



Rockefeller
Brothers Fund

Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

The RBF Diversity Report

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In early 2008, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) launched a foundation-wide project to assess and improve diversity within its operations and grantmaking. A Diversity Working Group (DWG) consisting of staff members from across the Fund was created to explore diversity and inclusion for the RBF. The initial goal of the DWG was to determine whether the RBF might embark on any specific initiatives or strategies to strengthen its commitment. The DWG settled on four basic goals for this initial exploration:

- To become familiar with contemporary concepts, frameworks, and programs for diversity;
- To assess the current status of the RBF's diversity relative to staff, board, and grants;
- To identify strengths and weaknesses in the RBF's institutional culture relative to diversity and inclusiveness; and
- To form recommendations regarding the design and implementation of strategies to strengthen and, where necessary, improve diversity and inclusion in the RBF's work.

CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORKS

Defining Diversity

From the beginning of the Diversity Project, RBF staff were faced with the difficult task of defining "diversity." Through a series of meetings, workshops, and discussions, staff explored various meanings of diversity and worked to create a cohesive definition that would be meaningful to them as individuals, to the RBF as an institution, and to the different RBF programs. Staff ultimately agreed that using a definition based on historically excluded groups was a good starting point, but that each RBF function and program would need to identify additional aspects of diversity that were meaningful to their areas of work. This definition is included in the Diversity Statement (page 12), which was approved by the RBF board of trustees on November 18, 2010.

Although time consuming and often difficult, this exploration process and the engagement of RBF staff in substantive discussions about diversity is one of the Diversity Project's greatest accomplishments. The discussions not only increased staff's awareness of the issues surrounding this important topic, but also brought about two important conclusions:

- Effectiveness Argument: Staff members agreed that the RBF and its grantees must reflect the diversity of the societies and the global community it serves not only to advance social justice, but also to increase its effectiveness as an institution and grantmaker. This argument provides a compelling reason beyond "it's the right thing to do" to nurture an institutional commitment to diversity.
- Importance of Inclusion: The concept of inclusion, which was introduced during these initial discussions, was acknowledged as a key factor in the successful institutionalization of diversity. Staff recognized that embracing diversity in practice requires an everyday commitment to promoting an inclusive environment where colleagues feel listened to, valued, and acknowledged as stakeholders. This is an integral part of animating the effectiveness argument by ensuring that the different skills, experiences, and perspectives that staff members bring to the Fund are fully appreciated and utilized.

The Status of RBF Diversity and Inclusion

In late 2008, the RBF engaged a team of consultants led by Jessica Chao (formerly of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors), to conduct surveys, data collection, and research on the current status of the Fund's diversity relative to staff, board, and grantmaking. Subsequently, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) was engaged in 2010 to conduct grantee, applicant, staff, and trustee perception surveys for the Fund and was asked to include custom questions regarding diversity in its standard survey instruments.

In collaboration with staff, the consultants collected data and conducted internal assessments of the RBF staff, board, and grantmaking diversity, as well as its institutional culture and predisposition toward inclusiveness. They also made presentations to the staff and board members on the evolution of attention to diversity in U.S. society and diversity initiatives in the field, and, importantly, helped to facilitate the DWG and a number of all-staff meetings. The results of these assessments were shared with staff and board members and were used to encourage further discussions and actions.

The consultant and CEP surveys of board, staff, applicant, and grantee perceptions of the RBF, including grantee perceptions of the Fund's engagement with diversity, produced the following results:

Board

- Unlike most family foundations, about 50 percent of the RBF's board consists of non-family members, which invests it with some diversity of background and experience. Most family foundations have only one or two outside members who are generally trusted advisors or close friends.
- Racial/ethnic minority representation on the RBF board has been quite stable ranging from one to two board members in any given year. From 1989 through 2008, of 37 total board members, four represented racial/ethnic minorities.
- Female representation on the board was also stable at four to five members over the years, but generally about 31 percent of all board members. But there was only one non-family female during the period studied.
- The average age of board members increased during this period from 52.9 years to the late 50s in more recent years. However, the average age of family members has been younger than non-family members with this discrepancy growing over time. In 2008, the average age of non-family trustees was 62.4 years compared with 53.8 years among family members.
- Relative to family foundations with assets of \$500 million or more, the RBF's board is more diverse. In 2008, RBF's minority representation comprised 12.5 percent of all members (two out of sixteen) compared to 6.5 percent of all larger family foundations, but a bit less diverse than boards of independent foundations at 13.2 percent.
- Female representation is similar to other family foundations at slightly less than a third of all trustees.

- The RBF has made further progress with regard to board diversity in 2009 and 2010. With the election of Kavita Ramdas in November 2010, the board includes eight women (44 percent) including three non-family female trustees, and three people of color (17 percent).

Staff

- Between 2002 and 2008, racial and ethnic diversity increased from 28.6 percent to 33.3 percent.
- There was less diversity on the director and higher levels at about 25 percent. However, this also represents a huge increase from no directors of color in 2002.
- In terms of promotions, there were 22 promotions throughout this period (2002-2008) of which 27.3 percent went to people of color.
- As of October 2010, 73 percent of RBF staff are women and 38 percent are people of color.
- The RBF staff is more diverse when compared with other foundations, including all family foundations. RBF diversity is consistent with national census data but lower than in New York City.
- Fifty-four percent of staff felt they have to modify how they interact with others sometimes, usually, or always.
- Fifty-eight percent of staff of color vs. 19 percent of whites felt they “sort of” or “seldom” fit in at the RBF.
- RBF program staff do not often engage with grantees on diversity issues, but they do so as much as the staff at the RBF’s peer foundations;
- Staff from the various RBF programs engage with diversity issues to different degrees and in different ways;

Grantees

- Seventy-eight percent of grantee respondents felt that RBF program staff paid “adequate” amounts of attention to these issues; and
- Sixty-six percent of grantee respondents stated that their work explicitly addresses diversity.

The results of both the consultant and CEP assessments clearly showed that although the RBF has remained more or less at the same level as its peers in terms of engagement with diversity, there is still room for improvement, especially with respect to the Fund’s commitment to building an inclusive organizational environment and engaging with grantees on diversity issues. When asked what we could do as a funder to better support their diversity interests, aside from requests for increasing related funding, grantees noted that technical assistance and advice around diversity practices, such as board development and convening leaders in an inclusive manner, would be helpful.

Data Collection

While staff and consultants struggled with the limitations of the data available for their assessments, they remained convinced that comprehensive data collection—both institutional and in grantmaking—is important to monitoring and evaluating work on diversity. Moreover, staff noted that the grant coding systems in use across philanthropy today do not accurately depict the scope of the populations potentially affected by or engaged in RBF programs. Since a significant portion of the RBF’s grantmaking supports public policy and does not involve direct services, staff realized that the audiences for studies, participants in advocacy strategies, attendees at conferences, and other forms of engagement should be taken into consideration as target populations. Staff also noted that international grantmaking adds a layer of complexity that is not adequately reflected in the existing coding systems and methodologies. The “vocabulary” of diversity also may need to be adapted to contexts outside the United States.

Given these limitations, the questions of how to accurately benchmark the RBF’s work on diversity emerged as a key challenge of the Diversity Project. Many staff members observed that it would be more helpful—and indeed more accurate—to use several benchmarks when making comparisons to help the RBF better understand the institution’s strengths, weaknesses, and progress over time.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

At the end of the Diversity Project’s initial phase, the DWG drafted a Vision and Purpose statement to guide staff as they entered the planning and implementation phase. This statement focused on the following key goals:

- Balancing history and tradition with contemporary realities in a changing world;
- Balancing both the effectiveness rationale for embracing diverse perspectives with the moral obligation to address past and current injustices that may have disadvantaged or excluded specific communities; and
- Building an organizational culture where people are comfortable expressing their authentic selves.

