff person that is fully devoted to grant development. In our set of interviewees, only one organization had a full-time development director, while in the other organizations, these duties were outsourced to existing staff and Board Members In light of this reality, part of building the stability of these organizations is contingent on equipping and mentoring several staff members and volunteers – particularly young talent – to ensure the lessons learned and connections between the organization and funders was not lost. One leader shared,

With limited human capacity, navigating the grant seeking and unique proposal processes for each Foundation can be overwhelming for these small organizations, particularly for those CBOs those that might be poorly networked or disconnected from the ecosystem of funders. As mentioned by multiple CBO leaders, the process by which grant decisions by funders are made can be more of a "black box" – that it is unclear how grantees are selected and what criteria are used to do so.

For the purposes of this report, we will describe the typical grant making process in six steps: Strategy Development, Partnership Exploration, Proposal Stage, Grant Period, Evaluation/reporting, and Renewal/End of Grantee relationship. See Figure 1 below.

"There are no formal mentoring plans in place. But we need to create a structure to allow for knowledge and skills to be passed to others because currently the work is either done on a volunteer basis, which is not sustainable"

Figure 1: Steps in a typical foundation's grantmaking process

The first step is **Strategy Development**, which could encompass multiple ways to assess the state of the field of interest, understand gaps and opportunities, and help program officers design a Theory of Change that identifies goals, strategies and the impact a foundation would like to have as a result of the grantmaking. Multiple leaders insisted that in order for foundations to better support the work of CBOs, they need to actually have a conversation with communities to understand what their needs are. This lack of research leads to funding the wrong organizations (i.e., funding organizations that are not doing the most impactful work, but appear to be impactful in the space) and a weak strategy that does not address the root causes of the issues at hand.

Strategy Development and **Partnership Exploration** is often done in parallel. Partnership exploration can involve a variety of tasks: desktop research on the organization, conversations with potential grantee partners, and conversations with other funders who currently support the organization being considered for funding. One of the challenges that CBO leaders raised is that funders often are not clear about what they are looking for, and become risk-averse to new ideas or out-of-the box applications that might emerge from conversations with organizations that they have no track record with (i.e., have not previously funded). This dynamic of fear of the unknown and not being clear about desired outcomes and deliverables often force funders to go back to what they are comfortable with: funding large, mainstream environmental organizations or even outsider organizations that are barely connected or have spent time in the communities they serve. A couple of leaders speak to this dynamic of not having a historical relationship with funders and how that can limit opportunities for small CBOs, but actually be a greater benefit to larger organizations, where the power dynamics in the grantee-subgrantee relationship work in the larger organization's favor:

"A lot of the bigger grants I've applied to - like with X foundation - wouldn't fund me originally because they said I didn't have history with them. Now that's crazy"

"What happens is that a lot of bigger organizations always include us in their grants, and they get 75% of the grant and we get a smaller portion. Obviously, they are developing the projects and the rest of it but, if they do not have access to our community and to our residents and the connections, they wouldn't be able to do the work"

Depending on the foundation, the Proposal stage could involve an opportunity for organizations to submit an unsolicited Letter of Intent, draft a proposal based on previous conversations (i.e., partnership exploration), or submit a full proposal. Typically, if organizations are not asked to submit a full proposal, funding is not guaranteed. While it is exciting to be asked for a full proposal, leaders spoke to an array of challenges in this stage: the amount of information that applicants are asked to collect, including complex financial records and records of financial audits is burdensome; back-and-forth conversations with funders that are not sure what they are looking for; difficulties manipulating the technology platforms (i.e. FLUXX) that become time consuming for CBOs to complete the online application. And in some cases, applications are still denied even after communities expend a great deal of time and energy to begin to build a relationship, understand the funder's needs and expectations and then pull all of the paperwork together. Once leader shares this frustration, with a solution:

"Some communities don't have the resources to apply and they keep getting denied. So why not provide support to these communities that keep getting denied and assist them"

A critical aspect of the proposal process is for the decisions around the grant time period and level of funding. Lengthening the grant period was recommended by all leaders. Leaders shared that to see any grant impact, organizations need to be funded in 5-year time frames, or at least at the same level and over the same time period as White-led organizations. Also, during the grant period it's important to CBOs that Funders champion their work, particularly in influential circles of other funders.

As a part of any successful grant proposal, grantees are required to share project updates, including any concerns or significant changes in the project direction with the funder, either at the close of the project, the midpoint of the grant or at specific milestones.   Many leaders spoke to the reporting process being burdensome and taking up 'precious programming time'. Keeping reporting simple and sharing updates through site visits and more creative methods was encouraged.

The table below summarizes some of the challenges illuminated by CBO leaders throughout the various stages of the Grantmaking process.

Table 1: Grantmaking Process and Barriers/Challenges identified by CBOs

Steps in a Typical Foundation Grantmaking Process	Identified Barriers/Challenges
Strategy Development	• No proactive engagement by funders. Funding priorities are set without knowing what the community or CBO needs are. • Lack of research by the Foundation to understand who in the community is completing the work (this includes existing partnerships and other resources) • For Tribal Organizations, they are overlooked because they do not have the access to resources to 'match a grant' because they usually have a very small budget and limited capacity to produce required application documentation
Partnership Exploration	• Grant seeking process is unclear • Funders do not provide examples of what they consider to be successful projects and outcomes upfront • Funders can be risk adverse to new ideas, research or out-the-box applications • Funders limit conversations for funding only project work and not capacity building, general operating, or flexible support
Proposal Stage	• Lengthy process that results in no funding being offered • Requiring supplemental information that is used to 'screen out' (e.g., audits, complex financial records) vs. 'screen in' organizations • Time consuming process of back and forth with funders that are not sure what they want or are looking for • Funders unwilling/hesitant to step up and make big investments to lead to real change • Technology platforms (i.e., FLUXX) are challenging and time consuming for grantees • Funders trying to force a relationship to work with other organizations when its not there • Delayed availability of funds (i.e., community needs shifted by the time funds were available) • Many duplicative asks for the same information, especially related to financial reporting. Audits can be expensive for small organizations.
Grant Period	• Not providing multi-year funding requires limited staff time spent looking for funding year after year versus time spent on the work • Black, Indigenous and People of color organizations need to be funded over the same time period and at the same level as White-led organizations • To see impact, organizations need at least 2 to 5 years of funding
Evaluation and Reporting	• Burdensome reporting that has tight timelines takes up 'precious programming time' • Unrealistic production timelines • Need program officers to be in 'communion' with CBOs to help share the impact of their work through the types of questions and reporting requirements

Questions for Reflection:

- Is there an opportunity to broaden the set of stakeholders we engage in our strategy development process?
- Can we provide any type of capacity to support the grant development activities of organizations we fund or want to fund?

Lessons to share/Practices to consider:

- Assess your current grantmaking process and determine the bare minimum (i.e. paperwork, financial statements, etc.) of what you will require from a grant applicant to make a funding decision.
- In the case where there is no alignment between the applicant and your foundation, identify other ways that you can be supportive (e.g., introducing the organization to other funders, providing advice and consultation, etc.)
- Understand your starting point: Review the current funding levels and funding time frame of Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations compared to White-led Organizations within your organization.

