Neighbor to Neighbor

MANY ROADS...
THREE DECADES OF ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

SEATTLE FOUNDATION
the heart & science of philanthropy
For 30 years, Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) collaborators have traveled many paths on the road to racial equity. By investing in the power of organizations led by people of color, grassroots voices have been amplified in South Seattle, White Center and Kent.

Today, N2N is one of the longest standing programs of the Seattle Foundation. It plays a critical role in advancing the Foundation’s vision of a thriving region of shared prosperity, belonging and justice, where all individuals and communities have equitable access and outcomes regardless of race, place or identity.

Since its inception in 1991, N2N has granted nearly $3.4 million to more than 400 grassroots organizations. Together, community advocates, N2N grantees and funders are traveling on the road to justice.

We CELEBRATE the people and organizations who work in communities of color to advance racial equity.

We CELEBRATE the grassroots advocates who take their rightful place at the table, are heard and become servant leaders in and on behalf of their communities.

We CELEBRATE the persistence, skill and creativity of N2N grantees to meet changing needs of their communities in the face of difficult conditions and great challenges – especially during 2020’s year of racial reckoning and the COVID-19 pandemic.

We CELEBRATE the public and private funders who walk the walk to share their resources with low-income communities in South Seattle, White Center and Kent.

We CELEBRATE 30 years of traveling together on the road toward equity and justice.

If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.

*African Proverb*
Since inception, the Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) program has reimagined community philanthropy and influenced Seattle Foundation’s overarching commitment to equity and justice. In the late 1980s, foundations across the nation, including Seattle Foundation, were being scrutinized for their low level of grant support to “disadvantaged communities.” Seattle Foundation began addressing its behavior and received a C.S. Mott Foundation grant to begin remedying past wrongs. As a result, N2N emerged as a small grants program to invest in communities of color and other underinvested communities.

“The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy’s study documented the dramatic lack of foundation giving to communities of color. When they engaged with grassroots community leaders - and listened - new programs and opportunities were created that genuinely supported their move toward equity and justice.”

- Alice Ito, Seattle Foundation Senior Advisor for Equity, former N2N Advisory Committee member

At the beginning, N2N’s grants supported grassroots, community efforts in Central and Southeast Seattle neighborhoods. When the Mott funding ended in 1996, Seattle Foundation opened the N2N opportunity to other investors. Early funders included The Boeing Company, Kirkpatrick Family and Kongsgaard-Goldman foundations as well as Safeco, USBank and individual donors.

The initial focus of N2N was to support proposals that improve neighborhoods through citizen participation and organization and leadership development, with particular interest in supporting organizations that likely did not have access to traditional sources of funding.

“Neighbor to Neighbor has been a great innovation lab. And, by tethering communities and funders together in a space where they could learn from each other, the risks and rewards could be shared. It has changed the communities and philanthropy.”

- Michael Brown, Seattle Foundation Civic Architect, Civic Commons, former Vice President of Community Programs
And, the N2N team shared their learnings with civic leaders, and policymakers as well as other funders. As gentrification moved these communities out of Seattle, N2N expanded geographically to include all of South Seattle, White Center and Kent.

After making its early rounds of grants, N2N noticed that grantees were asking similar technical assistance and nonprofit management questions. N2N knew that supporting grassroots grantees required strong relationships, cultural fluency and customized approaches. In a bold step not taken by most funders, N2N funders supported the creation of the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) specifically given their focus on serving nonprofit communities of color and their unique needs. In 2019, after co-locating and partnering with Wayfind, a nonprofit legal assistance organization, they merged to become Communities Rise. They foster movements to build power in communities impacted by systemic oppression. To create an equitable system, they pursue cross-sector collaboration, and provide capacity building and legal services for community organizations and small businesses. Since COVID-19 began, Communities Rise has helped over 2,000 organizations across the state with the challenges of surviving in these difficult times.

In recent years, N2N began another bold strategy to bring the grantee family together to strengthen relationships and to learn from each other: Annual Convenings. Each year since 2015, over 100 grantees, funders and collaborators came together to hear from each other, share best practices, celebrate victories, eat great multiethnic food and plan joint efforts to move an agenda of equity and justice forward. Communities across ethnicities and spanning the geographic reach of the three targeted neighborhoods discovered new ideas, opportunities to partners and realized they were not alone in some of the struggles of community organizing and running small nonprofits. The coronavirus COVID-19 has interrupted the in-person sharing, but N2N and grantees continue to find ways to support each other during these difficult times.

