

THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN KING COUNTY'S BLACK-LED ORGANIZATIONS

Photo credits: Young Lee

Project Partners



[Byrd Barr Place](#) partners with organizations and individuals to raise awareness about the effects of racism on people's opportunities to build a good life. We work together to promote solutions that will create a more equitable community.



[Seattle Foundation](#) provides the expertise, network of partners and research that enables philanthropists to maximize their impact in meeting our community's most critical needs. Every day, we convene, communicate with and catalyze our philanthropic partners, uniting passion and discipline to create lasting change. We call this intersection the heart and science of philanthropy.

Funding for this project was generously provided by Seattle Foundation.



For nearly 50 years, [Cardea](#) has strived to improve organizations' abilities to deliver accessible, high quality, culturally proficient, and compassionate services to their clients. We believe that organizations thrive by integrating principles of equity and social justice into all aspects of their work.

Report Authors

Olivia Lutz, MPH

Malvika Nair

Amanda Winters, MPH, MPA

Melanie Ogletton, MHSA, MPH

Wendy Nakatsukasa-Ono, MPH

Acknowledgements

We appreciate leaders from Black-led organizations who participated in key informant interviews

- [Africatown Community Land Trust](#)
- [Africatown International](#)
- [Alajawan Brown Foundation](#)
- [Brothers United in Leadership Development \(BUILD\)](#)
- [Byrd Barr Place](#)
- [Central Area Collaborative](#)
- [Divine Alternatives for Dads \(DADS\)](#)
- [First African Methodist Episcopal \(FAME\) Church & FAME Equity Alliance of Washington](#)
- [First Place](#)
- [LANGSTON](#)
- [Northwest African American Museum](#)
- [Northwest Tap Connection](#)
- [Rainier Beach Action Coalition](#)
- [Technology Access Foundation](#)
- [Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle](#)
- [Wa Na Wari](#)
- [Washington State Commission on African American Affairs](#)
- [Wonder of Women International](#)

We also appreciate leaders from Black-led organizations who took the time to share their experiences, insights, and wisdom via the online survey

Table of Contents

01

Context

02

Findings

03

Recommendations

04

Considerations

05

References & Reviewers



Community event at Wa Na Wari in Seattle's Central District.
Photo credit: Jill Friedberg

Context



section 01

Context

Committed to understanding Black-led organizations' strengths & challenges

Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole. ¹ — **Ta-Nehisi Coates, Distinguished author and journalist**

Black residents in King County have faced immeasurable layers of harm, due to systemic racism, redlining, under-employment, the school-to-prison pipeline, and the implementation of systematic barriers, which have prevented Blacks from accessing traditional pathways to wealth and economic security in the region. In alignment with its commitment to advancing racial equity and in support of Black residents, Seattle Foundation invested in learning how to better support the work of Black-led organizations (BLOs) through a partnership with Byrd Barr Place and Cardea. The project team worked to explore the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for alignment across BLOs.

Black-led organizations are registered nonprofit organizations or community groups with predominantly Black staff, leadership, and boards that focus on serving the Black community. These groups focus on building political, economic, and social power to ensure the Black community thrives.²

The intent of this report is to enhance funders' understanding of local BLOs, so they can provide tailored philanthropic support that meets the needs of BLOs and so BLOs in the King County region can better understand each other's work.

section 01

Context




Leaders of BLOs were engaged through surveys and key informant interviews

The project team collaborated on the development of an online survey of leaders of BLOs and identified 96 BLOs to invite to participate. However, due to missing contact information, 74 BLOs were ultimately invited to participate.

There were two waves of outreach for the survey in August 2019 and in March 2020, as the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic, the movement for racial justice, and heightened attention to longstanding structural and systemic issues for Black people were elevating in King County. In the second wave, the project team included a few additional questions and made other adjustments that did not substantively change the survey. Those who completed surveys in the first wave were invited to respond to a supplemental survey with these additional questions. In total, 41 leaders of BLOs responded to the survey: 21 in the first wave and 20 in the second wave.

Survey respondents were given the option to participate in a key informant interview. Twenty-six (26) individuals expressed interest, and Cardea completed 18 interviews. Participants were offered compensation for completing the survey and key informant interview.

To ground the findings, Seattle Foundation invited a group of four stakeholders to review and provide feedback around the information presented in this report.

	41 leaders responded to the online survey
	18 leaders participated in a key informant interview
	4 key stakeholders reviewed the report

Context

Leaders of BLOs were asked to share insights and experiences related to a range of topics

Leaders of BLOs were asked to describe the demographic characteristics of the community they primarily serve and where they focus their efforts (e.g., Seattle, South King County). In addition, they were asked to share details about the size of their staff, volunteers, and board members, including the demographic characteristics of organizational leadership. Other questions focused on issue areas for BLOs, as well as their organizational strengths and impacts on the Black community. Financial questions focused on annual operating budget, cash reserves, confidence in maintaining future funding, and funding sources. Leaders of BLOs were also asked to share what challenges they face in securing new funding and how funders could better support them. Finally, they were asked to identify factors that facilitate working in partnership with other organizations, as well as their awareness of and connection to other BLOs in King County.

