Seattle Foundation Grants Evaluation
Comprehensive Report l June 2021

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Executive Summary

The Blueprint for Impact outlines Seattle Foundation's vision for a more racially and economically equitable King County and Greater Seattle region.[1] To achieve this vision, Seattle Foundation supports organizations through six civic engagement grant programs that focus on organizations led by and for low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities who mobilize underrepresented people, civic organizations, and institutions to take part in shaping more inclusive policies and systems of governance through the democratic process.

This evaluation examined grantee annual reports and conducted a subset of in-depth interviews to understand how grantees were identifying progress in their communities, and the level of alignment between indicators of progress and the evaluation outcomes associated with the Foundation's Blueprint for Impact. This evaluation found that the metrics to determine success of Seattle Foundation's grantmaking strategy to be reliable and aligned with the reality of how BIPOC-led and serving community organizations implement racial and economic equity work. Key findings include:

Over 4,700 King County community members participated in leadership development activities and assumed new leadership roles between 2018 and 2020 directly through grantee activities

Two thirds of all grantees reported significant improvements in at least one facet of organizational capacity during the two-year grant period, including improved internal operations and staff skills, community outreach, and ability to access additional funding

Nearly 12,000 community members were registered to vote between 2018 and 2020 by Voter Education Fund grantees, in addition to a wide range of civic engagement participation through grantee efforts

65 new formal partnerships and alliances created in 2019 by grantees with other community organizations and constituencies throughout King County and the surrounding region

Grantees are adapting in real time to the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with growing evidence of a common challenge of devoting resources to long-term strategy

The evaluation confirms that Seattle Foundation's theory and practice of centering community-based organizations led by and for BIPOC and low-income communities is demonstrating early indications of equitable representation in the development of policies and systems of governance that shape socioeconomic outcomes for the region. While this is good news, the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice have continued to disproportionately impact these communities. To ensure that these programs facilitating the leadership of BIPOC and low-income communities can achieve population-level impact, Seattle Foundation should continue to practice adaptive grantmaking by continuing to work closely with grantees and remain agile to respond to barriers grantees face in forthcoming years of rebuilding and recovery.

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[1] The theoretical framework underpinning the vision articulated in the Blueprint for Impact, which was published in 2020, is based on the grantmaking strategies employed by the six legacy civic engagement programs (hereafter referred also as the *core grant programs*)

We envision 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.

Background

Seattle Foundation's approach to philanthropy is anchored in an understanding of systemic racial and economic injustice that acknowledges there are interconnected systemic failures that continue to leave Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income communities behind. The Blueprint for Impact (Blueprint) articulates how, along with other select strategies, Seattle Foundation employs resources to advance a vision for shared prosperity and belonging.

Exhibit 1.   The Blueprint for Impact's Three Pillars of a Thriving Region

A **Just Democracy** ensures individuals and communities are fairly represented and hold political power

An **Equitable Economy** ensures inclusive growth and fundamental financial security for individuals and communities

A **Resilient Environment** ensures that individuals and communities thrive in a healthy built and natural environment

The Blueprint for Impact's Three Pillars of a Thriving Region (see Exhibit 1) identify priority systemic issues where Seattle Foundation aims to address root causes of the greatest drivers of racial and economic disparities in the region. Through civic engagement, leadership development, and policy advocacy, grantees inform and empower low-income and BIPOC communities to advocate for greater equity across the three issue areas.

The Blueprint represents a strategy built on the foundation established, in part, by the six core civic engagement grant programs. Based on this strategy, Seattle Foundation developed an evaluation framework to track key outcomes advanced by its core grant programs.

Core civic engagement grant programs[2]:

- The **Communities of Opportunity** (COO) Systems and Policy Change supports community-led and community-engaged efforts to transform systems and policies for stronger community connections, economic opportunity, better health, and/or housing.

- The **Engagement Pipeline** grant focuses on strengthening the voice and participation of underrepresented communities to ensure more equitable systems change.

- The **Neighbor to Neighbor** (N2N) grant supports grassroots efforts that increase engagement, power and influence of community members affected by poverty and racial disparities.

- The **Partnership Mobilization** program supports nonprofit partnerships that strengthen the civic voice and participation of underrepresented communities to increase racial and economic equity.

- The **Resilience Fund** grant aims to support organizations with activities tied to providing critical services to immigrants and refugees, the Black community, and other vulnerable residents whose health, safety, and human rights are at risk.

- The **Voter Education Fund** program supports organizations that work to reduce inequities in voting access in historically excluded communities.

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[2] Seattle Foundation. (2021). Current Grant Opportunities. Retrieved from Seattle Foundation: https://www.seattlefoundation.org/nonprofits/nonprofit-grant-opportunities. See Appendix I for further detail.

This evaluation report provides an analysis of the six core grant programs in the context of the evaluation framework and describes the level of alignment between progress grantees are making through systemic change efforts and near-term evaluation outcomes (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2.　　Key Outcomes of Seattle Foundation's Grantmaking Evaluation Framework

N2N grantees at the Equity Summit 2018

Near-term outcomes

1 **Expanded community leadership –** more, more diverse, and more skilled

2 **Increased capacity of organizations** in vulnerable or marginalized communities

3 **Increased participation and influence** in high-impact public planning, decision processes, and elections by individuals, groups or organizations in vulnerable or marginalized communities

4 **Strengthened connections and alliances** among individuals, groups or organizations in marginalized communities

5 **Shared commitment across communities, public, and private sectors** to address systems and policies in order to realize impact for marginalized communities

6 **Civic and political leaders demonstrate increased openness, responsiveness, and accountability** to marginalized communities

Long-term outcomes

7 **Adoption and effective implementation of policies and programs** that promote equitable outcomes and reduced disparities

8 **Increased public, private, and philanthropic resources** directed at aligned goals

Near-term outcomes 1-4 are based on key strategies, developed with input from grantee organizations, for building movements that result in sustained equitable policies and systems of governance over time[4]

COO Systems and Policies Change grantees at a grantee convening

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[3] Pastor, M., Ito, J., & Rosner, R. (2011). Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements. Los Angeles: Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE).

Harder+Company Community Research served as the evaluation contractor for this work. Harder+Company approaches all evaluation engagements from a culturally responsive and applied evaluation approach to ensure the thoughtful engagement and inclusion of diverse populations. It views evaluation as a tool for learning and improvement and practices an explicit approach on using evaluation to achieve racial equity (see Appendix I for more information).

Key Considerations

The evaluation does not take into consideration other Seattle Foundation activities beyond the scope of how the foundation supports the grantees of the core civic engagement grant programs. While the evaluation cannot speak to Seattle Foundation's comprehensive portfolio, alignment between the key near-term outcomes and grantee activities can help to identify what evidence there is within the core grant programs that speaks to Seattle Foundation's re-imagination of their role in racial and economic equity for the region. In other words, the evaluation looks at how the core grant programs are building towards this longer-term systems level change that is detailed in the Foundation-wide Blueprint for Impact.

The Grants Evaluation Report

This evaluation examined the progress of civic engagement Seattle Foundation aims to advance in the region, by assessing the alignment between the first four near-term outcomes and the community and programmatic outcomes grantees are reporting. By collecting stories and analyzing data from 184 grantee annual reports, the evaluation team assessed what the narrative shows about Seattle Foundation's alignment to the grantees they support.

During the analysis of grantee reports and interview data, the evaluation team assessed results for early signs of longer-term outcomes, including changes in systems of governance and policies associated with grantee efforts. Additionally, the team focused on assessing the extent to which the six civic engagement grant programs are supporting grantees towards achieving key outcomes respective to each program. Fundamentally, this evaluation served as a starting point of a proof of concept for how Seattle Foundation's Blueprint can initiate the localized systemic changes necessary to achieve the equitable, long term vision.

The data from the grantee reports provide robust evidence of how funded organizations and civic engagement efforts have worked with and had an impact on underrepresented communities across the region. The potential impacts of their work cannot be understated. For this reason, it is important to state what this evaluation does not prove.

> *The six core grant programs aim to impact systemic and policy change by targeting funding toward organizations led by and for BIPOC communities and low-income communities, and funding programs that build civic power and increase representation in policymaking.*

This evaluation is not an attempt to attribute impact through an assessment of the grantee data, but to identify the through-line from the grantees of the six core grant programs to the Blueprint vision. The evaluation also does not aim to find in the grantee reports or interviews that sweeping changes are occurring, and in fact, it is important to reiterate and rethink what systems-level change actually means and right-size the expectations of how this is done.

In the evaluation team's systematic review of the Blueprint and other Seattle Foundation strategy documents, the core grant programs were understood as part of the Foundation's explicit commitment to racial and economic equity. The strategy of these programs asserts that the greatest impact for BIPOC and low-income communities within King County can be achieved by investing in grassroots community-based organizations and understanding that this is where equity-focused systemic and policy change begins. These are organizations represented by and working with communities who have experienced historical disinvestment. The stories and data grantees share are evidence that the vision of impact is feasible and that it takes community-level power to reimagine the system that reflects their experiences and is more equitable.

This evaluation is grounded in the understanding that the change observed is likely to be cumulative due to the context and systemic conditions in which these grantees operate (i.e., expectations of change must be scaled and aligned to the realities of the communities otherwise the evaluation runs the risk of not detecting meaningful, if modest, changes). Evaluation of philanthropic place-based systemic and policy change is evolving to capture the nuance of how community-led organizations advance work for the size and scope of the communities and target populations they work in. This approach differs from traditional evaluation which tends to overvalue "statistically significant quantifiable change" and the tracking of population-based indicators. In other words, traditional evaluation has often undervalued changes that aren't immediately noticeable or detectable by traditional research methods.

> *The evaluation team would like to underscore the importance of findings that emerge from these grantees – that indeed these preliminary findings are indicative of evidence that these grantees have the potential to advance innovative systems and policies changes that lead to more equitable outcomes.*

Even if the sample size or the quantity of individuals involved in a specific grantee intervention or program, such as a comprehensive community leadership training, or train-the-trainer interventions, are small compared to the population size, they are important to elevate. These types of activities are fundamentally designed to have ripple effects, have far reach, and serve as baseline examples of how Seattle Foundation's core grant program strategy is moving towards larger systemic impact.

Lastly, this evaluation acknowledges that Seattle Foundation is a leader but not the sole player in the regional systemic change movement towards greater equity. Therefore, this evaluation does not expect to make bold proclamations that Seattle Foundation grantmaking strategy alone is moving the system. Instead, what this evaluation hopes to do is collect stories where it does observe changes and then build the evidence of how the outcomes-aligned stories that are being told by Seattle Foundation grantees are leading to greater racial and economic equity.

This report is designed to inform Seattle Foundation to what extent funding enabled progress towards key evaluation framework outcomes respective to each program.

Methods

This descriptive evaluation incorporated qualitative and quantitative methods that resulted in a systematic and stepwise review of existing grantee annual report data, Seattle Foundation strategy documents, and primary interviews with grantees. Under Seattle Foundation's evaluation framework, grantees under the core grant programs complete an evaluation report or interview at the end of each funding period. This evaluation analyzed a total of 184 final reports submitted between 2018 to 2020. These secondary data were complemented by primary interviews the evaluators conducted with grantees representative of the six core grant programs, grantee organization location, and communities served. The evaluators assured confidentiality to

all grantees in order to encourage unbiased feedback and avoid attributing specific findings to individual organizations. Sense-making sessions were held to bring the evaluation findings back to Seattle Foundation program officers and organizational leaders familiar with the core grant programs and Blueprint for Impact (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3.　　　Evaluation Approach

Secondary Grantee Data + **Primary Data Collection** → **Sense-Making Sessions**

Secondary grantee data. Analysis of 184 evaluation reports or interviews conducted at the end of each funding period, designed to inform Seattle Foundation to what extent their funding enabled progress towards key evaluation outcomes respective to each program.

Primary data collection. In-depth interviews with 12 organizations to learn about grantees' experience working with Seattle Foundation and how the grant funding contributed to their organization's goals and vision.

Sense-making sessions. Over the course of the evaluation, Harder+Company conducted a series of three sense-making sessions with Seattle Foundation staff to bring the evaluation findings to Seattle foundation stakeholders (i.e., program officers, foundation leadership) to apply meaning and provide perspective to the data findings.

The evaluation team used SPSS to code and analyze quantitative data from grantee reports. For the qualitative data, the evaluation team used rigorous coding of qualitative data to ensure an objective analysis and shared that analysis back to Seattle Foundation during the sense-making sessions that brought data back to a subjective context. The evaluation team critically analyzed sense-making sessions data to ensure as unbiased recommendations as possible. More details of the evaluation design, methods, and analysis are found in Appendix I.

Context: Evaluation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The majority of grantee work includes in the evaluation were funded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic[4] while the evaluation activities took place between April 2020 and February 2021. In the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020 and continues through the writing of this evaluation report. Thus, it is important to contextualize how the pandemic impacted the data and our evaluation approach. First, there were many grantee reports that were submitted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect programming that took place prior to the pandemic. However, grantees from Engagement Pipeline, Neighbor to Neighbor, and COO did submit reports that reflected program changes after the pandemic began. The primary data collection included questions to assess the current and perceived long-term impacts of the pandemic. The Evaluation Findings section includes an analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grantee's work.

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[4] the two Engagement Pipeline evaluation cohorts completed their grant work in July of 2021
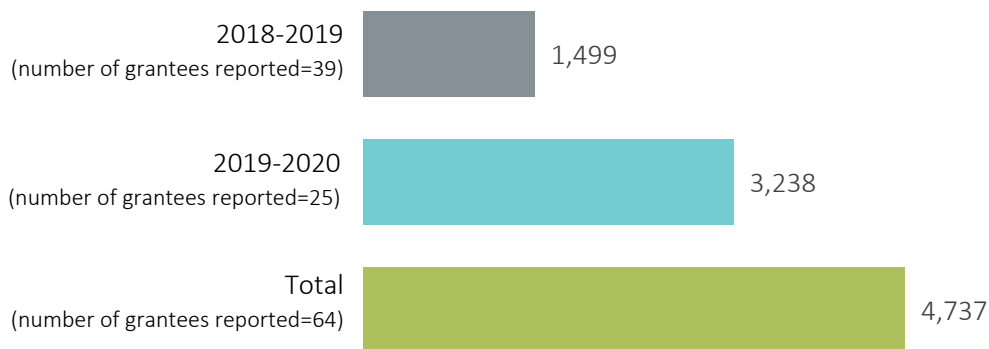
Evaluation Findings

Findings by Community Change Outcomes

Core Grant Programs Strengthen Adaptive Community Leadership

In the context of this evaluation, leadership development refers to grantee activities aimed at empowering BIPOC and low-income communities to use their voice to advocate on behalf of their communities and step into civic leadership roles. In systems and policies change work, leadership development is important because, when done in a culturally responsive way, it can transform individuals from marginalized communities into effective champions for more equitable policies and systems of governance.[5]

Three[6] of Seattle Foundation's core grant programs support and invest in leadership development in their communities. At the local level, grantees supported community leadership development through formal community programming and via indirect professional development opportunities for organizational and civic leadership. Grantees also demonstrated increased leadership at the regional level by participating and leading organizational collaborative efforts for coalition and advocacy building efforts. Analysis of grantee reports showed that the number of community members who participated in civic leadership development activities more than doubled, a 116% increase, between the evaluation years spanning 2018-2020 (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4.   Number of community members who accessed new opportunities and trainings for civic leadership roles through grantee activities[7]

2018-2019 (number of grantees reported=39)	1,499
2019-2020 (number of grantees reported=25)	3,238
Total (number of grantees reported=64)	4,737

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[5] Pastor, M., Ito, J., & Rosner, R. (2011). Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements. Los Angeles: Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE).
[6] Neighbor to Neighbor, Engagement Pipeline & Communities of Opportunity
[7] Data from COO, N2N and Engagement Pipeline grantee reports Analysis based on report questions that asked the number of community members/representatives/residents engaged in leadership roles or trained, mentored, or supported to develop their leadership skills. Possible duplicate counts across years due to lack of timeframe specification in reporting

Community members participating in a driving permit lesson led by Mujer al Volante, a Resilience Fund grantee

"Our [leadership program] is directly focused on individuals, and having a cohort of about 20 leaders of color, who are part of this six-month fellowship with all sorts of trainings."

Community member at a May Day awareness event hosted by a Resilience Fund grantee

Across the core grant programs, grantees cited community leaders as central to their mission. Grantee organizations provided leadership opportunities for community members (in addition to staff) to take part in complex, regional-level efforts. One grantee working with incarcerated community members reported that they led 30 community members through a restorative justice circle training during the grant reporting period, approximately 18 of whom will be continuing leadership training with the organization to become facilitators for next year's program.

Another grantee shared that participation in grant program-supported activities helped them develop confidence in a newfound leadership role they felt was previously inaccessible to them:

"When I started getting involved, I felt a change. There is always a fear [of speaking out] but now I feel calmer, now with my participation with the alliance and seeing so many women. [Such as] the time we went and some politicians sought us out, it made me feel confident that we can express our needs. On different occasions I have explained this to my colleagues. It has been a very big change, it has helped me a lot."

Evaluation findings illustrated many examples of leadership cohort programs that grantees designed with Seattle Foundation support, from youth-centered civic engagement programs to leadership training for community organizers. Altogether, these findings demonstrate evidence towards the goals outlined in Outcome 1 of the evaluation framework (i.e., expanded community leadership, see Exhibit 2).

Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic did lead to temporary pauses in planned leadership programming, as complex community-capacity and civic leadership building projects had to pivot to emergency response and meeting community's immediate needs, such as ensuring food and shelter. Grantees coordinating at the regional level also had to re-focus their efforts to more localized support. 88% of the Engagement Pipeline grantees, for one, indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their organization's capacity for their grant programing.

Despite these setbacks, there is a bright spot demonstrated through who was taking active leadership roles in emergency response efforts. Grantees implementing leadership development programming at the community-level found that community members that had been involved in their programming applied their skills to coordinating and creating emergency response efforts in their respective communities.

> "We've had a harder time doing advocacy with joint organizations, when there's just too many community needs at the moment, like direct housing, food, and support on applying for government assistance."

During an interview, a grantee shared that they had been the primary recipient of professional development and leadership capacity-building guidance from Seattle Foundation. Their organization had to cease their programming due to the need for social distancing but this individual immediately began contacting and subsequently working alongside local and municipal leaders they had met through their grant program's cohort model. While their own organization's programs were on pause, they applied themselves to leading emergency response in their area and continued supporting their community.

The evaluation findings demonstrate that the core grant programs provide support for dynamic and adaptive leadership, which grantees found especially crucial given the impact of the pandemic. While many grantees were quick to adapt to their communities' immediate needs, the evolving crisis means frequent and ongoing communication with grantees is important for Seattle Foundation to support local changing needs.

Increased Organizational Capacity Leads to More Effective Movements

In movement building work, capacity building includes grantmaking approaches that support activities to improve an organization's internal operations and the skills of staff with the end goal of enhancing the organization's impact.[8] Capacity-building is especially important to evaluate across core program grantees because organizations that are led by and for BIPOC and low-income communities have been historically underfunded.[9] Seattle Foundation tracks the following indicators to measure changes in capacity of organizations with implications for movement-building work: changes in internal operations, changes in capacity for programming and community engagement; changes in community relevance, and changes in funding.

Members of VEF grantee, Latino Community Fund, at a voter registration booth

Members of N2N grantee, Somali Parents Education Board, at a parent meeting

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[8] Pastor, M., Ito, J., & Rosner, R. (2011). Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements. Los Angeles: Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE).

[9] Seattle Foundation. (2020, May). *The Case for Investing in King County's Black-Led Organizations.* Retrieved from Seattle Foundation: https://www.seattlefoundation.org/-/media/SeaFdn/Files/Other-pdfs/Funding-KC-BLOs-Final.pdf

Many community organizations become core program grantees with an aim to strengthen organizational capacity, all of which are led by and serving BIPOC and underrepresented communities. Most grantees reported that Seattle Foundation contributed to their organization's internal operations, with over half of all grantees (56% and 57% respectively) over the two years indicating that the grant program contributed significantly to operations (Exhibit 5).

The direct support from the grant programs not only allowed organizations to strengthen internal operations, such as procuring computer software or increasing their ability to plan strategically, but served as the building blocks for the organization to advance their work. One grantee explained that improvements in internal operations allowed them to improve their budgeting, which in turn made it possible to provide travel stipends to community members for participation in their programs.

Exhibit 5. Percent of grantees who indicated grant program contributed to improving internal operations[10]

2019 (n=42)	29%	57%
2018 (n=34)	18%	56%

■ Contributed moderately   ■ Contributed significantly
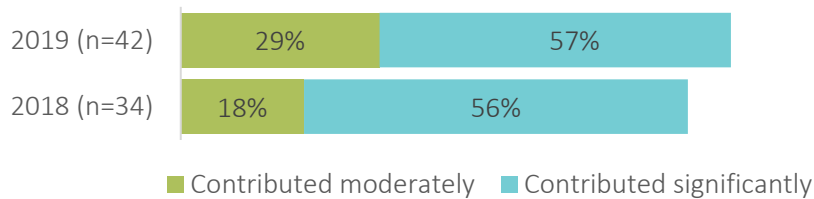
Hiring staff and creating new positions within organizations were reported as crucial ways grantees augmented internal operations and strengthened their ability to engage in every step of policy and advocacy work. Recruiting and retaining skilled and passionate staff who have the lived experiences that align with the communities they serve is important for grantee organizations to make a sustainable impact in their communities.[11] Conversely, insufficient staff capacity can lead to unfulfilled organizational objectives, which can exacerbate challenges that organizations working with vulnerable and marginalized communities have in developing proposals or securing additional funding.

> **"Our Policy & Field Campaign Manager joined us in late September and has already had a marked impact on our team. […] We've had additional capacity to build strong relationships with the people in our listening sessions, and he is working with several of them to testify and share their stories with legislators during the 2019 legislative session."**

As the organizational infrastructure becomes strengthened, grantees reported more time to design and increase opportunities to build trust and foster relationships with other community groups. These relationships led to collaborations on joint initiatives, increases in resource-sharing

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[10] Response options were ordered from "Contributed significantly, Moderately, Slightly, Did not contribute, and NA or no improvement in this area". Precents shown are for those grantees who indicated "Contributed significantly" or "Moderately". See Appendix Exhibit 4 for detail.

[11] Seattle Foundation. (2020, May). *The Case for Investing in King County's Black-Led Organizations.* Retrieved from Seattle Foundation: https://www.seattlefoundation.org/-/media/SeaFdn/Files/Other-pdfs/Funding-KC-BLOs-Final.pdf

and leveraging funding opportunities that ultimately expanded access and resources across many types of programs in the communities being served.

Additionally, grantee reports provide evidence of new programs launched and improvements to existing programs made possible through additional staff capacity and resources. One grantee described that improvements to their existing community engagement work did not imply there was a measurable increase in the communities or constituencies they reached, but a qualitive improvement in their engagement work due to increased staff capacity to devote to community outreach. Overall, over 85% of organizations funded between 2018-2020 stated that Seattle Foundation grants contributed significantly to improvements in civic programs and community engagement work (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6.   Percent of grantees who indicated grant program contributed to their group or organization's ability to improve its programs or community engagement work[12]
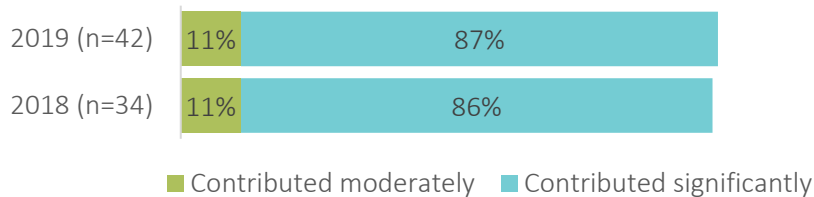
Capacity building can also be measured through perceived community relevance of grantees, which in the case of this evaluation includes grantee reporting on increased visibility and/or perceived legitimacy, increased opportunities to participating in decision-making, and increased roles as go-to sources within desired audiences and communities. More than 75% of organizations funded between 2018-2020 indicated that the grant program contributed to their relevance in communities. Grantees led by and working with marginalized and vulnerable communities described how increased visibility and perceived legitimacy was vital to advancing their work in their communities. One Neighbor to Neighbor grantee, for instance, described how the increased visibility helped them build new programs to support new mothers in the immigrant community they worked in, a population they had not included in their activities prior to the grant period.

Exhibit 7.   Percent of grantees who indicated grant program contributed to their group or organization's relevance among their communities[12]
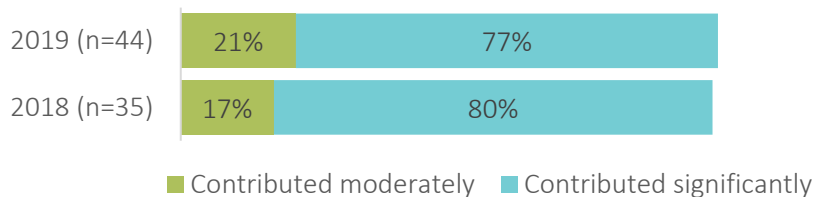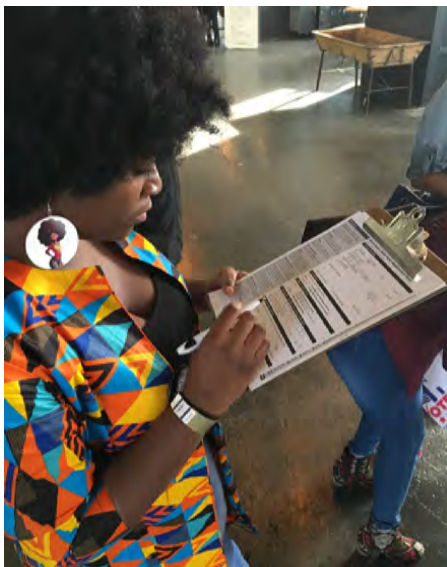
Members of Open Doors for Multicultural Families, a COO Systems and Policies Change grantee, at an advocacy event in Olympia

"Funding has been critical in maintaining a staff position, Advocacy and Civic Engagement Lead, and provide needed stipends for members in our community to participate in public policy making meetings."
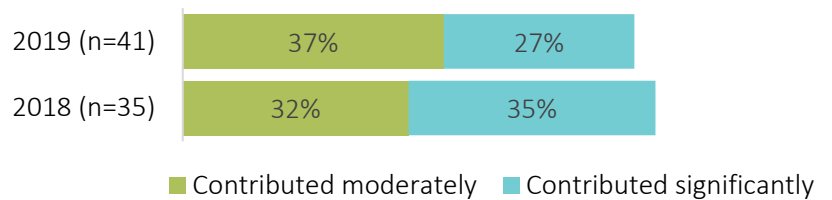

A young woman registers to vote through a voter registration booth by Urbvote, a VEF grantee

Grant program funding also served as a path to entry for organizations looking to establish their role in social movements and causes, notably for smaller organizations that tend to reflect greater representation of small, emergent immigrant populations. The Neighbor to Neighbor program, for example, serves a valuable gateway for emerging community leaders to formalize their civic engagement efforts through the non-profit sector by providing seed grants to increase opportunities for connections with funders through networking events. These opportunities were directly channeled by Neighbor to Neighbor grantees to help them secure additional sources of funding, including additional grants from Seattle Foundation such as Census 2020/Census Alliance, Voter Education Fund, and Resilience Fund.

One grantee described the COVID-19 Response Fund as the initial seed funding to invest and build their organization' entire pandemic response strategy – they subsequently fundraised $8.8 million grassroots fund from the initial grant of $100,000. That pool of funds led to the development of a $40 million statewide fund, which the grantee shared was also evidence that "people of color can be trusted" to manage funds for their own communities.

Exhibit 8. Percent of grantees who indicated grant program contributed to their group or organization's ability to access other sources of funding[14]

	Contributed moderately	Contributed significantly
2019 (n=41)	37%	27%
2018 (n=35)	32%	35%

■ Contributed moderately ■ Contributed significantly

Approximately two thirds of grantees mentioned that the grant program contributed to their ability to access other sources of funding (Exhibit 8). A few grantees shared that fundamentally, capacity building boiled down to the ability to access funding. Money via grant funding and via wealth-building for their

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[14] Questions were asked for 5 programs: Engagement Pipeline, Communities of Opportunities, Partnership Mobilization, Resilience Fund, Neighbor to Neighbor. *Response options were ordered from "Contributed significantly, Moderately, Slightly, Did not contribute, and NA or no improvement in this area". Precents shown are for those grantees who indicated "Contributed significantly" or "Moderately". See Appendix Exhibit 7 for detail.*

communities was described as the most powerful tool that can combat economic disparities directly attributed to systemic racism. This theme resonated from the individual to the community and regional level (especially in the South King County geography). They shared that they see systemic racism as continuing to present the most obstructive barrier to wealth-building and that this issue will continue to challenge and be a barrier to grantee's work.

These findings altogether demonstrate how the core grant programs supported capacity building activities through improvements to grantee organization's internal operations and staff skills, which provide evidence of alignment with Outcome 2 of the evaluation framework (i.e., the increased capacity of organizations, see Exhibit 2). These findings are especially important for organizations led by and for BIPOC and low-income communities because they have been historically underfunded and thus have an unmet need for these supports. Over time, strengthened capacity can minimize the reliance on outside experts and resources, helping organizations with strengthen skills, knowledge, and confidence, and in turn provide communities with more control over their own future.

The all-around increases in capacity were critical, as grantees were able to respond to increased challenges in racism, voting, and pandemic-related issues that took precedence in 2020. The Resilience Fund provided flexible funding to grantees to react to urgent and emergent needs in their communities, from rapid shifts in federal policies to the COVID-19 pandemic responses in communities. In-depth interviews illustrated that grant-supported work led to increased participation of community members to lead, coordinate, innovate emergency response efforts related to the pandemic.

> **"We have been able to gain the trust of the community, to share sensitive information with them in moments of crisis, whether that's immigration [officers] knocking at the door, whether a loved one being detained, whether they actually ran out of food during this COVID pandemic, whether they have contracted COVID-19, whether they're about to be houseless because of the economic downfall during this pandemic, you name it. This particular [investment], that the Resilience Fund was able to make with us during their partnerships in 2018 and 2019, has allowed us to grow."**

"This year, because of COVID, we had to pivot what we've done. Our strategy has become more social media and we have found that we're reaching further south and further north with our messaging, and we know we have people who are messaging us back from Bellingham, all the way south into Pierce County. And we've partnered with other Native organizations together, with the philosophy we're stronger together, so if we partner with all these other groups, we're getting our message out even further."

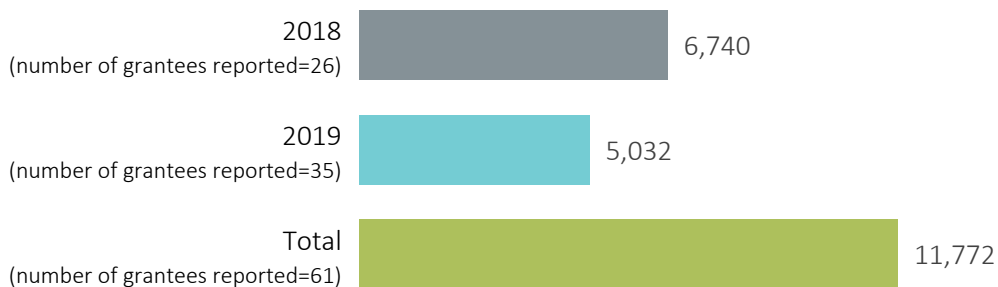**Increased Civic Participation Promotes a Stronger Democracy**

This evaluation uses the term civic participation to refer to activities by grantees and their constituencies that focus on making a difference in the lives of communities through encouraged participation and information about the value of political and non-political processes. At a transactional level, examples can include voter registration, education, and turnout. At a more transformational level, examples include shifting of political discourse and a constituencies' willingness to challenge the status quo.[15]

Despite the extensive barriers to participating in public life that many BIPOC and low-income communities face, grantees implemented extensive programming that encouraged community members to get involved in many types of civic engagement, evidence that maps onto Outcome 3 of the evaluation framework (i.e., increased civic participation and influence, see Exhibit 2). Community members were active and involved in various types of local committees focused on justice issues for youth advocacy, labor rights, and voting to a name a few. One grantee explained how the Black and immigrant communities they work with have been historically disenfranchised from voting and that the Voter Education Fund allowed the organization to distribute education materials on the benefits of voting and host ballot parties to encourage civic participation. Through these activities, this grantee was able to register 190 new voters.

