

Assessing Diversity, Advancing Equity

Our Moment

Soon after Dr. King's assassination, as American cities convulsed, [Esquire interviewed James Baldwin](#), asking, "How can we get black people to cool it?" Baldwin pointedly replied, "It is not for us to cool it." His responses underscored the inability of those in power to grasp the depth and breadth of racism in this country and the enormous efforts that would be required to secure a path to peace.

"It's a very serious question in my mind," Baldwin said, "whether or not the people of this country, the bulk of population of this country, have enough sense of what is really happening to their black co-citizens to understand why they're in the streets."

Baldwin goes on to illustrate a history of systemic racial oppression, touching on the failures of the war on poverty, the importance of community control of schools and policing, and the pernicious sense of political inefficacy in the Black community, perpetuated by old-school political power structures (many of which remain intact).

Rereading his despairing narrative from 1968 it is hard not to see and hear significant parallels to the conversation on race gaining airtime this summer. Nationally and locally, activists are raising their voices to call out inequities and bring greater awareness to America's legacy of racism.

Their song has many verses, but a common refrain might be found in a recent [Op-Ed](#) by McCormick Foundation Board Member and former *Chicago Tribune* Editorial Page Editor, Don Wycliff, who wrote, "It's a white folks' world and black folks are merely guests in it. And too often, unwelcome guests."

How do we move forward?

It is difficult to read Baldwin's litany of abuses from half a century ago and come away with any great sense of hope. Evidently, *Esquire's* editors felt similarly at the time because towards the end of the interview they ask Baldwin, "Do you have any hope for the future of this country?"

"I have a great deal of hope," he answers. "I think the most hopeful thing to do is to look at the situation. People accuse me of being a doom-monger. I'm not a doom-monger. If you don't look at it, you can't change it."

Heeding Baldwin's challenge, in the Democracy Program we are looking closely through a racial lens at our work. In refreshing our Program's strategy last year, we purposefully used the concept of civic empowerment to frame our work. Our goal, as outlined on [our website](#) and in a series of [posts on our blog](#) in 2019, is to use our power to advocate, convene, and recommend grants to ensure all people in our region, regardless of their race or ethnicity, have the civic information, civic dispositions, and civic opportunities to fully participate in our democracy.

To achieve our goal of equitably serving our region's diverse population, we need partners that recognize the racial and ethnic disparities that concern us. Our partners must be committed to achieving an equitable democracy through their external work and be inclusive in their internal practices. We believe the partners that center the latter will be most effective at the former.

For the last several years, we have using a [Demographic Profile Questionnaire](#) (DPQ) to collect data from grant applicants to understand the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of each organization's leadership, staff, and population served. This summer, for the first time, we have compiled the DPQs across all our grantees to analyze the diversity of our portfolio and how reflective

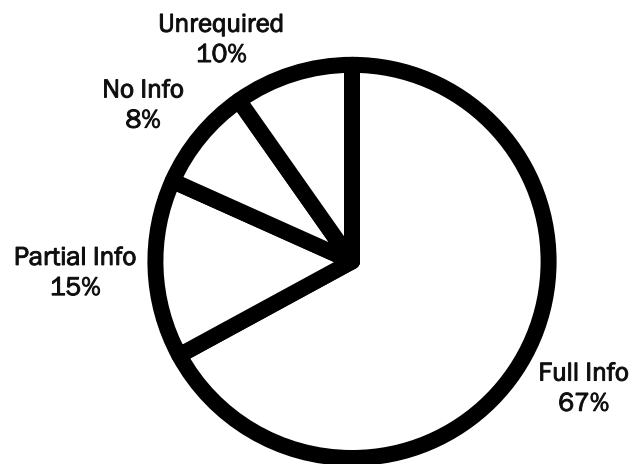
our partners are of the region and city we focus on. This analysis is an important first step in looking at the situation as it now stands so we can become more intentional in ensuring our work supports our goals of closing civic information and engagement gaps.

Understanding the diversity of our network

Collecting Data

As of June 2020, the Program has 101 active grants¹ to 82 grantees across our three Focus Areas. Of those 82 grantees, 74 were asked to submit a DPQ as part of their grant application process.² These DPQs were submitted between 2018 and 2020. Most applicants submitted all the information requested, but a significant percentage either provided incomplete or no information.

Figure 1



Of those providing only partial information, the information most likely to be missing was on the demographic composition of the organization’s Board of Directors or Advisory Group.

