REFLECTIONS & ACTIONS:
PEOPLE OF COLOR AND THE METRO DENVER NONPROFIT SECTOR

Inclusiveness Project
a program of

THE DENVER FOUNDATION
Dear Friends and Members of the Community,

The Denver Foundation began hearing from Metro Denver nonprofit organizations as far back as the late 1990s about a desire to have more diversity in their staff, boards, and volunteers, and their need to find ways to accomplish these goals. In 2001, The Denver Foundation made a commitment to engage with nonprofits, including funders, to become more inclusive of people of color, believing that a commitment to diversity might change the face of an organization, but a commitment to inclusiveness will change the overall impact. Through the Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project, we’ve worked to accomplish this mission on three different levels: sharing best practices sector-wide, working with nonprofit organizations, and connecting with individuals. A key goal is to increase the number of individuals of color involved in the nonprofit sector, thereby supporting more effective nonprofits.

In 2007, The Denver Foundation released the “Report from the Pipeline: Reflections on the Nonprofit Sector from People of Color in Metro Denver.” The report highlighted conversations with over 100 individuals of color and the results of a survey of 110 college students and young nonprofit professionals from communities of color. The participants shared perspectives about several issues:

- What led (or would lead) to their involvement in the nonprofit sector?
- What makes a nonprofit welcoming vs. unwelcoming to people of color?
- What barriers keep people of color from maintaining engagement in the sector?
- What makes a fulfilling volunteer experience from the perspective of a person of color?
- What can be done by The Denver Foundation or individual nonprofits to increase the involvement of people of color in the sector?

Some common themes and recommendations emerged from the collective responses (see page 3); and with those perspectives in mind, the Inclusiveness Project went to work in partnership with consultant Angela Davis, nonprofit organizations, and leadership development programs throughout the region. Our aim was to remove some of the barriers and provide rich opportunities for people of color to engage in the nonprofit sector. This report provides an overview of some of those offerings, and the outcomes as shared by participants. Also, included in this report is information about The Denver Foundation’s 2011-2021 Strategic Plan, specifically our focus on supporting community leadership. Great progress has been realized, but there is more to be done. We hope you will help us craft the next decade of leadership, racial equity, and impact.

Sincerely,

María Guajardo
Chair, Inclusiveness Project Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2007 PIPELINE REPORT

- Develop a formalized top-down commitment to inclusiveness, including diverse board and leadership.
- Develop outreach to communities of color through educational sessions, networking events, and marketing strategies.
- Offer face-to-face opportunities for connection as well as letters and printed materials.
- Encourage more intense connection between nonprofit boards and the communities they serve, including recruitment of individuals of color for board and other leadership roles.
- Provide leadership development opportunities.
- Highlight and celebrate accomplishments of individuals of color in the nonprofit sector or in specific organizations.
- Provide communities of color with information, resources, and services regarding nonprofits.
- Create mentorship and internship relationships for emerging leaders.
- Enhance collaboration between organizations and different communities for overall effectiveness.
- Build capacity in nonprofits.
- Frame volunteer opportunities as a way to broaden participants’ networks and increase opportunities.
- Offer nontraditional ways to connect with nonprofits in service.
- Inform the community about opportunities to serve.

On the following pages read how The Denver Foundation responded to these recommendations.
NONPROFIT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

After hearing from college students of color that internships would encourage them to get involved with nonprofit organizations, The Denver Foundation launched the Nonprofit Internship Program in 2007. The program connects motivated and highly-qualified college students from communities traditionally underrepresented in the nonprofit sector with Metro Denver nonprofit organizations by offering paid summer internships.

Students gain employment for the summer, have the opportunity to significantly contribute to the work of a nonprofit organization, and obtain the skills and understanding necessary to have an impact on important issues. Many of our alumni continue to work in the nonprofit sector, and almost all alumni report that they will be involved with nonprofit organizations as board members, volunteers, and donors long after the end of their internship. As a result of participating in the program, “interns shared that they have more confidence in themselves, felt more informed about social issues, and had a greater appreciation for the work nonprofits do. Interns were inspired by the individuals they worked with and were motivated to work for social change.” (OMNI Institute Evaluation Report, 2011)

The Foundation builds a strong community among the interns through Learning Workshops, opportunities for interns to come together and connect as well as information about important aspects of work with nonprofit organizations from professionals in the field. Learning Workshops cover topics such as leadership, fundraising and grantmaking, storytelling, and inclusiveness and diversity. In addition to interns learning about leadership at these workshops, the host organizations are committed to developing the leadership of their interns. Interns leave the program having developed a new community of future nonprofit colleagues and resources. With over 70 alumni, former interns can use each other as a resource in many fields. As the program develops, the Foundation continues to meet its goals of engaging students from diverse communities, particularly communities of color, in the nonprofit sector. In 2007, 36 percent of interns self-identified as people of color. By 2012, 66 percent of interns self-identified as people of color. Sixty-three percent of our alumni from the past six years identify as people of color. To achieve these increases, we worked hard to improve outreach strategies and materials. We intentionally engaged our alumni of color in recruiting their friends and colleagues; we created a new brochure featuring photos of diverse alumni; and specifically reached out to student organizations, sororities, and fraternities on college campuses and in our community that serve students of color.

As the Internship Program continues to evolve, we are increasing our commitment to develop college students of color as leaders, offering tools and support to encourage them to make change in their communities.
BOARD LEADERSHIP: GETTING ON BOARD

A qualified nonprofit board member—one who is well-trained, well-connected, well-informed, and committed to the mission of the organization—can be tremendously helpful to an organization in addressing community issues. In partnership with the Circle of Latina Leadership and the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce’s Chamber Connect program, the Inclusiveness Project instituted annual workshops, introducing over 225 leaders of color enrolled in these programs to board service by providing relevant and comprehensive training.

Developed in 2008, the Board Leadership Workshop offered the following takeaways:

- A thorough understanding of the fiduciary responsibilities that are part of effective board governance.
- Knowledge of the unique responsibilities of board members in the areas of mission, oversight, resources, and outreach, as well as board development and creating an inclusive organizational climate.
- Tips for avoiding tokenism when selecting and serving on a board.

“I used the knowledge gained from the Board Leadership workshop and was able to put it to use in my current board appointment – my first. I often reflect on the tips, such as really understanding my financial and fiduciary responsibilities as a board member.”
- Participant
I was hungry for leadership, a sense of belonging, and acceptance. I was a participant in the Colorado Black Chamber’s Chamber Connect program. After attending a class focused on board leadership, I was invited to the Inclusiveness Project Summit, where I met board members who not only wanted my service, but were interested in helping me make a difference in my community. Through my participation, I was able to overcome an abusive relationship, rise above my circumstances, and give back to people who occupy that dark place that I was in not long ago.”

- Participant

BOARD ACCESS AND EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT

In 2009, we launched the Board Access and Empowerment Summit as a culminating activity for the Board Leadership: Getting on Board project. This networking opportunity, which was subsequently held in 2010 as well, was designed to connect people of color who participated in the board readiness trainings with organizations seeking to diversify their boards and whose leadership embraced a culture of and commitment to inclusion. Connections were made between representatives of 45 nonprofit organizations and nearly 100 emerging leaders from the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce’s Chamber Connect (CBCC) program.

A summary of the event includes:

- The event allowed the leaders to visit nonprofit exhibit tables to introduce themselves, ask questions, and exchange information. Nonprofit representatives also walked around the room to introduce themselves and network with leaders.
- Time was allotted for polling of responses to questions about what made for a successful volunteer experience, the barriers to keeping people of color engaged, and what motivated each participant to attend the Summit. Civic Canopy, a partner organization, guided the attendees through the polling using clicker technology, which allowed participants to answer immediately, anonymously, and more authentically.
- Guided table discussions followed the poll. Each table, populated by a mixture of nonprofit leaders, leaders, and seasoned community leaders of color, delved into a deeper dialogue around the results of the poll.
STEP UP YOUR GAME: PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND BOARD READINESS

When asked, people of color may respond that they are not leaders, all too often tying that label to traditional notions of power. But, the same skill sets that individuals put to work in their everyday jobs, in volunteer roles at church and school, and in community, make them valuable candidates for nonprofit board leadership. Further, changing demographics in Colorado make it crucial for people of color to step up to board leadership roles in the nonprofit sector.

In 2010, the Inclusiveness Project presented Step Up Your Game: Professional Leadership and Board Readiness. This training tapped the local pool of emerging and established leaders of color and worked with them to enhance professional leadership skills and prepare them for board leadership positions in the local nonprofit sector.

Through this workshop, leaders of color gained knowledge of:

- Personal leadership characteristics.
- Fiduciary responsibilities of nonprofit board members.
- Tools for assessing the right fit for successful volunteer board service.
- Self-care strategies when dealing with issues of privilege and tokenism on boards.
STEP UP YOUR GAME SUMMIT

As a culminating activity of the Step Up Your Game Leadership Trainings, we hosted the Step Up Your Game Summit in 2010. The purpose of the event was to bring nonprofit organizations that had done significant work to become more inclusive together with participants of Chamber Connect and the Circle of Latina Leadership who had engaged in the board leadership trainings. Fifty-seven people attended.

- The Summit began with an informal meeting where panelists, nonprofits, and audience members asked informal questions and exchanged information.
- A 90-minute interactive discussion between panelists and the audience followed. The topics included the role race plays in an inclusive organizational culture and best practices leading to a more inclusive environment.
- The evening ended as it began with informal networking and an exchange of ideas. Nonprofits were encouraged to hand out collateral materials directly to participants rather than leaving information on resource tables.

“I attended “Step Up Your Game” to learn more about not for profit organizations as a whole. I was never sure if I wanted to be a part of a board, so this event gave me a great understanding. I am currently having the journey of my lifetime!
I was hungry for connection, and wanted to feed my intellect too. I am excited to be “re-inventing” myself. I was excited to see other Black men and women taking time to invest in themselves so they could start and/or continue shaping their God-given purpose.”

- Participant
DARE TO LEAD

In 2011, the Inclusiveness Project introduced Dare to Lead, a series of workshops which served to increase awareness among the pipeline of leaders of color about participation in the nonprofit sector and to provide comprehensive resources and best practices in leadership, board service, volunteerism, and donating time, talent, and treasure.

The following provides an overview of the sessions:

- Session one challenged participants to gain a thorough understanding of the definition, attributes, and characteristics of effective leadership, and to identify and assess their own personal leadership style.
- In session two participants gained a thorough understanding of the leadership roles available in the nonprofit sector and identified the role that best fit their ambitions, needs, and aspirations.
- The workshops concluded with nonprofit organizations and community leaders of color speaking in a speed-dating style format with small groups of 5-6 participants.

“Attending the Dare to Lead workshop allowed me to connect with many different people in various communities who share similar goals. I have the ability now to reach out to those individuals who I made connections with and build relationships. Relationship building is a key component in leadership in my opinion, and the workshop gave me that opportunity.”

- Participant
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF COLOR INSTITUTE

The Metro Denver nonprofit community realizes the need for more diverse leadership within and across the sector. Despite this recognition, a significant gap in the representation of leaders from a wide range of backgrounds remains. The Denver Foundation provided support to pilot an effort to intentionally address this gap by supporting individual leaders of color.

The Executive Directors of Color Institute (EDCI) launched in March 2012 to serve and support ten participants. Led by a team of eight faculty members, the effort is focused on providing leadership development opportunities for the participants, capacity building for their organizations, and developing strategies to strengthen the collective work of the Metro Denver nonprofit sector.

Sessions have helped to clarify the motivations and challenges of the participants. Resources and tools are shared and faculty members have structured the activities of the Institute in large and small group sessions as well as one-on-one meetings.

The faculty team worked to create an environment where the participating Executive Directors are candid – sharing both successful approaches and challenges with one another. Having the opportunity to share openly with other leaders reminded participants that they do not have to be perfect as they do their work. Several organizations found ways to partner with one another or to share resources and information. Faculty members work to carefully listen and document the aspirations, needs, and challenges of the participating members. In addition, participants shared that the isolation they felt is reduced by being able to regularly connect and network with their peers.
GRANTS FOR EMERGING AND ESTABLISHED LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

An independent nonprofit organization, the Circle of Latina Leadership (CLL) conducts a nine-month intensive leadership development program preparing alumnae to be active and influential community leaders, including specific training to prepare participants for nonprofit board service. For example, each class works on a special fundraising event so participants can utilize those skills when they serve on boards as well. Founded by Juana Bordas in 2000, CLL has developed a talented pool of nearly 200 young Latinas who have participated in board training. Networking receptions have been held to introduce alumnae to nonprofit organizations looking for skilled and dedicated Latinas to serve as board members. CLL also assists nonprofit boards in becoming more inclusive of people of color. Advance training is provided to alumnae so they can take leadership roles and be effective participants. This is especially critical since many of the alumnae are on mainstream boards and need to know how to work in these types of organizations. Alumnae move organizations to be more inclusive as well as identify additional board members from communities of color to serve.

CLL launched an interactive website in 2011 – to date over 70 alumnae are utilizing the site. Once developed further, the website will be a perfect venue for listing board opportunities and for nonprofits to access Latina leaders who are prepared to serve on boards.

With grant support from the Inclusiveness Project, the following is possible:

- Introductory board and commissions training to the current class of leaders.
- Tracking and support of current board participation of its alumnae.
- Documentation and follow-up with requests for board referrals, helping to place the best-suited and qualified alumnae in board positions.
- Advanced training to alumnae who currently serve on boards, encouraging alumnae to develop board leadership roles and recommending the outreach to other Latinas and people of color to serve on these boards.

