

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on May 3, 2022.

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 7, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Amirfaiz, Ma, Mansfield, Phan, Singh
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Piper, Commissioner Mercer
STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Leslie Miller, Department of Parks and Community Services
GUEST SPEAKERS: Amadeo Guiao, Lunas Consulting
OTHERS PRESENT: Human Services Commissioner and Staff from City of Kirkland, City of Kirkland, Sammamish, and Issaquah.
RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Commissioner Ma who presided.

2. SPECIAL MEETING

A. Equitable Grantmaking Principles and Practices

Trainer Amadeo Guiao with Lunas Consulting stated that deep equity is about more than just changing structures, policies, and procedures; it is about approaching the work in a radically different way that puts relationships first. Amadeo Guiao noted having more than 20 years of experience supporting community-based organizations and working with the most resilient and the most marginalized communities, including Black and Brown, and queer and trans folks, and noted identifying as queer and nonbinary from a line of community builders and healers.

Amadeo Guiao shared having started and run a community organization 13 years ago in South Seattle called Venue Healing. The organization served queer and trans, Black and indigenous people of color and social justice leaders. It was a leadership development organization that used regenerative practices and access to nature as a pathway of healing. After leaving the organization and going back to school to obtain two master's degrees from Brandeis University, the doors to more and new opportunities were opened. The difference in acceptance is evidence of societal biases. The last four years have been spent working in philanthropy, including two years as capacity building director at the Potlatch Fund, and for the past two years as a consultant supporting foundations like Social Justice Fund, Satterberg Foundation, and funders of LGTBQ issues on issues of healing justice.

The Commission training is occurring in two parts. All human service commissioners were asked to either participate in person or listen to the recording for tonight's part one. Those

new to the information were encouraged to do more research on their own using the abundance of information available on every subject related to racial equity social justice philanthropy. It was noted that tonight's workshop would take the form of a lecture, and that the second would focus more on community building and putting the principles into action using a case study.

Equitable grantmaking stems from the principles and values of social justice philanthropy, which seeks to transform philanthropy, the giving of money to charitable causes, toward redistribution rather than charities. It recognizes that access to money to be given away is in and of itself not just because of the extraction principles of capitalism in the systems. It is therefore not being charitable towards those in need, but rather in order to be fair and equitable it is only fair to redistribute it. The first principle is that social justice giving focuses on systemic change that addresses the root causes of racial, economic, and environmental injustice, not just the symptoms. For example, multi-year funding to organizations creating public safety initiatives in working to defund the police rather than only responding after a murder has happened. The next principle is social justice giving centers the people who are the most impacted as key decision makers and respects their self-determination by giving with no strings attached. Much of philanthropic giving is only given for projects; little is available for overhead or administrative costs.

Grantmaking organizations strive to be accountable, transparent, and responsive in their work. For example, having clear and simple compensated application processes, explicit funding criteria, and invitations for feedback from grantee partners that help build strong relationships. Those doing the work should be seen as partners, not charity cases. Grantmaking organizations act in solidarity with social justice movements by contributing not only money but other resources like time, knowledge, skills, and access to social networks.

Amadeo Guiao said equity is defined as trying to understand and giving people and communities what they need to live full and healthy lives. Equality is defined as everyone getting the same thing. Equality can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things. In unjust and oppressive systems in which power and resources get hoarded, everyone does not start from the same place. Racial equity is the process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies and practices, systems, structures, and culture by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

The need to focus on race is because the mountains of research and studies done over literally decades shows that race is one of the most reliable predictors of life outcomes across many areas, including life expectancy, income, wealth, physical and mental health, maternal mortality, and other areas. Achieving results from grantmaking that actually brings systemic change and not just band-aid solutions depends on bringing an intentional, explicit, and sustained focus to address racial disparities across the problems trying to be solved.

Compared to White individuals, African American business owners are 5.2 times more likely to be denied a loan, even when everything else is held constant. African Americans are also 2.3 times more likely to experience infant death and are almost three times more likely to be searched at a traffic stop. Black women die three times more often giving birth.

