



# Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity in Community Foundations

## “Responding to Systemic Equity Issues In Our Communities”

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As groups across the country engage in dialogue about this nation’s growing diversity, it is inevitable that these discussions also turn to long-standing issues of power and equity. National and local leadership interested in improving relations across racial and ethnic divides acknowledge that dialogue is a starting point, not an ending point for their earnest efforts. These leaders know that improving relations across boundaries of difference calls for strategic and sustained action to address the systemic equity issues that currently divide groups across the boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Given their asset base and scope of work, there are limits to what a community foundation is capable of achieving in terms of these systemic equity issues. However, as a key institution and leader in the civic life of their communities, many community foundations are searching for viable strategies to play a role in efforts to address these systemic equity issues. Drawing on some of the issues, concepts, analysis, and principles for action outlined in *Searching For The Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in American* (Glover-Blackwell, Pastor, & Kwoh), this tool provides guidelines for engaging your leaders in a dynamic discussion of strategies for making stronger impacts on systemic equity issues through strategic grantmaking and community leadership.

### Overview of Session

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- Small group discussion of implications of issues raised in *Searching For Uncommon Common Ground* for your community;
- Small group discussion of current and potential impact of foundation’s efforts on systemic equity issues in your community;
- Report out;
- Review and discussion of principles for leadership and action for 21st Century.

*The magnitude of the challenges presented by race cannot be underestimated. To make progress, the entire culture around racial discourse will need to shift. The nation must first acknowledge that a problem still exist—an American problem, not mere complaints from special interests groups. A dialogue about race is needed that is less emotionally confrontational, more informed, more rigorously pursued. No effort can be successful unless the experiences of others whose points of view differ from their own. The nation must commit to a course of action that is purposeful and based on sound policy that embraces its diversity and works to achieve economic and social equity.*

**Angela Glover Blackwell, Stewart Kwoh, & Manuel Pastor**

## Mixed-Group Discussions:

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Glover-Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor suggest that improving relations between the nation's various racial and ethnic groups, will require a willingness to discuss and address long-standing and emerging systemic equity issues. Working in mix-groups and large groups you will have the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue about these dynamics in your community.

### Mixed Group Discussion:

**(30 Minutes)** Select a facilitator and recorder, then take a few moments to collect then share your thoughts about the issue, themes, and dilemmas raised in the book (see box on right). Do any of the issues raised resonate with your own thinking about the changes that are occurring in the community your foundation serves? If so, which of these issues do you consider most important as factors to consider in your foundation's efforts to address diversity, inclusion, and equity issues? Consider any issues you identified in your Diversity E-Scan and SWOT or that have emerged in community studies you have conducted.

**(30 Minutes)** Then, take a few minutes to think about and share your insights about your own foundation's current efforts to address the most important systemic issues you previously identified in your community. Since you will not have time to discuss all aspects of each foundation's efforts, concentrate just on the following two areas: Grantmaking (Regular and Initiatives if you have some) and Community Leadership. In particular, consider and discuss your insights on the following questions:

- As currently structured, do either your Grantmaking or Community Leadership efforts allow your foundation to make a strong impact on the systemic equity issues you identified in your previous discussion?
- Do your grantmaking guidelines support work to strengthen individual initiative and also address structural factors? Do your guidelines allow for investment in the efforts of community groups who are tackling these issues through community organizing, policy advocacy, or other system reform strategies?
- Do your foundation's various convening and/or leadership efforts allow your staff and trustees to play a catalytic role in bringing attention to these issues in the various civic arenas the foundation is a part of?
- What are some ways you believe your foundation's current Grantmaking or Community Leadership efforts could be strengthened to improve the impact you are making on these system equity issues? Would making these changes have implications for other aspects of the foundation (e.g., donor development, staffing, governance, etc.)? What steps and leadership would it take to move in these directions?

### Selected Issues or Questions Raised in *Searching For the Uncommon Common Ground*:

?The need to consider the viability of continuing to frame race relations issues through a Black-White Paradigm.

?Do enduring economic disparities among different racial and ethnic groups indicate a persistence of structural inequality in our communities and society? Do these structural equity issues need to be dealt with to improve relations among these groups?

?Do civic and community leaders need to be more explicit about our way of discussing implications of diversity. Are we talking about and working toward "valuing diversity," "achieving racial and social justice," or both?

?Are there other structural factors that should be considered in our efforts to improve outcomes for the different groups in our communities? For example, political and economic impact of suburban sprawl, educational outcomes, accumulation of wealth and assets, affirmative action, immigration policy, build up of prisons, etc.

?In order to have a major impact on these equity issues related to diversity, do we need to undertake strategies that address structural factors or strengthen individual initiative? Or both?

## Approaches For Leadership & Action on Systemic Equity Issues

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**(30 Minutes)** If your group has time, take a few moments to consider and discuss the approaches and principles for leadership and action that Glover-Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor suggest.

How do they square with your own experience and thinking on these matters?

How would you modify them? Or add to them?

Are these approaches and principles you would feel comfortable raising for others to consider in their efforts to strengthen their own personal or organizational practices around issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity?

### *From Searching For Uncommon Common Ground:*

“A leader in the 21st century should be a problem solver, a life-long learner, and ethical example for others...”

“To lead, one should have a penchant for action as well as a commitment to reflection and assessment and be able to collaborate with others...”

Other dimensions highlighted:  
“(1) a commitment to racial and social justice, (2) the embracing of a multicultural perspective, (3) ability to make cross-sector linkages, and (4) a commitment to acquiring and improving skills...”

## Debrief and Issues To Follow Up On (in large group):

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**(15 minutes) Report Out Summary Notes of Small Groups**

**(15 – 20 minutes) Discussion of ways to use information and ideas that surfaced in small groups to move the foundation’s LBE work forward.**



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