Three workgroups representing the Human Resources, Programs, and Pocantico¹ functions were formed to draft work plans to guide the Diversity Project’s implementation phase. The DWG was reorganized as a Diversity Steering Committee (DSC) with leadership drawn from each working group, the Communications Department, and a chairperson.

Following discussions with the board, a fourth working group drafted a statement on the RBF’s commitment to diversity and inclusiveness. The proposed statement text, attached as Appendix 1, recognizes that embracing diversity, inclusiveness, and equity is essential to the RBF’s mission.

¹ The Pocantico Center is managed by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as part of its agreement with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Two major questions framed the work plan of the Human Resources working group:

- Is the RBF recruiting, hiring, and promoting staff in ways that are fair, equitable, and supportive of all groups that have been historically excluded?
- Are existing policies, procedures, and systems as fair, consistent, and transparent as they could be to create an open environment where staff can contribute to the RBF's mission?

To answer these questions, the Human Resources team is currently engaged in a series of ongoing, comprehensive assessments of the relevant systems and tools. Specifically, the Human Resources team has been evaluating the accessibility, effectiveness, and transparency of their communications processes, professional development programs, recruitment processes, and the new-hire orientation process.

The Human Resources team also has focused on improving the Fund's system of recording and tracking staff demographic data. The Automated Data Processing (ADP) portal was launched in fall 2009. The portal provides employees access to review and update their information on file resulting in more effective data collection. As part of the evaluation of the RBF's recruitment and orientation processes, a self-identification Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) form² was created and is currently being given to all applicants who interview for employment at the RBF. The team is working to develop a system to collect demographic data from all applicants to ensure that future job listings are reaching the widest possible range of available talent. In addition, the Human Resources team has made an increased effort to expose RBF job opportunities to a more diverse applicant pool by using a greater variety of job listing Web sites and recruitment sources.

The Human Resources team was able to apply these changes to the data collection and hiring process for four positions that needed to be filled in early 2010. The team also had the opportunity to implement improvements to the new hire orientation process that takes the RBF's commitment to diversity and inclusion into account.

In addition to reviewing the orientation and hiring procedures, the Human Resources group also has been working to identify new ways in which professional development and training can be used to further institutional effectiveness and enhance the commitment to diversity and inclusiveness. The Human Resources team will continue working on ways to help staff develop the skills that are needed to foster a genuinely inclusive organizational culture through both formal and informal means. Ongoing efforts in this area include professional training to help RBF staff gain effective communication and negotiation skills. Staff members have participated in a number of communication and problem solving workshops, specifically at our recent staff retreats. An enhanced tuition reimbursement model that supports professional development and diversity-related educational offerings for all levels of staff is also being formulated and will be incorporated into the employee handbook, which is currently being updated.

² This form allows applicants to self-identify gender and race/ethnicity.

Finally, the Human Resources department is currently engaged in reviewing the performance evaluation process, promotion opportunities, disciplinary actions, and systems for addressing grievances, peer and subordinate-supervisor issues. As a result, an electronic inbox was created to ensure speedy responses to queries and complaints of staff. These initiatives aim at embedding a culture of diversity and inclusivity into all aspects of the Fund's work.

PROGRAM WORKING GROUP

The program working group is exploring ways in which greater attention to diversity can enhance the Fund's program strategies and grantmaking. In order to encourage engagement on diversity among colleagues and grantees, the group concluded it should begin by tapping into the underlying social justice motivations and convictions that it believes play a significant role in the vision and approaches of staff that make grants. The working group focused on elevating and exploring the concept of "justice," a central tenet of the RBF's mission and an essential impetus for engaging with diversity. Further, it asked, how can the RBF's grantmaking include a justice dimension in the same way that "sustainability" informs and enriches much of the Fund's grantmaking and operations? The group worked to clarify what "diversity" means for RBF programs in the context of its mission as well as in the Fund's various fields of work, and explored how engaging diversity could enhance program effectiveness.

Discussions were held at the program staff retreat with Alan Jenkins of The Opportunity Agenda, and Kavita Ramdas of the Global Fund for Women (elected to the RBF board of trustees on November 18, 2010), and at a program staff workshop for which staff prepared written reflections that explored: 1) which aspects of the demographics of the United States or the international contexts in which the program teams work are most salient for their fields, goals, and strategies; and 2) implications of not addressing diversity within grantee organizations and fields as well as advantages or benefits that would accrue if this was done. Several cross cutting conclusions emerged:

The RBF's grantmaking is organized around three themes: Democratic Practice, Peace and Security, Sustainable Development, and three pivotal places: New York City, Southern China, and the Western Balkans.

- Engaging with diversity is a part of larger efforts to redress injustice—to confront the systematic exclusion, disempowerment, and discrimination that surrounds us. Addressing exclusion and engaging diverse constituencies are key dimensions of working for what is just.
- One cultivates a sense of and chooses to work for "justice" from deeply personal journeys that include the experience of or exposure to discrimination, deprivation, exclusion, or violence; living as an immigrant or expatriate in the United States or abroad; study and reflection, religion, and other experiences and influences. As staff offered reflections about how their beliefs and motivations regarding justice took shape, they discovered that they all bring a passion rooted in advancing social justice to their work at the RBF.
- The enormity of injustices to be addressed can be overwhelming; it is important that the Fund start from and affirm shared values, then take on what it can do as a foundation and in the context of its program focus.

- Across all programs there is a consensus that it is necessary to cultivate diversity in program strategies and grantmaking in order to advance the social justice dimensions of the RBF's mission and achieve its program goals. There also was great concern for ensuring respectful attention to groups disproportionately affected by historical and contemporary patterns of discrimination, deprivation, and exclusion.
- Any initiatives undertaken to advance diversity in the RBF's programs need to be accompanied by a commitment to building an inclusive environment, within the RBF, across its fields of work, and in grantee relationships. Efforts to advance justice cannot be meaningfully pursued—through work on diversity or any other focus—unless the process is accompanied by proactive inclusion.

Program teams agree that their goals and strategies reflect and address many aspects of social justice:

- *Democratic Practice* focuses on “democratic deficits,” many of which are rooted in historic patterns of exclusion. The team's strategies in the United States and regarding global governance reflect a variety of efforts to ensure voice, access, and the ability to exercise rights.
- *Sustainable Development* engages climate change as a profound social justice issue with severe implications for generations to come. Unequal distribution of impacts, differentiated responsibilities for mitigation, and different capacities to respond are conditioning progress toward solutions, especially at the global level.
- *Peace and Security* works to address unresolved conflicts, many of them rooted in long-standing prejudices, to advance more collaborative and inclusive approaches to global problem solving.
- *Pivotal Places* present important grounding for the RBF's consideration of diversity in three distinct places: Southern China, with a racially homogeneous but ethnically diverse population; Western Balkans, still overcoming the contrived sense of unity promoted under Communist governments that masked ethnic divisions, which ultimately erupted into violent conflict; and New York City's extraordinarily diverse population, with all the conflicts and rich cultural vitality it engenders.

Across all programs, staff are exploring ways to ensure that the Fund's strategies contribute to overcoming exclusion, disempowerment, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, and other differences.

The practical matter of data collection was also an integral part of the program working group's discussions. The team agrees that collecting data on diversity in the Fund's grantmaking will enable staff both to remain accountable to the RBF's institutional commitment to diversity and to better understand diversity in relation to grantees and their work. The team is currently working on how data collection can be incorporated into the Fund's existing application and reporting processes without unduly increasing the administrative burden for grantees and staff. Program staff are cognizant that any request for information made to grantees signals the Fund's interest and staff

need to be prepared to explain to grantees why the RBF is interested in diversity and how this information will be used.

Program staff came away from these various discussions committed to engaging with diversity, to helping identify ways to promote it internally and represent our interests externally, and to examining the ways in which attention to diversity can increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking. Approaches will differ according to the goals and strategies of the various programs. For example, while some programs may make grants whose primary purpose is to address systemic causes of inequality and exclusion, others will focus on fostering inclusiveness across fields and engaging with grantees on the importance of diversity in their own organizations and strategies.

