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

“Neighbor to Neighbor’s funding says to grassroots activists and advocates everywhere: WE BELIEVE IN YOU. You know the problems and you know the solutions. That support is just invaluable to guide us down the most just path. Our voices are powerful and when we all come together to fight for what is right, to fight for what is just, and to fight for each other, we are unstoppable… I can’t wait to see what happens next!”

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal
7th District, Washington
Since inception, the Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) program has reimagined community philanthropy and influenced Seattle Foundation’s overarching commitment to equity and justice. In the late 1980s, foundations across the nation, including Seattle Foundation, were being scrutinized for their low level of grant support to “disadvantaged communities.” Seattle Foundation began addressing its behavior and received a C.S. Mott Foundation grant to begin remediying past wrongs. As a result, N2N emerged as a small grants program to invest in communities of color and other underinvested communities.

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

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

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

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

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

- Michael Brown, Seattle Foundation Civic Architect, Civic Commons, former Vice President of Community Programs

Charlotte Ahn, Alyia Bo and Vicki Artey celebrate Communities Rise.
And, the N2N team shared their learnings with civic leaders, and policymakers as well as other funders. As gentrification moved these communities out of Seattle, N2N expanded geographically to include all of South Seattle, White Center and Kent.

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

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

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

- Kathleen Pierce, Kirkpatrick Family Foundation, N2N Advisory Committee Member
COVID-19 brought new needs. With donated laptops, SOMCSS offers a “living-room support” program where staff help parents understand how to use Zoom with their children for school and their own remote learning opportunities and community involvement. With N2N’s support, SOMCSS works to improve family safety by engaging the police with the community across generations.

White Center Community Development Association

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

Longtime White Center activist, Sili Savusa, followed N2N consultant Aileen Balahadia as executive director of WCCDA. The WCCDA builds toward sustainability in civic engagement, education, housing, jobs and leadership development. Savusa was one of the trusted advocates who helped lead the Highline School Board, and has continued to be a voice for justice throughout the community. Currently under development, the White Center HUB (Hope, Unity, Belonging) will be a place of learning, sharing, and quality homes for working families—a place created by and for White Center, where efforts to create a more resilient community are centered. One thing that differentiates WCCDA from other organizations is their commitment to data—data that shows successes, and sometimes shortcomings—and the use of that data to inform their equity and social justice agenda. For example, a regular Summit is held to consistently hear from, engage and report back to the community on progress. Annexation of White Center to the City of Seattle is one of their big strategies, but it is currently on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Imagine trying to navigate social services for your children with different levels of developmental ability and enduring cultural and language barriers through the process. Open Doors for Multicultural Families was created in 2009 by parents to support this process by providing relevant information, services, and programming to diverse families of persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

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

### Somali Community Services of Seattle (SOMCSS)

The Seattle King County area is home to the second largest Somali American community in the country. To fill a real need for guidance and access to resources, the Somali Community Services of Seattle (SOMCSS) was created to serve that growing community. Sahra Farah, founder and director of SOMCSS, based in South Seattle, left Somalia before civil war broke out in 1991. As conflicts in Somalia escalated, more and more refugees came to the United States. “I chose to come to the community because I see a lot of elders, a lot of people who have the language barriers…” she said. “I got my language back too, culture back, everything, because I see people that I grew up with and it makes the people happy,” she said. Over the years, SOMCSS has added one resource after another from access to education, jobs, voter education, drug and tobacco prevention and an internet lab in addition to the regular need for case management, educational and housing assistance.

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and joy to the heirs of that horrible history. Nurturing Roots brings healing to the South where they tilled the land, worked the descendants of enslaved people who came from many of the Black families who settled here were right in the middle of Beacon Hill. Historically, community volunteers have built a thriving urban farm they can own in South King County. For the past five years, Nyema Clark and community owners. Nurturing Roots pivoted and offered Grow-at-Home vegetable kits and provided much needed positive project for families in isolation. Nurturing Roots’ dream now is to go beyond their former Beacon Hill pea patch to a much larger farm they can own in South King County.

OneAmerica

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

Along the way, it became OneAmerica to better reflect its commitment to all immigrants and refugees seeking their rights and justice. Under the more recent leadership of Rich Stolz and Roxana Norouzi, OneAmerica is a nationally recognized, multi-million dollar immigrant and refugee rights organization and Jayapal is the US Congresswoman of Washington’s 7th District and chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. OneAmerica advocacy at the Capitol in Olympia weekly, anyone can volunteer on the farm and go home with fresh produce and eggs. With events, workshops and sharing their produce with local restaurants and community, they are teaching self-sufficiency and food empowerment, building on a social justice foundation. For Earth Day 2021, they partnered with another N2N grantee, Got Green, and others in a community-wide healthy food event. During COVID, Nurturing Roots pivoted and offered Grow-at-Home vegetable kits and provided much needed positive project for families in isolation. Nurturing Roots’ dream now is to go beyond their former Beacon Hill pea patch to a much larger farm they can own in South King County.
In 1998, the Iraqi Community Center of Washington was created in Kent to help their growing immigrant community to make a successful transition to life in Washington. The IRCCW founder and director, Yahya Algarib, knew the needs, having previously worked with immigrant families in White Center. Family support specialist, Marwa Sadik, was a youth participant in White Center N2N projects and joined IRCCW after having received her degree in early childhood education.

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

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

Fruits, vegetables, herbs and chickens. Twice weekly, anyone can volunteer on the farm and go home with fresh produce and eggs. With events, workshops and sharing their produce with local restaurants and community, they are teaching self-sufficiency and food empowerment, building on a social justice foundation. For Earth Day 2021, they partnered with another N2N grantee, Got Green, and others in a community-wide healthy food event. During COVID, Nurturing Roots pivoted and offered Grow-at-Home vegetable kits and provided much needed positive project for families in isolation. Nurturing Roots’ dream now is to go beyond their former Beacon Hill pea patch to a much larger farm they can own in South King County.
For thirty years, N2N has traveled with emerging and under resourced coalitions and communities who were elevating their cultures, community priorities and quest for justice. Grants meant more than their actual dollars when some were not yet nonprofit organizations and others were not recognized by either funders or decision makers. N2N grants often led to greater public awareness and credibility. Some of the grantees that went from obscurity to lasting community organizations:

**Colectiva Legal del Pueblo**

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

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

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

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

The DRCC advocates for the environmental and community health and preserve the cultures of their community. Through a broad coalition of arts, business, environmental and community advocates working together, they reclaim the land and river – and their sense of community. Projects range from the creation of the 2018 Duwamish Valley Action Plan to their participation in a new affordable family housing complex in South Park that moves them towards housing, racial and environmental justice goals.

**Got Green**

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

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