Theme 3:
Creating transformational vs. transactional relationships

"We want to know them. We don't just want their money. And I think that is a big starting point" CBO leader

The practice of grantmaking is unique to each funder, guided by the written and unwritten rules of the Foundation. While many would agree that good grantmaking practice results in achieving the stated project objectives and deliverables, community leaders articulate a healthy relationship between funders and grantees can reaps benefits for both parties, beyond the stated project deliverables. A healthy relationship – one that is less of a business exchange, or 'selling or buying of goods' but a more transformational relationship begins with longer funding cycles. Longer funding cycles can result in tangible benefits for the organizations because the organizations have more time to focus on the work, and more time to plan ahead. Additional time also allows the Funder to get to know the organization, build trust; and the CBOs have broader exposure and can expand their network of potential funders. For example, if organizations had at least three years of funding, they could begin to plan differently and create more sustainability and stability. One leader commented,

"We are always chasing grants and we work pretty hard to strengthen the relationships with our foundations and grant officers so it's not just transactional. We want it to be relational"

There are benefits to the funders as well. Longer relationships provide an opportunity for funders to enhance their understanding of the work of the organizations. By attending virtual and live events, funders can better understand impact and intersectionality for work that might not be so linear and fit into any of the 'columns, headings and silos' that funders create.

It also helps build trust between the funder and grantee which is sometimes hard for funders to trust that smaller organizations - compared to larger, mainstream environmental organizations - can do the work. Funders lean on fiscal sponsors and intermediaries to support smaller organizations that may or may not have 501c3 status. However, because organizations are typically one step away or not in direct contact with the funder, it limits the opportunities for funders to get to the know the CBO and build trust. An intermediary setup also makes it difficult for the intermediary organization or fiscal sponsor to receive the recognition for the work externally, when the actual work was performed by the CBO. Organizations suggested any type of fiscal sponsorship or sub-granting should be complemented by training that will help the organizations begin to build the infrastructure and capacity to be independent and stand on their own.

This development of trust can ultimately lead to increased flexibility, allowing organizations to use the resources how they see fit and not be constrained by the funder silos.   Relationships also provide a window for funders to better understand the multiple barriers community organizations are facing, particularly as it relates to executing on intensive documentation and reporting requirements due to staff capacity or simply lack of internet access. For example, some Tribes that are located on Reservations in remote locations, technology and access is often challenging and one of the reasons they do not apply for various funding opportunities.

Transformational grantmaking practice often requires the room for innovation and new policies and procedures, particularly when it comes to grantee report back to funders project status for mid-term or year-end reports. Leaders identified several ways the tracking

and reporting process could be improved, starting with grantees and funders deciding collaboratively how they want to report out, in lieu of the traditional written report style. Use of info-graphics, storytelling, video-taped conversations, were examples of less burdensome process for grantees, which would still allow funders to follow-up with any questions in a subsequent dialogue. And, in some cases where a written report was the only option, reducing the report size, scope and redundancy of questions was suggested. A leader shared,

"Funders should focus less on standard reporting, increase engagement with storytelling and accept lived experience accounts as valid impact evidence. Understanding that qualitative measures are equally as valuable as quantitative measures"

Creating opportunities for education, training, and connection amongst foundation grantees could be transformational. Several existing CBOs expressed appreciation for funders that provided training and seminars on topics like grant writing and networking. Organizing peer learning sessions and larger convenings were helpful to help grantees understand where other grantees are having success, learn from other grantees, and helps foster transparency and collaborative relationship building within the sector.

"Technical assistance and education should go hand in hand. It multiplies the value of that dollar because you're training people to do more and to tap into more resources"

Another part of the relationship building is recognizing the experience and ongoing trauma felt by Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Particularly if the foundation staff and board do not reflect the communities they are serving, understanding this cultural context and dynamic is essential. Overarchingly, these leaders and organizations have not had the time and opportunity to "ramp up" in the same time way as well-resourced White led organizations have had because of network poverty (i.e. not being connected in wealthy social circles), historical lack of funding (i.e. not being funded at the level of

white-led organizations), and funders being less open to taking a risk with smaller organizations or organizations they do not know as well. The reality is Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations lack the circles of influence needed to build relationships with foundation staff teams. CBO leaders want funders to recognize the experience and ongoing trauma felt by Black, Indigenous and People of Color as they seek to serve their communities.

"Take time to understand the structural issues and then fund us to dismantle those structures"

Interviewees shared a list of Foundations/ Initiatives that are particularly effective at providing additional support. See list in the Appendix.

Questions for Reflection:

- Do we have a really good reason for not supporting multi-year funding cycles?
- How can I intentionally expand the network of funders for CBOs by connecting or making inroads to new funders for this organization?
- How can I make sure that any fiscal sponsors or intermediaries we are supporting are not co-opting the work of the CBOs, and the CBOs are rightfully acknowledged?
- Are we supporting these organizations because we value the strong leadership from diverse communities or are we just supporting them because we face a public obligation to do it?
- How can I make sure that our institution recognizes the work of CBOs that are funded through an intermediary or fiscal sponsor?
- How can we make sure that how we gather information from CBOs is not extractive but transformative? (Example of what NOT to do: convening CBO organizations, learn from them about what is happening on the ground, and then fund larger, white-led organizations to do the work).

Lessons to share/practices to begin:

- Co-determine the most productive funding cycle frequency for CBOs and work to remove the institutional constraints.
- Take moments to amplify the work of your grantees, particularly through various media forms, funder networks and other spaces that could enhance their social and funding networks.
- Consider sending a staff member to write the mid-term of the final report on behalf of the organization-based off of a site visit that demonstrates the impact of the work in the community instead of the typical reporting process.
- View behavioral change and other intangibles as measures of success that might not show up in a report, but have a lasting effect on the community.
- Fund the proposal scoping and planning process for CBOs.
- Create a capacity building pilot program for CBOs, particularly for those that are being funded through re-granting mechanisms or without 501c3 status. As an example, Foundations could provide each organization with starter funds and trainings to help the CBO, complimented with a series of trainings with an autonomous organization that can achieve non-profit status in a short time.

Theme3

Theme 4:
Providing innovative support

Organizational leaders identified a range of needs as it relates to expanding organizational capacity. Beyond direct funding, the need for training on a variety of topics was shared, including: antiracism, financial management tools, human resources, grant writing, project planning, how to access federal funding, professional development and succession planning. Leaders desired general operating support for funding programmatic services, but also investments in the leadership and staff. Other basic supports to sustain the organization – learning how to meet IRS requirements, accounting and evaluation could be a useful part of the scope of work of a project. One leader mentioned that funders should also be open to engaging in 1:1 with CBOs about financial concerns in monthly check-in meetings to help build their financial awareness, since financial capacity is often a concern.

Other needs arose in the form of direct tools to support their advocacy and service, including website development, devices (e.g. I-pads or electronic tables) to capture demographic or statistical data from events or door-to-door outreach. Developing or creating a platform to build the intellectual capacity and 'community IQ' on complex water issues was named because water leaders are oftentimes called to engage at multiple tables, but are not fully informed about the technical aspects or needs. The technical assistance and human capacity for Tribes, specifically related to water quality assessment activities was raised.

"There is a need to support baseline sampling, stream gauging, groundwater monitoring, and wellhead protection planning. We must also have human capacity – for planning and development- so we can begin to figure out our own water quality standards"

Even beyond the Tribes, supporting the basic human capacity of the organizers to do the work and provide living wages was important. As one leader shared, "we have many of our community organizers are sleeping on couches and do not have insurance." But even without the basics, leaders continue to sacrifice, literally pulling money out of their pockets to, for example, pay for potable water in their community due to imminent concerns related to lack of access to healthy drinking water. The commitment of volunteers and community members to delivering that water – without receiving any type of stipend or support – is something leaders wanted to be able to rectify.