“...community leaders work harder to solve tough problems than I ever imagined, surmounting enormous barriers. I’ve launched and been part of a number of collaborative funding groups. None has survived as long or been as effective as N2N.”

- Kathleen Pierce, Kirkpatrick Family Foundation, N2N Advisory Committee Member

."The Neighbor to Neighbor convening and the partners that we work with are the most valuable partners that I’ve ever worked with in my job. These partners are working every day to try to address the inequities in our community and they do it with incredible passion, great dedication, and real partnership with each other so that communities can come together and really give opportunity for all.”

- Tony Mestres, Seattle Foundation President & CEO (June 2014 – May, 2021)
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1991-1994: C.S. Mott Foundation makes grant to the Seattle Foundation to serve low-income communities of color. Steve Forman is hired to reach out to potential neighborhoods, creates a community Advisory Committee and administers the small grant program primarily in Southeast Seattle.

1996: Seattle Foundation opens its own Neighbor to Neighbor Donor Advised Fund and invites other funders to join. Small grants are set at $5000.

1997: Eunice Letzing is hired to administer the N2N grants program.

1998: The boundaries of N2N are extended to include all of South Seattle.

1999: Funds are committed to create the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC, now Communities Rise) to build the capacity of low-income communities and communities of color.

2002: N2N expands to include the White Center neighborhood when the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s “Making Connections” initiative joins the funding collaborative.

2004: A total of 183 grants totaling $784,565 have been awarded since 1996.

2006: N2N neighborhoods experience rapid gentrification; equitable development becomes a primary N2N concern.

2007: With the support of the United Way of King County, N2N expands to Kent where many families of color have been gentrified out of South Seattle.
2010: Judy de Barros is hired as the new consultant to administer the N2N grants.

2011: N2N advisory committee considers the benefits of becoming a program of the Seattle Foundation. Other funders and community investors continue to contribute.

2013: N2N becomes part of the newly formed Norman B. Rice Center for Community Partnerships, completing the transition of N2N as a full-fledged program of the Seattle Foundation.

2015: N2N holds its first annual grantee convening with over 100 community members. N2N pilots a larger $10,000 capacity building grant opportunity for existing grantees.

2017: Aileen Balahadia becomes the first person of color to become the N2N consultant and lives in one of the targeted neighborhoods.

2018: N2N increases grants to $6,000. Three Community Advocates representing the focus neighborhoods are hired to provide additional staff capacity and outreach. Ten former/current N2N grantees receive $25,000 to “Advance Racial Equity” in issue areas of their choice.

2019: Fifth Annual N2N grantee convening has over 120 grantees where partners learn from another and deepen relationships.

2020: Grantees struggle during the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. While the annual convening is canceled, many grantees persist and pivot to support communities disproportionately impacted by the virus and systemic racism.

2021: N2N celebrates its 30th anniversary and grants increase to $7,500.
$3.4 million in total grants from 1991-2021

Total of 691 grants to 403 different grantee organizations/projects

GRANTEE COMMUNITIES LED BY & SERVING

- Black: 10%
- Asian: 11%
- Pan-African or African: 15%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 3%
- Latinx: 11%
- Afro-Latinx: 2%
- Native American: 1%
- Middle Eastern: 1%

Communities of Color

- Kent
- White Center
- South Seattle/Seattle
- Neighborhoods
N2N FUNDERS
(as of June, 2021)

CURRENT:
- Brant Foundation
- Leslie J. Decker
- Lauren Dudley
- Kent, City of
- Gates Foundation
- Kirkpatrick Family Foundation
- Medina Foundation
- Seattle, City of
- Seattle Foundation
- United Way of King County
- Elliot Wilson

PAST:
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Boeing Company
- Mary Ellen Cunningham
- Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation
- C.S. Mott Foundation
- Thomas Neckle
- Judy Pigott
- Safeco
- US Bank

N2N STAFF

CURRENT:
- Aileen Balahadia
- Sokha Danh
- Riham Hashi
- Patrice Thomas
- Program Consultant
- Events
- Kent Community Advocate
- South Seattle Community Advocate

PAST:
- Steve Forman
- Tracie Friedman
- Shamsu Issac
- Eunice Letzing
- Judy Smith de Barros
- Program Consultant
- White Center Community Advocate
- Kent Community Advocate
- Program Consultant

N2N ADVISORY
Committee Members & Affiliations

CURRENT:
- Mares Asfaha
- Elaine Chu
- Leslie Decker
- Lauren Dudley
- Sally Gillis
- Anna Lauckhart
- Alice Park
- Gale Picker
- Kathleen Pierce
- Allynn Ruth
- Marwa Sadik
- Marie Sauter
- Sili Savusa
- Daniel Sims
- Matias Valenzuela
- Dinah Wilson
- Elliot Wilson
- South Seattle Community
- Seattle Foundation
- Community Investor
- Community Investor
- Seattle Foundation
- Medina Foundation
- United Way of King County
- Brant Foundation
- Kirkpatrick Family Foundation
- City of Seattle
- Kent Community
- Gates Foundation
- White Center Community
- City of Seattle
- Public Health, Seattle & King County
- City of Kent
- Community Investor

PAST:
- Amaury Avalos
- Claire Bishop
- Michael Brown
- Mary Ellen Cunningham
- Theresa Fujiwara
- Greg Garcia
- Andy Gordon
- Lori Guilfoyle
- Glenn Harris
- Alice Ito
- Martha Kongsgaard
- Betsy Lieberman
- Andres Mantilla
- Jennifer Martin
- Mary Moore
- Thomas Neckel
- Collette Oglesby
- Judy Pigott
- Maria Rodriguez
- Dale Smith
- Natalie Thomson
- Maya Vengadasalam
- Huong Vu
- City of Seattle
- South Seattle Community
- Seattle Foundation
- Community Investor
- United Way of King County
- University of Washington
- United Way of King County
- City of Seattle
- Seattle Foundation
- Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation
- Community Investor
- City of Seattle
- Seattle Foundation
- US Bank
- Community Investor
- The Boeing Company
- Community Investor
- City of Seattle
- The Boeing Company
- Kent Community
- City of Seattle
- The Boeing Company
For thirty years, N2N has traveled with emerging and under resourced coalitions and communities who were elevating their cultures, community priorities and quest for justice. Grants meant more than their actual dollars when some were not yet nonprofit organizations and others were not recognized by either funders or decision makers. N2N grants often led to greater public awareness and credibility. Some of the grantees that went from obscurity to lasting community organizations:

**Colectiva Legal del Pueblo**

When Colectiva founder and executive director, Sandy Restrepo, talks about their humble beginnings, she credits N2N as the very first grant for this bilingual immigrant legal services agency. Initially, Colectiva was not much more than an idea and a group of young attorneys and activists with big dreams of helping immigrants. “We didn’t even know how to write a grant application, but Judy (de Barros, then N2N’s program consultant) helped us fill out the forms.”

Today, Colectiva has a team of immigration specialists from attorneys to translators, community workers and paralegals. It’s not an exaggeration that Colectiva saves lives. An undocumented workers, Rene Ramirez-Alatorre, was detained by ICE in the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma for 17 months. With underlying health conditions, he was at life threatening risk for COVID-19 in a facility with high positive COVID test results. The Colectiva legal team would not let up and filed motion after motion until Ramirez-Alatorre was released and reunited with his family in December, 2020.

**Duwamish River Clean Up Coalition (DRCC)**

When the EPA declared the Duwamish River a Superfund Site in 2001, the federal government confirmed what the surrounding communities had known for decades. The river was toxic and the environmental waste hazards were causing serious health issues to the people, animals and the land. With the leadership of director, Paulina López and Superfund Manager, James Rasmussen – a Duwamish tribal elder - the DRCC worked with South Park and Georgetown community organizations and government agencies, as
Got Green

Fifteen years ago, local activists created an organization that would address the disproportionality of communities of color to environmental conditions that cause asthma and other chronic health problems. At the same time, those communities are often excluded from a seat at environmental tables. Got Green addresses environmental justice strategically and is advocating for “environment, equity and opportunity.” An early grant from N2N under their founder, Michael Woo, was critical to establishing this focus.

Got Green builds community power by waging campaigns at the intersection of racial, economic, gender and climate justice that engages communities via robust base-building, provides a pipeline of leadership development for directly impacted communities, and engages in direct action. “Our three grassroots committees — Food Access, Young Leaders, and Climate Justice — are our primary vehicles of building power and creating change,” according to outgoing executive director, Jill Mangaliman. For example, long before congressional Green New Deal initiatives were created, Got Green was advocating for green jobs as a part of their justice movement. On the heels of their study about access to healthy food, they advocated for greater access to fresh produce. Today, the Fresh Bucks voucher program makes healthy food for affordable and is available throughout King County.
Iraqi Community Center of Washington

In 1998, the Iraqi Community Center of Washington was created in Kent to help their growing immigrant community to make a successful transition to life in Washington. The IRCCW founder and director, Yahya Algarib, knew the needs, having previously worked with immigrant families in White Center. Family support specialist, Marwa Sadik, was a youth participant in White Center N2N projects and joined IRCCW after having received her degree in early childhood education.

The 90 day limit on refugee resettlement services is not enough to help immigrant families acclimate. That’s when IRCCW steps in to help Arabic speaking immigrants with direct services for youth, women, elders and families. They conduct classes in Arabic, ESL and have programs such as early learning, housing, advocacy and leadership training as well as cultural festivals and events. They flex with changing needs such as the loss of ride share jobs during COVID-19. Staff help them fill out unemployment and emergency fund applications and provide job referrals. Some obtain food worker cards and business licenses to start their own food services. IRCCW also works with landlords to prevent evictions and is helping families and schools understand each other’s cultures. Families also come to IRCCW for help with personal crises. A child was diagnosed autistic only after an IRCCW home visit and referral to specialists. The mother had no idea and now both child and family are doing well.

Nurturing Roots

For the past five years, Nyema Clark and community volunteers have built a thriving urban farm right in the middle of Beacon Hill. Historically, many of the Black families who settled here were descendants of enslaved people who came from the South where they tilled the land, worked the fields of cotton, tobacco and other crops for plantation owners. Nurturing Roots brings healing and joy to the heirs of that horrible history at the same time they are bringing nourishment, health and healing to the community.

Fruits, vegetables, herbs and chickens. Twice
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Fruits, vegetables, herbs and chickens. Twice weekly, anyone can volunteer on the farm and go home with fresh produce and eggs. With events, workshops and sharing their produce with local restaurants and community, they are teaching self-sufficiency and food empowerment, building on a social justice foundation. For Earth Day 2021, they partnered with another N2N grantee, Got Green, and others in a community-wide healthy food event. During COVID, Nurturing Roots pivoted and offered Grow-at-Home vegetable kits and provided much needed positive project for families in isolation. Nurturing Roots’ dream now is to go beyond their former Beacon Hill pea patch to a much larger farm they can own in South King County.

OneAmerica

Shortly after September 11, 2001, Pramila Jayapal had a conversation with then Congressman Jim McDermott, raising concerns about the hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, Arabs, South Asians and other immigrant groups. Out of that conversation, she founded Hate Free Zone. It received its first grant from N2N.

Along the way, it became OneAmerica to better reflect its commitment to all immigrants and refugees seeking their rights and justice. Under the more recent leadership of Rich Stolz and Roxana Norouzi, OneAmerica is a nationally recognized, multi-million dollar immigrant and refugee rights organization and Jayapal is the US Congresswoman of Washington’s 7th District and chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. OneAmerica Votes is a separate entity that allows them to conduct ongoing voter education, advocate for local, state and national policy and endorse candidates for office. All of their many programs focus on democracy, civic engagement and leadership development. In the process, they are training new generations of community organizers who are in leadership roles around the county and running for local office.
Imagine trying to navigate social services for your children with different levels of developmental ability and enduring cultural and language barriers through the process. Open Doors for Multicultural Families was created in 2009 by parents to support this process by providing relevant information, services, and programming to diverse families of persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Executive Director, Ginger Kwan fondly speaks of their first grant from N2N that allowed her to directly hear the needs and priorities of these families using a “cultural brokering” model. “Our staff come from the same culture and speak the same language as the families they serve, and so are able to communicate with the family in their own language, and in a way that will make sense within their cultural context.” Staff bridge the gap between families and the services they need. The majority of these families live in South Seattle and South King County, where over 100 different languages are spoken. With its expanded staff of forty, Open Doors provides bilingual services in Spanish, Somali, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Tigrinya.

Open Doors has also evolved from providing direct services to also engaging those same families in civic engagement advocacy, parent/youth trainings and support of language access bills in Washington state.

