Transcript for Webinar "Movement Infrastructure Series- Meeting the Need: Building the Capacity of Community-Based Organizations"

Host: Building Movement Project

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Frances Kunreuther:

Welcome, folks. We'll get started shortly. We see a lot of folks are still coming in, so we'll start very soon.

Frances Kunreuther:

And for those of you, who are already on, if you want to put into the chat, your name, your pronouns, where you're coming from today. And we're really curious, what do you think about, when you hear movement infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure? What's a word or two that you think about? We know that this is, we think of infrastructure like the bridges, the Biden infrastructure bills. What do you think about when you hear the word infrastructure? So if you're just joining us, we're just going to wait a couple of more minutes, but what do you think about when you think about the word movement infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure? It'd be great to know your thinking. We're going to just start, we're just waiting for some folks to come on. We had over 300 people sign up for this webinar, so we want to give them a little chance to start. We're going to just start on one minute.

Wow. [inaudible 00:02:06] think of infrastructure, the lack of funding, the co-directorship, your name, your pronouns, your organization's from Santa Cruz, radically reimagine it. Yeah, we agree. Strength and power. And if you're just joining us, if you want to put in your name, your pronouns, where you're coming from, and maybe a word or two of what you think about when you hear movement infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure. And so, we're going to just wait another minute and then we're going to get started. A lot of people signed up for this webinar. We want to give them a chance to join. And glad that you're here today. Thank you so much for coming during this busy time of year. So your name, your pronouns, where you're coming from today, and what you think about when you hear either movement infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure. Organizational power to impact systems change. Fantastic. Really great to have people here today. Pathways for communication, how the work gets done.

Excellent. So why don't we... We have a critical mass here today. And again, you can keep putting in your name, your pronouns, where you're coming from today and what you think about when you hear movement infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure. My name is Frances Kunreuther, I'm the co-executive director of the Building Movement Project. And we're thrilled to be having this webinar about our new report that's being released this very day, Meeting the need: Building the capacity of Community Based Organizations. And it's the first of a movement infrastructure series we're going to be doing. So, look out for our four reports that will be coming out, the next one in the new year.

So let's see. For those of you who need a reminder that you're not going to be visible if you're attendee, you can use the Q&A feature anytime you want to ask a question, either of me or the panelist or of Sean, my co-executive director who you'll be meeting soon. You can use a chat function just to chat anything that comes up for you, any comments you have, we welcome the chat. If you have technical issues, you should put those in the chat and direct them towards BMP Admin. That's the one goes to Jasmine Lee Worth, who I really want to thank, who's been really the brain's behind putting together this webinar. And they will help you if you have issues, technical issues, and they'll work with you on that. The

webinar's being recorded, we're going to share a link to the webinar, a link to the report, and any other materials that get mentioned.

And then, I don't know, we might not be on Twitter very much longer, right? I mean we might all have to jump ship, so this is your chance to tweet. This may be your last chance to tweet, and you can use the hashtag #MovementInfrastructure. And our handle is Bldingmovement, or building movement without the U and the I. So welcome. And that's a little housekeeping. Let me go through the agenda today. I will be talking about the findings, just a really brief overview of this report. And then Sean, my co-executive director, will be moderating a panel discussion with our four fabulous participants, Yolanda Alindor from the San Francisco Foundation, Ericka Stallings from the Leadership Learning Community, Sachi Watase from the New Mexico Asian Family Center and Cassandra Webster from the Memphis Challenge. We're then going to have a, in between those conversations, there'll be some Q&A time that you can ask your questions and then we'll sum up and close at the end of the hour.

But before we get started, we would like to do a poll, so we know who you are. For those of you on the phone, we're interested whether you're an executive director, or a senior staffer in your organization, or maybe another type of staffer, if you're a board member, if you're a consultant or a capacity builder, wanting to know how you build the capacity of community based organizations or a funder. So let me give you a little bit more time to answer that poll, and just maybe one more minute you can kind of see what's going on. You might have multiple roles, but we're going to end the poll now. And you can see here, I think that the results are, a few CEOs, thank you 8%. But mostly it's either senior staff or other staff. So we really welcome you and also the funders, capacity builders, board members. So thanks so much.

Let's see. I'm trying to stop sharing. Go away. There we go. Okay. So for those of you who don't know the Building Movement Project, we work to support organizations to integrate social change and systems change activities into their everyday work. And we do that by conducting research. That's what you're going to hear about today. Developing resources and building relationships with groups on the ground, which really inform all of the work that we do. We also are in the middle of our Race to Lead surveys, some of you may know our Race to Lead work @racetolead.org. But please take the survey, I think you should take a screenshot right now of this and share it with everybody who you know who works in the nonprofit sector. Anybody who's a paid staff in the nonprofit sector can take the survey, and it's only open for six more weeks.