Table 1

No. of Orgs Missing Information on:	
Board of Directors	5
Advisory Group	5
Part-time Staff	4
Senior Staff	1

Board Diversity

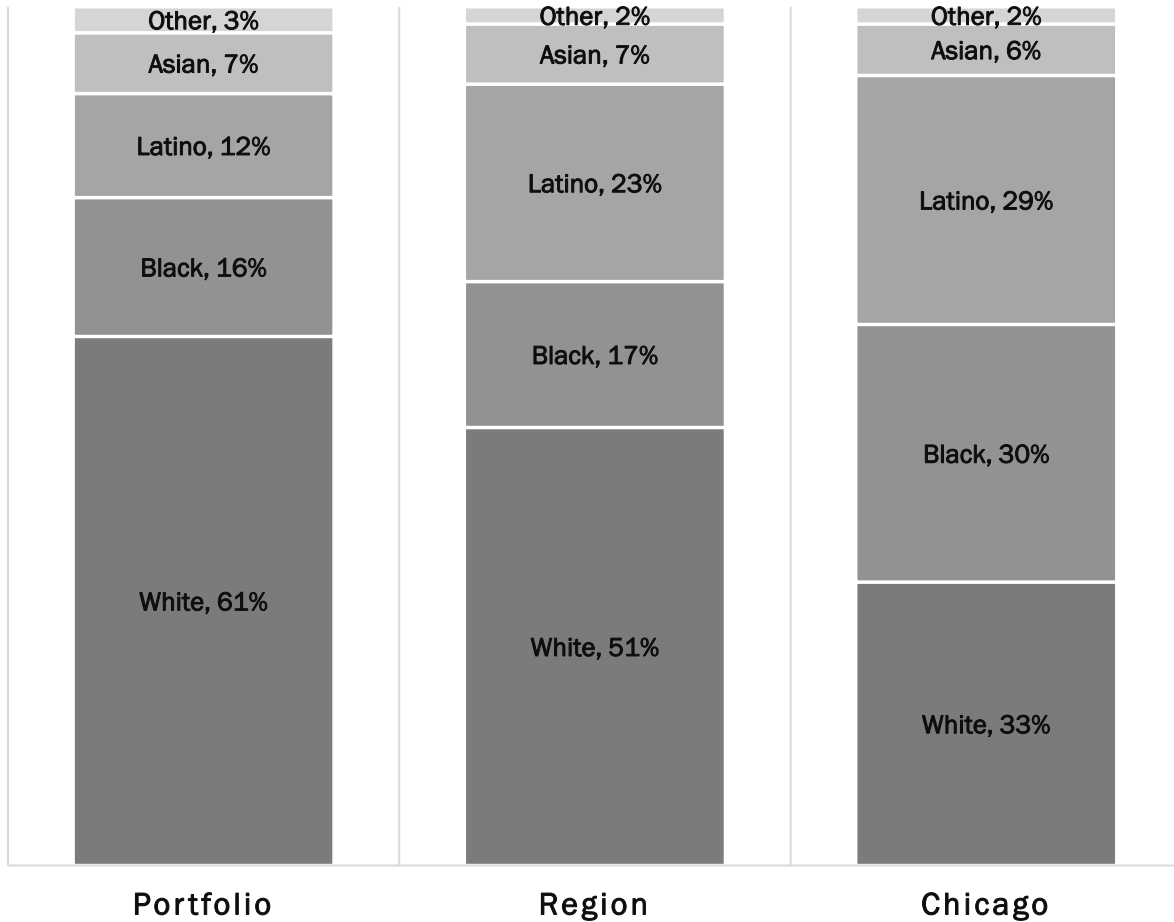
Of the 67 grantees who submitted DPQs, 62 provided demographic information on their Boards of Directors. Boards for whom we have data are on average 61% White, well above the region’s White population and almost double Chicago’s. A quarter of grantees have a Board that is over 80% White,

¹ “Active” is defined as a grant that has been approved and for which the grant period has not yet ended, meaning a final report has not yet been submitted. Active grants may or may not have remaining disbursements.

² The eight grantees who did not submit DPQs represent a very small subset of grant funds (less than \$150,000, while the remaining grantees represent more than \$10m in commitments) and were generally projects that were very limited in time and scope (e.g. event sponsorships).

while just 16% have a Board that is less than a third White. Figure 2 illustrates how the diversity on Boards across our portfolio compares to the region and Chicago’s demographics.