Looking forward, CLL and the Inclusiveness Project will partner to further develop an online tool that will allow alumnae to create and edit profiles about skills and board leadership interests.
AAPI EMERGING LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Beginning in 2010, a committee of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community leaders discussed the need for an AAPI youth leadership program in order to cultivate the next generation of leaders. In 2011, the Emerging Leadership Program was developed to do just that, and the Inclusiveness Project is pleased to have been an initial funder of the program. The program takes into account participants’ ethnic culture and offers ways of addressing how ethnic culture and cultural values affect decision-making and situational interactions. Leadership skills are cultivated by uncovering the authentic leader within each participant while addressing cultural values and issues that may conflict with becoming a leader in a U.S. mainstream setting. After successfully completing the leadership program and community project, young leaders further their community and career development with additional opportunities to utilize their leadership skills, e.g., internship programs, job opportunities, appointment to Boards or Commissions, and chances to network with successful AAPI professionals.

THE BLACK CONSORTIUM

In 2011, The Inclusiveness Project supported the Black Consortium Boards and Commissions Project to increase the number of African Americans on boards and commissions in Metro Denver. The Consortium:

- Monitors vacancies on targeted boards that have a significant impact on the Black community.
- Informs community members of upcoming vacancies with email notifications, web postings, and other outreach.
- Recruits prospective applicants for targeted vacancies.
- Advocates for applicants who have been chosen through a screening and application process.
- Tracks applicants and current appointees and releases reports annually.
- Recruits prospects into Denver Foundation board trainings and other applicable programs.
GET INVOLVED: A TOOLKIT FOR INDIVIDUALS OF COLOR CONNECTING TO THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Get Involved provides information about the various ways people of color can connect with the nonprofit sector. Since its development as an immediate response to recommendations from the Pipeline Report in 2007, this information serves as a useful resource for individuals who want to make a difference in their communities, ways that include:

- Volunteering
- Charitable Giving
- Finding a Job in the Nonprofit Sector
- Participating in a Leadership Program
- Exploring Chambers of Commerce
- Exploring Affinity Group
- Participating in a Mentoring or Internship Program

For more resources visit [www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org](http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org).
Dear Friends and Partners;

Since its founding in 1925, The Denver Foundation, like all community foundations around the world, has experienced several stages of evolution in our understanding and involvement of community leaders. Early on, community leaders in the Denver banking industry came together to create an endowment fund to meet the changing needs of the community. They were using a model of other communities in the country, led by Cleveland in 1914, creating a new type of organization called a community foundation.

Skip ahead to 1996, when the Foundation invited 100 leading members of the community to share ideas about how we could expand our engagement and impact with the community. The number one suggestion was “Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building.” The Strengthening Neighborhoods Initiative (SN) was built on the premise that all neighborhoods have assets – from parks and businesses, to ideas, connections, and relationships, and most importantly, people - residents, who are leaders in their own right. By the end of 1997, SN had chosen some of the most vulnerable inner city neighborhoods as its partners and launched the program of small neighborhood grants with five years of funding.

Through our grantmaking work, SN, and conversations with leaders in Denver’s nonprofit sector, we discovered a widespread community interest in developing a deeper understanding of how inclusiveness of voices and experiences of people of color enhances and expands the work of nonprofits. In 2000, the Foundation board approved the development of the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII), which in 2008 became an ongoing and nationally recognized program, the Inclusiveness Project (IP).

Both SN and IP have been fertile grounds for cultivation of individual leaders and leadership networks. Each of these programs has intentionally developed research, programs, practices, and values that build the trust necessary for authentic dialogue with residents, people of color, and across lines of power and privilege. Additionally, each program has specific efforts designed to empower individuals at various stages of development for neighborhood, nonprofit, and other civic leadership.

Now, as we enter 2013 the Foundation has a new charge ahead of us. We gathered perspectives from nearly 800 residents through an in-depth Listening Campaign, and used the results of this campaign to help create a new strategic plan. As we have many times since our founding in 1925, we are adjusting our work to meet the community’s needs. We will sharpen our focus to ensure residents in Metro Denver have good jobs, access to help for meeting their basic needs, and a high quality education for their children. Our efforts supporting and cultivating leaders will also shift to meet this complex and important charge, reducing racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in Metro Denver.

If you are reading this report, you are undoubtedly a community leader. We will continue to look to you for guidance, support, and leadership so that we can partner in achieving community impact. Share your ideas about community leadership in our evolving work by contacting us by email at listening@denverfoundation.org, tweeting us @tdfcommunity, or visiting our Facebook page.

Sincerely,

Lauren Y. Casteel
Vice President of Philanthropic Partnerships

Adrienne Mansanares
Manager of the Inclusiveness Project
A special note of thanks to all the past and present Inclusiveness Project Committee members who have led and implemented a vision of inclusive leadership in Metro Denver.