"It would be great to have a fund that we can go to once a month to purchase water with. And to deliver that water, it takes volunteers and community members, and providing stipends to volunteers – particularly youth – which is a priority need. We need to begin to pay individuals what they are worth for the service they provide"

The power dynamic that exists between grantor and grantee can 'cloud authentic communication' in a way that grantees or potential grantees might not fully express their entire set of needs which reinforces the need for Program Officers to engage deeper with the community by attending grantee events and being active. Authenticity in communication can lead to organizations sharing the support they need, particularly as it relates to the other risks of doing this work. For example, Leaders expressed the work can be a security risk to them and their families because of some of the contentious issues they cover, especially living in the neighborhoods that are campaigning against certain interests. To that end, leaders wanted funders to take some reputational risks of their own, potentially weighing in on these high-profile issues that organizations are working on.

"The X foundation made a commitment to weigh in on this high-profile issues we were fighting while other foundations say neutral. This was a huge support for our work"

It was also expressed that Funders need to be more open to the innovation of CBOs and trust the solutions they are offering. One leader referred to this phenomenon of grantees distorting themselves to fit funder requirements as a 'dance with funders' to find/sustain resources for the organization. This dynamic also raises tension in the local communities because the same organizations are often competing for funding from the same sources. Leaders expressed that another way to build the capacity of all organizations was to actually bring people together that are working in the same community. Supporting ways to develop collective impact by creating spaces and capacity for organizations to share the work, create a shared agenda, and provide a learning opportunity for the funders and the peer organizations could help eliminate that competitive spirit on the ground.

The competitive edge to source and attract funding in many ways is driven by the sheer range of issues each of these organizations work on. While water is the underlying connector, for many of these organizations, they do not have the privilege to just work on water issues. The range of issues these organizations face, from sustainability, public health, racial justice and many others – underscore the consideration for funders to get out of their siloed thinking because issues of racism, social justice, health and water are so interrelated. As one leader shared, "the same things that are contaminating the water are also contaminating the air and land and water" and social justice oriented organizations.

"Water is a big issue and everything flows from it, therefore, intersectional issues must be funded for water strategies to be effective and impactful"

Current funder criteria of 'what to fund or not to fund' – particularly for Black, Indigenous and

People of Color led organizations – can be a barrier. With the range of issues (both water-related and non-water related issues shown in the word clouds below) that these organizations are called to take on, a new set of questions should be driving the scope of decision making.

"The questions that should inspire funders decision making should be is the group reliable, are they careful with their reporting and are they good stewards of the money?"

Figure 1: Types of water related work and advocacy shared by community based organizations & tribal organizations

Figure 2: Non-water related work shared by community based organizations & tribal organizations

Questions for Reflection:

- Is my foundation willing to expand our range of support – beyond the project deliverables/objectives – to include the broader needs and capacity requests to sustain Black, Indigenous and People of Color Organizations?
- As a program officer, are their skills that I can directly offer to these organizations?
- Are there unstated criteria or biases within my foundation that limit the funding to Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations that we need to name and address?

Lessons to share/practices to begin:

- Deepen the conversations with grantee partners to understand the holistic set of needs of leadership and staff.
- Take moments to amplify the work of grantees, particularly through various media forms, funder networks and other spaces that could enhance their social and funding networks.
- Take the time to understand, acknowledge and appreciate the personal financial sacrifices and the health and safety risks that leaders make to do this work.
- Have conversations with existing grantees or potential partners to better understand the intersectionality of the environmental issues that they work to help inform your grantmaking decisions.

Theme 4

Reflections on philanthropic practice: Foundation Staff and Leaders

We explored with Foundation leaders and staff the drivers, models, aspirations and lessons learned related to funding strategies and capacity building efforts to support Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations/Tribal Organizations. While the primary focus of this exploration was funders providing support in the Great Lakes Region, as shown in the Appendix, we interviewed several funders that were able to offer national and international perspectives. Funder interviewees held the titles of executive director, program officer, as well as those working on mission related investments and grant administration.

Foundations in the Great Lakes Region fund on environmental issues - including: environmental stewardship, agricultural run-off, combined sewer overflows, environmental Justice, environmental health - and a range of other issues captured in the word cloud below.

Figure 3. Word cloud of grant making interests across Funders interviewed

After listening to foundation leaders, we devised a spectrum that can be used to describe a foundation's institutional commitment to Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations. We also learned about the challenges and barriers that staff within foundations experience that prevent it from making clear strategies to support those organizations. And through these discussions we lifted up opportunities for funders to take action, using the voices of funders we spoke with in the field.

Theme 1:
Spectrum of Institutional Commitment

Each of the Foundations interviewed were at various points in their journey of creating strategies to intentionally support Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led Organizations. For example, some foundations had no strategy, while others had been visualizing and implementing aligned strategies to address multiple racial and economic gaps for over a decade. We created a way to characterize the foundations we spoke with to describe their intentionality to support Black, indigenous and People of Color Led organizations. In the Figure below, we subjectively characterize where the foundations fall on this spectrum and describes each point of the spectrum below:

Figure 4. Funder spectrum of Institutional Commitment to advancing support for Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations

No Strategy: The foundation has not formalized a strategy to fund and support these organizations, and conducts more "traditional" grantmaking centered on the foundation and its strategy, without including ideas from community or organizational leaders. One funder noted:

"Essentially you go out and do a community engagement process and you either cram what people are saying to align with your strategic priorities, or you leave out what people are saying because you don't like what you're hearing. Or in other cases, you just have the process and the community said this and it was already decided internally what you were going to do. You have to go out and truly be willing to learn what is needed and accept the fact that certain things might not - you might not get the cutting-edge idea, and be willing to accept what people say"

Actively Surveying: The foundation is identifying and/or collecting data on current funding levels. It is looking inward to assess their funding patterns as a way to evaluate themselves, but they are not implementing targets or benchmarks that could prompt strategic shifts in their networks, relationships and processes.

"We needed more clarity and how to use data to develop a robust strategy. We didn't want to take up the partners' time if we didn't know what we were doing"

Funding Intermediaries: Foundations that are indirectly supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations and/or complementary efforts through intermediaries or partners. Some intermediaries are better connected to these organizations and can bring that knowledge to bear when the funder has not created those relationships for themselves.

"We created a partnership with Public Allies and Americorp program that supported two young adults from non-traditional backgrounds and they were placed in grantee organizations working on environmental justice and water stewardship to begin to build a more diverse pipeline for the field. It was successful as the two allies ended up getting two full-time jobs with the host organizations"

"We created and supported the infrastructure for a donors of color network"

Robust Portfolio: The foundation has a strategy and is funding these organizations. Funders that have an explicit strategy and commitment to fund Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations and is building relationships with organizational leaders.

"We look to connect Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations and leverage relationships by having honest dialogue and reduce the power dynamic at play. Black, Indigenous and People of Color groups need funding over time therefore, you must build relationships and eat meals together. Thus, these actions will provide the opportunity to directly listen and build trust. More authentic and effective relationship are critical to successful partnership"

Embedded in the DNA: A foundation that was created or revised their organizational mission to specifically support these organizations. These organizations have no challenges with staff or leadership understanding the value of funding Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations. Funding is distributed in a way that reflects their commitment.