From wealth to employment, systemic racism leads to significant disparities. The pandemic has revealed that the most vulnerable are Black and Brown community members, who have experienced a higher likelihood of getting sick and dying from COVID-19, not just because of a lack of access to healthcare but because Black and Brown persons make up a disproportionate share of essential workers. Those communities are also getting hit the hardest in recessions.

The research on field-based philanthropic efforts to combat complex social problems shows that when it comes to achieving population level change from teen smoking to teenage pregnancy and access to hospice and palliative care, the stories are different when the results are aggregated by race. For instance, in 2001 only seven percent of U.S. hospitals with 50 or more beds reported having a palliative care team with access to end-of-life hospice care. That number increased to 72 percent by 2019, however access and utilization have not been equitable across populations. Of the patients using hospice care in 2013, only seven percent identified as Latino, Latinx or Hispanic, and only eight percent identified as African American. Both of those percentages were significantly lower than the groups' representation in the overall population. Likewise, the U.S. teen birth rate has seen a dramatic drop of 70 percent since its peak in 1991. However, despite progress across all racial groups, there are significant racial disparities in teen birthrates; while the rate for White teen girls is 13 per one thousand girls, the rate for teen girls of color is more than twice that with 28 per one thousand Black girls, 29 per one thousand Latinx girls, and 33 per one thousand Native American girls. The reasons for the differences are no doubt complicated by issues of race, class and access to healthcare and contraception. However, it is easy to look at the overall drop in teen pregnancy and just assume that the problem has been solved. The philanthropists who care about the issue are having to play catchup. If solutions had been designed from the very beginning with racial equity in mind, there would currently be compelling and comparable results across all populations.

While some say that equity is not fair to everyone and that some communities get more than others, the truth is that equity benefits everyone. A good example of how designing for the most vulnerable groups often ends up benefiting all people can be seen in the use of sidewalk curb cuts that were originally intended to help folks in wheelchairs. Pressured by disability advocates, the city of Berkeley installed its first curb cut in 1972 at a time when curb cuts were not common. What was surprising, however, was that once curb cuts were in place, the nation discovered that more than just the disabled benefited and curb cuts became a favorite of parents pushing strollers, workers pulling heavy carts, business travelers wheeling luggage, anyone suffering from joint pain, and runners and bikers. The curb cut effect can be used as a guide to achieve equitable impact. Instead of seeing equity as a zero-sum game, it should be recognized that helping one group benefits other groups. When support is given where it is needed the most, everyone wins.

Of the \$427 billion given in 2018, Giving USA showed that individuals gave the most to non-profits at 68 percent. Foundations and governments gave about 18 percent of the total. The overall budget of the typical non-profit includes a mix of revenues. Foundation and government grants make up only a small percentage of the total. While it is known that there is widespread acceptance of the principles and goals of diversity, equity and inclusion, the numbers show that distribution is not equitable. Despite changing demographics and increased awareness of the impacts of systemic racism and oppression, giving to communities of color has remained fairly static over time. Pre-pandemic less than seven percent of grant dollars went to racial minorities even though they comprise 40 percent of the U.S. population. Only six percent of grant dollars went to people with disabilities, even though they represent 12 percent of the population. Giving to immigrants and refugees has ranged from 0.6 to one percent of large foundation grants, even though foreign-born U.S. residents comprise more than 11 percent of the population. On average, the revenues of Black-led organizations are 24 percent smaller than the revenues of their White-led counterparts. When it comes to unrestricted funding, the picture is even bleaker. The unrestricted net assets of Black-led organizations are 76 percent smaller than their White-led counterparts. In philanthropy, unrestricted funding often represents a proxy for trust.

