Good Measure

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FUNDERS

▶ We believe funders have a critical role to play, both individually and collectively, in supporting our partners' ability to strengthen internal evaluation systems and utilize data-driven insights.

1 View evaluation first and foremost as a critical tool for partners' own learning and program improvement.

- Communicate the view of evaluation as a "learning process" designed to help strengthen programs and services.
- Encourage service providers to focus primarily on what data they need to develop and refine their program model, assess progress and guide ongoing programmatic improvements.
- Limit the number of funder-required metrics and clearly communicate the reason behind any requirements and how the data will be used.
- Seek ongoing feedback regarding current reporting requirements. Ask how requirements and processes can be improved to better support partner efforts.

Create a safe space for partners to share their data with us, including their challenges. **2**

- Acknowledge that the work of creating change is difficult and we as funders recognize there are no quick fixes or easy solutions.
- Strive to balance expectations regarding a community partner's ability to deliver on outcomes with a realistic understanding of what it takes to truly achieve results.
- When results aren't as anticipated, be open to exploring why. While there may be times in which funding is tied directly to outcomes, discussions on how partners can work to improve results will often be more useful than penalizing nonprofits for unexpectedly poor results.

3 Help clarify what constitutes "good data" and "good evaluation".

- Speak openly about the challenges of evaluation work and the differences between assessing causation versus contribution.
- Help to clarify for service providers what types of data you find meaningful, given the grant partner's specific program and circumstances. Are you looking for statistical analysis of quantitative metrics or will client testimonials and self-reports suffice?
- Encourage partners to build a case for how their program contributes to the outcomes they are hoping to achieve; encourage them to refer to research-based studies to help establish this plausible link.

Fund the evaluation efforts of our partners.

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- Include grant funding for evaluation, either through general operating funds or by adding a line item for evaluation.
- Consider funding more in-depth evaluation needs when possible. Ideas include funding evaluation positions within an agency (or a percentage of a position), database systems, and/or external evaluation staff support.

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Support evaluation capacity building efforts.

- Start a dialogue with your community partners to better understand their current capacity for evaluation work, the challenges they face, and the types of training and tools they would find most useful.
- Fund evaluation capacity building activities when possible, at both the community and organizational levels. In addition, support efforts to "build a pipeline" of diverse nonprofit leaders in our community with a passion for using data to drive decision-making and change.
- Help connect service providers with each other, so they can share best practices and useful tools and resources.

Advocate for community data infrastructure and access efforts.

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- Ask your partners what specific barriers and challenges they are experiencing related to data access.
- Raise the visibility of data access and infrastructure gaps and advocate for creative solutions to these challenges. For example, how can philanthropy work with others to ensure that those who need the evidence/credible data most have access to it?
- Fund projects related to community data access and infrastructure.