

GRANTMAKING

Guiding Principles for Using Grantmaking to Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Criminal Legal System



State, county and federal governments play an important role in funding programs and services that support the well-being of community members. With this budget authority, governments have a unique opportunity to invest in community-led organizations that often provide critical services and supports to communities underserved by social service systems and overrepresented in the justice system. By strategically investing in and partnering with such organizations, governments are also working to close these gaps to correct for historic disinvestment that has led to racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal legal system. To achieve this goal, government funders can help ensure equitable access to funding opportunities and minimize barriers to implementation of grant-funded programs and services.

The National Association of Counties and the National Criminal Justice Association, with support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, convened a working group of county stakeholders, State Administering Agency (SAA) representatives and leaders from community-led organizations. The purpose of this group was to develop a set of guiding principles to help government entities administer funding more equitably, with the goal of reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal legal system. Despite their different roles and authorities, counties and states alike may face similar barriers to grantmaking, such as limits on funding periods, reimbursement mechanisms and monitoring requirements. Yet they share the opportunity to listen, learn and evolve to increase equity and partner with one another on these goals.

Key Definitions:



COMMUNITY-LED ORGANIZATIONS:

grassroots groups operating "by and for" the neighbors they serve.



COMMUNITY:

those impacted by racial and ethnic disparities and harm, and the organizations or agencies that support them.



Equity: A process of identifying and eliminating disparities, shifting of power and removing barriers that perpetuate inequity. It is the intentional practice of change to actualize fair treatment, advancement, access and opportunity for all to thrive.¹

¹The National Association of Counties' (NACo) [definition of equity](#) is "the process of identifying and removing the barriers that create disparities in the access to resources and means, and the achievement of fair treatment and equal opportunities to thrive." The working group expanded on NACo's definition to reflect the group's experiences and discussions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITABLE GRANTMAKING

When deploying resources and managing implementation of programs or policies, government leaders pursuing equity in procurement and grantmaking may choose to guide their decision making with:



TRUST

By investing in the capacity and expertise of community leadership, anchoring the relationship in a common goal, rejecting the funder/recipient power dynamic that can stifle relationships, and learning from and listening to one another as partners



TRANSPARENCY

By prioritizing an open and ongoing commitment to share information in a timely and helpful manner, announcing the decision making and personnel/advisors involved and communicating the purpose of data collection efforts and results



COMMUNITY

By supporting "by and for" organizations, including community member voices in the decision-making process and proactively engaging community representation



FAIRNESS

By training staff to recognize, reflect and address personal and organizational bias, promoting practices that allow grantees to contribute to the grantmaking process, raising up champions and not lowering the bar but raising the platform



INTENTIONAL ACCESS & INCLUSION

By considering the structure and level of funding, allowing for various entry points, evaluating needed changes in the application process and components and measuring and broadening success



SUPPORT

By providing culturally and socially responsive training, technical assistance and coaching; investing in funder internal capacity and engaging intermediaries



CREATIVITY

By learning, sharing and evolving beyond the status quo and utilizing the tools, discretion and flexibility available to the government, and



JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY

By prioritizing intentional investments in communities traditionally left out of the funding process, communicating funder expectations, committing to sharing data and building a working relationship with continued communication and support.

These guiding principles are supported by several strategies and practices government

entities can implement to bring them to life and demonstrate a commitment to equity in our communities.

For more information on county grantmaking, please visit www.naco.org/equitable-grantmaking,

and reach out to strategicplanning@ncja.org for state-level approaches.