

Beyond Diversity

The Denver Foundation's Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative is working to move past diversity to inclusiveness.

The most common statement we hear from nonprofit leaders is probably: “We need more money to do our work.” Perhaps the second most common statement is: “We’d like to have a more diverse board and staff, but...”

The “but” in the preceding sentence is usually followed by something like this: “We don’t know the right people to ask.” “We asked Ms. A and Mr. B to be on our board, but they both declined because they’re already on too many other boards.” “We aren’t sure how best to recruit people from different ethnic and racial communities.”

In short, many nonprofit organizations have the desire to be more diverse, yet they lack the tools necessary to make it happen. This is the story of how The Denver Foundation has begun to create some of those tools and put them in the hands of nonprofit leaders.

Our story begins with a sad truth. In many ways, diversity in the nonprofit sector lags behind other sectors. Currently, people of color make up 31 percent of the federal workforce and 58 percent of Denver Mayor John Hickmlooper’s appointees. In the business world, many companies began long ago to diversify everything from their workforces to their marketing. As one business leader told us, “It’s common sense.

From a business standpoint, it’s stupid not to be more diverse.”

Unfortunately, we in the nonprofit sector are beginning to pay the price for not being more diverse—especially in places like the city of Denver, which now has a population that is more than 50 percent people of color. When we lose touch with our constituents, we become less able to respond to their needs and less able to bring together the resources to meet those needs. Nonprofit organizations are in danger of becoming less effective as their communities change around them.

Given these demographic realities and nonprofit leaders’ interest in addressing them, The Denver Foundation’s board of trustees voted in 2001 to make a long-term investment to help nonprofits become more diverse. For years, our program officers had been asking our grantees about staff and board diversity, and they had heard a recurring response—“We want to increase our diversity, but we don’t know how.”

Getting Started

Once the foundation identified this issue as a priority, we realized that we weren’t sure how to start. So, we convened task forces of local leaders from communities of color to help us develop ideas

and to propose people who could best serve on a steering committee to help lead and create the vision for an initiative. We also did extensive research into how other foundations and nonprofits had addressed this issue. One of the first things the newly appointed steering committee did was to push our thinking to a higher level. We weren’t going to be focusing on diversity, but on inclusiveness.

As we have come to define it, diversity in the nonprofit sector is the extent to which an organization has diverse people involved as board members, staff members and volunteers. Diversity is only one aspect of being inclusive. Inclusive nonprofits effectively incorporate the needs, viewpoints and assets of diverse communities into the culture and work of their organizations. Inclusive organizations must be diverse; however, diverse organizations are not always inclusive.

The steering committee gave the project a name—Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII)—and chose to focus on race and ethnicity. We clearly recognize the importance of inclusiveness of all kinds. However, given the limited resources available and the complexity of the issue of race in American society, we had to focus the scope of our work.



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL GADLIN

The mission of ENII is to enhance the effectiveness of metropolitan Denver nonprofit organizations by helping them become more inclusive of people of color.

Developing the Resources

ENII has developed a number of tools and strategies to help nonprofits increase their inclusiveness. Starting in 2002 with an allocation of \$50,000 per year from the foundation, ENII has:

- Published and disseminated *Inside Inclusiveness: Race, Ethnicity and Nonprofit Organizations*, a research report on best practices and barriers, designed for nonprofit organizations seeking to become more inclusive of people of color.

- Developed a speakers bureau and made presentations on *Inside Inclusiveness* to approximately 1,500 individuals in nonprofit organizations and associations.

- Developed a database of local inclusiveness trainers and consultants, available as part of our online Technical Assistance Database.

- Hosted a conference, *Diversity and Beyond*, in July 2005. The conference sold out three weeks early; 300 attended with 150 on a waiting list.

- Published *Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Nonprofit Orga-*

nizations, an 18-module workbook to help nonprofits become more inclusive of people of color by creating their own customized inclusiveness blueprint.

All of the resources named above are available through our website (www.denverfoundation.org).

The Plan of Action

With the enthusiastic support of the foundation's board, the ENII steering committee developed a strategic plan that carries the project and our internal funding through 2008. Next steps entail working on inclusiveness at three levels—throughout the sector, within organizations and for individuals.