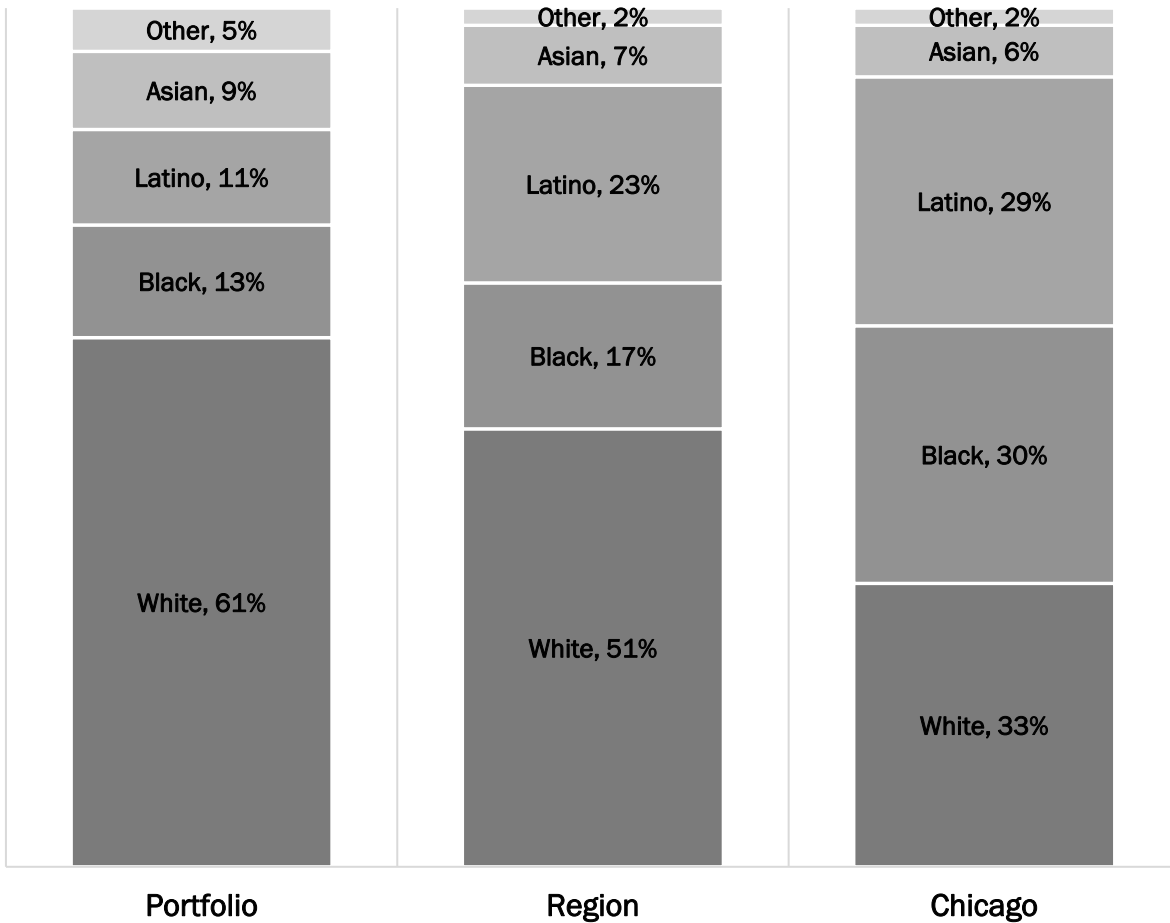
Figure 2



Senior Staff Diversity

Fifty-eight of the organizations that submitted DPQs indicated having full-time Senior Staff and collected data on their racial/ethnic composition. Senior staff range in size from one to hundreds (at universities). There is a similarly wide range of racial/ethnic representation in staff leadership as on Boards, from 0 to 100% White. On average, Senior Staff are 61% White and a quarter of grantees have Senior Staffs that are over 91% White (this includes four organizations that indicate having a Senior Staff of just one person). Figure 3 illustrates how the diversity on Senior Staff across our portfolio compares to the region and Chicago’s demographics

