

**United
Way**



United Way
of Greater Cincinnati



**DESIGN
IMPACT**

BLACK-LED SOCIAL CHANGE CINCINNATI

2018

HOW MIGHT WE... INCREASE UNITED WAY OF GREATER CINCINNATI'S INVESTMENT IN BLACK-LED, COMMUNITY- BASED IDEAS BY 2019?

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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Understand the landscape, opportunities, and the challenges faced by Greater Cincinnati's Black social change leaders.
- Develop concepts that United Way of Greater Cincinnati (UWGC) can use to support Black-led social change as a strategy to decrease racial disparities within UWGC's *Bold Goals* outcomes and reduce the rates of Black people in poverty.
- Shake up traditional funding and resource structures with new approaches.

A photograph showing two men in a meeting. The man in the foreground is wearing a plaid shirt and glasses, gesturing with his hands while speaking. The man in the background is wearing a blue blazer and is listening. They are seated at a table in a room with wood-paneled walls.

EXPANDING
SUPPORT FOR
BLACK-LED SOCIAL
CHANGE EFFORTS
WILL **STRENGTHEN**
SOLUTIONS FOR
THOSE MOST
AFFECTED
BY RACIAL
DISPARITIES.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS “BLACK-LED SOCIAL CHANGE?”

Black-led social change encompasses organizations, ideas and strategies that are led by individuals that identify as Black or African American, and that aim to build power and positive outcomes within that population. Black-led is defined here as organizations having a majority Black board of directors, executive leadership, and staff.



WHY DOES THIS MATTER NOW?

INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

Historically, there has been a pattern of philanthropic neglect and underinvestment in Black social change leaders and Black-led organizations, and especially the smaller, community-based organizations and coalitions. UWGC's current Call for Partners (CFP) process privileges bigger nonprofits with strong back office and grant-writing support. Meanwhile

smaller organizations, acting innovatively and creating social change at a grassroots level are overlooked.

While some progress has been made, it's not enough.



WHY IS BLACK-LED SOCIAL CHANGE WORK IMPORTANT TO UWGC?

THRIVING COMMUNITY

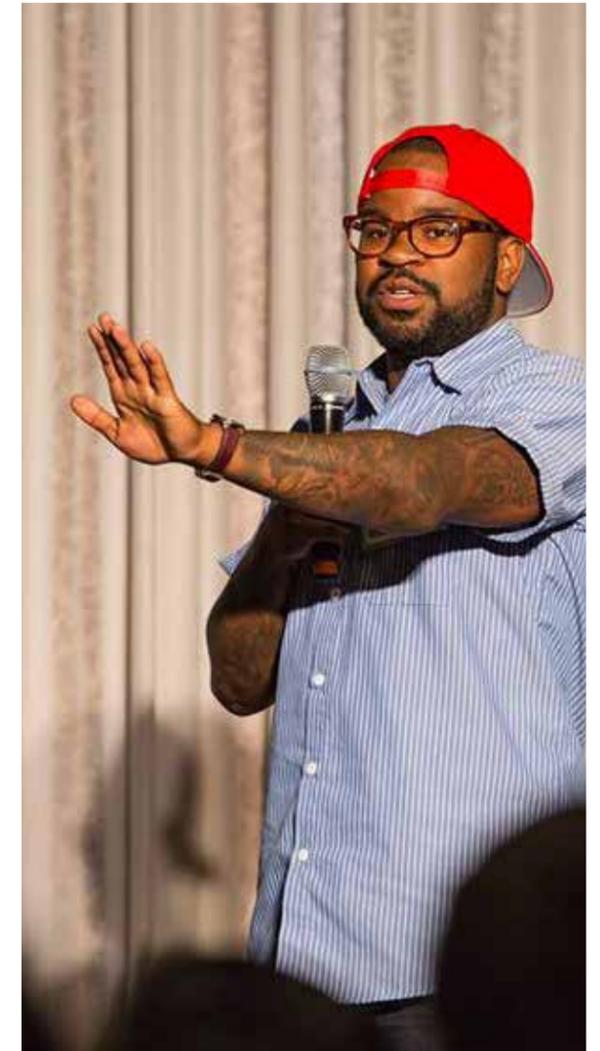
UWGC believes in creating a community where everyone has an opportunity to thrive. However, poverty undermines that opportunity for more than 600,000 people in the Greater Cincinnati region. African Americans are disproportionately affected, and yet Black institutions and Black-led ideas receive less investment by major funders.

Recognizing these disparities, as well as the efforts on the ground to address these disparities, UWGC decided to take bold steps to address the issue and increase support for community-based, Black-led ideas. UWGC recognized they could do more to support Black-led social change, including more intentionally investing resources in Black leaders and organizations.

EFFECTIVE CHANGE

By effectively supporting Black-led social change, UWGC can:

- **Bring a greater diversity of solutions and thought-leadership** into the work they do;
- **Gain a better understanding** of unique strengths, opportunities and challenges;
- Begin to **reduce disparities by race and place.**



ABOUT THE PROJECT

PARTNERSHIP

In winter, 2017, UWGC partnered with Design Impact (DI), a nonprofit social innovation firm based in Cincinnati, Ohio that uses design to address pressing community issues, equip leaders, and inspire communities.

Design Impact and UWGC partnered to define and explore the challenges faced by Black social change leaders. The team leveraged a *human-centered design* approach to employ empathy, creativity, and rationality.

This project is one of many ways UWGC is seeking to incorporate equity into its work, authentically. This report ends by offering several recommendations for further steps beyond this project.



WHAT UWGC HEARD

Through conversations and interviews, UWGC spoke with over 75 individuals—Black leaders, funders, and UWGC staff members. DI helped unpack UWGC’s qualitative research efforts, and examined other best practice research from United Way branches across the country.

Through the discovery work, the team spoke with

- **Black leaders/social changemakers** including long standing leaders, budding social entrepreneurs, and current UW agency partners
- **United Way staff** representing all departments and various levels within the organization
- **Other funders** including United Ways doing similar work



We heard you say....

“

A lot of people feel good when people are at the table, but what about their voice? What about going beyond institutions? **If you're not willing to invite me to your home or at least happy hour, we haven't really connected.**”

“

African American organizations receive less money and funders have unrealistically lofty expectations of us. As soon as we mess, up we are dropped.”

“

Not interested in doing a bunch of paperwork for people, following restrictive guidelines of United Way. Paperwork should follow simple templates. Older institutions like United Way are like the bar exam for lawyers – trying to make it hard to get people in, and ensuring people stay out.”

MAJOR THEMES

From over 200 data points informed by UWGC and DI's qualitative and best practice research, four themes emerged that captured interviewees' common **sources of frustration**. The themes below represent points of tension and opportunities.

- **Community connection and visibility**—Funders tend to invest in what they trust, trust what is familiar, and tend to be less familiar with Black-led social change work. Conversely, perceptions of how investment decisions are made may deter Black-led social changemakers from applying altogether, not trusting that foundations are looking to invest beyond the familiar, trusted circle. **HOW MIGHT WE ENSURE THAT BOTH UNITED WAY AND BLACK LEADERS CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER?**
- **Putting people first**—Funders use writing, strong staffing, and back office support as proxies for good programming even though they are limited and incomplete measures of effectiveness. **HOW MIGHT WE PUT PEOPLE FIRST IN THE WAY WE MEASURE SUCCESS SO THAT COMPLIANCE AND PAPERWORK AREN'T THE ONLY STANDARD FOR GOOD PROGRAMMING?**
- **Coaching all leaders to success (capacity building)**—While new funding approaches require greater funder flexibility, it cannot be at the expense of accountability and impact. Organizations already possess incredible skills, talent, and passion, but could benefit from support that enhances their existing strengths so that they receive recognition (and funding) for the work they are doing. **HOW MIGHT WE MEET ORGANIZATIONS WHERE THEY ARE AND GET THEM THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO DEMONSTRATE IMPACT?**
- **Courageous conversations about race**—If UWGC work is supposed to address social disparities they must be willing to address inequities that they perpetuate and include new voices at the table. Having people with a diversity of experiences and backgrounds on staff and on boards often proves critical to increasing investment in community based, Black-led ideas. **HOW MIGHT WE CREATE A CULTURE THAT ADDRESSES INEQUITIES THAT EXIST BOTH INTERNALLY AT UWGC AND EXTERNALLY IN OUR COMMUNITY?**

IDEAS TOWARD A WAY FORWARD

IDEATION SESSION

In February 2018, UWGC and DI hosted an ideation, or brainstorming session, with Black leaders, UWGC staff members, and a small group of donors/volunteers. During the session, teams came up with ideas that could change how UWGC supports and funds community-based, Black-led ideas.

The following concepts are the top four ideas that emerged from the session. Three focus groups reviewed the ideas, and shared their critical feedback on things they liked and challenges UWGC may face to test the solutions. These ideas are not final solutions, but are meant serve as a starting point to effectively address funding disparities and push UWGC to move toward action in greater, more intentional, investment in community-based, Black-led ideas.



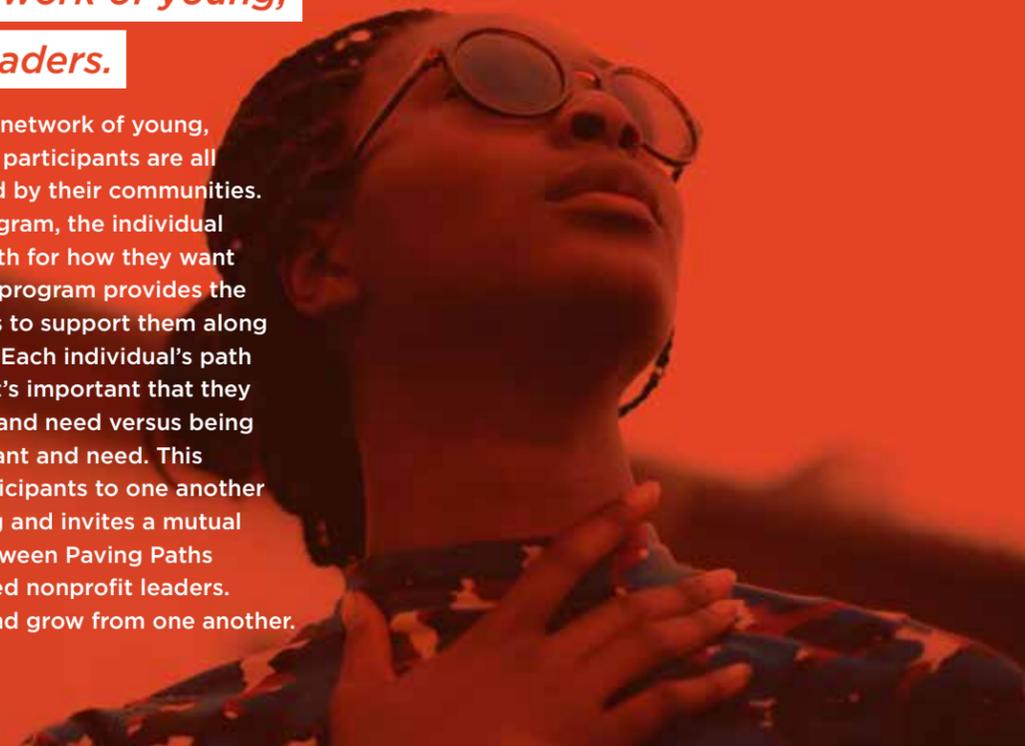
TOP CONCEPTS



① PAVING PATHS

Creating a network of young, rising Black leaders.

Paving Paths supports a network of young, rising Black leaders. The participants are all identified and nominated by their communities. Once they are in the program, the individual determines their own path for how they want to grow as a leader. The program provides the individual with resources to support them along their leadership journey. Each individual's path may look different, but it's important that they identify what they want and need versus being told what they should want and need. This model connects the participants to one another for peer-to-peer learning and invites a mutual learning relationship between Paving Paths participants and seasoned nonprofit leaders. Both parties can learn and grow from one another.



HOW IT COULD WORK

- UWGC focuses on **non-traditional recruiting** efforts (ex. mining social media, engaging Black fraternities and sororities, attending and sharing at community meetings, etc.)
- Rising Black leaders are **nominated by their communities** (or nominate themselves).
- A team of **Black leaders** (potentially Herbert R. Brown society members, folks engaged in the BSCC project, etc.) **select** the Paving Paths participants.
- **Recipients identify how they want to develop** as leaders and the path they want to take. UWGC helps facilitate this discovery process. (This might mean earning a college degree or training with a grassroots leader in another city)
- The **program supports and funds the individual** throughout the program as they:
 - Discover what they're really good at and where their passions lie
 - Uncover ways to use their voice and power
 - Deepen their contacts in the city
 - Practice doing the work
- As participants graduate the program, they **find their leadership home** in Cincinnati. The program provides support to pursue additional funding, establish a 501c3, or match them to job opportunities.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The fellowship program builds a pipeline of talent that emphasizes people over organizations. This program not only retains homegrown talent in Cincinnati but can engage UW donors through shared, mutual learning.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES/PARTNERS

- Public Allies
- Universities/Colleges
- Nonprofit Leadership Institute
- CBI's informal network with neighborhood leaders

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Partner participants with a specific mentor/leader who can actually help them navigate the system.
- Provide participants with tangible tools/skills; for example:
 - Support doing the "start up paperwork" (ex. Establishing a 501(c)(3))
 - Board building
 - Securing Funding
 - Pilot support
 - Make connections, facilitate relationships
- Make sure that this program is not duplicative of Urban League or Leadership Cincinnati's leadership development programs. UWGC can either partner (and strengthen their existing programs) with them or differentiate its program.
- UWGC needs to (internally) challenge the belief that you get more bang for your buck when you help organizations versus individuals. Replace it with the belief that: there is value in developing a pipeline and marketing and promoting stories about people versus organizational work.
- Needs to reinforce a mutually beneficial relationship whereby Black leaders' work informs UWGC.

② GROWING GRASSROOTS

Identifying grassroots organizations.

Identify grassroots organizations that serve the black community, enable their access to resources (e.g. funding, other forms of support), and celebrate black-led initiatives that emerge from this effort.



HOW IT COULD WORK

1. **Identify** Black-led grassroots efforts that **serve** the Black community through several non-traditional outreach strategies:
 - Facebook campaign
 - Community leader nominations
 - Local incubator programs
 - Word of mouth
 - African American Chamber
 - Host a listening event where people are given a platform to speak and share their ideas
 - In the community (parks)
2. Recipients are chosen by a **panel of peers** (and/or previous year recipients).
3. Set aside **versatile funds** that can be used to meet individual/organization needs and support these group through a 1-year customized incubator.
4. The incubator also **prepares “graduates” to compete** for United Way’s larger funding bucket.
5. United Way **improves storytelling efforts** of graduates to highlight **successes** and encourage other Black leaders to participate.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT

- Because there are organizations doing phenomenal work that don’t have the access to capital and support they need to thrive.
- United Way needs to represent the voice of all stakeholders equally and communities are critical stakeholders.
- One interview participant said she didn’t want a separate bucket created for her — she wanted access to a larger bucket. This effort provides a bridge to a larger bucket.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES/PARTNERS

- UW: community impact team
- Leaders from under-represented organizations

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus group participants liked that this idea was centered around trust, meaning that the funding came with few strings attached. Don’t lose that.
- This concept cannot be a one-time or seed funded initiative.
- Get a diverse group of Black leaders
 - Don’t just go to the churches and recruit pastors
- Consider launching this work in the neighborhoods that are typically “ignored”
 - South Fairmont
 - Carthage
- Consider pairing this initiative with From the Top

③ STEPPING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Putting the mirror on ourselves first.

United Way uses its “bully pulpit” (i.e. power and status) with partners, agencies, and donors to call out and educate them around overt, neutral, and implicit actions that have discriminatory effects. But in order to credibly lead this work, United Way needs to put the mirror on themselves first before championing this work externally. It focuses on discriminatory outcomes in leadership choices, funding decisions, and really all decisions that can materially affect outcomes. This a long-term but necessary play. United Way leadership begins this culture-change work internally focused and then leads this work externally.

HOW IT COULD WORK

- **Internal:**
 - a. First, UW designates a **staff member to own progress** on this initiative, although a core team of staff may lead this work.
 - b. United Way leadership and staff participate in a facilitated process to **co-design solutions** with staff on how it might speak loudly and boldly about the inequities that go on in the workplace.
- **In the community:**
 - c. United Way **co-creates with agency partners** guiding principles to measure and shape funding, training, and leadership practices.
 - d. United Way uses its power and status to **challenge implicit racial bias** in agency partners. (Ex: Require that agency partners have a certain percentage of leadership be Black on projects affecting majority Black populations).

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

- Greater Black representation in decision-making positions tends to translate to greater Black representation as grantees. (ex: One interviewee said: How many Black people need to get jobs for us to get meetings?)
- ‘Value’ is tied to funding. If United Way, as one of the largest funders, states mitigating discriminatory effects is a priority then the smaller organizations it finances will follow suit to secure funding. Eventually they will grow to understand the importance this work.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES/PARTNERS

- BOLD program managers
- Individuals releasing RFPs
- Privilege influencers/white allies
- Gatekeepers (e.g. big donors)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This concept needs to be paired with an external initiative that drive action.
- Challenge the traditional division of labor where Blacks hold frontline staff positions while whites occupy decision-maker roles.
- Avoid a quota system.
- UWGC needs to allocate staff time and resources to ensuring that its internal practices are equitable.
- Use “bully pulpit” to educate (and challenge) donors.

④ CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Ongoing input from the Black community.

Black social change isn't a one-time thing. It requires ongoing investment and ongoing input from the Black community. This network of Black leaders design how they work together (ex. how often they meet, the roles each person plays, how they will track success, etc.) Through a shared vision, they meet to set an agenda for what Black social change should be in Cincinnati. These leaders may come from those already engaged in the Black-led social change project.



HOW IT COULD WORK

- **Recruit members** from Black-led social change project to be part of a rotating cohort of participants.
- United Way provides a **facilitator to convene** the group but ultimately the **group decides** how it will work together.
- All **participants are paid** for their time and expertise.
- In its first convening the **group establishes** a vision and agenda
- Then, the group:
 - a. **Advise**s United Way on equitable reporting metrics for existing RFPs
 - b. **Develops** new RFPs
 - c. **Recruits** rising leaders for United Way programs
 - d. **Assists** in the United Way RFP selection process
 - e. **Brainstorms** new ideas and approaches for making social change happen in Cincinnati
 - f. **Provides** a safe space to talk and reflect on social change in Cincinnati
- In order to stay relevant and inclusive, **members rotate** off after a period of time and new members join.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

- It champions a Black-led approach that's by the people and for the people.
- Leverages Black leaders' ideas to shake up the traditional funding structure.
- Their activities help UWGC authentically invest in Black-led ideas.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES/PARTNERS

- Herbert R. Brown Society
- United Way RFP writers/evaluators

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This concept is not enough as a stand alone idea; it should be paired with another idea.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UWGC

While these concepts are a great starting point for UWGC to increase its investment in community-based Black-led ideas, they must happen in conjunction with a **significant internal shift**. These recommendations echo the voices from focus group participants and capture clear ways for UWGC to show up and do this work.

UWGC NEEDS TO FIX THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTION AND DEEP DISTRUST THEY HAVE WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

- Mending the broken relationship between the Black community and UWGC goes deeper than giving them dollars, **UWGC needs to critically assess where the funding dollars come from in the first place and be willing to challenge donors.**
- **UWGC must evaluate who is on the board and what communities and positions of power that they represent.** It needs to include more people experiencing poverty in the boardroom.
- To do this work, **UWGC has to be much bolder and own our past failures** – messaging can't "soften the blow" or find a positive spin like they historically do.
- **UWGC must challenge its overall funding philosophy** that equates "high capacity," meaning strong staffing, back office support, and grant-writing skills with effectiveness. Going forward, it should place a higher value on the community building, people-focused labor done by individuals and smaller organizations.

UWGC NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENT WITH ITS VALUES OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

- **Implement staffing practices internally** that demonstrate that equity and inclusion are key values of the organization.
- **Set performance metrics against internal priorities** connected to equity and inclusion not just fundraising goals.
- For example, there needs to be more than one dedicated resource to implement this work.

UWGC NEEDS TO FULLY SUPPORT BLACK-LED IDEAS.

- **Community-based, Black-led ideas need ongoing support and access to the bigger funding bucket.** These ideas can't be permanently marginalized as a separate initiative.
 - This work needs to be part of UWGC's overall funding practices and strategy around poverty so it receives the internal focus, resources, and value it deserves.

UWGC NEEDS TO BE SPECIFIC AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT THE COMMUNITIES AND POPULATIONS IT WILL SERVE.

UWGC NEEDS TO WORK ON ITSELF WHILE CARRYING OUT EXTERNAL INITIATIVES AND PUBLICIZE THE PROGRESS.

THANK YOU

United Way of Greater Cincinnati for funding, leading, and participating in this project.

Finally, thank you to all of the Black leaders in Cincinnati who shared their time, thoughts, experiences, and skills to this project. Their honesty shaped an important narrative and reaffirmed the urgency to move to action.

CONTACT UNITED WAY OF GREATER CINCINNATI

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APPENDIX



THEME BOARDS FROM IDEATION SESSION



Community Connection and Visibility

How might we ensure that both United Way and black leaders connect with each other?

Insight:

- Funders tend to fund what they know. If you can't see it, you can't fund it.
- We see merit in self-validating ways and so we ignore or judge more harshly the unfamiliar. As a result, we miss an opportunity to connect across differences, learn and then act in new ways.