Key questions included

- 1.What community do you primarily serve?
- 2.What are the strengths of your organization?
- 3.What are you most proud of?
- 4.How does your organization impact the well-being of the communities you serve?
- 5.What challenges do you face?
- 6.What is one key issue you wish funders would better understand as it relates to working with and engaging BLOs?
- 7.How can funders best support BLOs?
- 8.What factors facilitate working in partnership with other BLOs?
- 9.How connected are you with other King County BLOs?

Findings



section 02

Findings

BLOs primarily focus on serving Seattle residents, and nearly half serve South King County residents

More than four out of five (83%) of respondents reported Seattle as one of their primary focus areas, and over half (55%) indicated that they serve residents in South King County. A few noted specific neighborhoods in which their organizations work (e.g., Central District, Rainier Beach, White Center). In addition, a few noted that they serve residents in neighboring counties (i.e., Pierce, Snohomish).



Geographic Region	%*
Seattle	83
South King County	55
Washington State	33
North King County	18
East King County	13

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple geographic regions

section 02

. Photo credit: Africatown Community Land Trust

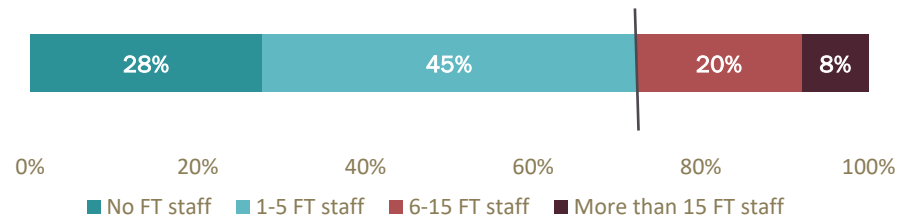
Findings

Most BLOs have limited full-time staff and robust volunteer support

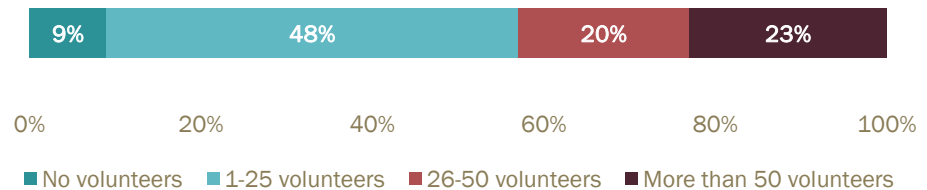
Generally, the size of BLOs, as indicated by the number of full-time (FT) staff, was small. About three out of four (73%) reported having five or fewer FT staff, with 28% indicating their organization had no FT staff members. Some organizations with 15 or more staff, indicated that they had as many as 46 FT staff.

Most (91%) BLOs reported some degree of volunteer support, with nearly half (48%) reporting 1-25 consistent volunteers. One BLO reported over 500 volunteers.

Most (73%) BLOs have 5 or fewer full-time staff



Most (91%) BLOs have some volunteer support



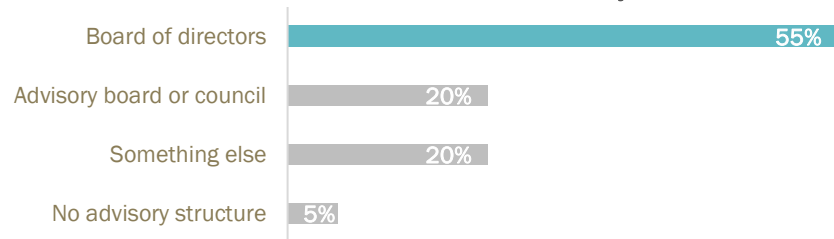
Findings

BLOs' advisory structures are primarily boards of directors with predominantly Black membership

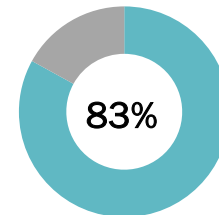
Over half (55%) of respondents reported having a board of directors as the advisory structure for their organization. About one out of five (20%) reported having an advisory board or council, and one out of five (20%) identified their advisory structure as something else, including commissioners, elected officials, executive boards, or a leadership roundtable.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported advisory bodies that reflect the communities they serve. Respondents reported a median of 86% people of color among advisory members and a median of 83% members who are Black.

A board of directors is the most common advisory structure















Median % Black advisory members



Findings

BLOs address a wide range of issues that impact the Black community

BLOs tackle a diverse array of issues, with community building as the most common (73%) issue area. BLOs reported serving anywhere from 15 to 29,000 people in a year, with a median number of 700 people served.

	Community Building	(73%)		Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP)	(45%)
	Leadership Development	(60%)		Health Services	(40%)
	Youth Development	(53%)		Housing	(35%)
	Economic Development	(50%)		Political Power Building/ Civic Engagement	(35%)
	Education	(45%)		Arts & Culture Promotion/Education	(33%)
	Social-Emotional Development	(45%)		Community Re-Entry	(30%)

We've existed for 30 years in service to and from within the African American community. We are a safe place that focuses on children and families. We provide stable housing, education, and case management from a culturally relevant African American experience. Also, First Place provides service to other organizations and helps other African American groups achieve success.
– Dawn Mason, First Place



section 02

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple issue areas.