Somali Community Services of Seattle (SOMCSS)

The Seattle King County area is home to the second largest Somali American community in the country. To fill a real need for guidance and access to resources, the Somali Community Services of Seattle (SOMCSS) was created to serve that growing community. Sahra Farah, founder and director of SOMCSS, based in South Seattle, left Somalia before civil war broke out in 1991. As conflicts in Somalia escalated, more and more refugees came to the United States. “I chose to come to the community because I see a lot of elders, a lot of people who have the language barriers...” she said. “I got my language back too, culture back, everything, because I see people that I grew up with and it makes the people happy,” she said. Over the years, SOMCSS has added one resource after another from access to education, jobs, voter education, drug and tobacco prevention and an internet lab in addition to the regular need for case management, educational and housing assistance.
COVID-19 brought new needs. With donated laptops, SOMCSS offers a “living-room support” program where staff help parents understand how to use Zoom with their children for school and their own remote learning opportunities and community involvement. With N2N’s support, SOMCSS works to improve family safety by engaging the police with the community across generations.

**White Center Community Development Association**

The WCCDA was formed at a time when negative media about White Center was focused on drugs, prostitution and other crimes. At the same time, it was an affordable home for many new immigrants from East Africa, SE Asia, Latin America and the Pacific Islands.

Longtime White Center activist, Sili Savusa, followed N2N consultant Aileen Balahadia as executive director of WCCDA. The WCCDA builds toward sustainability in civic engagement, education, housing, jobs and leadership development. Savusa was one of the trusted advocates who helped lead the multiyear Annie E. Casey Foundation Making Connections program, successfully ran for the Highline School Board, and has continued to be a voice for justice throughout the community. Currently under development, the White Center HUB (Hope, Unity, Belonging) will be a place of learning, sharing, and quality homes for working families--a place created by and for White Center, where efforts to create a more resilient community are centered. One thing that differentiates WCCDA from other organizations is their commitment to data - data that shows successes, and sometimes shortcomings-and the use of that data to inform their equity and social justice agenda. For example, a regular Summit is held to consistently hear from, engage and report back to the community on progress. Annexation of White Center to the City of Seattle is one of their big strategies, but it is currently on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.
“Neighbor to Neighbor’s funding says to grassroots activists and advocates everywhere: WE BELIEVE IN YOU. You know the problems and you know the solutions. That support is just invaluable to guide us down the most just path. Our voices are powerful and when we all come together to fight for what is right, to fight for what is just, and to fight for each other; we are unstoppable… I can’t wait to see what happens next!”

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal
7th District, Washington

N2N will travel many roads with community partners by continuing to reimagine community philanthropy in support of racial equity. We look forward to supporting passionate grassroots organizations by increasing the number of grants. We envision new leaders emerging from these organizations. And as gentrification pushes communities of color further away from the urban core, we will expand the geographic reach beyond South Seattle, White Center, and Kent.
30th Anniversary Celebration Media

30 for 30 short video profiles. Produced by Trial & Error:

Age Up
Black Dollar Days Task Force
BUILD
Colectiva Legal del Pueblo
Communities Rise
Duwamish River Clean Up Coalition
Eat with Muslims
Eritrean Association in Greater Seattle
Filipino Community of Seattle
Got Green
Haida Roots
Iraqi Community Center of WA
Kenyan Women’s Association
Khmer Community of Seattle
King County
Mother Africa
Mujer al Volante
Nurturing Roots
OneAmerica
Open Doors for Multicultural Families
Our Future Matters & YES Foundation
Pacific Islander Community Association
Para Los Ninos
Rainier Beach Action Coalition
Southeast Seattle Education Committee
Somali Community Services of Seattle
Somali Family Safety Task Force
UTOPIA
Villa Comunitaria
White Center Community Development Association

Trial & Error Team:
Whitney Bashaw
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Lauren Dudley
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Bri Little
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Arlene Martinez-Vazquez
Sarah Kate Moore
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Feature stories in the South Seattle Emerald.
Writer: Kamna Shastri

Mothers for Police Accountability
Open Doors for Multicultural Families
Somali Community Services of Seattle
UTOPIA
Wasat
Washington Dream Act Coalition
yəhaw Indigenous Creatives Collective
YES Foundation

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Apologies to those inadvertently not listed.