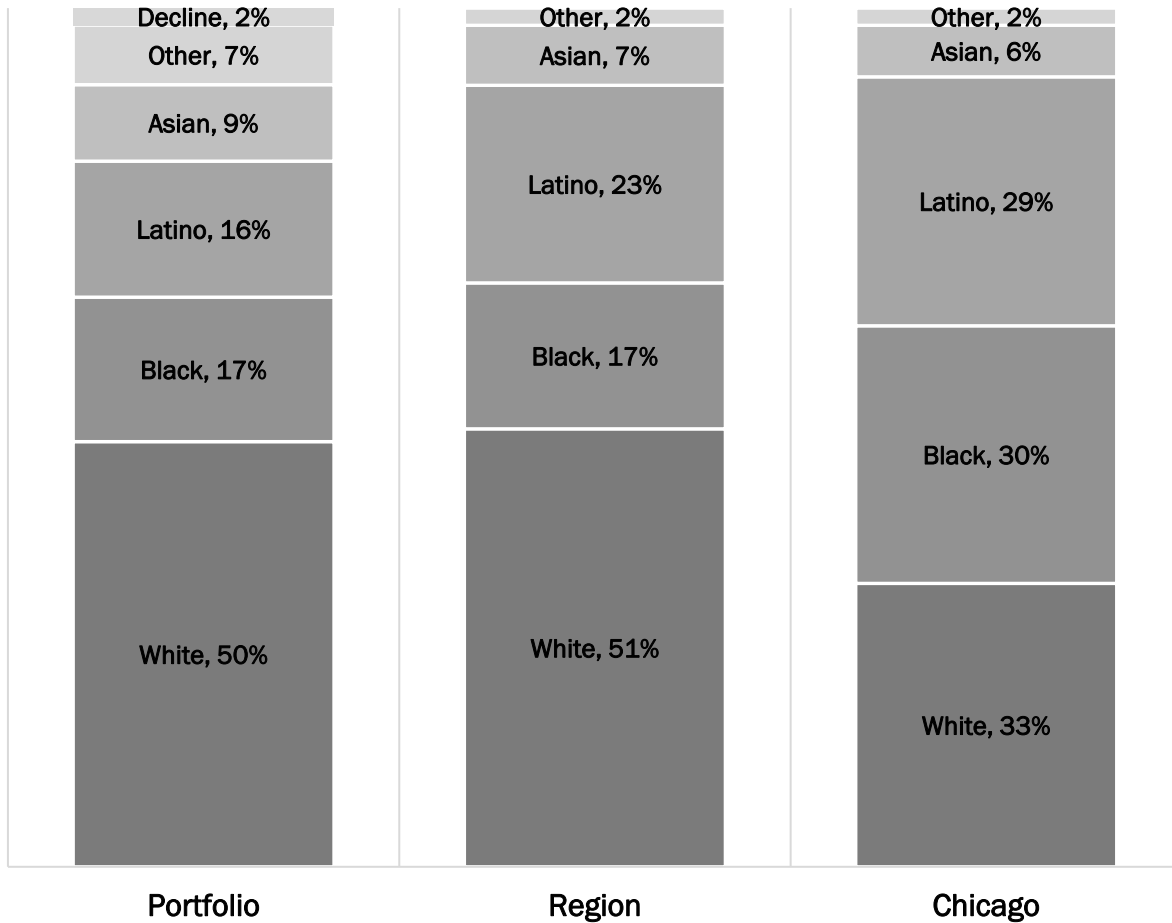
Figure 3



Staff Diversity

Sixty-eight organizations provided racial/ethnic information on their staff and three indicated having no full-time staff. Of the 65 organizations with full-time staff and for which we have data, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), on average, make up almost half of staff, higher than at the organizational leadership level. A quarter of organizations have staff that are more than 69% White, while a quarter have staff that are less 30% White, indicating the range of diversity at different organizations. Figure 4 illustrates how the staff diversity across our portfolio compares to the region and Chicago's demographics

Figure 4



Our Response to the Data

In reviewing the data on diversity at our partner organizations, the Democracy Program will be taking a few immediate steps to ensure our investments are aligned with our Foundation's value of [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

1. Require a completed DPQ from all grantees

Almost a quarter of all grantees submitted no information or incomplete information on the demographic composition of their leadership and staff. Without transparency, we cannot effectively partner with grantees to build more inclusive organizations and address racial disparities in our democracy. Starting with our Fall 2020 grant application process, all applicants will be required to submit a completed DPQ to be eligible for funding. We will also ask for this information in the first stage of our grant review process to ensure conversations on racial and ethnic diversity and inclusivity are more central in our evaluation of prospective partnerships.