"Our goal is supporting communities of color and low-income communities within poverty or environment, with a specific focus on communities that are under-resourced"

"As a result of systemic racism and inequities, we ensure those closest to the environmental justice work are funded to do the work. We are working to build and share power in this space so we have an inclusive movement led by Black, Indigenous and People of Color leader"

Theme 2:
Institutional Challenges and Barriers

Unclear Definition of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations

Regardless of where foundations fell on the spectrum, all respondents articulated a set of institutional challenges/barriers that make it difficult – but not impossible – to advance support to these organizations. These challenges include: Culture, Assumptions, Funder Expectations & Proposal Logistics, Relationships, Unclear Definitions and Process. Each challenge is described below.

Culture

Each foundation is embarking on an exploration or activating a strategy to support more Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations. While some relied on historical work and engagements between the foundation and their communities, others noted that they started "a strategic re-alignment after the murder of George Floyd and the whole summer of unrest." Foundations looked to existing data, reports, and brought in external experts to share and guide their foundations on how to have more equitable grant making practices. Some completed a 'back of the envelope' assessment to understand who and how many Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led and serving groups they were already supporting.

"We can't do equity work without looking at ourselves first and figuring out if internally the culture of this organization is one that truly embraces equity in daily practice"

Funders noted it is sometimes hard to begin the internal work on equity versus the external work with partners. An interviewee mentioned "uncomfortableness" as funders intentionally examined their internal practices related to issues of equity and social justice.

Implicit bias, disconnected to the community, lack of internal organizational work on equity and holding on to unrealistic and unnecessary expectations were also named as cultural challenges.   A respondent shared how funders need to shift how philanthropy is thought of, being mission-driven versus deploying capital for a product that is going to hit the market.

"We need to shift our mindset, that philanthropic work has to have a return on investment, which is really a business paradigm, right? When we are doing this sort of complex social change work, we don't know if strategies are going to work. We need to get out of this feeling that we have to be technical and have concrete answers for things and that we will produce the results we want"

One interviewee noted that big funding institutions are hard to change, particularly since Boards are mostly White, and in some cases have staff that do not value and/or trust Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations.

"Our whiteness means we often might miss who on the ground is doing good work. Foundations are often not approachable to Black, Indigenous and People of Color leaders unintentionally and that informs how we analyze problems and identify solutions because we fail to listen to or lift their voice. Reading and education about centered whiteness are key and must be dismantled if we are to do a just job of funding Black, Indigenous and People of Color organizations. Must address this with the project staff and trustees"

Assumptions

Some funders assume they know what is happening in the communities they are funding, but that is not always the case. Consequently, invitation-only opportunities only work well if the program officer is well-connected with that community.

"Your program officers have to carve out some space where you're actually going out and learning what work is going on in the community. And I've heard a lot of grant makers presume that they know what work is going on in the nonprofit sector in the communities and they don't have a clue"

A stronger set of assumptions around what people of color care about could also be a barrier to the landscape of grantees that could be funded. One founder recounts a conversation she had with a grantee:

"I was having a conversation and one person was like, "all the people I know that care about water or working on water are White". And the grantee replied, 'well that's funny because everyone I know that is working on water or cares about water is a person of color"

Funder Expectations & Proposal Logistics

Meeting funder expectations and navigating the grantmaking process can be arduous for some organizations, particularly for under-resourced and underpaid staff who are completing proposals. One funder shares how simply the presentation of a proposal can turn funders away.

"Sometimes we look at how professional the grant is written. It can be hard for smaller organizations to meet these expectations"

Other challenges funder's shared that they heard back from their own applicants include: foundations can be intimidating; who the grant will serve – if not aligned with the foundation will not be funded; character limits in the application prevent applicants from adequately describing the nuances of the issues they are trying to address; the applications usually have to be written in English and often very technical; and, the time, rigor and documentation needed to prove financial stability strains their already limited resources.

A funder shared that these organizations, particularly those that are smaller or have less organizational capacity, are often invited to apply for lower amounts of funding and only for programming only, which is limiting.

"History and trust of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations is low... often very labor-intensive process to try and get smaller amounts of funding. General operating funds are critical to build capacity-based efforts that are reflective of what is happening on the ground and in real time, not what funders are excited about"

Relationships

Critical funding needs were shared with foundation staff that had deeper relationships with organizational leaders through a variety of mechanisms, such as listening sessions with community leaders and annual surveys, for example. One funder commented that a transparent and trusting relationship with grantees provides them with the opportunity for continuous feedback:

"Healing work and security justice came out of the deeper dive, interviews and talks with leaders. Multi-year and leadership support now occurs as a result of deep, reflective listening sessions to hear their needs and challenges...support for coaching opportunities is also critical for Black, Indigenous and People of color led organizations"

Funders also acknowledged some of the challenges ascertaining community needs and building relationships, specifically when working through intermediaries because of the lack of 'direct connection' with grantee partners. Funders acknowledged the barriers that these organizations face to do this work and were committed to build trusting relationships that

can sustain partnerships, but also "bring other funders in early to support these organizations".

Funders also mentioned the need to be in communion with grantees. For example, foundation program staff visiting the organizations versus having the organizations come to foundation offices. Encouraging the addition of family members or others during site visits or unstructured meetings, which one funder noted is an action that is usually a part of their culture of Hispanic and African Americans.

Unclear Definition of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations

Several respondents mentioned the importance of defining the parameters for what Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations meant, as there is no agreed-upon standard. The parameters were different for foundations. Some defined People of Color leadership as the Executive Director, while others defined it as a certain percentage of the Board or staff, or the community that the organization is serving was important.

Process

Several funders reiterated that the COVID pandemic has sparked ways of working that foundations should have been taking on before, including but not limited to streamlining the application process, trusting the organization's know what is best for their community, providing flexible spending, and being innovative with the grantee reporting process.

"We had suspended our evaluation process where we historically had grantees participate in a process to understand the collective impact of the work. We have moved to having conversations over the phone for reporting"

Some funders began making permanent changes: created minimal application processes and requirements, and began to fund the infrastructure and the program, moving away from questions in the application process that are too specific, and developing a collaborative scoping process was offered as a way improve impact and efficiency.

"I think the model that could be possible is more collaborative scoping of work. I think philanthropic organizations will be well-served if they do a lot more sort of collaborative scoping of a project and not to be so prescriptive of what they want"

The process must be built on trust and flexible enough to reflect the unique needs of organizations working on social change. One funder shared some advice:

"We might need to realign or rework our current grant process to reflect your trust in Black, Indigenous and People of Color leaders and communities they serve, and ensure our funding reflects their work"

"It's not anything revolutionary. It is literally finding people of color led organizations like you find everyone else. It is multi-year general operating support, building relationships. It's understanding that if you're doing systems change work especially, we're operating always in a changing and evolving context"

Theme 3:
Opportunities for Action

Every foundation has a unique opportunity to increase funding and capacity related support to Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations. Table 2 presents specific actions funders can consider as they navigate the spectrum of institutional commitment to this work.