Photo credit: Chris B. Bennett. *Flix & Pix Northwest*. 2014.

Findings



Our project, on the face of it, is a Black arts and media project. Our actual goal is to address issues of displacement and Black homeownership in the neighborhood. On one level, our project is presenting the model where homeowners can think creatively about how to use their properties in ways that can create community benefit and also bring in the financial resources they need to maintain their homes and maintain ownership. It's another way of thinking about land use in terms of single family, residential zone homes beyond the current owner occupancy or tenancy arrangement.

— Inye Wokoma, Wa Na Wari

We've seen over 4,000 fathers walk through our door and get some sense of direction in their life, whether it be jobs, whether it be reconnecting with their kids, or reconnecting with their families after bouts with drugs and alcohol or prison. The thing we're most proud of is that we've created an environment where folks can come and just be heard.

Most fathers just want to be heard.

*— Jeanett and Marvin Charles,
Divine Alternatives for Dads Services (DADS)*



section 02

Photo credits (left to right): Susan Fried, Wa Na Wari Arunga Party | Jeanett & Marvin Charles, DADS

Findings

This organization is in honor of Alajawan Brown who was shot and killed on purpose in a case of mistaken identity on April 29, 2010. Alajawan was 12 when he passed away...

The Foundation continues what Alajawan was doing...provides free backpacks and school supplies to children, hosts Thanksgiving dinner for about 200 people, provides scholarships for kids who want to play a sport or go to a camp. Alajawan wanted to make a difference in his community, and we feel like it's our job to continue that.

– Ayanna Brown, Alajawan Brown Foundation



What we do at Northwest Tap Connection is not with the intent that every child will pursue dance as a career.

For us, realistically, dance is a hook, because what we're really talking about is getting kids in to understand the difference between integrity and reputation, and bring up a community of socially conscious young people. So, the thought was to get kids really hooked on dance and use dance as leverage to talk about historically how the arts have been used for change and then to hold them accountable from an integrity standpoint.

– Melba Ayco, Northwest Tap Connection

section 02

Findings

BLOs most commonly reported strong missions; skilled leadership, staff, and boards; and longevity as key strengths

Survey respondents commonly identified strong mission, vision, and values; skilled leadership, board, and staff; and the longevity or history of their organization as key strengths. In interviews, leaders of BLOs consistently spoke about their passionate staff who have lived experiences similar to clients served as critical to the organization's ability to make an impact on the community.

Organizations' strengths*



section 02

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple strengths.

Findings

We have many strengths. Our mission and focus. The support that we receive from the community. Community is at the center of what we produce, it's about the community and the people that we serve. Also the people – the board, the directors, the staff, and volunteers –without them, we would not be able to do our daily mission.

– LaNesha DeBardelaben,
Northwest African American Museum (NAAM)



We definitely have a strong vision, a strong mission, and our board members and staff are all so passionate about this work and this location, because many of us have ties to the Central District. So we care in a way that helps fuel our energy when it comes to the work. It comes through in almost everything we do.

– TraeAnna Holiday, Africatown
Community Land Trust

section 02

Findings



I think the reason why we're so successful right now is that the people on the frontlines doing the work are people with lived experiences that are the example of what is possible. Quite a few of the folks that are a part of our team are formerly incarcerated, formerly homeless, from the community in which that they're serving and working. All people of color are on our team. I think when they come through our doors, they see themselves, and there is a comfort and trust level in that they feel comfortable sharing more, because it's either somebody that they know or somebody that they see themselves in...I attribute all of our success to that. To the fact that the workforce at the Urban League looks like and has the lived experiences of those that we're serving.

-- Michelle Merriweather, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

In my organization, [the strength] is the spiritual connectivity and the fact that they are focused on building a community.

The other thing is promoting equity and social justice as a strength. We give voice to those who don't have a voice, believing that everyone should have a right to espouse their constitution. Just like the living wage issue... we're involved in that. And, with criminal justice, we want to make every effort to make sure that we stop that pipeline from school to prison for our young Black kids.

-- Julie Burrell,

First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church &
FAME Equity Alliance of Washington



section 02

Findings

Our number one accomplishment has been creating the space that has been transformative for more people than we can reliably count. There are almost no more easily accessible, drop-in, community-oriented, DIY art spaces, almost anywhere in the city, and certainly not in the Central District, definitely very few that are Black-led and specifically for Black art.

— Inye Wokoma, Wa Na Wari



As a result of the cultural healing of our retreats, women are starting businesses, writing books, getting promoted, and even receiving vital organ donations. Women are speaking up and prioritizing self care and discovery. Women are more active as parents, professionals, and in their community. When you free folks from the traumas that have paralyzed and imprisoned them, in a safe space that is culturally centered, it not only helps the women, but it helps the entire community. This is radical healing justice!