- At the sector-wide level, we are developing a broad-based communications strategy to promote the value of inclusiveness and diversity in the nonprofit sector.

- To help enhance the inclusiveness of organizations, we will provide grant dollars to help them undertake the process described in *Inclusiveness at Work* and to assess whether or not the organizations become more effective as a result. We will also revamp our speakers bureau to provide ongoing training on becoming more inclusive to organizations.

- On the individual level, we are working to create a pipeline to connect

individuals from communities of color with the nonprofit sector. In particular, we hope to increase the number of people of color who are board members, staff members, donors and volunteers at nonprofit organizations.

At this point in our journey, ENII has gained an important partner. The Ford Foundation recently awarded The Denver Foundation a grant of \$250,000 over two-and-a-half years to help accomplish the work of ENII. As part of the grant, the Ford Foundation encouraged us to bring our story and tools to the broader philanthropic community—especially to other community foundations.

In service to this goal, we'd like to share some important lessons learned for other foundations seeking to build inclusiveness within their communities or among their grantees:

Listen to the community. The steering committee of ENII, which included many of metropolitan Denver's most established leaders and talented rising stars, has been its greatest strength. In Denver, our steering committee is composed almost entirely of people of color.

Link your initiative with your board. The chair of the steering committee is Dr. Dean Prina, a prominent local pediatrician, dedicated community volunteer and immediate past board

Why Invest in Becoming More Inclusive?

The following is excerpted from *Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Nonprofit Organizations* (Katherine Pease et al., The Denver Foundation, 2005, www.denverfoundation.org).

At one time or another, most nonprofit organizations have asked themselves, “How do we become more diverse?” In fact, their first question should be, “Why do we need to become more diverse?” There are two basic reasons why creating a more inclusive organization is a worthy endeavor:

- Inclusiveness can help nonprofits be more effective and better serve their constituents and communities.
- Creating an inclusive workplace is good for business.

First and foremost, inclusiveness can help organizations do their work more effectively and better serve their constituents and communities. Nonprofits are in the business of making their communities healthier, stronger and more enriching for all members. People, by their very nature, experience many aspects of life, from healthcare to the arts, differently. One of the primary reasons that people experience life differently is because they have different cultural backgrounds. When developing their programs and services, nonprofits must take cultural backgrounds and experiences into consideration to have a positive influence on the communities they serve.

Demographic shifts currently taking place in the United States are changing the makeup of the communities nonprofits serve. If nonprofits continue to base their plans and decisions on unexamined assumptions about their communities that may no longer be accurate, chances are high that their work will become less effective and relevant, given demographic changes.

There is a second compelling reason that race and ethnicity matter to the success of nonprofits. As many corporations have discovered—and a great deal of research has proven—creating an inclusive workplace is good for business. This adage may even be truer for nonprofits than for corporations. Nonprofits generally have lower pay scales than their corporate counterparts. The staff and volunteers of nonprofits join because they receive personal satisfaction from working with nonprofits. When financial incentive is removed as a key factor in staff and board retention, then creating a healthy working environment becomes even more important.

chair of The Denver Foundation. His passion for ENII and its work has spread throughout the board and helped create a sense of shared ownership among board members. As one board member recently said, “If we don’t do this work, who will?”

Invest in talented management.

Although the steering committee sets the vision, the management team of ENII has been the driver of its activities. Along with Dr. Prina and the foundation staff, we have been joined by Katherine Pease, consultant and noted expert in philanthropy. She has provided outstanding facilitation to ENII and served as the primary author of *Inclusiveness at Work*.

Look to those who have gone before. We have studied and learned from projects such as the greater Boston area’s Diversity Initiative (www.diversityinitiative.org), the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation’s Community Foundations Race Relations Learning Project (www.mott.org) and *Leading by Example* (www.ccfy.org/toolbox/leading_by_example_CA.htm), funded by the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth and California Tomorrow.

Build a bigger table. The key to ENII’s success to date has been our own inclusiveness. We have been joined by generous sponsors in the production of our conference and *Inclusiveness at Work*, including First Data Western Union Foundation, the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado, HealthOne Alliance

and Kroenke Sports Enterprises. In addition, we actively invite scrutiny, thoughtful comments and discussion throughout our initiative. We have often changed course as a result of input from community members.

Walk your talk. The Denver Foundation has committed to our own internal inclusiveness initiative. In our 18th month of this foundation-wide process, we are almost finished with our inclusiveness blueprint.

Be patient. This work is difficult and takes time. It cannot and does not happen overnight.

Be flexible and humble. As we do this work and learn more, we realize just how complex it is. We do not have all of the answers; in fact, we have very few of the answers. As we proceed, we are constantly making changes and adjustments.

As our story continues, we work toward the vision of a nonprofit sector where the most common statement we’ll hear is: “Being inclusive has helped us to become much more successful in providing services to the community.” **FNSC**

*Dean Prina, MD, is a trustee of The Denver Foundation. David Miller is president and CEO. Vice Presidents Lauren Casteel and Rebecca Arno serve on the ENII Management Team. Casteel was recently selected to serve on the Council on Foundations’ Committee on Inclusiveness. For more information on ENII, or to order your copy of *Inclusiveness at Work*, visit www.denverfoundation.org.*



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What's Next?

The Denver Foundation's Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII) is proud to have worked in partnership with the Community Resource Center to sponsor the Diversity and Beyond conference on July 21. During the conference, we unveiled the ENII workbook, *Inclusiveness at Work*, which provides tools to help nonprofits develop their own blueprints to become more inclusive of people of color.

So, what are the next steps for ENII? Here are some:

Distribute *Inclusiveness at Work*

- Approximately 1,000 copies of the workbook will be given away at no charge to grantees of the foundation's Community Grants Program, organizations and individuals connected with ENII, conference attendees and others.

- Additional copies will be sold through the foundation's website (www.denverfoundation.org) for \$35, plus shipping and handling.

- A second edition of the workbook is tentatively planned for 2007. We welcome and will depend on your feedback on this first edition of the workbook to revise it for a second edition. If you have feedback, please use the faxback form (Appendix E) included in the back of *Inclusiveness at Work*.

Provide Inclusiveness Resources

- ENII's popular Speakers Bureau has already reached more than 1,500 individuals, not including conference attendees, with presentations about the findings of ENII's original research project, *Inside Inclusiveness: Race, Ethnicity, and Nonprofit Organizations* (available at http://216.29.5.69/sites_cfa/1680/page18188.cfm).

- Additional presentations about the *Inclusiveness at Work* process and the importance of inclusiveness for nonprofit organizations will be available to nonprofit organizations and other groups at no cost. Updated information on the presentations will be posted at www.denverfoundation.org. To get more information on coordinating

a presentation throughout the United States, contact Oz Spies at ospies@denverfoundation.org or 303/300-1790, extension 130. Presentations will be available in September.

- We plan to facilitate the sharing of nonprofit organizations' inclusiveness stories. To share a story about successes or challenges related to inclusiveness work, contact Oz Spies at ospies@denverfoundation.org or 303/300-1790, extension 130.

- The Denver Foundation offers a searchable database of technical assistance consultants, including inclusiveness/diversity trainers and consultants, at www.denverfoundation.org/page22540.cfm.

- Additional opportunities and resources for nonprofit organizations working on inclusiveness to network with and learn from one another are being explored. Information will be posted at www.denverfoundation.org as it becomes available.

Put the Ford Foundation Grant to Work

- ENII has received a 30-month grant from the Ford Foundation to support *Inclusiveness at Work*, to conduct activities to increase the involvement of individuals of color in the nonprofit sector at all levels, to further evaluate our work and to provide a limited number of small grants for nonprofit organizations to engage in the workbook process.

- ENII's steering committee is currently developing a grants process for the small number of grants that will be available to help organizations engage in the process outlined in *Inclusiveness at Work*. For more information, visit www.denverfoundation.org. Grants will be available to organizations that have received support through The Denver Foundation's Community Grants Program. Information about grants will be available in September and the application will be available in October.

- ENII is working to develop a specific action plan to increase the involvement of individuals of color in the nonprofit sector.