> **"We've used the Voter Education Fund to support outreach to Native communities, to encourage our Native communities to register to vote, to be an active participant in civic engagement. Our method of doing so is to meet our Native communities where they can be."**

Many of these community members subsequently participated in activities to influence decision-makers at different levels of government and in advocacy campaigns targeting legislators and policy makers. Grantees across various communities mentioned that it was their responsibility and mission to raise the visibility of marginalized communities and to demonstrate that they can actively lead the actions necessary to change the inequitable policy conditions that exist today. Of note, grantees of the Voter Education Fund leveraged the opportunities provided by the program to increase voter turnout and civic engagement in communities that have historically been marginalized and disenfranchised, with grantee report analysis showing a total of 11,772 individuals registered to vote by Voter Education Fund grantees between 2018 and 2019 (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9.   Voter Registration Totals reported by VEF grantees[16]

2018 (number of grantees reported=26)	6,740
2019 (number of grantees reported=35)	5,032
Total (number of grantees reported=61)	11,772

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[15] Pastor, M., Ito, J., & Rosner, R. (2011). Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements. Los Angeles: Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE).
[16] Verified through the 2019 King County voting records

Community members faced greater challenges to civic participation, such as cultural, linguistic, and technological barriers as a result of the pandemic. While digital community engagement was a boon for some grantees and resulted in increased outreach, other grantees found that digital platforms and social media limited the ability to interact with many community members. Grantees working with older, lower-income, and limited English proficient individuals found that those individuals and communities became further isolated. This was similar for communities with little digital literacy or access to reliable internet connections. Despite the conditions of operating in a pandemic, grantees pushed forward with their communities to increase civic participation and education.

Staff of Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS), an Engagement Pipeline grantee, at a march for immigrant rights

> "COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to engage one-on-one with our community. [We are] taking on the challenge and moving to an alternative way to engage, using a variety of digital platforms. This can be a challenge for our community, due to lack of access, training, etc."

"These relationships represent a widening of who feels ownership of the organizing spaces we have been cultivating in the last two years. These partnerships advance the work by deepening solidarity across different community sectors and developing shared analyses, practices, and actions that build power."

Strengthened Connections & Alliances Expands Grantee Reach

In movement building and systems change work, alliance building refers to the cultivation and nurturing of collaboration among groups with shared values and interests towards intersecting goals.[17] Alliances are core to movement building as cultivating accountability to equitable systems of governance requires power in numbers. Furthermore, alliances help groups maximize resources.[18]

New alliances and partnership development are important amplifiers of outreach, helping grantees expand the reach of their work through the increased resources and leadership that partnership brings, in part by expanding the geographic and community reach of grantee influence. For instance, grantees of the Resilience Fund leveraged new partnerships and alliances to expand outreach of legal services in response to rapid changes in federal policies and a political landscape that disproportionately impacted immigrant and refugee populations. Expanded formal networks enabled Resilience

COO Systems and Policies Change grantees at a grantee convening

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[17] USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE). (2020, February). *Power-Building Ecosystem Framework.* Retrieved from https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/1411/docs/2020_Power_Building_Ecosystem_Framework_v3.pdf

[18] Pastor, M., Ito, J., & Rosner, R. (2011). Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements. Los Angeles: Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE).

Fund grantees to inform more communities about their civic rights and protections and amplify the impact of their work.

As grantee build power through strengthened connections and alliances, they have been able to share valuable resources and build coalitions among like-minded partners for advocacy and other activities. These connections show signs of progress that map onto Outcome 4 of the evaluation framework (i.e., strengthened connections and alliances, see Exhibit 2). For many grantees, their networks didn't just expand among other community organizations but with very important connections such as government agencies and elected officials.

> **"Ironically, the spread of COVID-19 created a wide-spread coalition of Korean American organizations coming together to help the community. The local Korean American Chamber of Commerce, Korean American Associations of both Seattle and Federal Way, and the Korean Community Service Center, Korean American Bar Association and many other organizations worked together to provide aid to the community. We hope to leverage this coalition in the future on efforts in civic engagement."**

Developing new and strong partnerships was key to grantees' programmatic work that helped enable important functions such as outreach, advocacy, and connections to expertise. In 2019, grantee evaluation reports of the Communities of Opportunities and the Neighbor to Neighbor programs asked organizations to describe the new partnerships and alliances they created during that year's grant period. Analysis of evaluation reports submitted by grantees detail 18 organizations in King County creating a total of 65 new partnerships and alliances with organizations and their constituencies throughout King County and the Greater Seattle area during the grant period (Exhibit 10). Based on a closer examination of partners' location, the expanded reach of the grantees due to these partnerships is evident. Most grantees (72%) established new partnerships all throughout King County, with a handful of grantees expanding their networks further to regions including Snohomish County, Pierce County, Spokane County, and Thurston County.

Exhibit 10.   New partnerships created during the 2019 grant period
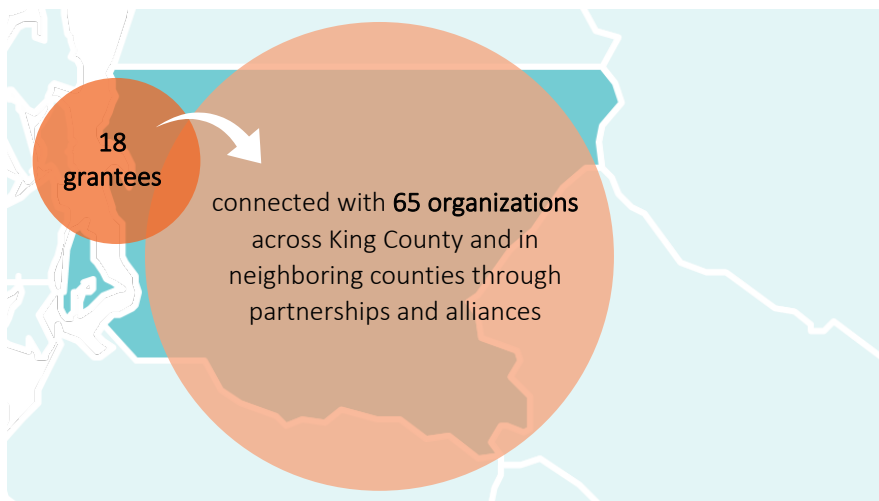
COO Systems and Policies Change grantees at a grantee convening

"The cohort model for grant funding promotes coalition building for leaders at [CBOs] and advocacy groups. The training sessions provided a valuable opportunity to learn what other CBOs do."

Displacement awareness event hosted by Got Green, a Resilience Fund grantee

Across all grant programs, the proportion of grantees indicating that the grant program contributed to new partnerships or alliances increased over the reporting years, with 65% of grantees affirming this grant's impact on new partnerships in 2019 (Exhibit 11). Alliances also led to grantee organizations reaching more marginalized and underrepresented groups in need and expanding programming and resources to support their communities. One grantee of the Resilience Fund explained that partnerships were crucial in expanding the reach of their resource and information distribution to immigrant communities against the threat of unlawful detentions. Partnerships that represented more diverse geographic and ethnic constituencies amplified the grantee organization's impact.

Exhibit 11. Percent of grantees who reported any new partnerships or alliances associated with the grant's effort during the grant period

	No	Yes
2018 (n=37)	41%	60%
2019 (n=37)	35%	65%
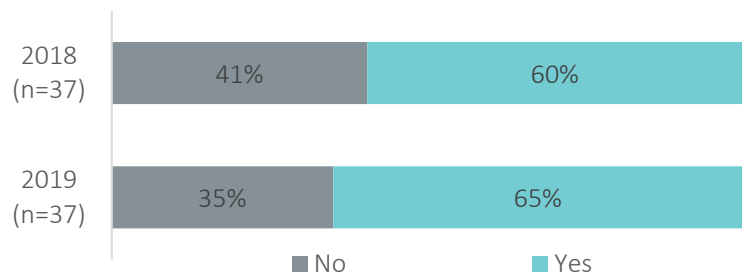
Seattle Foundation's core grant programs with a cohort model was described as a 'built-in network' that promoted coalition-building for leaders at community-based organizations. The training sessions offered to cohorts through the Voter Education Fund allowed grantees to learn from one another what other organizations in the region do and organize outreach events in collaboration with peers in their cohorts.

Influence and Impact of COVID-19 on Community Change Outcomes

The core grant programs provided timely support for grantee communities, many of whom were hit the hardest by the pandemic, affected by racism and devoid of economic wealth. Seattle Foundation's COVID-19 Response Fund was seen as an important lifeline for grantees to provide frontline services, case management, and direct aid support. Where data was collected from grantees during the pandemic, the evaluators learned about advocacy activity directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Grantee reports provided examples of policy advocacy efforts at all levels of government, from federal advocacy to include grantees' immigrant communities in federal stimulus measures to county-level advocacy to strengthen unemployment benefits and create local relief funds.

> **"Our leaders are juggling direct services with meetings with the County to advocate for how relief funds will be distributed and ensuring they reach communities most likely to be left out, while being the most impacted by COVID cases. This is a time that exemplifies the need for systems change work, while also adding additional work to leaders and communities who are hurting from the impacts of COVID."**

Participants of a leadership through journalism program hosted by International Examiner, an Engagement Pipeline grantee

Participants of Collective Justice's (Partnership Mobilization grantee) civic leadership program

A few grantees that provided in-person services or programs had to cease all their activities and temporarily shut their doors. In the cases that the evaluators learned about, grantee leadership took advantage of the networks they had created through Seattle Foundation and formed affinity-based or geography-based partnerships with other service providers to ensure their communities' essential needs were met. It is unclear if these grantees will permanently shutdown or what comes next for them.

The evolving impact of COVID-19 continues to concern grantees and is affecting their longer-term vision and planning. COVID-19 redirected operations for many, especially given the impact the pandemic had on their communities that were already confronted with multiple health, economic, and political challenges. Programming focused on policy and advocacy issues continued for some grantees.