Amadeo Guiao stated that in their effort to ensure that grant dollars go toward effective

organizations, many philanthropists have grantmaking practices that actually perpetuate unequal distribution of funds. Traditional grantmaking tends to favor organizations that already have existing relationships with funders and that have dedicated development staff, professional grant writers, larger budgets, more staff, and in essence greater organizational capacity. Such organizations are better positioned to access funding, and they tend to be led by White folks. Organizations led by people of color are left to sound the alarm about the disparities. Leaders of color on average have smaller budgets to work with and are more likely to report a lack of access to financial support from a variety of funding sources. Leaders of color also have inequitable access to social networks that enable connections to the philanthropic community. Internal interpersonal bias can often manifest as mistrust and microaggression, which inhibit relationship building and emotionally burdens leaders of color. Funders often lack an understanding of culturally relevant approaches, leaving them to over rely on specific forms of evaluation and strategies that are familiar to them. The major frustration many grassroots organizations have is the apparent disbelief among many funders and other people in power that communities actually have solutions to their own problems. The people in communities who have personal experiences dealing with society's entrenched problems should know more about it than those who have not.

Inequity exists because at the core there are structural processes, deeply rooted cultural norms, and biases relative to racial, gender, ethnic, class, sexual orientation, and disabilities. All of that leads to implicit bias.

Amadeo Guiao said the commissions have been tasked with a very sacred duty. In receiving grant applications, the commissions are receiving people's prayers and hopes for their communities. The review process determines which organizations will get funding and how much funding they will get. There are a variety of ways in which the process can be made more equitable but primarily they focus on learning about how decisions are made and how the brain works in terms of implicit bias. Implicit bias refers to the brain's automatic and instant association of stereotypes and attitudes toward particular groups without a conscious awareness. Implicit bias is evolutionary in that it involves the ability to distinguish a friend from an enemy. It is a fundamental quality of the human mind. Every day, people automatically group others into categories based on social and other characteristics, including race, gender, looks and speech mannerisms. Implicit bias explains why in recent years there has been a general decline in overly negative racial attitudes. In other words, people over time are becoming less consciously racist, leading to increased racial stratification, life outcomes and success indicators. Implicit or unconscious biases affect perceptions and guide behaviors, policies, and institutions. Implicit biases are often seen as individual problems, when in fact they are actually structural barriers to equality and equity. Studying implicit bias helps in understanding how to be more fair at a conscious level, undermining unfairness at the implicit and unconscious level.

Because implicit biases are pervasive, everyone possesses them. Most are often unaware of their implicit biases until education and exploration highlight them. It is incumbent upon all to be mindful of their decisions. Implicit biases cannot really be changed but through learning they can be interrupted.

Examples of implicit bias include the fact that doctors are less likely to prescribe life-saving care to Black folks. Female post-doctoral fellowship applicants must be 2.5 times more productive than the average male applicant in order to receive the same competence score. White researchers receive National Institutes of Health grants at nearly twice the rate Black researchers do. White managers are less likely to call back or hire members of a different ethnic group. A study in 2014 involved researchers sending the exact same resume and application for job openings. The resumes had the same names, but one person was listed as White and the other Black. The White person was described as generally being a good writer

with potential and good analytic skills, while the Black person was described as needing a lot of work and average at best. The rater was incredulous that the applicant went to New York University. The Black person was found to have twice as many spelling and grammar errors, even though the applications were identical.

Many racial inequities occur without intention or malice. Implicit bias helps to explain how racism can be subtle in appearance but significant in impact, especially when it comes to institutions where the bias of individuals at every level is routinely replicated through collective decisions and actions. Unless consciously counteracted, it becomes compounded. Implicit bias offers the idea that discrimination and bias are social, meaning they are learned, rather than individual.

Amadeo Guiao stated that the way grant making decisions are made is social. The way reality is interpreted is social. The unconscious is not just an internal phenomenon, it is constantly interacting with the environment and taking in an absorbing cues. Social categories like race, gender, nationality, and sexual orientation comprise some of the most powerful frames that operate at the subconscious level. It is the frames that give rise to implicit bias. Where one hangs out only with the same kind of people, it is likely that everyone in the group shares similar implicit biases. It therefore helps to socially diversify.

