

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Within the National Character Initiative



Starting in 2018, the Foundation prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion in its convenings with grantees and later with grantmaking. The Foundation provided supports to grantees to build grantees' capacity related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Specifically, they hired a consultant, Equity Meets Design, to provide technical assistance to and they allocated \$2 million for *Working Towards Equity* grants that grantees used to build capacity toward addressing issues of equity.

This document describes the role of Equity Meets Design in facilitating equity work, highlights how grantees used the *Working Towards Equity* grants, and the influence of the grant on individuals and organizations.

Support From Equity Meets Design

Equity Meets Design facilitated professional development sessions within the convenings that discussed the ways in which inequities are built into organizational design, and how organizations can develop solutions to address equity problems. Grantees described that these workshops:

provided an opportunity to have conversations and listen to diverse perspectives that informed thinking and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and engaged staff in all roles, including CEOs, which was integral because equity is built into all aspects of an organization and conversations should start from the top down.

Ultimately, staff took the learnings from the workshops back to their organizations, incorporating them into their work.

Working Towards Equity Grants

This section highlights work that four grantees (California School-Age Consortium [CalSAC], Campfire, Girls Inc., and YMCA of the USA [YMCA]) accomplished with the *Working Towards Equity* grants.

YMCA—SCALED UP PROMISING PRACTICES

The YMCA implemented Boys and Young Men of Color (BYMOC) in 10 pilot Ys in their first year. This program forms a coalition with other organizations committed to improving outcomes for boys and young men of color. Each of the pilot Ys (1) tested frameworks and tools that support boys and young men of color; (2) developed cross-functional implementation teams; (3) participated in organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion assessments using the Intercultural Development Inventory; and (4) collaborated with My Brother's Keeper Alliance and other national partners. In their second year, the YMCA launched the BYMOC in 20 other Ys who are working on identifying programs, practices, or policies that influence and connect with young men of color and their ambassadors.

YMCA plans to undertake a fundraising initiative that quadruples the resources that the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation provided and allows them to expand the BYMOC initiative into other cities. They also plan to refine some of their foundational trainings in response to input that they got from Equity Meets Design.

CALSAC—FORMED DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ALLIANCE

CalSAC, in partnership with the California cohort, established a strategic alliance across organizations. This alliance identified equity needs across California out-of-school time providers and established a common strategy to address them. The organizations (1) explored systems of power, privilege, and oppression; (2) studied counter dominant and authentic equity-driven leadership models and practices; (3) assessed organizational policies, practices, and culture to strengthen capacity to advance equity; (4) determined a plan for addressing equity policy, practice, and culture gaps within each organization; and (5) worked collaboratively to address any equity gaps across organizations.

Within the alliance, CalSAC responded to oppression and anti-blackness that was embedded in their programs and curricula and looked more deeply into racial justice within the program. At the organizational level, they examined their organizational policies and practices to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is built into their design.

CalSAC plans to find additional funding to continue to work with other organizations within the California cohort around diversity, equity, and inclusion. They also plan to conduct trainings with afterschool trainers about how to have conversations around equity. Finally, they plan to establish a group of trainers who will lead sessions about social and racial justice and anti-oppressive practices.

GIRLS INC.—INCORPORATED EQUITY INTO STRATEGIC PLANNING

Girls Inc.'s goal was for diversity, equity, and inclusion to permeate throughout all aspects of their organization, including the national office and the 79 Girls Inc. affiliates. To do so, they (1) revised their strategic plan and objectives to include diversity, equity, and inclusion components; (2) created permanent positions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion; (3) developed an organization-wide diversity task force; (4) developed a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan for the affiliate network using a SWOT analysis; and (5) conducted diversity, equity, and inclusion workshops with affiliates during the annual conferences.

Girls Inc. plans to continue diversity, equity, and inclusion work within their organization by hiring a chief diversity officer who will help them develop a framework to shape their diversity, equity, and inclusion approach. Girls Inc. also plans to ensure that more diversity exists across roles within their organization to ensure that people of color are represented across all aspects of the work.

CAMPFIRE—AUDITED PRACTICES

Campfire hired Thrive Paradigm, a consultant focused on equity in youth-serving organizations that supported them with a diversity, equity, and inclusion audit. Specifically, Thrive Paradigm provided an audit tool to identify and correct problematic organizational practices related to cultural appropriation.

Following Thrive Paradigm's advice, Campfire assembled a task force to participate in a series of trainings about cultural appropriation. Campfire staff noted that the consultants were important to the success of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work because they provided an outside perspective that allowed them to have more candid conversations.

Campfire plans to undertake an initiative that makes their overnight camps more accessible and inclusive and described that the *Working Towards Equity* grant was pivotal in this effort because it allowed them to do work at the organizational level that will trickle down to the programmatic level.

Influence of National Character Initiative on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Influence of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative on organizations

The Foundation’s diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative influenced organizations by motivating staff to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their own roles and establishing a statewide collective on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Staff from Girls Inc. and the YMCA explained that the Foundation’s investment in diversity, equity, and inclusion motivated staff to spearhead other informal initiatives that increase awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., book club, speakers).

“But there’s really been this sense of, we want more, we really want to learn about this. I also think it was a result of staff members stepping up saying, ‘Look, what are we going to say about this [2020 civil unrest]? What [are we] going to do about this?’” – Grantee

Staff from CalSAC said that the *Working Toward Equity* grants helped the California cohort form a meaningful coalition around diversity, equity, and inclusion and stimulated conversations within the cohort about common strategies that they could develop to address inequities across the California out-of-school time system.

“I feel like all six of the partners really have clarity on this is what this means, and people are doing individual learning and unlearning, and that’s been really profound.”– Grantee

Influence on individuals understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion

Grantees noted that the investment in diversity, equity, and inclusion advanced their knowledge and understanding of the topic. Grantees also said that the investment in diversity, equity, and inclusion helped them be more conscious about all aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their day-to-day work and experiences. They could identify how well-intended policies weren’t beneficial for everyone because of the different populations each branch caters to (e.g., rural vs. urban), or how those decisions were sometimes influenced by more vocal stakeholders and were necessarily equitable.

“I’ve certainly spent more time thinking about it and learning multiple perspectives on it...and inspired me to learn more” – Grantee

Facilitators and barriers to sustainability of diversity, equity, and inclusion

Grantees noted that the primary facilitators to sustainability of diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations include:

- *Buy-in from staff*—strong staff buy-in is integral to ensuring that staff are having candid conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion and these conversations are integral to successful implementation.
- *Organizational audits*—a diversity, equity, and inclusion audit helps organizations reflect on their narrative and identify problematic behaviors to correct.
- *Alignment across organizations*—the *Working Towards Equity* grant allowed California out-of-school time providers to form a strategic alliance and share resources, and ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is cohesive across the California out-of-school time system.
- *National attention on diversity, equity, and inclusion*—current events and the Black Lives Matter movement brought issues of equity to the forefront nationally, and organizations are able to leverage this visibility to emphasize the importance of addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion internally.

Grantees also explained that some barriers hinder the sustainability of diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- *COVID-19 pandemic*—shrinking budgets mean that organizations may have to shift funds away from diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to support direct programming or operational costs.
- *Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion at the program-level*—traditionally, diversity, equity, and inclusion activities are program driven, which can be responsive in the short term but not the long term. To ensure sustainability, organizations need to address diversity, equity, and inclusion through collective action and mobilization—to understand the political and institutional barriers that organizations need to overcome to truly be equitable.