> **"I have had conversations with elected officials, […] to continuously update them on the effort that we're doing as an organization and effort that we're doing in South King County, and for them to always remember that the most impacted communities are communities of color."**

Evaluation findings demonstrate that grantees are reacting in real time to the pandemic, which has presented another layer to the many obstacles that their communities have long been facing. These findings point to grantees common inability to devote resources to long-term organizational strategy. Grantees shared that flexible and unrestricted operating funds could help remedy the challenges smaller, community-based organizations face in maintaining long-term organizational health. Applying to grants is time and resource intensive and more flexible funding allows grantees a little more room to focus on their core grant programmatic work, such as their leadership or advocacy programs, and remain responsive to emergent needs in the communities they serve. Longer-term and sustained grants were also regarded as a testament to the trust foundations have in grantees.

"Our largest set of challenges has revolved around lack of organizational capacity and funding to do the work needed. As we get more funding and grow as an organization, we are taking care to develop an organizational structure that will support the long-term sustainability of the work, the staff, and our volunteer community."

Looking Ahead

This evaluation aimed to see if there was alignment between two major realities:

1 the near-term outcomes 1-4 that Seattle Foundation identified for the six core grant programs in the evaluation framework; and

2 the progress and milestones grantees made with their grants toward outcomes of their place-based, systemic change efforts.

The findings of the evaluation are consequential because of what it means for the Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) practice and Seattle Foundation's Blueprint for Impact; and for the philanthropic and community grantmaking practice that invests in BIPOC community-led systems change grounded in racial and economic justice. The next section explores what the findings are and the opportunities they present for Seattle Foundation and for the philanthropic field.

The Blueprint for Impact Reflects the Reality that Communities Can Impact Systemic Change

The key outcomes outlined by the evaluation framework of Seattle Foundation's Blueprint for Impact are adapted to fit the practical reality of how grantee organizations have advanced their programmatic work in their communities.

Seattle Foundation based the evaluation framework off the experience and input of grantees, and this evaluation demonstrates that the foundation has set realistic community grantmaking metrics. Grantee voices, as heard through grantee reports and interviews, are proof of concept that Seattle Foundation's vision is feasible.

Specifically, the near-term outcomes 1 through 4 in the evaluation framework (Exhibit 12) are appropriately identified and articulated to support what and how BIPOC-led and serving grantees prioritize across a diversity of communities. Analysis of the grantee report data and interviews demonstrate that grantees across all six core programmatic areas are implementing programming that is resulting in the indicators of near-term community results. This means that the strategy for the six core grant programs reflects a sound understanding of the realities of the unique work it takes for BIPOC-led and serving organizations to advance systemic change in King County.

While data provided evidence of success across the first four near-term outcomes despite the disruptions brought by the pandemic, grantee data did yield information that the continued progress of *Outcome 4: Strengthened connections and alliances* was the most at-risk. While many grantees were using connections and alliances made possible through Seattle Foundation funding to pivot to COVID-19 related emergency services or interventions, the ability to use connections and alliances to build power was perceived as harder to achieve or devote attention to during a crisis.

Exhibit 12. **Evaluation Framework Near-term Outcomes 1-4**

1 **Expanded community leadership –** more, more diverse, and more skilled

2 **Increased capacity of organizations** in vulnerable or marginalized communities

3 **Increased participation and influence** in high-impact public planning, decision processes, and elections by individuals, groups or organizations in vulnerable or marginalized communities

4 **Strengthened connections and alliances** among individuals, groups or organizations in marginalized communities

The rest of the first four near-term outcomes were less impacted by the pandemic and are equipped to respond and adapt to the progress and movement of community organizations regardless of the volatility in the environment made by the global pandemic; thus suggesting these are accurate and feasible outcomes. For Seattle Foundation, having an overarching framework that delineates the outcomes by which the foundation can measure its impact in supporting communities is a significant step towards making progress on the long-term, sustainable vision of community philanthropy.

Grantee Policy Implementation Activities as Early Signs of Progress Towards Long-Term Outcomes

This evaluation serves as evidence for how the evaluation framework, and specifically the near-term outcomes 1-4, aligns with how grantee organizations are creating the building blocks for systemic change. Further, there is evidence from grantee reports that signals early and promising signs that

the evaluation framework's long-term outcomes are also accurately defining how grantee work at the community level is aligned with the Blueprint's long-term vision. COO Systems and Policy Change grantees were asked to report on the number of systems and policies change efforts and campaigns led during their grant cycle, as well as the number of policies passed that support equitable outcomes, and the number of government systems changes with an equity focus achieved by as a result of their efforts. These metrics are all in support of Outcome 7 of the evaluation framework (i.e., the adoption and effective implementation of policies and programs, see Exhibit 2).

In 2019, through the Communities of Opportunity initiative, a funding partnership with King County Government, Seattle Foundation funded 40 community-led campaigns and efforts aimed at changing policies and government practices to advance racial and economic equity in the Greater Seattle Region and beyond. Additionally, 18 policies championed by COO grantee organizations were passed over the two evaluation years. Further progress towards greater social and economic equity achieved by COO grantees includes efforts in housing to increase funding for affordable housing in Seattle and renters' right protections in South King County; in health, to conduct a statewide assessment of tribal public health system in Washington State, and healthier school lunches in Seattle; in education, to increase funding for Special Education in Washington State and career support in King County; and efforts in economic opportunity, to decrease barriers for immigrants to establish food services in King County (see Appendix Exhibit 16 for additional information). These early findings support the evidence from the evaluation that speak to the Blueprint's alignment to grantee activities, and continued grant program support will help reveal further evidence for progress towards grantee long-term goals.

Participants of a leadership development program hosted by Brothers United in Leadership Development (BUILD), a N2N grantee

Participants at an event organized by, Somali Health Board, a COO Systems and Policies Change grantee

Systems Change Begins with the Communities

The alignment between grantee work and the evaluation framework is evidence that Seattle Foundation's grant programs, including the relationships program staff cultivated with grantees, their responsiveness to grantees, and the flexibility with pandemic emergency relief funding, are in service of the Blueprint vision. The measurement tools and practices (i.e., reporting tools and communication touchpoints with grantees) demonstrate the foundation's understanding that supporting grantees and their leadership with how they reimagine communities is how systems-level change begins.

As the evaluation framework continues to evolve, there is more work to do to determine the alignment of near-term outcomes 5-6 and to ensure that the path from the near-term outcomes to the long-term outcomes are attuned to the realities and barriers that BIPOC-led and serving grantees face. As a community philanthropic funder that has incorporated feedback from communities in the design of the grantmaking programming and metrics, it continues to be critical that the metrics Seattle Foundation has selected are truly in alignment with how BIPOC-led and serving communities can implement this complex work.

The standards of success for what has been traditionally regarded as evidence of systems-level change have historically not been best suited in service of what community-based organizations are doing. The desire for immediate results and a tangible return on investment does not align with how grantees realistically envision change. Grantees understand that addressing the root causes of racial and economic inequity begins with the communities who feel the impact of those inequities the strongest.

Philanthropic evaluation practice is undergoing the same scrutiny as many sectors in understanding how to deepen equitable practices that lead to racial equity. Part of this includes understanding when and how evaluation has been complicit in upholding the systems that maintain white supremacy, by either not being critical enough of certain practices that systemically exclude BIPOC communities or downplaying the rigor of community-based data collection practices.[19]

Evaluators can play an important role by providing a critical lens to recommendations that value the resources of organization towards producing immediate and quantifiable goals. These recommendations have resulted grantmaking strategy and metrics that are not attuned with the realities of what BIPOC-led and serving communities need to genuinely change deeply entrenched systemic barriers. What then happens is that the failure to reach these unrealistic metrics reinforce the erroneous notion that the BIPOC-led and serving communities cannot deliver on results rather than a grantmaking examination on *if* the strategy, resources, and metrics were accurate.

A true reimagination of community philanthropy needs to challenge the expectation of where power is held and what change looks like when the communities lead the movement.
A practice that formalizes this re-learning can position Seattle Foundation to practice what they lay out in their vision.

> *Dismantling and re-learning the expectation of getting immediate results is important to begin operationalizing what the philanthropic sector can achieve by listening to communities.*

While the Blueprint strategy is the adaptation of a long line of work that the foundation has been doing to address issues of racial and economic equity, the findings from this evaluation marks an inflection point. Now is an important time to further commit to grantee organizations, knowing that what the foundation has done to allow grantees to lead has proven to align with four critical

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[19] For further discussion on this topic, please see:
  ➤ Gray, A. (2019) *The Bias of 'Professionalism' (Stanford Social Innovation Review)*. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_bias_of_professionalism_standards
  ➤ Johnston-Goodstar, K. (2012), *Decolonizing evaluation: The necessity of evaluation advisory groups in indigenous evaluation*. New Directions for Evaluation, 2012: 109-117. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20038

near-term outcomes for racial and economic equity. Additionally, the pandemic has disrupted community wellbeing and livelihood for many, but it has undeniably impacted communities of color and low-income communities already facing unequal access to power the most. Given the volatility of the pandemic, the opportunity for crystallizing a learning process and expanding the measurement of the near and longer-term outcomes is right.

Strengthening Measurement & Learning Practice

Seattle Foundation already has a robust MLE approach in place. The organizational dedication to MLE staff, the thoroughness of the Blueprint, and the alignment of the near-term outcomes are part of what demonstrate this. Grantee reports and interviews are *some* of the ways in which measurement is already happening at Seattle Foundation. This is important to emphasize as the evaluation does not encourage additional burden on grantee capacity by way of additional reporting requirements. However, the evaluation findings illuminate the need to leverage these measurement tools more effectively into a consistent learning practice.

A learning practice should take the sum of the data and connect it to how Seattle Foundation's investments are impacting long-term outcomes. It can also help continually test if metrics on near-term and long-term outcomes remain accurate and feasible. While this type of learning practice can yield continuous improvement, it does mean dedicating time for staff. While the process itself is simple, the evaluation team acknowledges it is not always easy to establish unless integrated into the existing MLE culture.

Conclusion

The evaluation findings recommend Seattle Foundation continue their practice of adaptive grantmaking by working closely with grantees and by responding innovatively to the challenges grantees face in rebuilding and recovering from the impact of the pandemic. The evaluation findings do not suggest inaction or that further evidence is required to determine what steps to take. Rather, the evaluation and its recommendations for Seattle Foundation to strengthen a measurement and learning practice emphasizes no drastic pivot that needs to be taken. For this evaluation to recommend an immediate shift for Seattle Foundation to produce measurable improvements does a disservice to the road that has already been laid by the community organizations that the foundation supports. Grantee organizations have long been leading the movement to create community-driven change towards a new system of racial and economic equity. Given the pandemic and Seattle Foundation's renewed vision, now is the right time to continue defining the measurement and learning practice to the foundation's grantmaking strategy so that the foundation can best support grantees that lead the way to creating population-level, lasting impact.

Responding to Current Conditions

Many grantees were continuing to implement programming during the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and police brutality against Black and African American communities that had global implications in 2020. Systemic racism, specifically, is rooted in the systems that Seattle Foundation exists in and strives to change. Black-led community organizations have had to work in systems of anti-Black racism and trauma. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of the political and social movement for Black lives, there is a renewed awareness (and gap of awareness) in the trauma faced by the Black and African American community. Current learning practices are likely not best equipped to consider how the racial reckoning has impacted Seattle Foundation grantees. A more robust learning practice that confronts these questions directly would be a helpful shift in the learning culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income communities[20] and communities of color[21], communities served by grantees. The desire to mitigate this impact means that rapid responsive engagement is critical to adapt to the changing needs of the communities in response to the pandemic. Grantee data demonstrates the early impact of COVID-19 and asks for grantmaking interventions that allow for rapid and real-time adaptation. Seattle Foundation has already been responsive, as evidenced by the COVID-19 Relief Fund and the increase in communication touchpoints Program Officers have with grantees. The rapidly changing nature of the pandemic, and the growing magnitude of the impact, means that a learning strategy that complements the measurement practices already in place is crucial.

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[20] Economic, social and overall health impacts from COVID 19: Data dashboard - King County. https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/data/impacts.aspx

[21] COVID-19 data dashboard by race/ethnicity - King County. https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/data/race-ethnicity.aspx

Appendix I: About This Evaluation

Harder+Company Community Research designed an evaluation team of applied researchers and consultants with deep experience working collaboratively with public and philanthropic clients on systems change grantmaking and interventions. The organization is part of the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment and the Racial Equity Action Institute and practices a culturally responsive and equity-focused, community-based approach across all work. This practically means proactively supporting clients to identify and combat racism by providing targeted, pragmatic advice for changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices and attitudes to advance equity.

In 2019, Seattle Foundation Community Programs Team launched a new evaluation framework to track the impact of their six core grant programs. This framework includes key outcomes that represent recent adaptation to ongoing work that reimagines the role of community philanthropy, as outlined in the Blueprint for Impact. Collectively, the key outcomes measured by the evaluation look to see how the core grant programs channel funding to local community-based organizations led by and serving low-income communities and communities of color who work to amplify the civic power of those communities and to advance systemic solutions to racial and economic inequities.

The following section provides a description of each of these core grant programs[22]:

- The **Voter Education Fund** is the result of the partnership between Seattle Foundation and King County Elections to increase engagement and voter participation and address low voter turnout within historically excluded communities. This program provides grants to organizations that work to reduce inequities in voting access in historically excluded communities including, but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, people of color, people experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, limited English speaking (LES), LGBTQ residents, formerly incarcerated individuals, and residents in South King County. Applicants in this grant can develop and implement a robust campaign to engage voters or potential voters or provide a series of targeted events.

- The **Neighbor to Neighbor** (N2N) grant serves community-based organizations in South Seattle, White Center and Kent and focuses on organizations with small budget sizes that increase engagement, power and influence of community members affected by poverty and racial disparities. Priority is on efforts led by people from diverse and under-invested communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting the Foundation's mission: to ignite powerful and rewarding philanthropy to make Greater Seattle a stronger, more vibrant community for all.

- The **Engagement Pipeline** program supports organizations or networks of organizations working to increase the power of specific communities through leadership development and community mobilization. This grant invests in programs that build community power by

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[22] Seattle Foundation. (2021). Current Grant Opportunities. Retrieved from Seattle Foundation: https://www.seattlefoundation.org/nonprofits/nonprofit-grant-opportunities

strengthening individual leaders who participate in community change activities that mobilize the broader community.

- The **COO Systems & Policy Change** grant program supports community-led and community-engaged efforts to transform systems and policies for stronger community connections, economic opportunity, better health, and/or housing that will decrease and/or prevent continued inequity in communities of color in King County.

- The **Resilience Fund** supports organizations with activities tied to providing critical services to immigrants and refugees, the Black community, and other vulnerable residents whose health, safety, and human rights are at risk.

- The **Partnership Mobilization** program is part of Seattle Foundation's Vibrant Democracy Initiative. This grant program supports nonprofit partnerships that strengthen the civic voice and participation of underrepresented communities to increase racial and economic equity.

Appendix Exhibit 1.   **Program outcomes measured through current reporting tools by core grant program**

	Neighbor to Neighbor 1 year ($5-10k)	Resilience Fund 1 year ($5-20k)	Engagement Pipeline 3 year ($80-125k)	Partnership Mobilization 1 year ($2-10k)	Voter Education Fund 2 year ($15k & $40k)	Communities of Opportunity 2 year ($45k & $75-125K)
Outcome 1: Expanded community leadership	●		●			●
Outcome 2: Increased capacity of organizations	●	●	●	●	●	●
Outcome 3: Increased civic participation and influence			●	●	●	●
Outcome 4: Strengthened connections and alliances	●	●		●	●	●
Outcome 5: Shared commitment across communities, public, and private sectors			●			●
Outcome 6: Civic and political leaders demonstrate increased openness, responsiveness, and accountability						●
Outcome 7: Adoption and effective implementation of policies and programs						●
Outcome 8: Increased public, private, and philanthropic resources						

The key outcomes in Seattle Foundation's evaluation framework were selected by determining which outcomes were most likely to occur as a direct result of the grants based on the specific goals of each grant program and the criteria used to select grantees according to those goals. While not all eight outcomes were evaluated for each program, grantees funded by programs associated with near-term outcomes may have also advanced long-term outcomes during their funding period (Appendix Exhibit 1).

In order to tell the story of impact, Seattle Foundation approached Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Co) to support them with an evaluation of how the key outcomes outlined in the evaluation framework align with their grantees' work. This comprehensive report includes findings from the evaluation of grantee report data collected from 2018 to 2020, data collected through interviews, and feedback received from Seattle Foundation staff from sense-making sessions that collectively speak to evaluation findings for grantees. Harder+Co analyzed secondary grantee data from reports and triangulated findings with primary data collection efforts including interviews and sense-making sessions to assess alignment of grant funding to the evaluation framework's key outcomes.

Secondary Grantee Data + **Primary Data Collection** → **Impact and alignment of grant funding to evaluation framework outcomes**
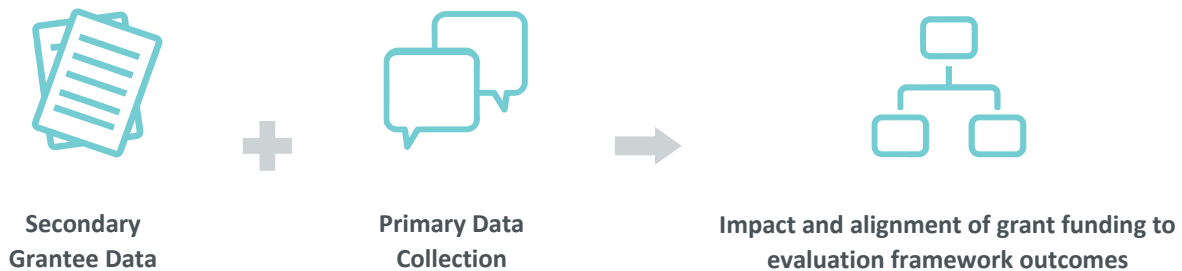
Under the new Seattle Foundation evaluation framework, grantees were asked to complete an evaluation report or interview at the end of each funding period. These reports were designed to inform Seattle Foundation to what extent their funding enabled progress towards key evaluation outcomes respective to each program. Seattle Foundation provided 184 final reports submitted by grantees participating in their grant programs.

In addition, Harder+Company developed an outreach and recruitment plan and timeline for stakeholders to participate in the key stakeholder interviews. The interview protocol was informed by the findings from the initial review of grantee reports and the sense-making session #1. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about grantees' experience working with Seattle Foundation and how their grant funding contributed to their organization. Harder+Company also conducted sense-making sessions to provide an understanding of the grantee data findings, perspectives on the near-term and long-term outcomes, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the grantee experience.

Harder+Company developed a three-phased study approach that included a *discovery phase* to understand the breadth and scope of grantmaking, alignment to the evaluation framework, and develop hypotheses of impact. The next phase included *pressure testing* the hypotheses against a deeper assessment of the grantee reports data and through primary data collection with key stakeholders. The third stage included developing deliverables focused for specific target audiences. Each phase was developed to be highly interactive and assumed this study as a team sport that leverages evaluation team's technical and facilitative skills with Seattle Foundation staff's experience and expertise.

Appendix II: Additional Grantee Reports Data by Outcome

<u>Outcome 1</u>: **Expanded Community Leadership – more, more diverse, and more skilled**

Appendix Exhibit 2.   Leadership development (number of community members/representatives/residents engaged in leadership roles) (Engagement Pipeline, N2N, COO)

	n	Mean	Min	Max	Sum
2018-19	39	38.4	1	500	1,499
2019-20	25	129.5	4	500	3,238

Appendix Exhibit 3.   Number and type of community leadership positions and opportunities taken by community members in the past year (Engagement Pipeline, COO)

Leadership development (number of community members/representatives/residents) by type of leadership role (Engagement Pipeline, COO)*

Leadership role	2018 (n=8)	2019 (n=24)
Experts on policy or systems change for their community	306	378
Organized or mobilized community members around an issue	237	550
Additional leadership training focused on policy systems change	210	700
Volunteered on campaigns or initiatives	180	579
New jobs related to skills learned in program	137	142
Organizations or coalitions at a conference related to policy or systems change	97	201
Public testimony during a public or government hearing	88	283
Community-organized committees, coalitions, taskforces, or advisory groups	87	96
Nonprofit boards	37	60
Government boards, commission, taskforces, or advisory groups	31	54
Candidates for elected office	27	23
Authored publications or communications on policy issues	11	54

■ 2018 (n=8)   ■ 2019 (n=24)

Appendix Exhibit 4.   Leadership role(s) and opportunities taken by representatives from grantee organizations (Neighbor to Neighbor)

Category	2018-19 (n=7)	2019-20 (n=8)
Nonprofit boards	57%	63%
Organized or mobilized community members around an issue	57%	50%
Community-organized committees, coalitions, taskforces, or advisory groups	71%	25%
New job related to skills learned in program	29%	38%
Volunteered on a campaign or initiative	43%	13%
Additional leadership training focused on policy systems change	43%	13%
Public testimony during a public or government hearing	29%	
Expert on policy or systems change for their community	29%	
Authored publications or communications on policy issues	29%	
Organization or coalition at a conference related to policy or systems change	14%	13%
Government boards, commissions, taskforces, or advisory groups	14%	
candidates for elected office	14%	

■ 2018-19 (n=7)   ■ 2019-20 (n=8)

Outcome 2: Increased Capacity of Organizations in Vulnerable or Marginalized Communities

Appendix Exhibit 5.   Improvement of internal operations

To what extent did this grant contribute to your group/organization improving its internal operations?‡

	NA or no improvement in this area	Did not contribute	Slightly	Moderately	Contributed significantly
2018 (n=34)	6%	9%	12%	18%	56%
2019 (n=42)	5%		10%	29%	57%

■ NA or no improvement in this area ■ Did not contribute ■ Slightly ■ Moderately ■ Contributed significantly
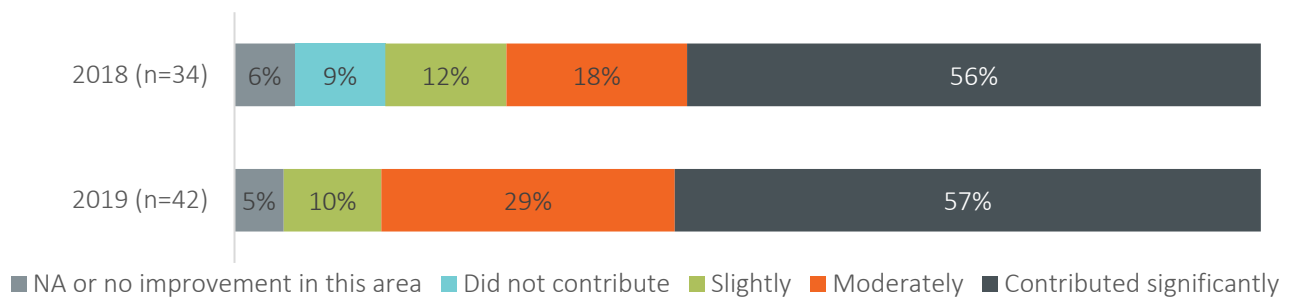
More than half (57%) of grantee organizations in 2019 responded that Seattle Foundation grant contributed significantly in the improvement of their internal operations (Appendix Exhibit 4). Most grantees also indicated

that the grant also contributed to their programs and engagement work (87%), and to their relevance among communities (77%) (Appendix Exhibit 5 and 6 respectively). In terms of access to funding, more than two thirds of grantees (67%) stated that the grant contributed in significantly or moderately to their ability to access other sources of funding (Appendix Exhibit 7).

Appendix Exhibit 6. Improvement of programs or community engagement work

To what extent did this grant contribute to your group/ organization's ability to improve its programs or community engagement work?‡

2018 (n=35)	3% 11%	86%
2019 (n=45)	2% 11%	87%

■ NA or no improvement in this area ■ Did not contribute ■ Slightly ■ Moderately ■ Contributed significantly
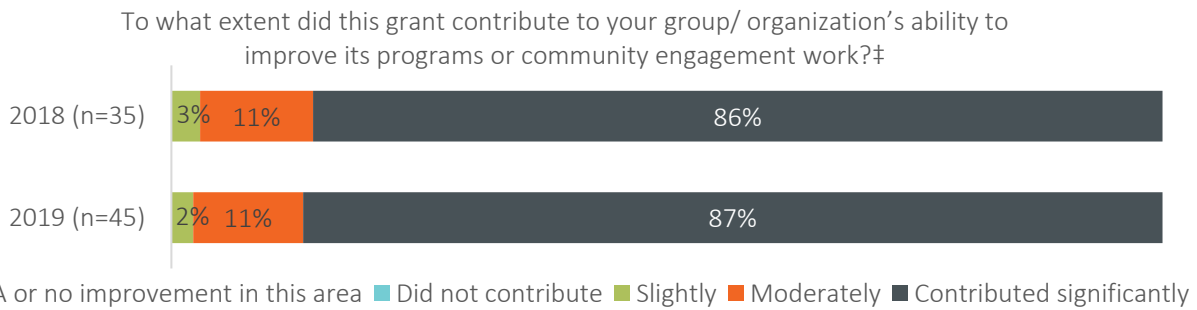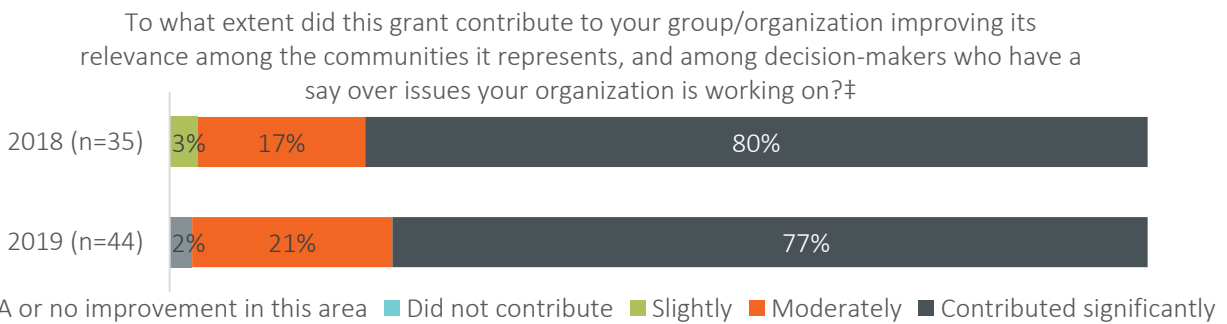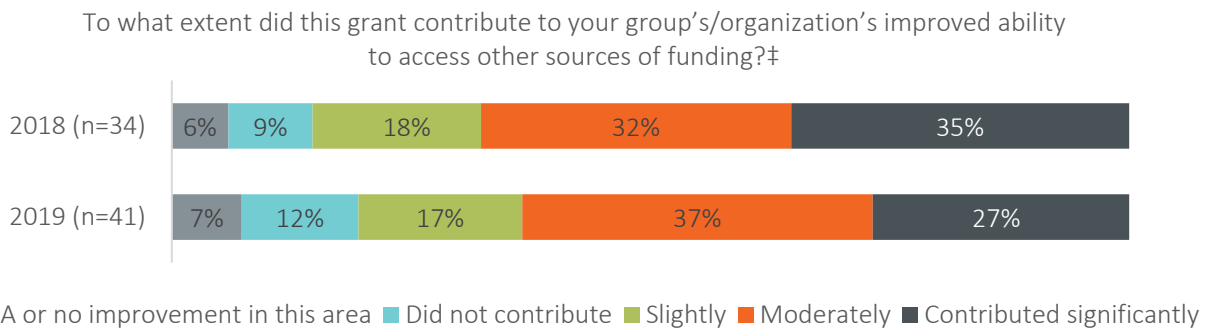
Appendix Exhibit 7. Relevance among communities

To what extent did this grant contribute to your group/organization improving its relevance among the communities it represents, and among decision-makers who have a say over issues your organization is working on?‡

2018 (n=35)	3% 17%	80%
2019 (n=44)	2% 21%	77%

■ NA or no improvement in this area ■ Did not contribute ■ Slightly ■ Moderately ■ Contributed significantly

Appendix Exhibit 8. Improved ability to access other sources of funding

To what extent did this grant contribute to your group's/organization's improved ability to access other sources of funding?‡

2018 (n=34)	6% 9% 18%	32%	35%
2019 (n=41)	7% 12% 17%	37%	27%

■ NA or no improvement in this area ■ Did not contribute ■ Slightly ■ Moderately ■ Contributed significantly

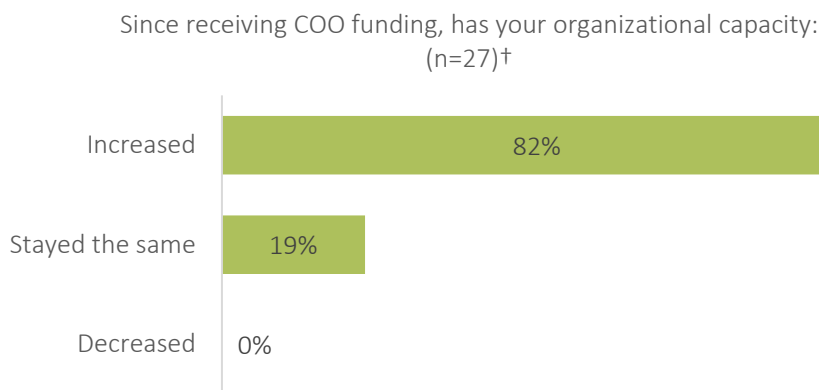†Question was asked for the Communities of Opportunities program for the 2018 reporting period.
‡ Questions were asked for 5 programs: Engagement Pipeline, Communities of Opportunities, Partnership Mobilization, Resilience Fund, Neighbor to Neighbor

Appendix Exhibit 9.   Change in amount of funding received to carry out ongoing work and operations in the past year (COO, Engagement Pipeline, Partnership Mobilization, Resilience Fund, N2N)

Increased
82%
70%

Stayed the same
9%
26%

Decreased
9%
4%

■ 2018 (n=34)   ■ 2019 (n=46)
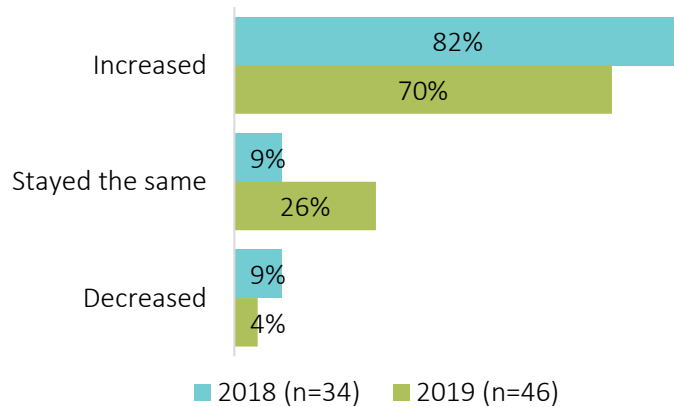
Appendix Exhibit 10.   Increase in organizational capacity (n=27)

Since receiving COO funding, has your organizational capacity: (n=27)†

Increased
82%

Stayed the same
19%

Decreased
0%

Outcome 3: Increased Participation and Influence in High-Impact Public Planning, Decision Processes, and Elections by Individuals, Groups, or Organizations in Vulnerable or Marginalized Communities

Appendix Exhibit 11.   External facing events held (Communities of Opportunities)

	Mean	Min	Max	Sum	# of participants
2018 (n=22)	6.1	1	19	134	8,244
2019 (n=24)	93.7	12	423	2,248	13,460[23]

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[23] Only for COO Project level grantees (n=16)

Appendix Exhibit 12.   Type of external facing events held (Communities of Opportunities, 2019)

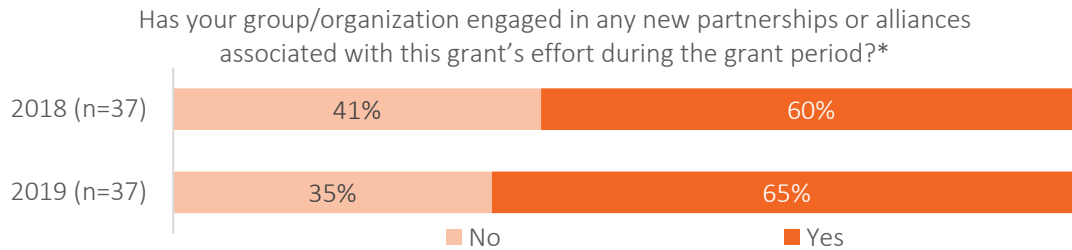|	Mean	Min	Max	Sum
Total (N=24)	93.7	12	423	2248
Voter outreach/education	6.3	0	115	151
Public awareness (i.e.: rallies, marches, protests)	1.9	0	15	45
Meetings with policy or government decision-makers	31.2	0	350	748
Trainings or workshops	14.2	0	64	342
Strategy and planning meetings	17.9	3	101	430
Volunteer or member recruitment	5.04	0	48	121
Community building	12.4	0	70	298
Community organizing	4.1	0	37	99
Fundraising events	0.4	0	4	10
Other	0.2	0	3	4

Appendix Exhibit 13.   Voter Registration Totals, verified through the County's 2019 records (Voter Education Fund)

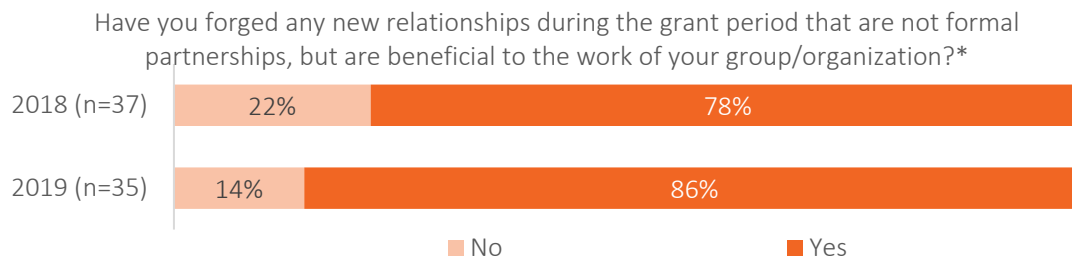|	Mean	Min	Max	Sum
2018 (n=26)	259.2	1	3,991	6,740
2019 (n=35)	173.5	1	3,249	5,032

Outcome 4: Strengthened Connections and Alliances Among Individuals, Groups or Organizations in Marginalized Communities

Appendix Exhibit 14. New partnerships or alliances

Has your group/organization engaged in any new partnerships or alliances
associated with this grant's effort during the grant period?*

2018 (n=37)	41% 60%
2019 (n=37)	35% 65%

■ No   ■ Yes

Approximately two-thirds (65%) of grantees in 2019 reported that their organization engaged in new partnerships or alliances with the support of the core grant program during the grant period (Appendix Exhibit 13). These partnerships refer to relationships that are bound by a formal agreement or explicit commitment to mutually agreed upon outcomes or end goals

Appendix Exhibit 15. New relationships

Have you forged any new relationships during the grant period that are not formal
partnerships, but are beneficial to the work of your group/organization?*

2018 (n=37)	22% 78%
2019 (n=35)	14% 86%

■ No   ■ Yes

*These questions were asked for the following programs: COO, Partnership mobilization, Resilience Fund, N2N

The majority of grantees indicated that they built new relationships with other organizations or individuals that they found beneficial to their work during the grant period (Appendix Exhibit 14). These relationships refer to partnerships that are <u>not</u> formal. Examples may include relationships with groups or individuals who share learnings with grantees, relationships with mentors or people who might help grantees access future funding, or non-contractual relationships with community members that care deeply about the communities served and are in frequent contact with grantees to support or be ambassadors of the work.

Appendix Exhibit 16. Number of new partnerships or relationships created during the grant period

	Mean	Min	Max	Sum
New partnerships				
2018 (n=22)	3.5	1	10	77
2019 (n=18)	3.6	1	13	65
New relationships				
2018 (n=27)	3.8	1	17	102
2019 (n=25)	7.8	1	60	196

Outcome 7: Adoption and Implementation of Policies

Appendix Exhibit 17.   Total number of policies passed or government systems and procedural changes accomplished

COO grant program year	Number of policies	Examples of policy goals and achievements:
2018 (n=7)	11	- Minimum wage, rest break, meal breaks and other essential rights to domestic workers in the City of Seattle. - Access to voting for underrepresented populations. - All rental housing is safe for Seattle residents and meets basic maintenance standards. - Restrictions in interest rate placed on Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs). - Substance Use Disorder (SUD) inpatient facilities over 16 beds Medicaid eligible. - Sound Transit surplus property be used for affordable housing, including community stewardship of land and guides local jurisdictions to adhere to equitable Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles.
2019 (n=4)	7	- Reductions to the amount of time necessary to vacate a person's criminal record at a state level. - Reversal of punitive measures for low-income families to access Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at the state level. - Consumer protection policies at a state level that will enhance medical debt protections, relieve tax lien foreclosures that affect people impacted by rising property taxes, and eliminating barriers for individuals to clear their debt. - Just Cause Eviction policy in City of Burien to enhance tenant protections against hasty or unfounded evictions. - Statewide eviction reform policy to enhance tenant rights protections. - Statewide policy to establish a forum and a funding mechanism to improve the health of Native American communities in the state. **Statewide policy enhancing resources to improve equitable access to public education to students and families with language access barriers.**

Appendix III: Recommendations for a Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) Practice for Seattle Foundation

The Importance of a Clear and Robust Learning Practice

This evaluation demonstrates evidence pointing to the progress that grantees have built upon through Seattle Foundation support as long-standing leaders in their communities. The Blueprint for Impact, and the foundation's efforts for continuous improvement and recalibration speaks to the willingness to listen to the communities the foundation support, and an acknowledgement that these communities have been leading this work for decades. The renewed clarity of Seattle Foundation's focus is challenged by the volatility that COVID-19 brings and highlights the importance of translating what the foundation knows from its measurement practices to a systematic learning process.

Under normal circumstances, Seattle Foundation's reporting mechanism and timeframes allow grantees and Seattle Foundation staff to monitor progress and address emerging challenges. However, the lag-time from funding to reporting is not conductive to the type of short-term programmatic monitoring needed to be responsive during a crisis such as the one being faced. Since near-term outcomes are being captured in grantee reports, the evaluation does not call for any major changes to the reporting format for those outcomes. In order capture change over time, the evaluation recommends revisiting the reporting format to ensure they are capturing the long-term outcomes.

Primary quantitative and qualitative data collection will be the fastest way to gather evidence of community conditions for grantees. Due to irregularities with the 2020 decennial Census, quantitative secondary public data will have very serious limitations at the population-level, especially in undercounted communities, further emphasizing the value of real-time primary data collection. When these types of primary data collection efforts are combined with a collective, systematic review of real-time data, it can be used to determine strategy.

The recommendations for data collection are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1**: Ensure that grantee reports are optimized to continue capturing change over time and indicators for long-term outcomes.

- **Recommendation 2**: Review and discuss the current measurement, evaluation and learning capacities at Seattle Foundation. If there are already existent real-time data and rapid-feedback opportunities, identify those explicitly.

- **Recommendation 3**: Determine what information Program Officers (POs) and Executives need to support grantmaking, communication, and feel confident in strategy-making i.e., explicitly identify and define what amount of evidence or data is sufficient to determine progress or initiative strategy review.

- **Recommendation 4**: Develop a rapid-feedback data collection protocol and determine the term of temporary MEL practice [for example, will this be until the pandemic transmission and mortality have decreased to a specific level in communities, etc.]. The protocol must be aligned to current knowledge management (where the data is entered, stored and exported); staff capacities (ensuring the knowledge management or data entry is feasible for the reality of staff workloads), and cultural monitoring practices (when, where and how often do program officers meet and discuss outcomes) for successful implementation.

- **Recommendation 5**: Strengthen the current learning practices with regular touchpoints to collectively synthesize rapid-feedback data learnings and elevate findings and recommendations to stakeholders and decision-makers.

It is important to clarify that a lot of the measurement outlined in these recommendations *is already happening* at Seattle Foundation, especially in the correspondences between Community Programs Officers and grantee organization representatives. The evaluation recommendations are not meant to cast additional burden on grantee capacity or on Seattle Foundation staff by way of additional measurement or reporting requirements. Rather, the recommendations stress the importance of identifying and naming the work that is already happening internally to clarify how it can become centered and formalized in the practice of ongoing feedback and learning. In other words, the evaluation sees that the measurement and evaluation capacities of Seattle Foundation are robust and recommends a learning practice to be formalized into the grantmaking strategy.

Strengthening a learning practice can be as simple as ensuring that Program Officers and MLE staff implement a coordinated approach to capture timely and systematic collective reflection of the community data followed by regular learning activities to reflect and make sense of the emerging data. Community data can be interpreted as the formal reporting processes, such as grantee reports or other activities, qualitative or quantitative data; or it can be the informal conversations with grantees, or observations from community programming.

In a collective reflection, data and information is shared to identify and understand issues such as societal trends or threats to the implementation of grantee's systemic change work. For instance, the evaluation illustrated how the COVID-19 Response Fund helped address grantees' immediate and urgent needs. As the impact of the pandemic continues to grow and change, it will serve the foundation well to prioritize and strengthen its learning and communication tools. This approach will help Program Officers measure and understand the rapidly shifting landscape of grantee communities and their needs. Grantees are acutely aware of the rapidly shifting landscape of their communities and rapid-feedback data can elevate real-time learning that helps Seattle Foundation continue to practice responsive grantmaking.

During the sensemaking session in November 2020, the evaluation team observed and discussed the impacts of the pandemic on grantees with Seattle Foundation Program Officers. Grantee interviews provided qualitative evidence of the immediate impact of the pandemic of grantee organization operations. Grantee data illuminated how Seattle Foundation-funded programming was in-part positively responsible for grantees responsiveness to emergent community needs due to the pandemic. Adoption of rapid-learning organizational monitoring and evaluation practices will increase the data-capacity infrastructure and enable a more systematic collection of these

kinds of community data. This community data will likely be the most comprehensive information that Seattle Foundation can use to determine temporary grantmaking strategy as the economic realities of the pandemic continue to unfold.