Table 2: Funder-to-Funder advice for supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Institutional Changes	**Address institutional and structural racism** Address the cultural barriers: a lot of white people do not allow themselves to look at what is going on and the root causes as to why some organizations are not being funded. There is also bias and assumptions that white people make that people of color are worried about 'other things' and not the environment.	"Foundations need to support the work in an equitable and inclusive way or they will not solve those challenges, that means including and funding Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations. If Foundations are trying to address structural racism, they must address structural and environmental justice issues because they are linked. Inclusivity drives where the policy and system change take place"
	Educate Board/ Trustees Using localized data, help Boards and Trustees understand the tangible impacts of pollution and other environmental threats, especially for Black Indigenous and People of Color communities.	"One thing that is also really helpful is a lot of the data that has been coming out more and more about local pollution impacts on a certain neighborhood. For any Board, when you actually start to see that in ways that are tangible, you can't deny it anymore. You see the institutional barriers that have put that stuff in place and how it's incumbent on us to rectify it".
	Begin a reconciliation process Funders can acknowledge past hurt and harm done to a community through a reconciliation process	"Time for respite and healing is needed and necessary for BIPOC organizations and their leaders"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Institutional Changes (Cont'd)	**Be more transparent about the decision-making process with the broader public.** Since there is currently limited oversight in philanthropy, there is a need to share information, and make public their decision-making processes at board meetings, etc. More transparency is required. Create more opportunity to learn from and support staff of color.	"The level of capacity in philanthropy needs to be changed. If you are doing something that can't be discussed publicly, you need to look at yourself in the mirror and just say, "we're just doing philanthropy" we're not doing equity. But as soon as you start saying "we're doing equitable work or social justice work', you have to change everything that you are doing and the way you are doing it"
	Approachability Understanding and learning about Centered Whiteness can help Foundations understand the barriers between themselves and communities they create.	"Our whiteness means we often might miss who on the ground is doing good work. Foundations are often not approachable to BIPOC leaders unintentionally and that informs how we analyze problems and identify solutions because we fail to listen to or lift their voice. Reading and education about centered whiteness are key and must be dismantled if we are to do a just job of funding BIPOC organizations. Must address this with project staff and trustees" "BIPOC leaders feel they cannot approach me because other white women have acted as gate keepers, and as a result I miss out on hearing their perspectives. Therefore, we do not have a technology-based application, we talk with our grantees and help them develop a budget for the work; a gatekeeper has no idea what the organization needs"
	Accountability Have publicly stated goals.	"Track them internally and invite the community to hold them accountable. That is an expression of their values"

"We can't do equity work without looking at ourselves first and figuring out if internally the culture of this organization is one that truly embraces equity in daily practice"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Expanding scope of grantmaking – being bolder	Need more gender justice, climate justice & environmental justice funding. Develop new entry points of funding	"We need to see how the portfolio will look and if it is different with dollars directly supporting Black, indigenous and people of color led organizations. If we have not been successful, then we need to rethink our strategies, and this might mean broadening our funding lens"
	Utilize an Equity Lens within each department and when making decisions that drive grantee impact within the Foundation	"For every problem, foundations that are already committed to these organizations are looking at solutions. They have a disciplined practice of paying attention to race and ethnicity around all decision making – from who's around the table to who should be a part of the process"
	Widen the view	"Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations broaden the universe and our coalitions. Foundations need to embrace Black, Indigenous and People of Color leaders diversity of thought, culture, and action"
Process	Groups outside the relationship sphere will not have an opportunity for funding. Invite only grants through relationships and allow groups to refer others and establish an open portal for applications.	"The advisory committee and decision making was composed of 9 prominent women of color"
	Facilitating a 'meet and greet' of funders and potential grantees Foundation Intermediaries can serve as connectors between a network of funders and organizations needed additional capacity. Inviting funders and grantees into the same room will allow matches and relationships to develop.	"We had an event right before COVID and it was an event where we invited funders as well as non-profit organizations into a room. We had non-profits saying 'we need organizational development support and fundraising support'. And then, one of the funders got up and said 'we don't support that….but, then come to me when you get to this point. And then the organization said, 'well, how do we get that"…and then it was a back and forth and everyone was talking. More foundations are realizing its not the sexy programs…but capacity building is the sexy thing, it's the bones of the house where the façade is a beautiful exterior"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Process (Cont'd)	Learn from existing processes that have been successful at moving monies to Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations Kataly Foundation awarded over $34M in grants to environmental and climate organizations, some working on water.	"We have served as a fiscal sponsor and worked with BIPOC organizations to obtain their grants. We utilized previous budgets required for other funders to make it simple or streamlined when making a case for funding. Over time, we have tested several different streamlined grant processes and they often accept previously written applications to other funds. So we don't require someone to rewrite an application for the same body of work. Flexible with application documents and will take the application with another funders name on it"
	Streamline the process for potential grantees Eliminate lengthy applications Quarterly or even semi-annual reports might not be necessary. Develop simple proposal template for Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led, smaller organizations	"They have noticed organizations stretching themselves to create an exciting application to do something brand new. Fund what is working. Fund staff time" "Perception, intimidation factor of the foundation (Who it is for, who it serves) is a real barrier. Capacity of BIPOC org is an issue as well they are often under resourced and staffed and as a result have no bandwidth to apply and go through grantmaking process. BIPOC organizations often lack a grant manager full time which makes it harder to collect supportive documents for the application process. Foundations need to look at minimal application processes and requirements. Begin to fund the infrastructure and the program" "We are tasking nonprofits with way too much"
	Educate foundation employees Developing an educational program to understand and acknowledge racism.	"Consider participation in Undoing Racism trainings for the board and staff"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Process (Cont'd)	Review hiring & recruiting Exploring current recruiting and hiring practices to focus on. getting more applicants of color.	"We've got a pipeline issue. We need to get more People of Color into the environmental community in our state"
	Practice letting go of Power Allow the funds to be deployed where the money is needed and not always where the work has been funded previously.	"Know how much money is on the table, be transparent to read and learn who is doing the good work. Do your research on best practices and who is out there doing it"
	Audit of internal policies and procedures Train staff and board to review policies and procedures that might be a hurdle and hinder inclusivity.	"Might need to realign or rework your current grant process to reflect your trust in BIPOC leaders and communities they serve, ensure your funding reflects this" "There is a great opportunity in this moment for Foundations to either do away with or really examine those systems that are. Often biased and continue to reaffirm white culture, history and identity. Start creating space for BIPOC leaders that are doing the work."
Functionality	Provide technology support Provide a laptop, high speed internet, and a printer	"Give Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations what they need to function"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
Functionality (Cont'd)	Provide back-office support for organizations Fund an organization that could serve as back-office support for multiple organizations in each city or region.	"We are currently making grants to very small organizations that appear to be Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led. The foundation is giving money to a fiscal sponsor, and this bigger organization works with the grantee to give them back office and other supports" "We help these organizations with accounting, legal, risk management, compliance, payroll, budgeting, all that. And the way I like to say it is we work on the back office so they can focus on the front lines"
Strategic use of community advisors	Cautiously use CBO Advisory Boards The notion that founda-tions are overtaxing community members to be on advisory boards to help them do their work.	"There is a trend of foundations that are recruiting community members to be on advisory boards. It's not important that every foundation start with an advisory board because grassroots leaders are being tapped for their time...it's excessive and becomes a second job. It needs to be really nuanced and balanced"
	Utilize previous budgets required by other funders to make it simple or streamline the case for funding Flexible application documents.	"Over time we have tested several different streamlined grant processes and we often accept previously written applications to other funders. We don't require someone to rewrite the application for the same body of work"
	Deploy multi-year grants Reduces the burden of having organizations apply year after year.	"Fund Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations like you do white led organizations, do not penalize them and give them room to fail. Treat them as leaders and not children"
No re-invention	Utilize existing lists of Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations	"The Kataly Foundation has a great starter list"
	Unnecessary research	"Caution people against the philanthropic habit of researching people to death. There is no reason to commission another study to find out stuff we already know"