— Veronica Very, Wonder of Women International



section 02

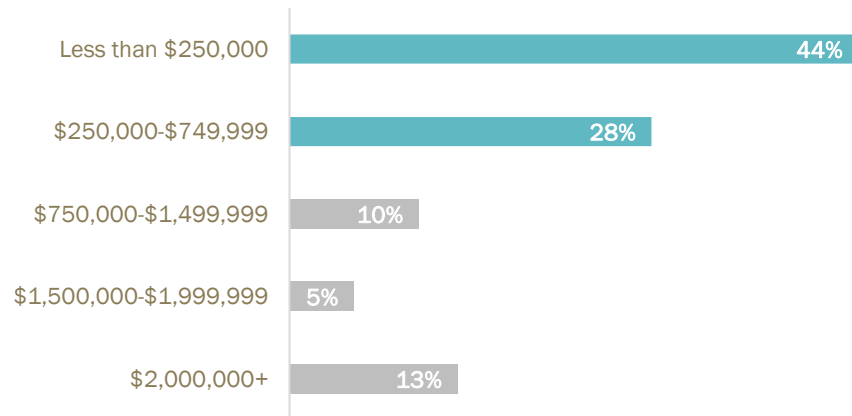
Photo credits (left to right): Susan Fried | Eyemagination Imaging

Findings

Reported budget size varied widely, with BLOs most commonly reporting an operating budget less than \$250,000

Reported annual budgets for BLOs varied widely from less than \$250,000 to over \$2,000,000. More than two out of five (44%) BLOs reported having annual budgets less than \$250,000, and nearly one-third (28%) of BLOs indicated their budgets were less than \$750,000 a year.

Annual operating budget



Findings

Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents reported three months or less of operating cash reserves

Approximate amount of operating cash reserves



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Not sure

■ 3 months or less

■ 4-6 months

■ More than 6 months

section 02

Findings

Funding sources vary widely among BLOs

Survey respondents reported a median of three different funding sources. Corporate, family, and private foundations/public or private foundations (76%) were most commonly reported as a funding source, followed by donors (70%), and local government (68%). About one-third of respondents reported receiving funding from other private or institutional funders (35%) and other sources (32%), with a few commenting that other sources included program, tuition, or tax revenue. Slightly more than one-quarter (27%) reported contributions from state government, and less than one-fifth (19%) reported federal government dollars as a funding source.

The degree to which each funding source contributed to an organization's overall operating budget varied widely across all funder types, with some organizations reporting as little as 5% and other organizations reporting as much as 100%.

Funding source	% BLOs receiving funding source*
Corporate, family, or private foundations/Public or private foundations	76
Donors	70
Local government	68
Other private or institutional foundations	35
Other sources	32
State government	27
Federal government	19

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple funding sources.

Findings

Funding is always a challenge. We never get enough money for overhead. We always get a slew of restricted funding, like we get funding specifically for food insecurity or housing, but not enough to run and administer the programs. It's always a challenge to tell that story and help the funder see how that's an investment. We, like a lot of our Black-led agencies, don't have the proximity to people with wealth to be able to get flexible dollars to be able to have an ease and a pathway to having access to resources. It has shifted a little bit. We are getting more private funding, but the conversation is still around things like, "Well, my donor-advised fund says this is the mission of my fund" vs. "What do you need for the well-being of the people you serve?"

– **Andrea Caupain, Byrd Barr Place**



One of the challenges is that we have to bootstrap everything. Not being able to find funders who are willing to say, "Hey, we like your track record. We like where you're going. We're going to make a big bet on you!" There are a few funders who have made big bets on us, but not that many. What I see, because I do a lot of national work as well in education, is the same pattern. The same pattern of, if you are a person of color, the hoop that you have to jump through is a lot higher than the hoop other people have to jump through. Even if you have success, you still have to prove yourself over and over and over again, whereas other folks might get money on an idea that they haven't even tried on people that they have no connection to—generally people of color.

– **Trish Millines Dziko, Technology Access Foundation**

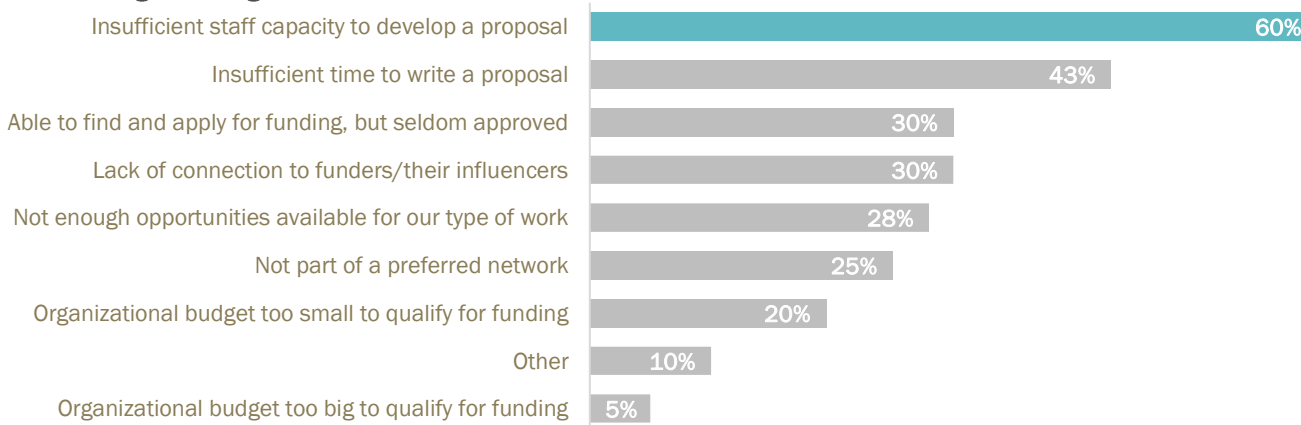
section 02

Findings

Insufficient staff capacity was identified as a primary challenge in securing funding

When asked to identify challenges in securing support from new funders, three out of five (60%) respondents identified insufficient staff capacity, and slightly less than half (43%) identified insufficient time to dedicate to a proposal. Nearly one-third (30%) of participants noted barriers to entry because of lack of connection to funders or their influencers. Respondents who selected “other” (10%) specified systemic inequities in how philanthropy is structured. About 10% of respondents reported no challenges with securing new funding, but many of these respondents noted that they were strictly a volunteer-run organization and did not have a need to seek operational or budget support.

Common funding challenges*



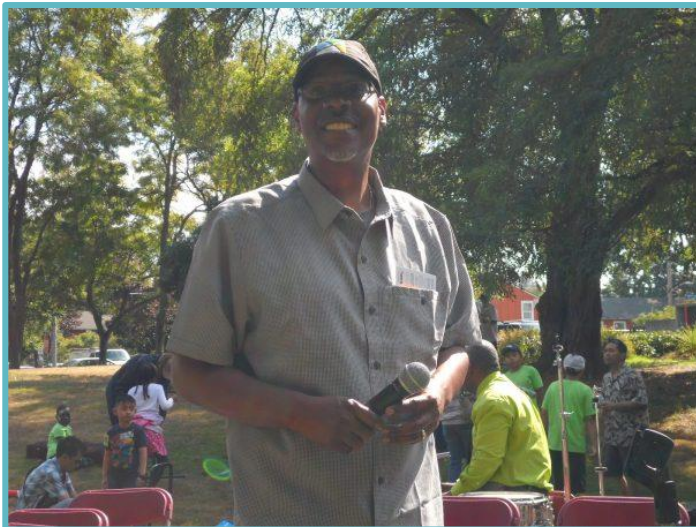
section 02

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple challenges.

Findings

I would say being second-guessed after all these years, in spite of the acclaim, is a challenge. I went to a social capital investment funding conference, and we talked about why don't Black-led/POC-led organizations get that kind of support? We can't do any worse than the ones that got that support. But, because of implicit bias and racism, we're second-guessed. It's like, if we really invested in the neighborhood and in them, they would be an even bigger thorn in our side.

– Gregory Davis, Rainier Beach Action Coalition



A lot of the funding that's out here is to fix broken people, and our people aren't really the issue; the systems are the issue. There's not a lot of funding that goes to fix broken systems. It's always about, "How are you going to get X number of people to graduate in this broken system? How are you going to get X number of people to get employed in this broken system?" It's not looking at the real root cause. We're looking at the participants as if there's something wrong with them and whatever we're going to do is going to help them overcome this broken system. So, as far as funding goes, that's been a barrier and it's really frustrating.

– André Franklin,
Brothers United In Leadership Development (BUILD)

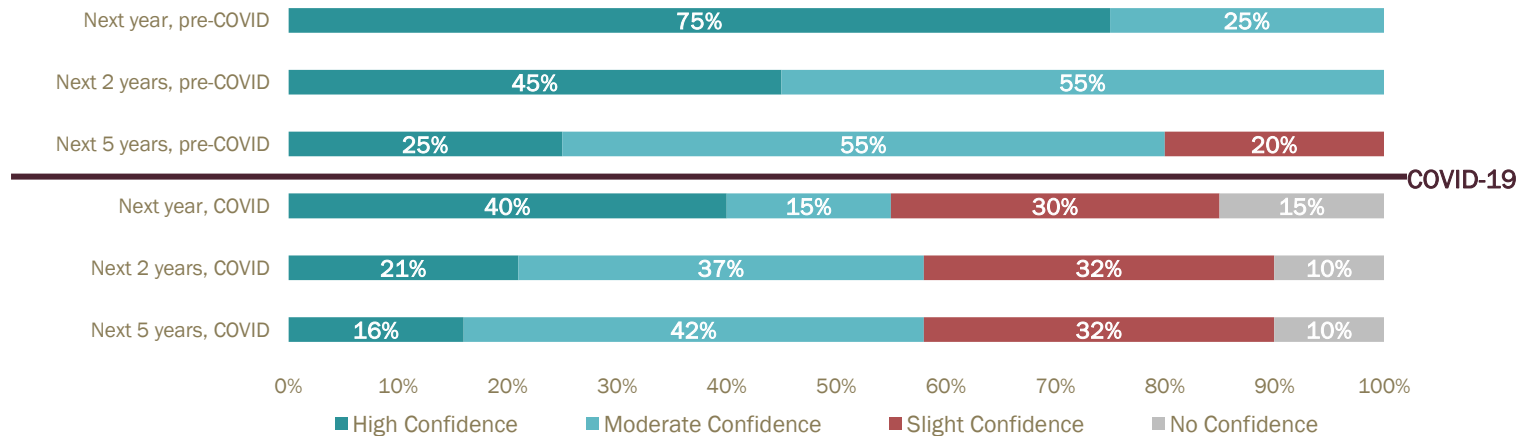
section 02

Findings

Insufficient funding is a common challenge

When asked to think about the challenges that make it difficult for their organization to accomplish its mission, interviewees overwhelmingly pointed to lack of funding. Survey respondents expressed similar concerns. Survey participants were asked to rate their confidence in their ability to maintain funding for the next year, two years, and five years. Prior to COVID-19, 75% of respondents (n=20) had high confidence in their ability to maintain funding over the next year, but only 40% of those who responded during the pandemic (n=19) had high confidence. For both groups, confidence waned for two- and five-year projections, suggesting a lack of funding reserves and future stability.

Confidence in ability to maintain funding, before and during COVID



Findings



The bottom line is that we don't have access to wealth. We don't have access to funding. It's very difficult for Black churches to get money for anything...We would love to be able to have great grants to pay people. Most are volunteers; we only have two paid staff. It would be nice to be able to attract people who are trained in nonprofits.

– Julie Burrell,
First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME) & FAME
Equity Alliance of Washington

The application and process to receive and report on funds shouldn't be so complicated. Oftentimes, I hear from our Development Director that we have to run through 1,000 hoops to get \$7500. Funders should ease the process of applying for and reporting on grant funds. With the limited capacity that we have to do the work that we do, we need processes that are less burdensome.

– LaNesha DeBardelaben,
Northwest African American Museum (NAAM)



section 02

Findings



See us. Invest in us. Trust us and ask us what it is that we need to close the gap, when organizations say they want to end racism, close the disparity gap, etc. We have to compete for pennies, and most of the funding goes to organizations that are not led by us, but serve us. It's disheartening. We're here. We're doing this work every day. Why is this other organization getting five times the support that we're getting from the same funder? How can you help us scale? When you truly see that we're closing the gap...we're answering the needs of our community. We just need the support to grow it. I think that's the biggest thing. I think, just like the folks that we serve, we often feel invisible.
– Michelle Merriweather, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

What has risen to the top for us that has often gone unheeded is from funders that have evaluations associated with the resource recognizing that other funders have evaluations associated with their resources. Now, you have to do a multiple-wing kind of evaluation work. Some of it is calling us to start from scratch. Instead of saying, "We've got this body of evaluation work. Now, what can you adapt?" If you ran the list of performance measures across all funders, I'm sure it would be two or three dozen different things.
– Gregory Davis, Rainier Beach Action Coalition



section 02

Findings

The doors of the church are always open. They're open to all groups. But then, in this state that we are, we're just sensitive. For example, we didn't used to have security, but now we have security, and we have to accommodate that expense in our budget. Security is not cheap, and, due to increased violence against Blacks and other groups, you have to invest in it to protect your community. Consequently, money that could have been used to help senior groups, struggling families or the youth, is re-directed to enhance security measures. It takes a chunk out of our budget, but you have to be serious about it if you want to keep people safe."

– Julie Burrell

First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME) &
FAME Equity Alliance of Washington



Funding without strings attached allows us to operate without [exclusive] focus on child and family trauma. Funding can fund excellence, despite deficiencies, and should come with capacity building elements. Make sure we have the technology that we need; help us use your money well. We need help in operations... community organizations may be good at delivering the mission, but need help with the back office.

– Dawn Mason, First Place

section 02

Findings

BLOs reported dramatic and immediate impacts related to COVID-19 that amplified existing systemic inequities

Eight interviewees participated in interviews during Washington State's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order. Consequently, when discussing challenges their organizations faced, many interviewees identified COVID-19 as a major barrier to connecting with the communities they serve. In addition, interviewees often discussed witnessing the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black communities in King County, in terms of illness, death, job loss, and housing instability.

Despite these challenges, interviewees talked about their organizations' resilience and unwavering commitment to work harder in the face of unprecedented circumstances, with one organization even pivoting to provide financial relief to community members that needed immediate support.

I just want to say that COVID's affected the communities we serve the hardest and is impacting us the hardest, requiring us to work more with the same amount of funds. We are in SOS mode at all times. People are saying, "I don't have food. My unemployment hasn't kicked in yet. I need money for bills, etc.", so we've had to work in overdrive. So, understand we're taxed. We're under-resourced already, and it's even worse for us now.

-- Yalonda Sinda, Africatown International



section 02

Findings

COVID's been heavily impacting people of all ages. Folks are losing their jobs. It's impacting their housing. Even with some of the emergency levers that are being pulled from federal and local governments, there's still a lot of impact with that. A lot of times, we focus on doing our events in historically Black neighborhoods that have been gentrified to try to have opportunities for people to come back in fellowship and build relationships. Unfortunately, we're not able to do that now, so we're really trying to learn different skill sets within our leadership team to be able to provide services and engage in different ways.

– André Franklin

Brothers United In Leadership Development (BUILD)



We've also pivoted very early on in this crisis to running the region's largest individual artists-focused relief program. It was an emergency funding program that three Seattle Black artists created to give back to the community that's given them so much. And, we took it on as fiscal sponsors to run the admin side of things and handle a lot of the financial information and disbursements. It's ongoing work where we've gotten close to \$600,000 out the door already, with a goal of a little bit over \$1 million. The scope of this crisis is so vast. This is \$1 million dollars to help people pay the bills they applied for help to pay back in March, so it's daunting work. But, I'm grateful we're able to contribute in some small way.

– Tim Lennon, LANGSTON

section 02

Findings



This year with COVID-19, it has highlighted our strengths, But, at the same time, some of strengths have become our weaknesses. When we started Northwest Tap Connection, we had policies and systems in place, so it would be affordable. We remodeled in 2018-2019, added two more studio spaces and a kitchen area, so we could really support artists in a variety of ways. We were going to have our auction in March, only for COVID-19 to hit the week of our auction. They hadn't stopped everything yet, but they were getting ready to close the schools, so a lot of people who normally came to the auction, didn't come. We usually raise \$60K, but we ended up with only \$15k.

It was a huge loss.

*– Melba Ayco,
Northwest Tap Connection*

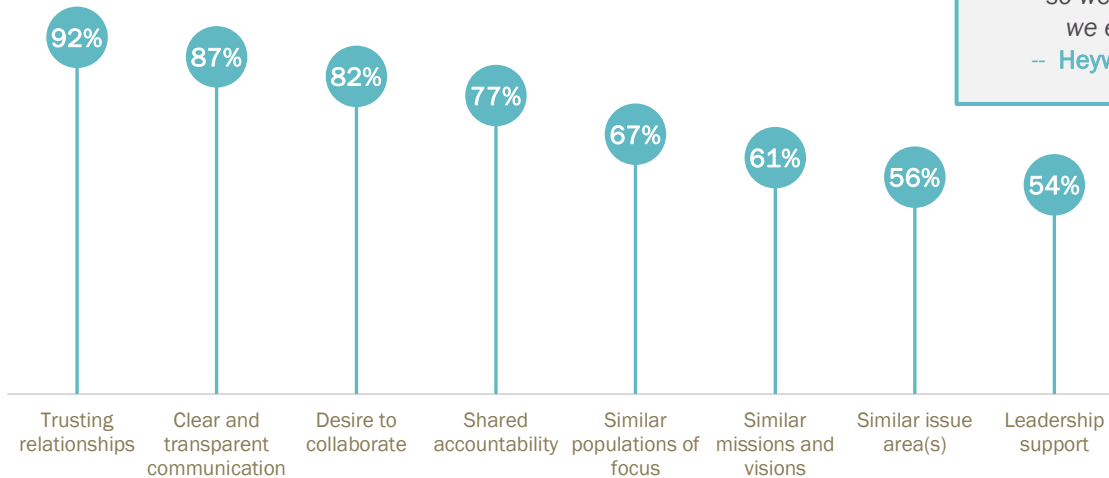


section 02

Findings

Trust, clear communication, and desire to collaborate emerged as the most important facilitators of partnership

Partnership facilitators*



The Central Area Collaborative has four values to guide how we work together: alignment, collaboration, collective responsibility, and transparency. We put those four values on the meeting agenda, so we know what we've all agreed to before we even start the meeting. And it works!

— Heyward Watson, Central Area Collaborative



section 02

*Percentages do not add to 100 because respondents could select multiple facilitators of partnership.

Photo Credit: Central Area Collaborative.

Findings

BLOs reported limited awareness of the vast number of BLOs, but deep relationships within their networks

Of the 96 BLOs listed on the survey, only five were unknown to any respondent. On average, respondents indicated that they had heard of 37 different BLOs, but awareness ranged from as few as five BLOs to as many as 72 BLOs.

Among the 24 BLOs with which 60% or more of respondents were familiar, a median of 63% of respondents rated their level of familiarity with the work of those organizations as “very familiar.”

When asked to identify key partners in King County, respondents listed a median of four BLOs, but some identified as many as 17 partners, and a few commented that their goal is to build more partnerships with all BLOs in King County.

That list [of organizations] that we were presented with [in the survey], I didn't check many boxes... amazed that there are that many. Would help to know that our missions coincide. We have to be on the same page...some fights, for lack of a better term, I don't want to get in. I feel like I'm not positioned to be part of a particular movement or agenda.”
— Ayanna Brown, Alajawan Brown Foundation



section 02

Recommendations







section 03

Recommendations

Involve and trust BLOs' expertise, directly share funding opportunities, and dedicate funding specifically for BLOs

Overwhelmingly, leaders of BLOs noted that funders could better support them with accomplishing their missions, if funders acknowledged the diversity of BLOs and involved BLOs in determining what priority areas to fund by giving BLOs a seat at the table. Many called on funders to trust their expertise. Several interviewees asked for funders to reach out to BLOs directly about funding opportunities, instead of relying on BLOs to find the funding announcements on their own. Leaders of BLOs also commonly discussed how dedicating resources specifically for BLOs could positively impact their ability to accomplish their mission.

