

Black EQUITY Initiative

FINAL LEARNING REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

“What can we do?” This question gripped many people across the country who were shocked by the regularity with which unarmed Black men were being killed. Exploring this question became the genesis of the Black Equity Initiative.

Launched in 2017 with a cohort of 15 organizations, the Black Equity Initiative outlined two primary goals:

- 1 Address conditions that perpetuate institutional racism against Black people.
- 2 Build a community of learning and practice that strengthens work on the ground and informs the broader philanthropic field of best practices to advance racial justice at scale.

APPROACH

From the onset, The JIB Fund pursued a “learning for action and continuous improvement” approach. The grant program was designed based on input generated from focus groups, a comprehensive literature review, 17 key informant interviews and three site visits to LA-based organizations identified in the research and by peers as exemplars in the field.

The core tenets of the grant program include:

Overarching strategy: Fund efforts that advance collaborative solutions and elevate a shared vision for systematic equity and opportunity in the Black community.

Primary methods: Fund local. Fund organizations with a clear and well-documented history of using a combination of grassroots community organizing and leadership development, policy, advocacy, research and/or coalition building to drive change.

ISSUE AREAS

Outcomes were targeted toward education, criminal justice or workforce development systems in Los Angeles County and the Inland Empire, such that both issues identified, and solutions proposed centered around the lived experiences of Black people in the local community.

INITIATIVE COMPONENTS

- Grants to nonprofits – Planning and Next Level
- Grantee convenings
- Leadership development

Planning Grants “Social justice R+D” to support organizations with new or emerging ideas with less than 3 years of proof points.

Next Level Grants “Tipping point” dollars to support organizations with 3 or more years of proof points in taking their models to its next level of impact.

Initiative 4-Year Impact

The JIB Fund wanted to understand whether, and how, coupling grant dollars with grantee convenings moved the needle on Black equity in a way that grant-funding or convenings ALONE could not do, or not do as well. We tracked the results over the life of the initiative and found that funding coupled with cohort convenings helped to move the needle in the following ways:

Did the convening format *paired with funding* help to move the needle on?...

MOVEMENT BUILDING

Developing networks of individuals and organizations; using the power of collective action to alter the relations of power and enact cultural, economic, and/or political change.

- Organizations facilitated major policy wins at the local and state level, including campaigns to decriminalize Black youth, win multimillion dollars investments in African American student achievement in both LAUSD and San Bernardino City USD, eliminate Life Without Parole for juveniles convicted of crimes, reunify Black families post-incarceration, establish an Office of Civil and Human Rights in the city of LA, and create a roundtable of publicly traded and privately held companies dedicated to equitable hiring practices for disconnected youth.
- One organization established an Institute for Civic Engagement in San Bernardino focused on recruiting, training, and placing Black residents on governing bodies at the local level.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM SYSTEMS CHANGE

Building the individual, organizational and collective community resiliency needed to continue pursuing systems change work, confront racial injustice and combat burnout.

- 79% of organizations said the multi-year investments helped advance their work to address institutional racism and systems change.
- Most organizations affirmed the importance of shared learning and peer support through the convenings. One shared: "The convenings gave us a moment to breathe, reconnect with a beloved community, and energized us for the work ahead."

COMMUNICATIONS AND FRAMING OF A BLACK EQUITY AGENDA

Telling the organization's story in more impactful ways and empowering organizations to embrace, describe and pursue a vision for Black equity more boldly.

- Three organizations re-branded their campaigns under a framework for Black equity. In San Bernardino, that framework was used to establish the BEI-IE Fund (launching in Fall 2021).
- All organizations co-developed the *Principles for Black Equity* and co-signed the *Open Letter to Philanthropy: Equity Meets Its Moment* in 2020, a response to the disproportionate impact of COVID on Black communities. The letter was sent to over 200 funders, elected officials, and public agency leaders.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Inspiring organizations to become the best versions of themselves through reflection and response, staff development, partner, and community engagement.

- Ten organizations initiated or deepened institutional partnerships with others in the cohort ranging from collaborating on programs and jointly pursuing grant funding to forging strategic partnerships to scale and expand impact in new communities.
- Four organizations examined their internal hiring and training practices to assess how Black staff were recruited, supported, and encouraged to lead. One organization restructured their board recruitment strategies to expand the number of Black board members.
- **The annual operating budget of Black-led organizations in the initiative increased by an average of \$748,250** from the time the first grant was issued in 2017 to when the final two-year grant was awarded in 2019. Several organizations cited the investment in Black-specific work allowed them to leverage The JIB's Fund's boldness to encourage other funders to do the same.



No other funders have provided such an enriched combination of funding and grantee networking. We have been working with many more organizations in the IE and even statewide on Black equity-focused initiatives (i.e., Communities & Schools Initiative, Black Census & Redistricting Outreach, Black Voter Education Engagement) more intensely than our organization would have had the capacity to do, if not for opportunity to connect with other Black-led organizations through the convenings.”

SPECIAL NEEDS NETWORK



While our organization has worked on and led campaigns to protect and advance the civil rights of our (Skid Row) community residents in the past, very rarely if ever have we received funds on the scale of the Black Equity Initiative to specifically focus on issues impacting Black communities which facilitated the level of collaboration prompted by this initiative.

LA CAN

IMPACT OF COVID-19

64% of organizations stated that COVID was the primary cause of shifts to their work. Those shifts were mostly felt in outreach strategies that resulted in creating new community support programs such as rapid response and mutual aid programs and/or shifting work modalities to virtual spaces and online platforms.

LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

1. **Boldly Center the Black Experience** – 71% reported that The JIB Fund’s intention to uplift issues impacting Black people had a direct impact on helping advance their organizational work to address institutional racism and systems change.
2. **Match Investments to the Significance of the Cause** – 64% reported that they were able to evolve/ scale organizational development efforts due to the size of the award amount and 57% reported the award sizes helped to scale their movement building efforts. In total, The JIB Fund investment more than \$5.7million in direct grantmaking and initiative management.
3. **Invest Over Time** – Making multi-year commitments allow leaders to plan and think big by giving them time and confidence to pursue justice rather than worrying about funding year over year.
4. **Listen, Learn and Let Leaders Lead** – The best philanthropic partners are active listeners and responsive learners. Adjustments made over the course of the initiative were often the result of organizational feedback, including hosting a funder convening in March 2019, where the first seed for the Black Equity Collective was planted.

INITIATIVE MANAGEMENT

The JIB Fund at JMC Philanthropic Advisors engaged Kaci Patterson, Founder of Social Good Solutions (SGS), as the Chief Strategist in designing and managing the initiative as well as facilitating the cohort convenings. Dr. Ange-Marie Hancock Alfaro, Dean’s Professor and Chair of Political Science and International Relations at USC, served as research partner and convenings co-facilitator. The JMC Philanthropic Advisors team, led by Janis Minton and Jeff Schaffer, provided ongoing guidance and support over the life of the initiative. Organizations continued to emphasize the importance of having a consultant with “community credibility” as an essential component in the initiative’s success.

“Having strong consultant leadership with ties to the Black community in Los Angeles was important and helped build a space grounded in trust and genuine knowledge of our communities.”