

NONPROFIT NEWS

ARE WE HONEST IN OUR EXPECTATIONS
FOR LEADERS OF COLOR?

INTENTIONAL EQUITY:
DO WHAT IT TAKES

Guest column with Allied Folk



A FREE EQUITY RESOURCE: WHAT'S NEW
WITH THE BIPOC NONPROFITS INDEX



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Our Mission

MCN works to inform, promote, connect, and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector.

Together with our 2,300 members, MCN helps nonprofits accomplish their missions for a healthy, cooperative, and just society.

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Letter from Nonoko Sato, executive director

Are we honest in our expectations for leaders of color?

This isn't another article (only) about racism. It's an invitation to join me on this complicated journey, and I hope you accept.

There is a reason to celebrate when nonprofit leaders of color are appointed to top positions. After all, [according to Minnesota Compass, 93 percent of nonprofit CEOs identify as white](#). Increased representation of people of color should be a good step forward, and it is, so long as the organization is set up for leaders of color to succeed.

Stop and truly ask yourself, are we?

Are we as nonprofits honest in our expectations for leaders of color, expectations that are often times unrealistic and unattainable for any leader?

How are we taking responsibility for putting these leaders on a precarious pedestal without an appropriate foundation in place to ensure their successes?

Many leaders of color, especially in predominately white institutions (PWI), myself included, have been on the receiving end of community expectations to be "different" than our white predecessors. **We are supposed to be bold, brave, and single-handedly solve all systemic inequities while we navigate systems that are already set up for us to fail.**

And if we fail, we also fail the leaders who follow us with a stain perceived as 'people of (fill in a marginalized identity here) are not able to do this work.'

Let me also say that this article cannot cover the fight to dismantle barriers to even be considered for top leadership roles. That's a long article for another time.

Board members hiring new leaders need to be reminded that leaders of color do not have a magic wand to turn your institutionally racist organization, not racist anymore. We actually have a complicated and challenging job that's not (just) about leading DEI trainings, talking about race, mentoring and speaking on behalf of other leaders of color, holding white folks accountable, making statements when another Black person is killed at the hands of police, or participating in an otherwise all-white panel.

Not surprisingly, I have yet to see a job description that includes all this additional labor as a part of their actual responsibility we are paid to do.

We should stop equating the term 'diverse' with race and ethnicity alone, but rather question and define diversity in the context of the communities you want to see represented. We should never assume how another person identifies, rather give them a chance to self-identify and respect their freedom to be who they are.

We want nonprofit leadership and staff to reflect the communities we serve. While I use the term 'leaders of color' often in this article, we can easily replace that title with 'leader from another marginalized community' because we need to remind ourselves that identities are broad and intersectional, and one person alone cannot represent everyone else with their shared identity. I can only speak from my own truth and experience being an Asian woman in a position of leadership.

If you are in a position of privilege in whatever form, use that privilege to uplift people who are being discriminated and do the work yourself before hiring a person underrepresented in your organization with unfair expectations. Lastly, give grace and room for people to make mistakes and learn from them; there are many ways to ensure accountability.

Just because I am a leader of color doesn't mean I can speak to all of the challenges that different leaders of color face. I am certainly privileged to be supported by an incredible board comprised of MCN's key stakeholders, and lead a staff who care deeply about our work toward equity, justice, and shared liberation.

Many do not have the support, the grace, and a job with realistic expectations. **We simply cannot afford to lose more leaders of color, whether that be from nonprofit leadership roles or the sector as a whole.**

We all have a role to play and I hope you join me in our collective journey and growth to ensure Minnesota nonprofits remain strong and resilient.

In community,

Nonoko

Guest column by Ashley Oolman, founder, Allied Folk

Intentional equity: do what it takes

For over two years, we have found ourselves in a DEI holding pattern where talk is getting cheaper and actual action is at an all-time premium. Living in Minnesota, many of us can still feel the reverberations from the 2020 explosion of good intentions and solidarity statements. Since the dust has settled, the time has come for nonprofits to transform meeting community needs in new and elevated ways. Though it may sting, I'm here to say that those good intentions with no action did nothing to make our communities more equitable, and actually resulted in folks feeling less included when lofty promises fell short. So, what is a nonprofit to do now?

It is critical to be clear about what equity is and what equity isn't. Equity is not the same as equality, and often the distinction ruffles feathers due to an unwavering allegiance to the idea of "fairness." The reality is, history wasn't fair even right here in Minnesota. Many groups were not given equal access, equal opportunity, equal justice, and on, and on. Because of that, we now have to approach our work through an equity lens, or rather with precision and the intention to remedy generations of inequality and its lasting impact.

When connecting with organizations who want to advance equity, I often start by asking three things to make a wide array of entry points more approachable.

What do you have to contribute to what specific issue?

Nonprofits interested in advancing equity need to ensure they have a firm grasp on what is happening in their own backyards. Yes, understanding "the system" is important, but what about your nonprofit's role in it? Have you

uncovered the social, economic, and political factors that created a need for your mission? Our organizations literally exist because of inequity, and yet many are unable to draw a line from the root causes of problems in society to what their nonprofit with access to resources is going to do to solve them. To disrupt this, eliminate barriers to the programs and services you offer, such as needing to have an address to access services, not having a criminal record to participate in programs, or even offering inflexible office hours.

How are you going to hold yourselves accountable?

Once clear about how you are specifically going to take part in creating change, it's time to get precise about how you will monitor progress and adjust in real time. This goes beyond one measure or one goal, saved in one place. Though more documentation may make you cringe, center the fact that folks from marginalized identities navigate inequity daily, while individuals and organizations alike are conditioned to be complacent bystanders. To disrupt this, start by measuring what work you are putting in, versus what you are getting out. What change factors are in your control, and are those changes working as you intended? Learning how you measure impact establishes an expectation of consistent action and a link to broader impact. Powerful accountability measures are those that get at the core of our nonprofit culture, and challenge our comfort and way we work internally. In other words, create change from the inside out.

What are you willing to put on the line to see results?

I often spend time in conversation with leaders who have good intentions,

understand the necessity of equity work, yet struggle with the disruption necessary to create change. Though challenging, audacity and risk acceptance are two absolutely necessary components of equity work. The opposites, conflict avoidance and risk aversion, often protect the comfort of majority groups and certainly uphold status quo. To disrupt this, identify resources your nonprofit has accumulated that can be leveraged and redistributed. Powerful organizational capital includes reputation, networks, and systems. While resource sharing is one way to take risks, another is abstaining from participating in harmful patterns. This can look like dissolving partnerships, not applying for a problematic grant process, or turning down press opportunities from outlets who don't participate in ethical storytelling.

Doing what it takes to remedy inequality is the charge of all nonprofits, it always has been. Though many don't fancy themselves "social justice organizations," the truth is, if our society was just, we wouldn't be in business. Creating disruptive, sustainable, equitable change goes beyond our collective impulse to find a checklist or training to solve for everything. It calls for our collective commitment to unlearn and relearn intentionally, plan and evaluate critically, and take risks courageously. All this may come at the cost of discomfort, but usually that's a good indicator that you're on the verge of something better.

Allied Folk is a trusted partner for transformative action, with resources and expertise to support kids and adults in their journey to being equitable and inclusive. [Learn more about their work.](#)

Disappointing end to Minnesota legislative session

by Laura Mortenson, communications director, Minnesota Budget Project

With a historic projected surplus of \$9.3 billion in FY 2022-23 and \$6.3 billion in FY 2024-25, policymakers had an opportunity to address the real challenges that Minnesotans are facing and build a stronger, more equitable recovery. But much of that remains unfinished. Policymakers in the House and Senate had taken very different approaches to the state's historic budget surplus. [The House budget targets](#) directed additional funding toward investments including education, child care, housing, and paid family leave. Their reasonably sized tax bill focuses on bringing down the costs of housing, child care, student loans, and other challenges facing everyday Minnesotans. [In contrast, the Senate prioritized large, permanent, and unfair tax cuts](#) that gave the biggest benefits to high-income Minnesotans. As a result, they proposed much smaller investments in public services.

The House and Senate failed to reach agreement in many major budget areas, including education, health and human services, transportation, and infrastructure (often called "bonding"). They reached agreement in other budget areas and on taxes, but those bills were not advanced for final votes once it became clear that all of the pieces needed [to enact the framework agreement](#) were not going to be completed.

Important caveat: when this issue went to print, a special legislative session was still a possibility; [visit our website for the latest news](#).

Minnesotans expect policymakers to solve the challenges in front of us by creating pathways to affordable housing for our neighbors; protecting our lakes, prairies, and waters; ensuring none of us go to bed hungry; and supporting other ways we build and strengthen our communities. Here are some of the priorities that the Minnesota Budget Project, along with our organizational and policymaker partners, had put on the table or supported to advance [MCN's Public Policy agenda](#) priorities that support budget, tax, and economic policies to create a more equitable Minnesota.

Transformational expansion of the Renters' Credit. [The Renters' Credit reaches Minnesotans across the state](#), refunding a portion of the property taxes they pay through their rent. This proposal was included in the [tax conference committee agreement](#), but not passed into law. The Minnesota House proposes making the Renters' Credit simpler to calculate and apply for. As a result, the Renters' Credit would reach many more renters, and refunds would be larger and get to people sooner. In total, this proposal would direct an additional \$150 million to Minnesotans struggling to pay rent.

Expanding affordable child care options. Child care is another household expense Minnesotans struggle to pay for. In today's economy, we can't leave working parents on the sidelines because they can't afford child care. Governor Walz's budget would fully fund child care assistance that brings down the cost of care, ending waiting lists and serving all eligible families. It would also increase the availability of other early learning options. Walz would also increase state reimbursement rates paid to child care providers to better match the value of their services, and provide additional resources to stabilize and build capacity in our fragile child care system. The Minnesota House includes portions of this proposal in their budget as well.

Expand access to affordable health care. We've supported many proposals this session to fill in gaps so that more Minnesotans can afford the care they need. These include [continuous eligibility](#) so that folks don't lose their health care due to temporarily fluctuations in their income or paperwork snafus; making needed updates to Medical Assistance for Employed People with Disabilities so they can stay in the workforce and afford the care and supports they need to thrive; allowing folks to buy affordable, high-quality health insurance through MinnesotaCare; and ensuring immigration status isn't a barrier to getting health coverage. Unfortunately, the House and Senate failed to reach agreement on a health and human services bill that included provisions for child care and health care.

Opposing harmful tax cuts. The Senate proposed billions of dollars in poorly targeted tax cuts that leave out Minnesotans struggling the most while giving the largest tax cuts to those with the highest incomes. The Senate prioritized two major tax cuts – [expanding Minnesota's tax exemption for Social Security benefits](#) and a [costly first bracket income tax cut](#). The Minnesota Budget Project has lifted up analysis demonstrating how both tax cut proposals are tilted toward high-income folks. Because the tax cuts are so large, they would prevent strong investments in schools, health care, child care, housing, and other public services that would create a brighter future for us all.

Nonprofit leaders and advocates understand the importance of investing in our people and communities. We feel the urgency to address our state's shameful racial disparities in opportunity and well-being, and to begin to shrink the challenges in front of us and improve the lives of people we serve. [Join us in advocating for priorities in your community](#).

‘Seat at the Table’ legislation aims to improve collaboration between nonprofits and federal government

by Marie Ellis, public policy director

Just a few weeks ago, Minnesota Representative Betty McCollum and Michigan Representative Fred Upton introduced the bipartisan [Nonprofit Sector Strength and Partnership Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. \(H.R. 7587\)](#), which would make significant changes to how nonprofits and the federal government interact with each other. With the goal to strengthen the nonprofit sector and its relationship with the federal government to advance the public good, MCN supports this legislation.

[The two bill authors explained the need for this legislation well in a recent op-ed:](#)

“When the Small Business Administration (SBA) opened PPP in April 2020, nonprofit and for-profit entities scrambled to complete

the application process while news reports warned of quickly dwindling funding. As nonprofits tried to grasp this lifeline, many were stumped by a section on the application requiring information about their ownership. Nobody owns a nonprofit. Was a nonprofit supposed to list its board, its executive director, or no one at all? Experts had varying advice, and the clock was ticking.

The SBA’s dedicated staff did heroic work in setting up the PPP, but they had little history working with nonprofits. This lack of nonprofit expertise amounted to more than a mere paperwork headache: Researchers estimate PPP protected fewer nonprofit jobs than expected, with smaller nonprofits disproportionately missing out. Despite relying on the nonprofit sector to help implement programs and serve those in need, the federal pandemic response left many nonprofits behind.”

MCN has seen time and time again in our advocacy work that government in general does not understand how our sector operates or what we do.

The Nonprofit Seat at the Table legislation would go a long way in sharing the importance of what we do and how we do it, with federal government partners.

Specifically, the bill would establish new mechanisms that would help the federal government better engage nonprofits, including:

- Creating a White House Office on the Nonprofit Sector with a commission on federal grant reforms;
- Establishing an Interagency Council on Nonprofit Sector Partnerships to promote government and nonprofit collaboration;

- Forming an Advisory Board made up of diverse community-based and national nonprofit and philanthropic leaders; and
- Directing federal agencies to provide better and more regular data on nonprofit jobs and volunteers.

These new systems would leverage the mission, knowledge, and impact of nonprofits to help the government and the sector work together more effectively in pursuit of shared goals. In turn, we as nonprofits are able to strengthen communities across the country by making the federal government a more productive partner through better coordination, transparency, and support.

This legislation also raises awareness of the sector at the federal level, and the vital civic, social, and economic contributions nonprofits make in the United States. As of 2020, 1.8 million nonprofit organizations in the U.S. contributed \$1.2 trillion to the economy. Nonprofits employ 12 million workers, and engage 20 million board members, 63 million volunteers, and 170 million donors every year.

As a collective, our sector is strong and has extensive experience and insights we can share in a more collaborative government-nonprofit partnership. The Nonprofit Sector Strength and Partnership Act enhances our ability to address public challenges and maximize opportunities to advance our mission in every community across the country. [Watch a recording of a virtual event about this legislation with Rep. McCollum and her staff.](#)

What does *abundance* mean to you?

Minnesota is a state of abundance and we have what we need to care for each other. [Together We Rise Minnesota](#) is a policy campaign, coordinated by MCN and the Minnesota Budget Project, that asks our policymakers to make lasting investments in the building blocks of strong communities, things like child care, paid family leave, affordable housing, clean air and water, good schools, and health care... and to build a fair tax system that raises revenues to sustainably fund those investments.

In our new video, we asked folks to tell us what *abundance* means to them, and to envision what it would look like if their community had all it needed. What they describe is truly beautiful. This video is a tool for nonprofits to spark conversations about Minnesota’s abundance and engage neighbors in all corners of our state as we create just and thriving communities. [Watch the video and join us in this work.](#)

Nonprofit news & advancements



Anil Hurkadli joined the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation as senior vice president of Community Impact; Anil previously served as a graduate lecturer at the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs.



The Hastings Family Service chose Amy Sutton as its executive director and CEO; Amy previously served as associate director.



The Family Partnership announced that Ashley Hemnarine joined as development manager; Ashley previously worked at Touch Foundation.



The Give Us Wings board of directors named Peter Carlson as executive director.

People for the American Way named Na Eng as chief communications officer; Na previously serviced as communications director at the McKnight Foundation.



Opportunity Partners welcomed four new board members: Milton Dodd, Julie Sjodal, Brett White, and Katie Mattis Sarver.



Joyce Preschool named Ryan Mulso as their new executive director.



Libby Starling and Doug Strandness joined the board of directors for HousingLink.



Washburn Center for Children named Craig Warren as acting CEO; the announcement comes as outgoing CEO Tom Steinmetz transitioned after 26 years.



Rethos: Places Reimagined announced that Erin Hanafin Berg is the director of the *Rethos Policy Institute: Center for New Preservation*.



Catholic Charities announced Keith Kozerski as chief program officer and Paul Deakins as vice president for development.



Seasons Hospice of Rochester hired a new executive director, Kristina Wright-Peterson, who will replace Beverly Haynes who is retiring after nearly 25 years with Seasons Hospice.

Submit Your Announcements

MCN member organizations are invited to submit your organization’s awards, staffing announcements, and other news to [Laura Dunford](#). MCN cannot guarantee that all announcements will make it into *Nonprofit News*.



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What's new with the BIPOC Nonprofits Index, a free equity resource

by Kari Aanestad, associate director

Building on the efforts of people who have been working for decades to expand power, influence, and resources of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, over a year ago MCN launched a free community resource: [the Minnesota BIPOC Nonprofits Index](#).

The Index aggregates publicly available information on nonprofits as a resource for people and organizations looking to partner, invest, and amplify the work of BIPOC-led and/or -serving nonprofits.

The goal is to create connections between people, resources, advocacy efforts, and partnerships as one way to combat systemic inequities.

For funders, donors, nonprofits, policymakers, students, partners, media, and more, the BIPOC Nonprofits Index is one way to help you center equity in your decision making.

What's new in the Index?

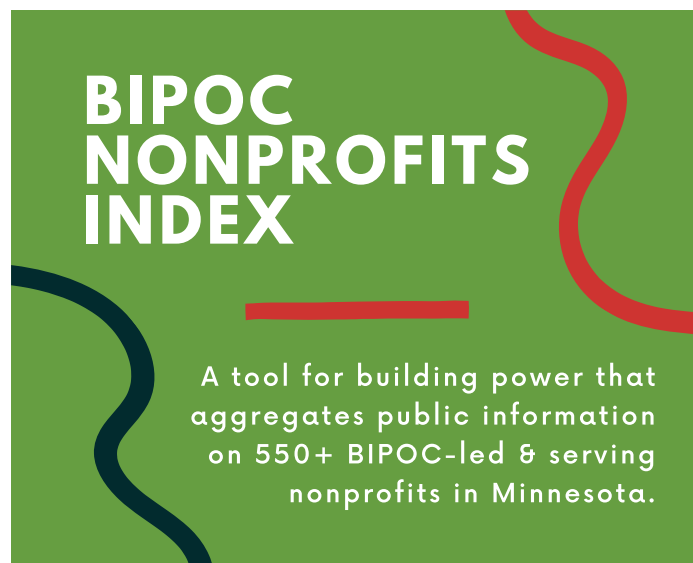
A few significant changes have occurred since MCN first launched this tool:

- Expanded Index: With additional community input, the Index now contains information on 550+ nonprofits primarily led by and/or serving BIPOC communities.
- More user-friendly: The Index is now available as a searchable directory on MCN's website, vastly improving usability and function by allowing users to select which primary racial/ethnic communities to learn about, as well as additional filters for budget size, activity area, county, city, and even Senate and House district.

How the Index is being used

Since launching the free tool a year ago, 370+ individuals have accessed the Index ranging from large private and community foundations, staff at all levels of state government, nonprofit leaders, graduate students, consultants, and more.

- Over 60 percent of people using the Index are expanding their networks and explore partnership opportunities.
- 16 percent of users are directing charitable giving as individuals and/or foundations, or to promote government funding opportunities.
- 9 percent of users are identifying partners to better connect communities to resources and services.
- 9 percent of users are conducting applied research on the sector.



What people are saying about the Index

- “I just joined [a DEI committee at a major state grantmaking agency] and wanted to ensure my upcoming RFP announcements reached as many BIPOC organizations as possible.”
- “95 percent of our student body is from a BIPOC population, with about 30 percent of our families being new immigrants. I would love to have some resources at my disposal to be able to help our families transition more smoothly.”
- “I am interested in finding organizations that we can donate to.”
- “[I am using the Index] to identify BIPOC democracy partners to connect with to see how we can co-plan long-term efforts to educate BIPOC voters on navigating spaces of power and effectively engaging elections officials and decision makers.”
- “Seeking potential community partnerships for living wage job creation.”
- “I’m using it for my human rights policy class!”
- “We are working on decolonizing our nonprofit and I want to see what community groups we can support.”

[Search the BIPOC Nonprofits Index.](#)

The nonprofit sector is dynamic and ever evolving. If you have edits, additions, or feedback, [please contact MCN](#); we make regular updates to the Index.

What we're hearing: challenges in Greater Minnesota

by Lenny Jones, development manager; Kelly LaCore, Greater MN & Northeast MN regional manager; Jes Wysong, Southern MN regional coordinator

Greater Minnesota and rural Minnesota nonprofits frequently express feeling disconnected from the seven-county Metro as it relates to the unique issues they face, including low population density, cultural shifts, limited resources, and extensive geographical span. MCN deliberately works to ensure inclusion, increase awareness, and support Greater Minnesota organizations and concerns by employing regional coordinators based outside of the Twin Cities.

Regional coordinators engage in regular conversation with our members; the following is a snapshot of three challenges staff have been hearing that Greater Minnesota nonprofits are facing.

Staffing challenges: The ongoing “Great Resignation” discussion has particular resonance for Greater Minnesota nonprofits, many of which have long struggled to attract and retain qualified staff. Compensation in the form of living-wage pay and benefit packages is too often beyond the reach of nonprofits operating in rural or remote regions. Executive directors, finance managers, and development professionals are particularly difficult to recruit, leading not only to staffing gaps but also to agency destabilization if long-term employees leave or leadership positions undergo rapid and repeated turnover. “I talked to a nonprofit in the Brainerd area who has had three executive directors in five years and multiple changes in programmatic leadership,” says MCN’s Jes Wysong. “A concern is losing funding because folks are not clear on expectations of their current funding.”

Organizational capacities: Many Greater Minnesota nonprofits operate on small agency budgets reliant on grants from the same few regional funders, which can create an environment of competition between organizations that might otherwise join forces to meet shared community needs. Several members of [MCN’s Regional Advisory Committee](#) mentioned their desire to diversify fundraising beyond relationships with local area foundations and entities such as United Way, but find themselves lacking the time to delve into individual giving efforts or submit proposals for state and federal funding, or lack the organizational capacity to expand fundraising efforts and meet government-funding reporting and evaluation requirements.

Technological capacity is also a complication, with many organizations unable to upgrade data collection or financial management tools due to lack of unrestricted funds. Hiring and retention of administrative staff – particularly development, finance, and human resources professionals – is an ongoing concern. These positions are most often paid out of the same general operations funds as rent, building maintenance, and other essential costs of agency functioning.

Population density vs. community needs: Underpinning these challenges is the issue of serving communities that, while low in number, may experience complicated intersectional needs, at the same time running an organization that flies under the radar of funders and other resource allocators. Another Regional Advisory Committee member

shared how their nonprofit was struggling to fund a much-needed shelter project that would provide 20-25 vulnerable adults and families with safe transitional lodging in a former hotel. Despite the obvious need in a region with very few housing resources for residents experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence, the fact that their shelter would serve a small number of people has proven to be a barrier to securing funding necessary to purchase the hotel.

Other committee members spoke of challenges in meeting funder definitions of “under-served populations” in RFPs meant to address equity issues in nonprofit grantmaking throughout Minnesota, but are not written to include sparsely populated, remote, and/or rural communities. This is a particular frustration for multi-service nonprofits serving individuals and families whose challenges may be further complicated by social isolation and lack of quality affordable housing, living-wage employment, reliable transportation, and access to basic amenities such as full-service grocery stores and pharmacies.

MCN is dedicated to amplifying the voices of Greater Minnesota through our programming, research, public policy, and beyond. We frequently stop to ask ourselves if we are doing all we can to honor MCN’s mission, “to inform, promote, connect, and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector.” You, our members and readers, are our greatest resource and we welcome your ideas and feedback. [Contact Kelly LaCore, Greater Minnesota and Northeast regional manager.](#)

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