Our Commitment to Racial Equity and Inclusive Recovery

We want greater Rochester to know that we are here to support the movement to ensure that Black Lives Matter and to realize the innate value and potential of all of our citizens.

That commitment starts with an acknowledgment that deep systemic racism has historically existed in our community and continues today. The evidence of systemic racism can be found in the persistent disparities that afflict Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) in Rochester.

Yet, behind every disparity lies an opportunity. We are committed to collaborating with partners and stakeholders to revitalize our region and realize Rochester’s promise by recognizing the inherent value and agency in every member of our community.

To learn more about the Community Foundation’s equity journey and steps we have already taken, click here.

Promoting an Inclusive and Equitable Recovery

Federal and state COVID recovery funding is, in today’s dollars, even greater than investments spurred by the New Deal in the 1930s. The Community Foundation has joined with partners intent on making sure recovery resources are distributed equitably to avoid the mistakes of New Deal legislation, like the housing policy called redlining that underlies concentrated poverty in communities of color today.

The North Star Coalition is comprised of representatives from government, philanthropy, business, education, and community organizations who recognize an unprecedented opportunity to
transform historically marginalized communities and reimagine the economic future of the greater Rochester-Finger Lakes region. Sign the pledge today.

Our Promise to Listen, Learn, and Act

We invite all of our partners to join the Community Foundation to turn collective anger and sorrow into a fierce resolve toward action (read our statement). Yet, if there is one thing we have learned since our equity work began in earnest a decade ago, it is that we need to be thoughtful about our approach and work with humility to ensure that we do not exacerbate our community’s challenges. We lead with listening, we learn from what we hear, and then we take sustained action.

Listen

Communities have embedded knowledge that comes from content experts – individuals with formal knowledge, recognized credentials, and resources – along with context experts, or people who can share their lived experiences. Too often we seek the counsel of the former over the latter.

We will prioritize engaging with all community perspectives and placing an emphasis on BIPOC voices. That means we will:

- Be open to new ideas and approaches shared with us by the community;
- Find ways to show up in the community, including at town hall meetings and other resident-engagement activities; and
- Explore participatory grantmaking and other strategies, where residents and community members drive the decision-making process.
Learn

Systemic racism is not a new phenomenon; it stems from a complex history in our society with unique characteristics in our own community.

We must familiarize ourselves with that history and all the complicated ways it continues to plague us.

We need to connect the historical narrative with residents’ current stories and contemporary data to develop a comprehensive understanding of systemic racism.

We need to constantly stay in a learning mode looking for unique insights to inform our work, and we need to share what we learn with other stakeholders. That means we will:

- Ensure that our staff and partners learn about the history of systemic racism in the country and our region;
- Continue to have ACT Rochester, our community indicators initiative, collect data regarding current racial disparities in our region; and
- Use feedback from community to center equity at the core of all work, not just “racial equity” work.

Act

The systemic nature of racism makes it impossible for any single individual or organization to engage alone. We reject paternalistic philanthropy and are not here to “fix” people or their communities, but to work alongside partners to ensure that the conditions exist for everyone to realize their fullest human potential.

Even as we recognize the disparities created by systemic racism, we look to build on the strengths and rich assets that our communities possess. We also recognize that the action must be sustained and deliberate even as the fervor of the
current moment wanes. **That means we will:**

- Steward the community’s resources to intentionally address the legacy of systemic racism. That is why we established the **Racial Equity Growth Fund**. Learn more about the fund [here](#).
- Model anti-racist behaviors, be held accountable for doing so by the community, and call out racism whenever we see it;
- Always collaborate with other organizations and individuals that are committed to an anti-racist Rochester region; and
- Act with urgency, recognizing that many BIPOC residents in our community are suffering now and deserve our undivided attention to end that suffering as quickly as possible.

**Staying Committed and Connected**

We believe that each and every one of us can lead from any position in our family, social networks, and organizational hierarchy — from entry-level to CEO. Please share your ideas by emailing Grants@racf.org, and please stay tuned in to our work by signing up for news and finding us on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube).