



## Engaging Diverse Communities Request for Proposal Instruments of Hope Unity Fund

### BACKGROUND

In 2019, The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB) launched a new strategic plan focused on five strategic priorities: Equity and Inclusion, Economic Opportunity for All, Overcoming Persistent Poverty, Thriving Communities and Regional Cooperation. These five priorities will guide CFGB over the next decade as we look to fulfill our vision of creating a just, prosperous, and unified region where every person is empowered to reach their full potential.

At the same time, through the generosity of an individual donor family, the Foundation launched the **Instruments of Hope Unity Fund** allowing CFGB to dive deeper within the area of Equity and Inclusion. Under the guidance of CFGB staff and the Unity Fund Advisory Committee, the Unity Fund focuses on three overarching goals:

- 1) Understanding the barriers to greater unity, shared growth and prosperity within the Greater Birmingham region;
- 2) Addressing and dismantling systemic racism and the policies, practices and mindsets that continue to divide and hold us back as a community; and
- 3) Creating opportunities to bring people together for meaningful engagement across differences.

Moreover, the Unity Fund seeks to bring thought leadership and philanthropic support to work that strengthens community cohesion, builds trust across diverse groups, and increases understanding around the concept of shared fates. We believe these are key cultural shifts that must occur in order for all people to thrive in the greater Birmingham region.

Over the last several years, the Foundation and other stakeholders have invested deeply in exploring what it will take for us to move forward together, as well as what is holding us back. A recurring theme within this exploration is the idea that as a whole, we lack a shared understanding of both our history and our present day circumstances and that this lack of shared understanding continues to hold us back from making forward progress.

For instance, racial disparities continue to burden the lives of many people of color in myriad ways that are not widely appreciated by those not sharing this experience. These disparities often impose heavier burdens on the lives of some, while having the exact opposite impact on the lives of others. These

divergent experiences, combined with the lack of understanding and recognition of the same, have only served to exacerbate community fragmentation while simultaneously hampering prosperity for the whole. While racism most harms people of color, it also has historically led to justification for policies that harm many people across race lines. Consequently, the pathway to a thriving Birmingham region across race and class lines is possible only by dismantling systemic racism and working toward growth, prosperity and opportunity for all.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

James Baldwin

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## PROJECT SCOPE

While our community has made great strides in a number of different areas, stark inequities persist. We believe the continued advancement of our region is contingent on greater unity and collaboration, and that neither of those can be achieved without addressing racial disparities, and more specifically their underlying causes – the interconnected systems, practices, policies, relationships and mindsets that created these inequities and allow them to persist.

**With this RFP, the Unity Fund is seeking organizations with a strong theory of change for how to address and rectify inequities along lines of race and class.** Recognizing there are myriad people and organizations working on these issues and in just as many ways, the Unity Fund has chosen to focus this grant opportunity on programs that incorporate one or both of the following to amplify the impact of their work:

1. [Narrative Change](#)

Storytelling can drive transformative change. It is through stories that we make sense of ourselves, the world around us, our past, and our possibilities. Recognizing that certain stories and perspectives have prevailed throughout history, we understand how we get to a biased or incomplete portrayal of our collective past. Race-based divisions and disparities make more sense when we understand the way stories perpetuate beliefs, feed into practices, inform policies and become “just the way things are.” Correcting this self-perpetuating cycle begins with a desire to understand and empathize more fully with one another as human beings and requires a willingness to read reality truthfully. As we commit to building a shared narrative representing a more thorough and accurate representation of history, we allow for the emergence of a story that fosters empathy and connection, and that motivates action. As we gain a clearer understanding of our community’s realities, we make way for a present where healing can occur, and for a future that is not limited by our past. Where do we need to change the story?

**Proposals that address narrative change will focus on how to craft and share a more authentic narrative around our community, its past, present and future. These proposals should address the mental models, assumptions and beliefs that guide what we think and do, along with describing how adding this element of narrative change would amplify the impact of your present work.**

## 2. [Diverse Coalition Building](#)

Coalitions are powerful. If history and present day can agree on one thing, it is that well organized groups of people, committed to a common goal are some of the most effective change-makers in the world. Something special happens when individuals and groups are able to rise above their feelings of separateness and actively collaborate in a spirit of mutual understanding, patience, and respect. Research on effective coalitions tells us that some of the most successful coalitions are those that value inclusivity, diversity and are reflective of the community on whose behalf they work. While coalitions come in all shapes, sizes and purposes, in this instance, we are asking organizations to focus on diverse, community-centered coalitions who together can work to address racial equity.

**Responses focused on coalition building should describe your approach to building and engaging a diverse coalition of individuals and/or groups. Both existing and newly formed coalitions should describe the issue(s) being addressed, the aims of the coalition, and how a diverse, engaged coalition would amplify the impact of their current working model.**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead*

## **DELIVERABLES**

As a part of your work, the selected partner will be expected to do the following:

- 1) Work closely with and coordinate activities with CFGB staff during the life of the grant.
- 2) Design and facilitate the process for implementation of their project from end-to-end, from the preparation of preliminary materials to collection of evaluation and feedback upon completion.
- 3) Regular communication and updates at agreed upon intervals to CFGB staff and the Unity Fund as the project progresses.
- 4) Produce an official report of outcomes and impact, including an interactive version of the report with data dashboards and (potentially) a print version.
  - a. The report should include an Executive Summary and a detailed outline of next steps or priorities the community can take to advance a vision for our community free of racism.

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## ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be qualified, 501(c)(3) organizations within the CFGB service area.

Preference will be given to non-profit agencies that demonstrate their ability to successfully implement the proposed activities. Experience working with the designated communities, conducting community outreach and engagement, and/or working on racial equity is preferred; as is knowledge or experience of at least one of the following: systemic racism, social cohesion and social capital, addressing racial and/ or socio-economically based inequities, or building diverse coalitions, preferably multiracial. Financial stability and organizational capacity will also be taken into consideration.

## HOW TO APPLY

The Instruments of Hope Unity Fund and the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham are seeking a nonprofit partner(s) to develop a community-centered effort that utilizes one or both of the approaches outlined above with the aim of achieving a more equitable, inclusive and unified community.

Interested organizations will submit applications via [CFGB's grant portal](#). In addition to providing standard organizational information and financial data, organizations will be asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Please describe your organization's theory of change relevant to this RFP.
2. How will you incorporate one of the elements outlined above (narrative change or diverse coalition building) into your work and what impact do you expect it to have?
3. What positions your organization to have the credibility, expertise and capacity to lead this work?
4. In your own words, please share your understanding of "mental models" and their impact. Discuss how these ways of thinking can or should evolve and their relationship to racial healing.
5. An important part of this process is bringing together disparate perspectives and different populations who may not normally interact with one another. What are your thoughts on this? Who are the stakeholders you plan to engage, and what is your strategy for engaging a diverse population?
6. Please tell us about the team who will lead/facilitate this project. Please describe relevant training, experience or expertise of these facilitators.
7. Please upload a basic framework and timeline of your proposed project.

(Think major milestones and stakeholders; **Note:** Advancing projects will be asked to provide a two-year work plan to include a detailed timeline, launch and communications strategy prior to final selection.)

## RFP PROCESS

- The RFP process will run parallel to our Spring 2021 competitive grant process.
- Completed applications must be submitted via [CFGB's grant portal](#) by **March 26, 2021**.
- Selected organizations may be asked to schedule a committee interview/ site visit and provide additional information.
- Grant awards will be determined by May 20, 2021.
- If you are unable to access the application via the above link, please copy and past the following into your browser: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=cfgb>

## HELPFUL LINKS

Below we've included links to resources that have informed our thinking around Equity & Inclusion and the topics discussed in this RFP.

### **Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

<https://healourcommunities.org/>

### **Woven Together: Conversation with Dr. Tricia Rose on How Systems Support Racial Inequality (video)**

<https://www.cfbham.org/news/woven-together-equity-and-inclusion-with-dr-tricia-rose/>

### **Sum of Us – The Hidden Cost of Racism for Everyone (audio)**

<https://www.npr.org/2021/02/17/968638759/sum-of-us-examines-the-hidden-cost-of-racism-for-everyone>