Theme/Issue/Opportunity	Action	Illustrative Quotes from Funders
No re-invention (Cont'd)	Limit 'overstudying' of issues for a long period of time or gathering of information to inform your grant making strategies in areas of specialty. Stop talking to a 'bunch of academics' but talk to the existing institutions and people that exist.	"Really be cautious about 'gradualism'. We are going to study it for five years, and then talk about it. Set some real goals, public goals, and stop giving ourselves credit for talking
	Hire staff and build a Board that includes people that come from organizing, or have deep relationships with the communities you are trying to fund in.	"We have folks that have worked as organizers in communities and have raised their hands to switch and move to philanthropy. Majority of staff and board are former labor or community organizers, People of Color; We have a board that has prominent movement leaders with grassroots connections"
Value of supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations	Deploy multi-year grants Reduces the burden of having organizations apply year after year.	"Fund Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations like you do White led organizations, do not penalize them and give them room to fail. Treat them as leaders and not children"
Activating Donor Advised Fund	Need to move this money 'sitting in assets' into the community	"The billions and billions of dollars that sit in donor-advised funds and people park it their for a myriad of reasons. We need to get that money out into the community and so that's why we say get off your assets because it's really important to do"

In sum, all funders we spoke with expressed similar sentiments about the value of supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led organizations. The diversity of thinking and ideas and representation of the full community was noted. Three leaders expressed this distinctly:

"What is the value? We have had these folks go unfunded because of racist policies; we want to lift up folks that have deserved a chance all along; we need to have a more culturally representative economic landscape of the city to build a stronger economy in an equitable way"

"Absolutely support BIPOC organizations especially if you want to win. The best chance of doing this are including those closest to the problems and give them the opportunity to figure out the program and generate the solutions. If an issue affects one organization directly they will be more inclined to fight harder versus a policy challenge if they are not part of the solution"

"Foundations need to support the work in an equitable and inclusive way or they will not solve those challenges. That means including and funding BIPOC organizations. If Foundations are trying to address structural racism, they must address structural and environmental justice issues because they are linked. Inclusivity drives where the policy and system change takes place"

Conclusion

Water is one of the key ingredients that supports all life functions, thus, it must be valued, protected, and treasured. This could not be truer than offering protection for the water of the Great Lakes Region. Collectively, there are hundreds of organizations and foundations that support this fragile ecosystem to ensure its sustainability and vitality. However, without critical funding, support, and advocacy measures this precious resource will no longer exist. The philanthropic sector has the ability to preserve this natural resource and invest in the people who are working to secure it.

Many foundations and organizations have unique geography, strategies, and ways of grantmaking to collectively support the Great Lakes Region. As we explored 'how philanthropy can better support these organizations we found that funders should:

- Take the necessary time to understand the needs of a particular community and build relationships with those closest to the work,
- Provide direct grant support however, and if necessary utilize an intermediary,
- Offer funding for operational and programmatic funding, and
- Be open to new mediums of reporting program success and impact.

Both funders and organizations noted similar ideas when asked about the impacts of racism and settler colonialism that limit a sufficient level of funding and capacity to support Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations. Racism and structural colonialism has had deleterious effects on these organizations and the communities they represent. One mechanism to combat this issue is to deeply embed foundation team members in the work taking place on the ground and hiring staff members that are reflective of the communities they seek to serve, not just as it relates to race but also lived experience. The use of extractive practices by foundations underscores the lack of respect often noted by organizations and the continued occurrence of power imbalance, as the system is "not built for certain people." If foundations are to counteract their "centered whiteness" they might consider antiracism trainings and seating board members that more closely mirror communities to be served.

The grant seeking and fundraising process continues to hamper and illuminate the challenges of organizations specifically as it relates to existing capacity. A plausible solution might include: strategy development, increasing partnership explorations, and creating a more inclusive grant proposal development process, Additionally moving from a transactional to a transformations relationship between organization and funder is a continued area of improvement. This single action has the greatest opportunity to improve the grant making and seeking process for organizations with significant benefits to the funder as well. Increasing and building transparent, authentic relationships founded on mutual trust and respect allow both organizations to be more efficient (they are not always "chasing the dollars") and provides a deeper understanding of the work the organization is completing on behalf of the foundation and community.

In the course of this exploration organizations noted many foundations that were "getting it right". These funders were champions of the organizations; offered flexible and creative ways to track and report; visited often to see the impact of the workstream directly; invested in the capacity of the organization; took time to account for barriers; focused on building a trusting relationship with the organization over time; created space for peer learning and trainings; and offered flexible funding terms. These actions honored the realities and effects of organizations and involved precise decision points to change their practices to better fit the needs of the organization.

By doing so, funders can provide a means for those closest to the work taking place in the community to be able to earn a livable wage - a critical aspect of a successful organization. This action is just as critical as providing technological support and offering general capacity support to organizations. Offering soft skills trainings and expanding the funding scope to include intersectional issues beyond water is an essential next step to supporting racial, social, and health justice work. We call on funders to disrupt the norm and expand their support and the scope of organizations to improve the grant seeking and grantee experience, and ultimately to make meaningful and lasting changes in the Great Lakes Region and beyond.

APPENDIX

Interviewee Identification, Recruitment and Final Interview List

Interviewees were suggested by the Project Advisory Team. The final list of CBO interviewees (those that were interviewed and not interviewed) are shown in the following tables. Interviewees included organizational leaders that had various roles, but primarily in leadership at the Executive or Founder level.   Suggested Funder interviewees were identified primarily by The Mott Foundation and the research team.

CBO Interviewees

	Organization	State	Organizational Type
1	People for Community Recovery	IL	Environmental & Social Justice
2	Southeast Environmental Taskforce	IL	Environmental & Social Justice
3	United Congregations of MetroEast	IL	Faith-based
4	Midwest Environmental Justice Network	MI	Environmental Justice
5	Wisdom Institute	MI	Consultancy
6	Smallvilles Farms	MI	Environmental
7	Westside Unity/Urban Farming	MI	Environmental
8	We the People of Detroit*	MI	Social Justice
9	The Junction Coalition*	OH	Environmental & Social Justice
10	Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO)	MI	Faith-based
11	Vincent Martin	MI	Consultant
12	Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee (WTCAC)	WI	Tribal
13	Sokaogon Chippewa Tribe	WI	Tribal
14	Honor the Earth	MN	Tribal
15	Milwaukee Water Commons*	WI	Environmental Justice
16	The Nature Conservatory	MN	Environmental
17	ECO America/AA Leadership Alliance of Milwaukee	WI	Environmental
18	Walnut Way	WI	Environmental
19	Adams Garden Park	WI	Environmental
20	True Skool	WI	Youth, Arts & Culture
21	Century City Triangle Association	WI	Environmental & Social Justice
22	DREAMS	MI	Youth Development
23	Urban Scouts	OH	Environmental
24	Community Gardening	OH	Environmental
25	Water Justice & Education for Indigenous Families	MI	Tribal
26	Great Lakes Indian, Fish and Wildlife Commission*	WI	CBO & Tribal
27	Sierra Club*	IL	Environmental

	Funder	Geographic Focus Area
1	JPB Foundation	National
2	The Ceres Trust	National
3	The Water Foundation	National
4	The Cleveland Foundation	Community
5	The Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice	South
6	The Erb Foundation	Local
7	Groundswell Fund	National
8	Great Lakes Protection Fund	Regional
9	The Wege Foundation	Regional
10	Rochester Community Foundation*	Community
11	Environmental Funders of Canada	International
12	Great Lakes Funders Collaborative	Regional
13	The Mott Foundation*	Regional/International
14	The Joyce Foundation	Regional
15	The Fund for Lake Michigan	Regional
16	TIDES Foundation	National
17	Greater Milwaukee Foundation	Community

*Denotes that two staff people were interviewed

Interview Protocol

The research team vetted the slate of interview questions with the Project Advisory team. A 2-page project overview and interview guide were shared in advance of each interview. Each interview lasted approximately 30 – 40 minutes. The majority of the interviews were recorded via Zoom, with permission from the interviewee. Interview questions are shown below for CBOs and Funders, respectively.