So take the survey and get back to us. We really want to get those numbers up so we can report back to you, what's happening with nonprofit staffers and leaders and the issues and barriers they face, especially BIPPOC leadership. So I'm going to start talking about the report. The report had over 800 respondents, and I just want to thank Tessa Constantine and Lisa Ramadhar from our research department who really helped do all the analysis and put together the tables that you're going to see, as we go through that. I'm going to highlight three main findings of the report. So you can get the report on our website. Again, it was released today, www.buildingmovement.org. And we'll send that to you after the webinar, a link to the report. But the three findings I'm going to highlight is that, first of all, for these community based groups, both BIPOC, that's Black, Indigenous, and people of color respondents, and the white respondents really face similar infrastructure challenges.

And we looked at a variety of indicators on these challenges. And why that's important is that there's been this assumption, I think, sometimes unspoken, sometimes it's just the way that groups are steered. The BIPOC led groups really have more capacity needs and challenges than white led groups. And that's just not what we found in this particular sample. So of the 800 plus leaders that filled out the survey, that was not true. And I'll show you a little bit of that in just a minute. The second finding that I'm going to talk about is that, what was true was actually BIPOC leaders had a harder time finding providers that really understood their organizations and the communities that they served. And they were less likely

than white leaders to report that they got adequate support from providers when they sought out support. And then the final finding is, as some people of you put in the chat when you think of infrastructure, was funding, funding, funding.

The groups really needed more funding, needed funding for the work. And that money for capacity building and for our ever growing capacity building sector of consultants and capacity building organizations, did not replace the need for funding for the work. The money being diverted to that really was a hardship for groups that really need the money for their operations. So let me go into some detail about that. First of all, when we say similar organizations and similar challenges, we really wanted to make sure we reached across the United States. And these are the regions that the organizations in our sample survey. And you can see they're really pretty equally distributed across the country, including people who worked on a national level. And I really want to pause for a minute here to thank our distribution partners because we really would never have had that reach without them.

And that's, the Bar Foundation in Massachusetts really getting it out to Massachusetts and the Northeast. In New Mexico, the Santa Fe Communities Foundation and Groundworks really made sure that that state had a lot of respondents. And again, in the Southwest, in North Carolina MDC, who also had great reach in the South. Oregon, the Coalition of Communities of Color and the Nonprofit Association of Oregon, did a great job of getting the survey out. Tennessee Momentum Partners, Mission Capital in Texas, and then in Wisconsin, the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management, at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. So just a shout out to those groups who have really, did a terrific job in the distribution. So the organizations also look similar in terms of the size of their organizations. We were really trying to find the small grassroots organizations, the community based organizations that are often ignored when we talk about capacity building.

On the left side, you'll see that blue color will always be BIPOC respondents or people of color respondents. And on the right side that green color, white respondents. And what we found is over half of the groups had 10 or fewer staff and had annual budgets of under a million dollars. And you can see that here. What's interesting that the very smallest organizations were more likely to be BIPOC organizations, those with annual budgets of $250,000. [inaudible 00:12:26] And as you get higher up, as you get into larger annual budgets, kind of the differences between the two groups really starts to even out somewhat. So the survey asked about four different domains. We asked about infrastructure challenges or capacity building challenges in four different domains. One was operations, communications and development. The second was staff development and wellness. We also asked about strategy and evaluation, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

And what we found is actually there were very similar needs or issues, in at least three of the domains. And you can see those are the first three there. Of course, the difference was in DEI, where white led groups were more likely to have issues with DEI and diversifying their staff, senior staff and board than BIPOC groups. Let me just dig in a little bit because under each of these domains, we asked a series of questions, and I'm just going to give you examples of what we found in some of those domains. So on the left side is operations, communications and development. Here were kind of the top issues that people said they had within that operations, communications and development area in that domain. And you can see it's really organizational growth and development of funding, which is very similar. Again, what we found is... The finding here is really the similarities, not the differences.

So we did see some differences, and you're always going to find some differences in these areas, but we were really struck by the similarities as BIPOC led groups didn't have more challenges in all of these areas. Similarly with staff development and wellness, here are some of the issues that people had within that. And I just thought it was interesting that everybody's dealing with staff burnout, and managing too big workloads, especially since Covid. We found that white led organizations had more issues with staff turnover and building a positive culture in their organizations, where people of color led organizations

were more focused on developing staff members and supporting staff wellness. So just some of the differences you see there again. There are some differences, just not dramatic differences. Here's a quote from a white respondent. We had a lot of write-ins in this survey, and talking about how small organizations like the one that this person runs, all the money goes to the program and not the staff, but that puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to splashy impact the funders are looking for.

So, let's move on to the second finding, which is that BIPOC led groups of... First of all, most people sought out support. This is all these different areas. This question was a little different than the one I just showed you with the domains. The domains were what challenges does your organization face? These four challenges that you face as a leader. And so, the responses were very similar. There was a lot of overlap. Most people sought out support, not everybody. You can see these were the top six challenges starting with the left side and then coming up to the right that people said that they faced. But people of color respondents, the BIPOC respondents were more likely to seek out support and they were less likely to receive adequate support. So, how do we know that? That top bar is whether they sought support for a challenge.

So the blue or the light blue or light green is whether they sought support and the gray is that they did not seek support. And then underneath that, that kind of shaded bar, the very darkest color is if they received adequate support, that middle color is if they received some support, but it wasn't really enough, not enough of what they need. And the very lightest color in that second bar is that they sought out support, but they actually didn't get that. So you can see that... We're not really giving adequate support to most of these groups. And that's especially true for BIPOC led organizations. Another way we've looked at the types of supports that people had, was asking about the providers that people were able to access. And so we asked on a scale from one to five, did they have barriers in any of these areas?

These are some of the areas represented here. One is like, there was absolutely no barrier and a five is that they had a significant barrier. And you can see actually we were surprised. We thought there would be much more barriers based on geography, even when we divided it up by the different areas. Geographic issues were not a big issue either for BIPOC or white respondents. Very similar response rates. And both white and BIPOC respondents leaders had much more bigger issues finding providers they could afford, and actually finding the time to participate in programs and technical assistance. And then on these last three issues, maybe not surprisingly, given our other findings, you could see that BIPOC leaders respondents had more barriers in finding providers that represented the communities that they served, finding providers that had an expertise in addressing racism and other systems of oppression, and finding providers that had a track record of working with BIPOC led organizations.

And then is a quote. We wanted to give you a positive experience. This is somebody who said, [inaudible 00:17:47] they had an excellent experience with a service provider, where they had an iterative relationship to ensure they understood the nuances of our mission, organizational culture programs, and our accompanying business model. So that's what this person said they needed in order to receive really excellent support with the provider. And then the final area, before we get to our panel is really this idea that most people were really focused on funding. You saw that in the earlier domain, when we looked at operations and development and communications, that funding was the second highest area, came up also with personal challenges and networks with funders that these leaders faced. But it really was resonant in the write-in responses. We had hundreds of write-in responses. And you can see the word fund, funding, funder, appeared at least 535 times.

There was probably more than that. With a variety of issues, the obstacles of filling out the forms, the demands from funders, the need for funding. And it also came up in the focus groups, especially the BIPOC focus groups that Lisa and Sean ran, and I'm going to give you... End with a quote from one of those BIPOC focus groups saying, "I sit on a major foundation in our city and what I found is that when

Black organizations ask for the support and get it, it's usually in the form of some technical assistance or advising as opposed to what we really need, which is financial support."

So let me end with two thoughts. One is that we have a huge capacity building field that is ever growing. We're actually part of that field, but that field should not take money away from what groups really need, which is money for operations. And secondly, that funding... Funders really need to see capacity building as part of a larger strategy to fund organizations, not funding the capacity building in lieu of funding organizations. It's not like a consolation prize for organizations. And with that, Sean, why don't I turn it over to you?

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Thanks so much Francis. So I'm really excited to start this conversation with our panelists. We're joined again by Cassandra Webster, who is the ED of the Memphis Challenge Inc. Ericka Stallings who is the co-ED of Leadership Learning Community. Sachi Watase who is the ED of New Mexico Asian Family Center, and Yolanda Alindor who is the leadership development program officer at the San Francisco Foundation. And so, you'll be hearing from all of them. And again, if you have reactions to what people are saying, please use the chat to do thumbs up and share your experiences that align with what people are saying. And then if you also have questions that you want us to answer, please use the Q&A feature for that. So to get us started, I'm going to invite Sachi to go first, and just briefly describe your work at New Mexico Asian Family Center and reflect on when you took the position on as executive director, what were the supports that the organization needed and what were the barriers that you experienced to receiving those supports as a new ED?

Sachi Watase:

Thank you Sean. And thank you all for giving me the opportunity to share about my experience. So the New Mexico Asian Family Center is a community based and culturally tailored organization that serves the Asian population of New Mexico through both direct services, specifically legal aid, counseling, case management, peer support groups, and healing circles mostly for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. But also we do community engagement work, advocacy, civic engagement and youth programming and multi-generational family programming. And, we do a lot of different things, but we work across the whole state of New Mexico, and we're based in Albuquerque. And we also provide basic translation and interpretation services to public and private entities all across the state, because there's such a lack of services, linguistically tailored and culturally tailored services for the Asian population here in New Mexico.

Yeah, and I took on this position, I'm from Albuquerque and I grew up here, but I left for about 10 years and I came back, because it felt like a really special opportunity to be able to work in the community that I grew up in, and be able to work for an organization that I wish had existed for me and my family when I was growing up. And when I came and started in this role, it was September, 2020. So it was still a very, very challenging time to be starting in this role, and to be building community, trying to build community and connection with staff who are already so burnt out, and we couldn't see each other in person at all. And so at the time that I started, I think one of the biggest things that I noticed almost immediately was just the lack of ability for our staff to have rest, to have a break because we had been really...

The state and city and county and lots of different entities had really leaned on our organization to serve the Asian population during the pandemic, but without providing us with the kind of subsequent funding that would help make that possible. But even if we had that funding, we didn't have the staffing necessarily to take on, in a manageable way to take on everything that was being asked of us. So we really had to just stretch, and I could tell that staff were extremely exhausted and just needing a break. But the need was so high that, and our staff is so committed and passionate that it was clear they never

really got that break, and were just pushing through. So that was one big need that I noticed when we first started, and because we were stretching our funding to serve more people, but still required to have the same kind of reporting processes and application processes, that became even harder to do because we had less and less time, but still had to report on more and more clients and all these very specific numbers and details that made it harder.

So, that was definitely one of the main challenges. And then, I also think that because... As kind of stated in other comments from the report, that many, many funders want to fund some more glamorous outcome programmatic work, like outcome based programmatic work that looks like client numbers or amount of programs or amount of people reached. And that naturally is, it happens in a lot of nonprofits. I think that we stretch to serve the community because we care and we want to, and we are in the community and it's our community. And so that, we want to do... We want to serve, we want to be able to run these programs that we really care about, and the programs that we're working on are getting funded, but as we add little programs and bring on new staff to run these programs, we're not able to really invest in administrative roles.

And so over time, you take on one little thing here, one little thing there, and it doesn't feel like too much for the administration who's already doing those basic things. But over time, facts that we hadn't built any administrative supports, but more and more staff and more and more programs, it was really causing a strain on everyone, because it trickles down throughout the whole organization. And so I think... Yeah. So I think that there's really a challenge there, and how do we really build that in, and convince funders and have funders trust us that we know what's best for our communities, because we're in those communities, we're working in those communities.

And the funders who are not here may not know that, likely don't know that. And that we really need to be able to just do the work that we do best, and not have to justify why we need this certain help to be able to do that. So those were some of the different things that I saw when I first started, and I think it was a very challenging time because we were providing essential services and there's a lot of issues that way, so.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Yeah, thanks so much. Thanks. Yeah, and I think that your point about organizational growth creates additional administrative challenges sometimes, that may not be supported or funded by the grants unfortunately, that are making it possible to grow to meet the needs. So, I want to move to Cassandra and ask your experience as someone who's working, well, leading an organization that had been founded by a philanthropist and also organization that's working with high performing students of color. And so, it seems like the organization could be well positioned, right? And yeah, I'm sure well positioned, doing great work. And there's still these challenges. So what has stood out to you in terms of the challenges in growing your work and your organization as it relates to some of the things that came up in the research that we did?

Cassandra Webster:

Thank you. Thank you Sean, for the question and for the Building Movement Project, for the opportunity. So, just to frame the Memphis Challenge, we're a talent pipeline program with a 33 year track record of social emotional development for high achieving students of color in the Memphis, Tennessee, wanted to frame where we are. And our efficacy was tested, obviously during the pandemic through Zoom workshops and learning journeys and ensuring that we had the arsenal of tools to keep our students connected, not only from a social component but also from a mental health standpoint. And yet at the same time, the question being said that the actual challenge in growing our work is the perceived assumption that we were funded... Because we were funded by a philanthropist that oh, you've got lots

and lots of money, which is far from the truth. So we are a public nonprofit and as a result, various forms of revenue streams are necessary to support our body of work.

And yet our brand appeal is stellar. Our alumni speak for themselves in terms of the success. We have judges, we have elected officials, we have professionals, creatives in our space. And our mission of inspiring and developing future Memphis leaders is bringing them back to our city. And yet, as a result of our connection, it's viewed as if there is a war chest of funding. And so, we are looking at ways and as a BIPOC led organizations, we're challenged to do more with less, coupled with racial inequities facing us, which is really the elephant in the room. At times, as we look now at the face of our nation and the support or the attention, the light, the bright light that's being focused on organizations that are led, BIPOC organizations, but also taking a deeper dive into the work that we do, and how much more we do with little and fewer dollars in resources compared to our counterparts, of majority led organizations who would have 2.5 to R1 in terms of staffing or support.

And some of it, I have to say, I'm very big on being self-reflective and looking at, okay, so what did I do wrong? Or what about this picture is blurry? And working in our space of wanting to do the best and being excellent at our work and by any means necessary, as Sachi alluded, the hours, the time, the effort, of being able to push back and to pause and to say, "Hey wait a minute, stop. Let's put a pin there. Point of clarification in terms of what my needs really are." How can we address that as opposed to continuing to plow through, and continue to take what's given or not given and making do with it. And so, it's caused me to be very intentional and move, I've never been one to be woe to me, but also recognizing that yes there are some implicit biases, and there are some inequities. And how can I be the voice to amplify that, to really talk about what the elephant is in the room.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Yeah, thanks so much Cassandra, because it's such a great point, because I think oftentimes without people having a framework or hearing stories like yours, they misinterpret what they're experiencing as being about them as opposed to an example of these kind of structural inequities that exist in the sector. So I hope that stories like this can help people have a different framework for understanding some of the challenges that they experience as organizational leaders. I want to switch to Ericka, because Leadership Learning Community, a close long time partner organization of BMP, and we're in a similar space where we see a lot of these same themes and stories coming up from local organizations that we have relationships with. And want to hear a little bit about how the report findings resonate for you, and what you're seeing in terms of the supports that groups, particularly smaller community BIPOC led organizations really are facing right now.

Ericka Stallings:

Great, thanks. Happy to be here. Thank you for the invitation. Quick note about LLC, we're a national organization and network of change makers. We work with people who run, fund, and study leadership, and these are people who want to deepen their ability to practice leadership and leadership development in libratory ways. And we primarily focus on BIPOC and historically excluded people and communities. Really excited about this inquiry because I've mostly thought about the difference and the amount of funding that our organizations get or the conditions like the deliverables, but not necessarily the kind of funding with the exception of general operating versus programmatic. So the focus on capacity building and that kind of funding is really helpful. From my observation of what organizations need, the first thing that is coming to mind for me is money, but I'm going to hold that for last, because I think that's the most obvious one.

I mean, other things that people clearly need is time. So time to reflect, time to dream and strategize. So that's sabbaticals and retreats. People need time for leadership development and growth. And this is

especially true for people who are working in communities, are trying to do things that are transformative, who are working with directly impacted people, who are trying to undo and unearth work that's required to heal from oppressive systems. And people need time for rest and for play. They need actual physical spaces to retreat, trying to do everything on a dime and you don't have money for even a staff retreat, and you're trying to put something together, and you don't have a beautiful place to bring your staff to, to thank them and appreciate them for what they've been doing. That's a burden on folks. I think people are trying to do new things and they need shared models of what works.

They need support to manage dissonance. I think, particularly as folks are thinking about intergenerational shifting, conflicts that people might not be prepared for are arising. And so people are dealing with new polarities and new tensions, and so they need support to do that. When we're providing capacity building, people really do need consultants who are representative and reflect the communities that they're working with. People can't do everything in-house, but that doesn't mean that they need an external [inaudible 00:36:17] person, that they have to spend a lot of time and energy doing a lot of interpretation and translation work.

I think folks also need staff. So people need to be able to hire, retain and support staff. I think, we talked about making due a second ago, and our organizations are too lean, there's not enough redundancy. So if someone is sick, someone leaves, someone grows out of their position, then the burden shifts to other staff people. There's also not enough internal support for that backend staffing, that backbone of organization that people need, the HR support, the admin support, all the stuff that holds the organizational house up, that burden is falling on folks and isn't evenly distributed. I think, at the end of the day, going back to what I started with, which is money. So organizations need flexible money. They need abundant money. When I say flexible, I mean people need to be free to do their business. They know what they need to do and they need their resources to do that.

I think folks need money for implementation. So I think capacity building and advice on how to do our work differently is really important. But if you leave the capacity building with a list of tasks and no capacity to implement, then it is one another burden. And it's also really bad for staff morale. People are really frustrated when you start a conversation, then there's no capacity to actually move on it. And I think just closing, I think the idea of making due and setting the bar... Not making due and setting the bar higher is really, really important, because when we set the bar higher for ourselves, we can set the bar higher for our communities. And when we take crumbs for our organizations, we take crumbs for our communities, and we're instead of doing more with less, we can do more with more. And that's I think what our communities need.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Thanks so much Ericka. Yeah, I love the idea of doing more with more. Let's have this narrative of abundance be a reality as well. So Yolanda, going to turn it to you. And you are a funder, right? And want to acknowledge that you have been very much involved in building capacity, working with community based organizations, BIPOC led organizations. Can you talk a little bit about the work you do? And your particular vantage point in terms of identifying areas where funders can really support the kind of groups that we're talking about? And also just noting there was a comment by someone named Nicky about, it's hard to agitate funders. I'm curious if you have any observations about when partners in community have been successful in agitating funders for more of this abundance.

Yolanda Alindor:

Sorry, totally forgot about that. We're so deep into listening. Okay. Yolanda Alindor, I'm a senior program officer at the San Francisco Foundation, where our north star is racial equity and economic inclusion. And I am part of a leadership team here at the foundation, where we're developing a Womxn of Color, Womxn X of Power program with our deep partner LeaderSpring Center. And I've worked at the foundation for over 16 years now, and I've run a capacity building program, do funding that is based on

capacity building cohorts. And previous to coming to the foundation, I was a consultant, so I myself was a capacity building provider. So let me start by saying that I think one of the places where foundations and funders need to start is, by deeply, deeply integrating trust based philanthropy into how they do they works.

So if you haven't heard that terminology, I'd suggest you google it and you'll find lots of information on it. But fundamentally, it's about approaching capacity building work as a partnership, to build community while building a sustainable organization, that will then serve and engage both the organizations, the BIPOC organizations and their communities. It starts by building a deeply respectful relationship. So how do you do that? One of the ways to do that is to make your application process and your reporting processes as simple and pain free as you can possibly make it. And I know as a founder, this is a very hard shift from where philanthropy has been traditionally. So one of the things we do, we've been working on here is to provide our applicants and grantees with the possibility of actually submitting their applications verbally. So our staff will call the applicant and say, you have this option of providing this online or we can just talk about it and our staff will input all the data as the individual is talking, as part of a conversation.

Same thing with reporting. And then, you convert that trust into action by providing, as people have already said, general operating support, programmatic work at full cost, and then multi-year grants. These are the tangible indicators of your trust. Other things that they have tried here at the foundation are to identify core partners. So being a community foundation, we don't have quite the deep pockets that some of our private foundation colleagues have. So we are always trying to find ways to make the dollars that we do have stretch as best we can. So one of the things we've done in our team is to identify organizations that we call within our team, the team that we work in, we call our core partners that we strive very hard to fund over time. At the foundation level, we've also identified core partners. These core partners get usually about our biggest grants that we offer at the foundation that we can provide.

And they are multi-year general operating grants. And then even yet, a higher level of this trust building, I think is the work that I mentioned briefly, our partnership in our leadership team with the LeaderSpring Center, where we are jointly fundraising, we are jointly planning, and we share an advisory board for our work. So I have to say, they do still laugh at our jokes. That's sort of the bar there. And they also are willing and able and good at putting up a mirror when we are not acting as partners. And for me, I think that's what makes them good partners.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Thanks so much Yolanda. I'm going to switch gears a little and ask a question that I'm hopeful everyone can weigh in on. But one of the things that really was striking to us is, we were looking at the data, was this challenge that particularly leaders of color were reporting in the response to the survey about the difficulty identifying partners who would really understand their organization and the communities that they're working in. And I'm curious if anyone has any either experiences of that barrier or strategies for overcoming that barrier. And Yolanda, I think, I'm actually going to start with you just because I think part of the strategy of LeaderSpring was to have a sort of stable of consistently high performing capacity builders that could be referred to for organizations. So there would be less uncertainty about, were people going to get adequate support in exchange for paying for these capacity building services. But I'm curious if you have any other thoughts about what does it take to identify and really find and work with a capacity builder who's really going to help the organizations and understand their needs.

Yolanda Alindor:

Yeah, so totally agree that it is a puzzle, and a complicated puzzle, to find the match between an organization and a consultant that will really, really be helpful to them. So people I think in general start, leaders start with looking for the specific expertise that they're looking for. Is that planning or is that finance or is it technology? What is that expertise? And then there's a bunch of other layers. There's

value alignment. Do you know our mission? Do you know our culture? Do you know how we work? Do you know our community? And then on top of that, there's this piece of cultural competence. So for BIPOC organizations there's an even higher level, a higher bar. And then I think if you consider the different types of organizations, in my experience here in the Bay area, might be different somewhere else, but in the Bay Area direct service organizations who may be looking for a meeting facilitator or a strategic planner, they're likely to find a person of color here in the Bay area that can lead them with that.

However, if you're a BIPOC leader who is running an advocacy, organizing, movement building organization and is looking for technical or finance expertise, good luck with that. It is very hard to find. So a couple of ideas, I think funders, I'm going to go to funders because that's who I know and that's who I think need to change. So we'll go with that. So one thing you can do that is not all that impossible to do is create a database, gather the information from the local consultants in your area, create a solid meaty database where people can find each other, and then of course advertise it. Get the word out so people can use the database. Another is, and this is actually common amongst foundations, is to fund a set of consultants to subsidize their work. These should be BIPOC consultants because those are the ones who are hard to find, and have them be subsidized so that the cost to the grantees isn't as high. So those are a couple of ideas.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

And so Cassandra and Sachi, as Yolanda acknowledged, she's based in the Bay Area. What are your experiences in Memphis and Albuquerque when it comes to finding capacity builders who deeply understand your community and the particular realities of your organizations? Cassandra, I'll have you go first and then Sachi.

Cassandra Webster:

Great. Thank you. And Yolanda, thank you for those tips. I took copious notes there. In terms of finding capacity building consultants, there's a plethora in Memphis. The opportunity challenge though is, I don't know any other way to say this, but to say it is, in most cases as the head of an organization, we know where the weak links are. We know what's necessary and what's needed. And for a consultant to... The challenge is having the opportunity for really giving me the support of resources and be a partner in the work, as opposed to outlining and defining the data on a 25 page document, and saying this is what needs to be done.

So yes, the consultant is key, in most cases it validates what we know, but I'm looking for the sponsor who's going to be right side with me and help give me the funding, so that I can build the team, so that we can do the work that's critical and necessary. And so, to Ericka's piece, that flexible funding, that abundant flow, so that in fact I can do more with more, to expand our program reach and thrust to move the needle.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Thanks so much Cassandra. Sachi, what are your thoughts on this topic?

Sachi Watase:

Yeah, I definitely agree with a lot of what Cassandra was just sharing. And I think that in my experience, I've been able to work with incredible consultants who are BIPOC and are located here, and who have been an incredible meaningful support to me. And I will say that the best support I have got from them is that they told me to trust myself and to know that we as an organization know what we need best. And that I think was the best advice and best kind of consultant work that I've received. Because it re-

empowered us to then know, we do know what we need and oftentimes these other mainstream capacity building programs or things like that don't really resonate. And I think, I took in a year long training program for executive directors and I was... I'm kind of new to the nonprofit world, and I was noticing just how easily people were talking about best practices and it wasn't defined.

It was just, this is the best practices and everyone would blindly agree with that and just move on. And I think that was a piece, a lens that I could bring because I hadn't worked in nonprofits for many years. And so I think I didn't even, I didn't understand what these best practices were, what they are and who created them? Probably some white person years ago and why are we all still saying that this is how it has to be? And so I think even those programs that are bringing brilliant people, unfortunately so much of this comes down to what we're used to and what we just accept as a truth. And I think that because it's a white supremacist culture, we accept these things as truths that are ultimately really based in white supremacy, and are very hard to then push back on when we're trying to gain those skills and that knowledge to heal.

And I think the burden is so often, I mean I think about what Ericka was saying about time, and how we need time. That's a problem for me is that, I don't have the time to meet with a consultant that often. I have some consultants that I work with for very specific things and it's great. It started at the beginning of this year, we call it our visioning project, that's really based in wanting to make time for ourselves to dream and be intentional about how we are growing and to build a sustainable culture that is rooted in our cultural, our organization's culture and our ethnic and racial culture. And also our knowing, our generational knowing of how this should be and wanting to heal from that, all this oppressive environment that has forced us to be a certain way. And so, I think, we've wanted to build that in and we've worked with such incredible people to be able to start that process, who want to help us do that.

But there's no time, because we have to continue running the programs that our funders are expecting us to deliver on. And we're fortunate enough that we don't have to take fun... We are picky with our funding at this point because we don't want to have to work with funders that are requiring us to do things that we know our community is not needing right now or is not the priority. However, we still have to keep those programs running to be able to justify that funding. And that is what's really hard is that there's no time, there's nobody who says okay, or there's very few people I guess who say, spend this much time and we'll pay you to just take a break and sit and think about this, and go on retreats and have these conversations with your staff because... And it is different with a direct service organization because we have clients who're... We can't just kind of put on hold, but at least to build that in and give us that space, I think is so important.

And I think about how we're... The entire systems we're working within are these kind of western systems, and so when we're applying to funding, it's all within that western system. And I think that too is a disadvantage to BIPOC leaders and organizations. And it also... I think the other piece that I would bring up with this is just that, there's so much... As a community based organization, all of our staff are Asian, we're all from the community and we are still the ones who are now... The burden is on us to continue to serve the Asian community. The other entities, these mainstream organizations, the county, the state, the city, they don't hold the burden. They put it back on us. And so, we already are holding that burden. We're already advocating every single day to push for what we need and deserve. And so, one way that we want a break and want relief is to not have to advocate and justify our existence to the people who are saying that they're funding us to do the work that we're doing every day.

So that's like a piece that's hard. And I think often with consultants that I've worked with too, who aren't really familiar with our organization already, I really resonate with what Cassandra said, [inaudible 00:55:33] kind of validate what we already know, but there's so many nuances also to an organization like ours. And I have really struggled sometimes with having to spend so much time explaining and being like, yes, thank you for bringing that up. That is something we've thought about and this is why. And

there's all these cultural things and... It's exhausting and it doesn't really serve us in the end. And it often just makes it more frustrating that we have to justify our own definition of best practices. We have to justify our own way of running things, because of this western white supremacist sort of expectation of what e should be. So yeah, I think it's very challenging and complicated.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Yeah, thanks so much Sachi. And so, there's a lot in the chat about trust based philanthropy, what it could look like for foundation and philanthropic support to be more flexible, abundant, less restrictive, less sort of adding to the pressures and hassles that nonprofit leaders are facing, just in terms of being able to deliver on organizational mission, and provide needed services and advocacy in their communities. So please check out the chat. And Yolanda recommends people go check out trust based philanthropy, which again, google it. There are several people like [inaudible 00:57:10] who have been behind creating a frame for this, and have done a lot of writing on it. So for folks who are interested in being able to point their funders to resources, check out trust based philanthropy for that. And I do want to make sure to bring Ericka in, as sort of a closing thoughts on this piece around capacity building.

Because I do think that we heard, particularly in the focus groups, some of what Sachi was bringing up, particularly at the end around the experience that leaders have of, sometimes capacity builders aren't... From the outside, aren't necessarily yielding much in terms of actual support for innovation inside of the organizations. And that's not the... Given LLCs community, you're working with people who, that's not their approach. They're not just asking questions of people already have known to ask themselves. So curious what your thoughts are about, or what you've seen and found in terms of the need for capacity builders in terms of how they can really support BIPOC leaders and organizations that are grassroots and community based.

Ericka Stallings:

Sure. So for those of us who have that intermediary role or capacity builder role, it's kind of a unique position in the ecosystem. And so, there's a couple things that I think are interesting. I think explorations of collaboration are interesting. I think there's a lot of shame and hiding of problems that we have, even though we may all have a similar problem. And so creating spaces for shared learning and support is something that I think is valuable and something that capacity builders and intermediaries offer. I think capacity builders who are really in alignment with community are starting to reimagine what capacity building actually means, like what they really mean when they say capacity building. And I think part of that is actually paying attention to the full life cycle of work. So that includes the implementation, when you're scoping out the work, and thinking about what does this mean for this organization and for the communities that we serve if we do this activity.

I think lastly, I think intermediaries and consultants and capacity builders have a unique space. They have a different relationship with philanthropy and they have a different level of risk. So they can name and advocate for things without the risk that organizations might have. So they can advocate and speak for... That's one thing that LLC does, for more and better funding and the sort of abundance approach. They can name when scarcity funding is happening. So when you see that there's pressure on organizations to do a lot with a little or at a stretch dollars more than is actually a good idea, then you have that space to say, "Actually this isn't a good idea." You can name when you see that there's issues of access. So smaller BIPOC groups that no one knows about might be doing amazing work, but if they aren't known, then they aren't getting the funding and support that they need.

And so intermediaries can be naming folks who are doing amazing work. I think lastly it is important for those of us who have intermediary roles or capacity building roles to name the BIPOC experience, what's happening or what people need, what we're seeing and observing. And specifically to name that it's not

monolithic, but Asia's a big place. So when you're talking about the Asian experience, and talking about only very specific communities and not talking about actually how complicated things are, and how complex and nuanced things are, and therefore more resources need to be invested so that we can actually address these things. That's a role that I think the capacity building intermediary ecosystem can play.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Wonderful. Thank you so much. Thank you to Yolanda, Cassandra, Sachi and Ericka. Thank you Francis for sharing the insights from the report. I want to invite folks to check out the report on the BMP website. Also, if you haven't already taken or shared the Race to Lead survey, please do so. All of the survey data ends up being really important for us in terms of being able to put out reports like this one, that help to advance a conversation in the sector that obviously we all feel is really needed. So I want to just thank everybody for joining us. You will get next week a link to the recording of the webinar, the PowerPoint and all of that. So just look out for your email for more information. This was a great conversation and we are at the end of the hour, so I'm real sorry to end it here. But thanks so much everybody.

Cassandra Webster:

Thank you. Bye bye.

Sachi Watase:

Thank you. Bye.

Yolanda Alindor:

Thank you. Bye bye.