The first step toward engaging differently is to explore, identify, acknowledge, and act on implicit bias. Amadeo Guiao directed the commissioners to take the implicit association test from Harvard University before the second workshop. Unconscious biases are a function of automaticity and engaging in deliberate and mindful processing can prevent implicit biases from kicking in and determining behaviors.

The second step is to set goals to increase engagement in relationship and partnership building in grantmaking in diverse communities. Implicit bias is best detected when one uses data to determine whether there are certain patterns of behavior that lead to racially disparate outcomes. Once aware of such links, it becomes possible to actually effect changes.

The third step involves monitoring and improving the environment. Because one's environment both primes and helps to create implicit associations, it is important to continue to monitor and improve it. The process involves a cross section of diverse decision makers. Research shows that including a critical mass of marginalized folks in the decision-making process shapes biases.

The fourth step is to convene, listen and engage. The most marginalized communities are more than happy to share their priorities, needs and challenges, and the best way to meet communities is to go where they are to conduct outreach and make investments to build their capacity. The process allows for the aligning of values and mission.

Amadeo Guiao said there are many opportunities to address barriers and include equity in the process. Where the commissioners can make the biggest difference is in the decision making. It would be good for each group to discuss among themselves the degree to which equity should be incorporated in the group's priorities and in assessment criteria used in reviewing grant applications. The groups will need to design grantmaking criteria that explicitly mitigates implicit bias and levels the playing field for smaller organizations led by BIPOC folks that might serve Black and Brown communities. Culturally responsive approaches should be used even if they are not evidence based. The groups should also discuss how much risk they are willing to take. That could involve discussing up front how much money should be set aside to fund smaller organizations that have lower capacity and potentially unstable finances. The groups should also consider capacity building grants, including professional development.

With regard to the recruitment and management of commissioners, the Potlatch Fund uses a community-based model. Folks from the community were paid to serve on the decision-making committee for each of the various grants. Including one or more grantee and beneficiary community members on the commissions should be considered. Racial, ethnic, gender and income diversities should also be considered in making up the membership of each commission. Equity should be embedded in all documents, and training in equity principles should continue.

Polling grantees and community foundations along with intermediary organizations and community leaders is a good way learn about strong grassroots organizations. Smaller organizations should be given additional time to submit applications, and additional consideration should be given to providing language and cultural translation and technical assistance when working with organizations that have staff with limited English proficiency. In reviewing applications from such organizations, there should be at least one grant reviewer familiar with the specific culture and language.

In making decisions about awarding grants, it can be very helpful to consider the overall portfolio and where there might be gaps in terms of diversity. One approach is to use a dashboard of portfolio characteristics, such as percent of beneficiaries by race or ethnic group, by age, by traumas experienced, by type of intervention, by geography, by income level, by sexual orientation and by gender. The commissions should be aware of how its due diligence process may be biased toward well-resourced organizations that have greater capacity. Deciding ahead of time to award a certain amount of money to smaller organizations is a good principle. Beyond organization size, grant applications can be bucketed in other categories for comparison.

The commissions should also be aware of how their processes may favor evidence-based practices. Many research studies traditionally focus on White populations and are not as inclusive as others. As a result, practices that are effective for underrepresented community might not have a solid academic research evidence base to validate them, though they might have other evidence of effectiveness. Many of the organizations funded by the Potlatch Fund connect folks to their ancestral lifeways of art and language, offering meaning and purpose to lives and supporting their mental and spiritual health, which is then translated into greater cultural identity, and which impacts tribal sovereignty and political autonomy.

Communicating directly with applicants when there are questions about their applications is a good practice. Quick phone calls can lead to a better understanding of their circumstances. In all cases, honesty should be given back to organizations about their applications out of respect for their time invested in applying for grants. The feedback will help them improve their grant writing capacity.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Amirfaiz adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.