	Involve BLOs in shaping the structure and scope of funding by giving leaders a seat at table
	Listen to and trust the expertise of BLOs
	Reach out to BLOs directly about opportunities
	Provide funding that is specifically earmarked for BLOs

Recommendations



I wish funders would understand that the culturally centered approach is critical. There is no way around that. I wish they understood the power of that, the ripple effect that it would mean for the community as a whole. I wish they knew the struggle it is to navigate through racism and how that impacts the work actually getting done. I wish they knew that their support could change the world.

– Veronica Very, Wonder of Women International

So many funders throw so much money at these diversity programs at major organizations and, if they were to just invest in general operations or payroll for small Black-led organizations...which is something that no funder is apparently interested in doing. They just want to fund program. But, if they were just able to help us retain the excellent people we have, we could grow our whole operation to the scale of these majors, but, instead, they're throwing diversity and inclusion grants out like candy to organizations that honestly aren't doing the work.

– Tim Lennon, LANGSTON



section 03

Recommendations



Sometimes, funders have a bad experience with one Black-led organization, and they don't give another different organization a second bite at the apple. So, they paint a really broad brush. And, I think that that has a negative impact on community. Like, if one organization has a bad interaction with [a funder], it would be a while before another Black-led organization will have a chance to have that same opportunity. And, so, in essence, when someone's misaligned, it doesn't just hurt their organization, it hurts all the organizations that come after them.

– Ed Prince, Washington State Commission on African American Affairs

Take into consideration that not one size fits all. Take into consideration that some of us are not going to have a particular track record that they may be seeking, just because of the scarcity of the resources. Be more willing to provide funds for pilot programs, instead of funding only ideas that are already established. Pilot programs allow for growth. You don't know what the success rate is, because you haven't tried it. You want to see if you can make that work

– Ayanna Brown, Alajawan Brown Foundation





section 03

Recommendations

Minimize barriers, value qualitative insights, invest in capacity building, and make decision-making processes transparent

Many interviewees noted how the burdensome application and reporting requirements of public and private funders prevented them from either obtaining or sustaining funding. Several said that they simply did not have the systems in place to manage reporting requirements and wished that funders would invest in capacity building support or provide general operating funds that would enable BLOs to build more robust tracking systems. A few called on funders to place greater value on the qualitative insights or stories of success that BLOs can more readily share, rather than giving quantitative data greater weight. Finally, some requested transparent decision-making processes to better understand how awardees are selected.

	Reduce or remove application and reporting barriers
	Recognize the qualitative insights have value
	Invest in capacity building assistance and provide general operating support
	Be transparent with how award decisions are made

Recommendations



People try to set up different ways of putting out calls for applications. You may change the way you do the call, the way you put the call out, the language of the call, the parameters of how people can apply, so more people can apply. You may change the way you promote it, so that different people see it, but if, at the end, there is still this structure where people submit their request and then everything goes behind a closed door somewhere and people decide and then emerge with their decision, it's the same fundamental structure.

— Inye Wokoma, Wa Na Wari

Be authentic in your approach. Recognize that not all Black-led organizations are the same. We don't look the same. We're not the same. Fund us in the guidelines you're going to put in, and then get out of the way, and let us do the work.

If you're all volunteer-based organization or maybe you have one employee and you're really, really grassroots, you've got to go and find someone to be your fiscal sponsor and then some of that money is being taken away.

No one's got a fiscal sponsor for you for free.

— Ed Prince,

Washington State Commission on African American Affairs



section 03

Considerations



section 04

Considerations

Some voices have not yet been elevated

The online survey had a 54% response rate. Therefore, findings may not reflect the full range of experiences of BLOs in King County. In addition, the second wave of the survey and the supplemental survey launched just as the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and the movement for racial justice were starting to impact the Black community in King County, which likely limited many leaders' abilities to respond to the surveys or participate in key informant interviews. Furthermore, while 26 individuals expressed interest, Cardea was only able to complete 18 key informant interviews, due to time constraints.



References & Reviewers



section 05

References & Reviewers

References

1. Coates, T. N. (2014). The case for reparations. *The Atlantic*, 313(5), 54-71.
2. Batten, S.T. and Williams, N.C. (2017). The case for funding Black-led social change.
<http://www.blacksocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BSCFN-Case-Statement.pdf>



Report review panel

- Ericka Cox | King County Office of Equity and Social Justice
- Gregory Davis | Rainier Beach Action Coalition
- Karen Toering | Leader in local and national efforts for philanthropic justice and Black cultural arts, formerly with Social Justice Fund Northwest
- Sharon Nyree Williams | Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas

