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## **OVERVIEW**

Often times grassroots leaders non-profit professionals and philanthropic organizations talk about the ways in which institutions operate from the vantage point of white people having control of the institutions that govern the lives of Black people. That frame is normalized in the status quo.

One manifestation of this is that the agencies that are tasked with providing services that affect Black people are often entities that are led by individuals and groups of individuals who 1.) have not been immersed in the history, culture and methodology of people of African decent who have been working areas of Black life and 2.) don't have mechanisms of accountability to community and instead are beholden to the white corporate sector, non-profit sector and government.

That is not just merely a cosmetic or inclusion issue. This model is one that has undermined the ability for Baltimore to build effective strategies for issues facing youth.

A model needs to be created where there is an entity that is accountable to grassroots organizations, community leaders and Baltimore's population writ large. This institution should either be built to capacity OR incubated by the youth fund itself to ensure its long term sustainability.

This document is intended to provide a general a model that would best benefit the Baltimore community. It's divided into three sections:

- **Redefining Expertise**
- **Operations & Infrastructure**
- **Community Accountability**

The goal is for the Youth Fund Task Force to embrace a racially equitable model that benefits all of Baltimore's youth. In the long term, this will ameliorate the structural impediments that stifle the growth of Baltimore's grassroots organizations serving youth and young adults.

The intention is not to list the fine details of how the Youth Fund will operate, but rather a guideline for how we can build a racially equitable model for the fund.

## **REDEFINING EXPERTISE**

We must fundamentally redefine the framework for what qualifies a person to administer philanthropic endeavors. This function has to fundamentally change in order to create equity and parity for funding.

Typically, when in the the non-profit sector, expertise is define by traditional technical expertise. This is usually defined by:

- **University degrees from mainstream academic institutions with a particular type of credibility**
  - These mainstream university institutions embrace a traditional methodology of philanthropy and institutional operations.
  - Our presumption that individuals terminal degrees in traditional areas of expertise are somehow more qualified than people in Baltimore's community is highly problematic.
- **Highly specialized technical training in specific areas**, including (but not limited to):
  - Accounting
  - Government operations
  - Public relations & communications
  - Connections to mainstream corporate/non-profit sector
  - Wealth and access to capital

We must not look at these traditional credentials as our barometers for who can operate an institution that distributes resources to community. This is not to say that these traditional forms of expertise or negative. We can look for traditional technical expertise for handling specific operational procedures (fiduciary competence, day-to-day operations, etc).

The argument is that our definition of expertise must be defined by work that individuals do in community, preferably individuals who are not employed/deployed by organizations that are in traditional mainstream white institutions.

There are several community based institutions that train people to have a racial justice lens and produces more effective leadership. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Nsoroma Academy For Holistic Thought
- Baltimore Racial Justice Action
- Morgan State School of Social Work
- Institute for Urban Research
- Orita's Cross Freedom School

Although these institutions, and similar grassroots organizations in Baltimore, have produced better outcomes for Baltimore youth, they are typically not elevated to the same level of legitimacy as mainstream institutions.

The traditional credentialing markers have been ineffective at producing change, evidenced by the the Baltimore Uprising and the slew of challenges face by Baltimore's most vulnerable

communities. The fact that the Youth Fund Task Force has to create a model for race equity in our model is indicative that the expertise of the people heading these agencies/institutions are not effective and there needs to be drastic changes in these areas.

The status quo model of philanthropy does not lead to effective leadership. This does not mean that that traditional trained leaders are not qualified. The issue is that we need to have a more critical lens for what we're looking for when we speak about expertise. Our metric of expertise should be the ability to build capacity effectively in community.

Race literacy is essential in our conversations about these issues. This is defined by how much a person/institution have been immersed in the methodologies produced by the people they serve. In this instance, considering Baltimore is a majority Black city, these institutions must be immersed in methodologies produced by people of African decent.

For example, if you're a non-profit professional, you should have a relatively high level of race understanding in order to effectively serve Baltimore's youth population. The higher your race literacy is, the more that you're qualified. This is not an ideological point, but is rather a question of effectiveness. If structural racism/white supremacy is our center of gravity that governs these institutions in the status quo, then we must challenge the status quo to change the way we distribute resources.

An example of how this has played out in Baltimore is a recent initiative by the Family League. They recently put out applications for a position in their organization and removed the requirement for a college degree. While this is a step towards the right direction, racial equity is not about lowering the bar or saying academic credentialing is negative.

The fundamental flaw is that we need to look for people who have different kinds of training who, and who are particularly trained in areas related to racial justice. Baltimore need peoples who are credentialed in programs that is not highly held by mainstream institutions, but explicitly is immersed in methods created by people of African decent.

People must trained in a methodology that is different than the status quo. In order to drastically alter these aforementioned structural dynamics, a model needs to be produced that is not rooted in the traditional social service methodology.

## **OPERATIONS & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Operations is typically the most difficult to design as racially equitable. In our meetings for the Youth Fund Task Force, we must have fruitful dialogue around ensuring that operations for the fund is accessible directly by community. We need to consider the types of people we want to

participate and what are some of the barriers to their current participation. Our goal should be to eliminate those barriers in order to make operations transparent and effective.

Here are some concrete examples of how to accomplish those goals:

- **Grant/Decision Making Periods**
  - Create a defined period where there are applications taken where money is distributed
  - Decreases the amount of time smaller organizations must spend on attending meetings and doing correspondences for grants
  - Should occur during the a particular quarter of the fiscal year where all decisions are made
  - Food should be provided, meetings should be in the evening and child-care provided for attendees
- **Lowering Overhead Costs**
  - Lean administrative staff is key to having an effective philanthropic institution
  - Solves the issue of opening far too much money on staffing throughout the fiscal year
- **Community Participation**
  - Community leaders should paid to help make decisions related to the youth fund
  - Decision making processes should be configured where corporate interests should be the minority
  - The process by which people are selected in the governance structure should be clear, transparent and accountable to community

These are items that will take several meetings for us to define and create. The objective here should be that the corporate sector cannot be in control of this process. It needs to be designed and controlled by community. This is most effectively administers by ensuring the Youth Fund governance structure represent an accurate demographic makeup of the city with an emphasis on racial equity.

## **COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY**

Baltimore needs built in mechanisms for the community to provide meaningful feedback on both the operations and expanding what expertise is. Here are some examples of how we can actualize accountability to community.

- **Meetings & Access**
  - Functioning website
  - Live streams from Charm TV
  - Advanced public notice with meeting information
- **Communications**

- Intentionality is essential and we must create effective modes of communication that reach Baltimore's population
- Resources must be expended on community organizing giving reports on the youth fund to Baltimore's civic organizations and telling local residents how to apply for money.

## **CONCLUSION**

The goal of this model is not to be exhaustive, but to give us a frame to use for all of our future discussions about administering the Youth Fund in a racially equitable fashion. Applying a racially equitable frame to the model we embrace is essential for Baltimore's long term success in servicing our youth and young adults. Our success should be measured by the shifting of these structural dynamics and the majority of our investments going to community based institutions that effectively serve the Baltimore community.