Community Based Organizations

Organizational Information & Capacity

1. Tell me about yourself, your organization's mission, and the types of water-related projects/rules/advocacy/research are you working on?
2. What other issues are a priority for your organization/government? (non-water issues)?
3. Has racism and/or settler colonialism affected your organization's ability to achieve its goal around protection of water and climate? If so, how?
4. Do you receive grant funds directly or through an intermediary?
5. Do you have someone dedicated to grant development and/or identifying financial resources to support the work within your organization? [Note: Grant development can include grant seeking, grant writing, developing interim reports/final reports, developing relationships with funders and other entities; For Tribal governments, it could also include innovative forms of financing – social investments, partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental entities]
   a) If not, how do you identify and go after funding opportunities?
   b) If yes, what is your process?

      1. Is there more than 1 person in your organization that has some grant development skills and/or experience?
      2. Have you created an opportunity within your organization to mentor or pass down these skills and tools to others in the organization to sustain the learnings and process?

Grant Development Process

6. Can you describe 1 or 2 characteristics of a GREAT grant-seeking/funding process you've experienced?
7. Can you describe 1 or 2 characteristics of the most frustrating grant-seeking/funding process you have been through?
8. How can Foundations improve the grant seeking and grant making process, particularly as it relates to building the capacity of BIPOC led organization/organizations that support Tribes/Tribal governments in the Great Lakes Basin? [Note: interviewees can speak to any step of the process and how to improve it – grant seeking, application process, review/reporting, type and amount of funding, longevity of funding, who they fund, etc.]
9. This question pertains to the grantee reporting process – both interim and final reports – that are given to funders/funding entities to share progress or final deliverables. Is there a better method or way to organize reporting that can better express the impact of your work, beyond just listing activities.

Identifying Additional Grant Supports

10. Are there specific services or supports that could help strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of BIPOC-led organizations in the Great Lakes Basin?
11. Should the range of organizations considered for funding within Mott's new Initiative work solely on water issues or, potentially, a range of related, intersectional issues?
12. Can you share one piece of advice that funders should keep in mind as they explore new approaches?

Foundation

Foundation Information and Capacity

1. What is your role within the Foundation?
   a) Probe: What specific foundation decisions, policies or processes do you influence or own, as it relates to supporting BIPOC organizations? [Note: this will vary for Program, Operations & Management staff]

2. Can you briefly describe the mission and areas of focus for your grantmaking?

3. Can you provide a high-level overview of your funding and grantmaking process?

4. Does your foundation engage in:
   a) Grantmaking?
   b) Social investments?
   c) Loans?
   d) Other types of support?

Grantmaking Strategies and Processes

5. Do you have a specific strategy for funding BIPOC organizations?
   a) If yes:
      i. Can you describe that strategy?
      ii. What data did you use to inform the strategy for funding BIPOC organizations (prompts: community driven, previous grantee feedback, staff decision, history of grant making in this discipline)?
      iii. Are most the organizations funded directly or through intermediaries?
      iv. Do you track your progress? If so, how?
      v. Approximately how many BIPOC organizations do you/your foundation fund per year? What is the funding range?
      vi. For what time period does your foundation traditionally support BIPOC organizations?
      Has the foundation conducted any assessments or special efforts to better understand the funding needs of BIPOC led organizations?

   b) If no:
      i. Is this an emerging priority for the foundation or not?

6. Does your foundation engage in:

   a. Are there institutional and/or process challenges/barriers within your organization or externally that prevent your foundation from funding BIPOC organizations? [Note: imagine interviewees might speak to capacity, readiness, infrastructure, being able to identify them, etc.]

   b. Are there cultural challenges within your organization that inhibit funding to BIPOC led organizations?

   c. Are there any additional challenges that BIPOC-led organizations face navigating the grantmaking process that you have witnessed, compared to other organizations that seek and apply for funding?

      i. Probe: Have you received any feedback regarding any aspect of your grantmaking process from current, past or grant seekers that you'd like to share?

Future Thinking and Advice

7. What best practices or strategic funding opportunities should we be aware of – in philanthropy or beyond – that do a good job supporting BIPOC-led organizations?
8. What do you find is the additional value (or not) in supporting BIPOC-led organizations?
9. If you could make 1 change in your foundation's process and/or policy to better support BIPOC-led organizations, what would it be?

Analysis

A qualitative analysis method called 'coding' was used to organize the findings from all of the interviews. Coding is simply assigning a description to an interview response. Organizing each interview response by a set of broad codes allows the research team to extract key themes and quotes from each interview.

1. Organization Information	1.1 Role in your organization
	1.2 Mission
	1.3 Water-related work
	1.4 Non-water related work
	1.5 Impacts of racism and setter colonialism on water and climate work
	1.6 Funding structure (direct/intermediary)
	1.7 Other
2. Grant Development Process	2.1 Grant Development Capacity/Staff/Process
	2.2 Financial Development Capacity/Staff/Process
	2.3 Staff Development and Mentorship
	2.4 Aspects of a favorable grant-seeking/funding process
	2.5 Aspects of a non-favorable grant-seeking/funding process
	2.6 Ways to improve the grant seeking & grant making process
	2.7 Ways to improve interim and final grant reporting
	2.8 Other
3. Additional Grant Supports	3.1 Specific services & supports to strengthen BIPOC capacity in Great Lakes
	3.2 Opportunity to expand support on issues beyond water
	3.3 General funder advice
	3.4 Other
4. Other	4.1 Other

Model Initiatives by Foundation - to expand capacity and support

Foundation/Initiative	Type of support/process	
Chicago Frontline Initiative	Provide CBOs support with various application processes	https://www.fsmonline.org/our-impact/chicago-frontline-funding-initiative/
Deaconess Foundation	Provides soft skills training and support for organizations	https://deaconess.org/
The Joyce Foundation	"An award program was created that connected the grantee with national opportunities; program officer recognized their leadership with other funders and through multiple vehicles (i.e. social media, emails, etc.)	https://www.joycefdn.org/
The Mott Foundation	Flexibility of funding that allows them to regrant to member organizations	https://www.mott.org/
Mosaic	Through a series of conversations with a prospective grantee they collectively create outcomes and metrics.	https://mosaicmomentum.org/
The Kresge Foundation	Environmental Program offered meaning opportunities for grantee to connect and share lessons learned and best practices without funders in the room.	https://kresge.org/initiative/climate-resilient-and-equitable-water-systems-crews/
Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Skillman Foundation, Erb Family Foundation	In collaboration with Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (Wayne Metro), partners launched the Detroit Residents First Fund (DRFF), a historic partnership to help Detroit-based grassroots nonprofit organizations led by Black, indigenous or other persons of color with the least access to power and social capital who are working to transform Detroit's neighborhoods.	https://www.waynemetro.org/author/agronda/

Foundation/Initiative	Type of support/process	
The Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice	Serves as a fiscal sponsor for organizations, primarily supporting organizations in the South that have lacked funding.	https://www.hivefund.org/
The Solutions Project	Their commitment and structure of the advisory team and the shift in the leadership team.	https://www.thesolutionsproj-ect.org
Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund	Hiring communications and community accelerator in the space to move policy.	https://www.theequityfund.org/
The Compton Foundation	Very innovative reporting requirements	https://comptonfound-tion.org/about-us/
The Libra Foundation	All around innovative	https://www.thelibrafoundtion.org/
Kataly Foundation	Moves resources to support the economic, political, and cultural power of Black & Indigenous communities, & all communities of color	https://www.katalyfoundation.org/
The Groundswell Fund	Staff and Board are reflective of the communities they are serving: organizers, advocates, etc.	https://groundswellfund.org/
TIDES Foundation	Provides back-office support for non-profits Creative way of connecting funders with potential grantees through a face-to-face 'meet and greet'	https://www.tides.org/
Panta Rhea Foundation	Innovative 'no reporting' process for grantees	https://pantarhea.org/

Full Contact List of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led CBOs working in the Great Lakes Region on water and related issues

#	Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led Organization	Website/Online Presence	State/Region of Impact	Contact Name	Email
1	Blacks in Green	https://www.blacksingreen.org	Illinois	Naomi Davis	naomidavis@blacksingreen.org
2	People for Community Recovery	http://www.peopleforcommunityrecovery.org	Illinois	Cheryl Johnson; Courtney Hanson	cheryl@pcrchi.org; courtney@pcrchi.org
3	Little Village Environmental Justice Organization	http://www.lvejo.org	Illinois	Kim Wasserman	kwasserman@lvejo.org
4	Southeast Environmental Taskforce	http://setaskforce.org	Illinois	Olga Bautista	obautista58@gmail.com
5	Centreville Citizens for Change	https://www.facebook.com/CentrevilleCitizensForChange/	Illinois	Kalila Jackson; Nicole Nelson	kjackson@ehoc-stl.org; nnelson@equitylegalservices.org
6	United Congregations of MetroEast	www.ucmetroeast.org	Illinois	Rev. Atty	mikeatty@ucmetroeast.org; ucmetroeast@gmail.com;
7	Detroit Black Food Security Network	https://www.dbcfsn.org/	Michigan	Malik Yakini	myakini@dbcfsn.org
8	Midwest Environmental Justice Network	https://www.mwejn.org/	Midwest	Eartha Borer-Bell	eborerbell@mwejn.org
9	Wisdom Institute	https://www.linkedin.com/in/gwendolyn-winston-81617b17/	Michigan	Gwen Winston	gwenwinston1740@gmail.com
10	Redeem Detroit	https://www.redeemdetroit.org/	Michigan	Alonzo Bell	zobell20000@yahoo.com
11	Smallvilles Farms	https://www.linkedin.com/in/smallvillefarms/	Michigan	Michelle Jackson	michelle.jackson@smallvillefarms.com
12	Westside Unity/Urban Farming	https://www.unityworldwideministries.org/ministry/west-side-unity-church	Michigan	JoAnn Watson	joannwatsondetroit@hotmail.com
13	We the People of Detroit	https://www.wethepeopleofdetroit.com/	Michigan	Debra Taylor	debra@wethepeopleofdetroit.com
14	The Junction Coalition	https://junctioncoalition419.org/	Ohio	Alicia Smith	asmith@419junction.org
15	Black Autonomy Network Community Organization	https://www.bhbanco.org/	Michigan	Rev. Edward Pinkney	banco9342@sbcglobal.net
16	EJ Consultant/Community Organizer	https://www.linkedin.com/in/vincent-martin-333a6316/	Michigan	Vincent Martin	vm1962@gmail.com
17	Eastside Community Network	https://www.ecn-detroit.org/	Michigan	Donna Givens	dgivens@ecn-detroit.org
18	Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA)	http://www.greatlakesfisheriestrail.org/organization.asp?ait=ov&oid=7	Michigan	Beverly Carrick	bevcarrick@chippewaottawa.org
19	Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee (WTCAC)	https://www.wtcac.org/	Wisconsin	Jeff Mears	mears@wtcac.org
20	Sokaogon Chippewa Tribe	http://sokaogonchippewa.com/	Wisconsin	Tina Van Zile (board member of WTCAC)	tina.vanzile@scc-nsn.gov
21	Honor the Earth	https://www.honorearth.org/	Minnesota	Winona LaDuke	winonaladuke@honorearth.org
22	Milwaukee Water Commons	https://www.milwaukeewatercommons.org/	Wisconsin	Kirsten Shead	kshead@milwaukeewatercommons.org
23	African American Leadership Alliance of Milwaukee	https://www.aalamilwaukee.org/	Wisconsin	Deneine Powell	deneine@ecoAmerica.org
24	Walnut Way	https://www.walnutway.org/	Wisconsin	Antonio Butts	antonio@walnutway.org
25	Adams Garden Park	https://www.agpmke.com/about-us	Wisconsin	Sharon Adams	sharon@agp-mke.com
26	Cream City Conservation	https://www.creamcityconservation.org/	Wisconsin	August Marie Ball	august@creamcityconservation.org
27	True Skool	https://www.trueskool.org/	Wisconsin	Fidel Verdin, Shalina Ali	fidel@trueskool.org, shalina@trueskool.org
28	Century City Triangle Association	https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/century-city-triangle-park	Wisconsin	Yvonne McCaskill	mccaskillym@yahoo.com
29	We Got This	https://wegotthismke.com	Wisconsin	Andre Lee Ellis	contact@wegotthismke.com
30	BANCO	https://www.bhbanco.org/	Michigan	Rev. Pinkney	banco9342@sbcglobal.net
31	DREAMS	https://flintbeat.com/basketball-skills-academy-works-to-build-resiliency-in-flints-youth/	Michigan	Royce Stephens	roycestephens@yahoo.com
32	Flint Development Center	http://www.flintdc.org/mpc-flint-community-lab	Michigan	Michael Harris	harris6ft6@yahoo.com
33	Urban Scouts	https://www.linkedin.com/in/miguel-tucker-796424165/	Ohio	Miguel Tucker	geno@ruurbanscouts.com
34	Community Gardening	https://www.velscott.com/purpleoasis	Ohio	Vel Scott	velmscott@gmail.com
35	Water Justice & Education for Indengous families	https://forloveofwater.org/moving-forward-natives-and-non-natives-alike-through-our-common-love-of-water/	Michigan	Jannan Cornstalk	jcornstalk@gmail.com
36	Water Justice & Citizens Science	http://freshwaterfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Freshwater-Future-Newsletter-March_2021-Hero-Award.pdf	Illinois	Jeff Whitelow	jeffwhitelow@yahoo.com
37	Dexter Elmhurst Center	http://outreach.msu.edu/capablecommunities/DexterElmhurst.html	Michigan	Helen Moore	helen-moore@att.ent
38	Educate to Liberate		Michigan	Dr. Nefertari Nkenge	313.673.7693