2. Seek partners that elevate Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx voices and talent.

Our portfolio of partners underrepresents two important communities that make up 40% of our region and 59% of Chicago. Latino people are significantly underrepresented on Boards, Senior Staff, and Staff of our current partners as compared to the region and Chicago. Black people are significantly underrepresented compared to Chicago in all the same categories.

Some organizations are doing impressive work building diverse Boards and Staff. We want to invest in these organizations, while helping those who have work to do emulate others' accomplishment. If we are going to eliminate racial disparities in our democracy, we need partners with the lived experience and cultural competencies necessary to design effective solutions. By 2025, we want our portfolio of partners to reflect the diversity of the populations we serve (regional or local, depending on the geographic scope of the work we are partnering on).

3. Report on our progress

Our Program must repeat this analysis annually to assess if we are advancing our diversity goals. We also need to publish our findings. This article is a first step in bringing greater transparency to our work and articulating how we are operationalizing our Foundation's commitment to equity. We are committing to repeating this analysis and publishing our results each year.

In addition to these three immediate steps, we are also working internally to tackle two challenges that emerged in our review of the data.

1. Clarifying the term "Senior Staff"

About 10% of grantees submitted complete (or almost complete) DPQs and indicated they had no Senior Staff. It could be some organizations are truly flat, collaborative operations, but we don't have enough data to know for sure. Since these organizations reported *not* having Senior Staff, their nonreporting of data on Senior Staff did not count against them and these data are not classified as missing. We will work to clarify the definition of Senior Staff and expectations for data submission in future DPQs.

2. Honing in on "Population Served"

We believe developing an inclusive organization is an important goal in its own right. We also believe internal inclusivity is an essential step to more equitably serving residents of our region. That said, defining the population a grantee serves and then collecting accurate demographic information for that population is difficult. The current DPQ invites grantees to self-define their population served and provide demographic data for this population based on sources available to them. A few organizations offer a direct service and tracks who participates in their programs. Most of our grantees, however, work in ways that make it more difficult to define, much less survey, their population served. For example, an organization that advocates on issues of land use policy might ostensibly serve the city as a whole, though all residents might not realize it. Or a journalism organization might have a direct population of readers, but its circle of service could extend more broadly given the positive civic impact the organization's reporting might have. With these subtleties in mind, we are considering how we can create space for grantees to continue to define their intended populations of service, while also setting an expectation – rooted in racial equity – of the population we hope to serve. This could allow for a clearer apples-to-apples comparison of how our partners are serving Chicago and the region equitably.

Finally, in reviewing the data on our partners' internal makeup and external demography, we repeatedly confronted the question of our own ethos: can we call for changes externally that we have not yet accomplished internally? In reflecting on this question, Equity in the Center's Levers for Building a Race Equity Culture came to mind, as detailed in the [Awake to Woke to Work](#) report that our staff spent some time studying last year. It's noteworthy that Equity in the Center doesn't describe a *path* to race equity. Rather, this work is framed as a cycle with levers and work that constantly have to be recalibrated. In short, this work is never "done" and "perfection" might be an

impossible achievement. Instead, the cycle emphasizes attention to data and intention in purpose to ensure an organization is constantly striving to do better and measuring its progress.

With this understand, we realize that should not envision or present ourselves as teachers. Instead, we are co-learners. We don't have the answers for how to achieve racial equity. We don't know how to ensure inclusivity. What we have learned is that to operationalize race equity we need to identify race equity as a goal, disaggregate data about our work by race and ethnicity, and be willing to have an open, continuous dialogue on the subject of race equity. Therefore, that is what we are asking of those who want to partner with us. We expect to learn much from this work, about ourselves and others, and look forward to sharing what we learn.

In short, we are not embarking on this work because we think we are doing it better. Rather, we know we all can do better and must do better. And at McCormick we have an opportunity to do so.

Conclusion

"You've got to look at it. And at certain times it cannot be more grim. If we don't look at it, we won't. If we don't change it, we're going to die."

Baldwin warned us, in his interview, that when we look at the work we are leading, the systems we are perpetuating, and the data on how we are doing it, we might not like what we see. But that cannot stop us from looking, especially if we want to learn to do better.

The Democracy Program is committed to learning with our grantee partners and our peers in philanthropy about how we can change the democracy we live in to ensure it works better for everyone. Looking at the diversity of the organizations we support and helping the ones that are more inclusive is one small way to start making this a world in which no one is an unwelcome guest, but rather everyone is an active, empowered participant.