Data Points:



In study, leaders cited three main ways issues of race manifested: (1) Extra demands placed on people of color, (2) difficulty in gaining legitimacy, and (3) the need to find and support additional leaders of color. *[echoed by many that we interviewed]*

“Failure is a privilege.”

“Funders must be willing to take risks and provide a wraparound of support—[i.e.] technical assistance, leniency, and clear expectations.”

A United Way endorsement carries weight in the community and can help orgs to get into the door with other big organizations.

Greenlining Institute provides the following as barriers to funding minority-led non-profits: (1) Inability to access foundations, (2) lack of trust between minority led nonprofits and foundations and (3) inadequate resources. *[echoed by many that we interviewed]*

“United Way needs to be more in the community: a lot of people don't understand what it is that you do.”



Putting People First

How might we put people first in the way we measure success so that compliance and paperwork aren't the only standard for good programming?

Insights:

- Funders use writing as a proxy for good programming even though it's a limited and incomplete measure.
- I'm so busy trying to prove my work/worth that I'm not able to do my work.

Data Points:



"It's important to understand the realities of grassroots organization, including the intensity of services, who's setting the goals, and how 'capacity building' is defined—sometimes, an intense QI (quality improvement) boot camp isn't appropriate."

"People over paperwork, and a strong belief in leadership are important."

"Not interested in doing a bunch of paperwork for people, following restrictive guidelines of United Way. Paperwork should follow simple templates. Older institutions like United Way are like the bar exam for lawyers—trying to make it hard to get people in, and ensuring people stay out."



Coaching All Leaders to Success (i.e. capacity building)

How might we meet organizations where they are and get them the resources they need?

Insight:

Even though there's a need to meet people where they are, funders still expect grantees to adopt dominant social norms in order to access their resources.

Data Points:



The number one challenge has been organizational development: how do we move past those first meetings?"

Coach people to success versus holding people accountable against failure.

"Sometimes people that mean well can cause harm. We had a volunteer that took over the garden and got very aggressive, making handwritten posters, controlling people, and generally making it so that people didn't want to come back. She genuinely cared, but was too overbearing. Be sure to bring in individuals that will be supportive, but not aggressive or controlling."

"United Way's strengths are their resources (money, data, staff), social influence (connections to diverse audiences, marketing), strategic process, and their content knowledge."

"A space to work and the ability to pay yourself are important."



Courageous Conversations about Race

How might we value black grantees for what they offer, not what they look like?

Insights:

- People will give you small amounts of money to do lots of work because your work isn't valued.
- How do you focus on race without "othering" people?

Data Points:

“Funders, people that I trust, have outright said to me that if I looked different, I would get more money.”

“A lot of people feel good when people are at the table, but what about their voice?”

We are afraid to have frank conversations because we don't want to be dismissed when sharing our story or unintentionally offend.

Hated the title "Black-led Social Change." For a long time, people have tried to put her [a black leader] in a box, and being in that box historically means less funding and attention. She has taken many efforts to not be there, and to not leave anyone out of her services.

"How many black people need to get jobs in order for us to get meetings?" Context: In this individual's experience, it has been hard to get meetings with companies to support their organization when there were no black staff members present. It has been easier to get meetings when there are black staff.

ADDITIONAL CONCEPTS

How might we value your team's work?

*That organization was...
The reason they need...*



⑤ DOUBLE THE IMPACT. DOUBLE THE FUNDS.

*Joint application for
black-led organizations.*

UW releases a joint application for black-led organizations to work collaboratively on an issue that's relevant to both of their missions. Their work is fully-funded. Instead of competing for dollars they both receive funding where their time is equally valued. While any organizations can jointly apply, at least one organization must be black-led. Preference will be given to partnerships between black-led organizations.

HOW IT COULD WORK

- United Way designates a pool of money and invites organizations to **jointly apply** for that funding. Community leaders may also nominate organizations.
- Applications **answer key questions** and are given a **choice in how they answer** (ex: oral storytelling, written, video, etc.)
- A team of **diverse Black leaders** (potentially Herbert R. Brown society members, folks engaged in the BSCC project, etc.) **select** the DIDF recipients.
- Recipients are **fully-funded and trusted** to do the work (ex: Non-traditional reporting designed by Black leaders.)
- United Way provides **additional, appropriate supports** when necessary, tapping into internal expertise (i.e. volunteer project management and recruitment, marketing, etc.)

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

- Joint funding supports both organizations in their work and invites more collaboration to achieve shared outcome objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This concept moved to the appendix since it received the fewest votes from focus groups.



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