Building on the consensus to be more intentional in addressing the diversity dimensions of our social justice mission, staff have taken a number of steps to increase attention to diversity into the Fund's program development and grantmaking processes:

1. Initiate conversations with grantees about how they think about diversity in their organizations and work. The New York City program included questions about diversity in its request for arts and culture capacity-building proposals. Sustainable Development staff have experimented with discussing diversity with one of its grantees that presents itself as a progressive policy institute but does not have people of color on its board or staff.
2. Expect diversity dimensions of various grants to be raised in docket preview meetings. Several conversations have been initiated at docket preview meetings about the lack of engagement with the environmental justice community, largely groups representing communities of color and low-income communities that experience disproportionately the effects of environmental contamination and pollution.
3. Address diversity in program reviews. The Western Balkans and Sustainable Development program teams were able to incorporate more explicit attention to diversity into their program review papers.
4. Consider options for data collection. Grants Management staff are participating in the Foundation Center's working group on diversity metrics and have kept abreast of data collection trends in the field of philanthropy. The group also developed a series of custom questions on diversity for the Fund's CEP grantee and applicant surveys conducted in the winter of 2010 and continues to explore meaningful ways to track diversity and learn from the Fund's grantmaking.
5. Continue dialogue with thought-and-practice leaders to better define ideas and promote practices.

POCANTICO WORKING GROUP

Concentrating on the growing importance of public programs as the estate transitions from private to public uses, the Pocantico working group focused its implementation plan on two key questions:

- How do Pocantico programs address the injustices that have disadvantaged or excluded specific communities?
- How does Pocantico staff reach out and engage constituencies whose experience and expertise can help refine the RBF and The Pocantico Center's programs?

Using these questions and previous discussions as a departure point, the Pocantico group focused on devising manageable data collection systems to identify the populations currently being served by their programs.

Public Programs

Pocantico staff began their assessment by looking at the Historic Hudson Valley's (HHV) surveys of visitors to Kykuit and launching an informal survey of the public program audience. The data collected by HHV confirmed the staff's own findings that underserved populations constitute only a small percentage of the public program's audience. Due to the diverse demographics of the Pocantico Hills School district, however, staff found that the school garden program serves a more diverse population than other public programs.

In order to address this discrepancy, Pocantico staff decided that, in 2011, they will pursue opportunities in the community by reaching out to a diverse selection of local community leaders in the surrounding towns of Mount Pleasant, Tarrytown, and Sleepy Hollow. With the help of these local leaders, Pocantico staff hopes to identify the interests and needs of the local populations so that they might be better reflected in the public programs at Pocantico. Pocantico staff will also focus on showcasing RBF arts and culture grantees who represent diverse racial and ethnic groups.

Conference Program

Since the beginning of 2010, Pocantico staff have been collecting demographic data from conference participants by asking organizers to identify the race and ethnicity of all participants on the "Participant Information Form." Organizers are not required to provide this information and, unfortunately, Pocantico staff noticed that organizations new to The Pocantico Center have been more willing to provide the information than returning organizations. To help fill in these data gaps, Pocantico staff have been conducting "sidewalk surveys" of conference participants whenever possible.

In 2011, Pocantico staff will analyze the data collected and will share their findings with the RBF's program staff to explore whether attendance at Pocantico conferences is an accurate reflection of the diverse populations these programs are trying to reach.

Stewardship

Pocantico staff have conducted an internal analysis of the race and ethnicity of its contractors and vendors, and conversations on these topics have been initiated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The purpose of this analysis and dialogue is to ensure that the center is using the most efficient and diverse group of vendors possible.

CONCLUSION

Even at this early stage, the RBF Diversity Project has already served as an example in the field. As other philanthropic and nonprofit organizations have also shown interest in improving their engagement with diversity, RBF staff members have had the opportunity to share some of the lessons learned throughout this process. Stephen Heintz has used the RBF process and experience to inform his work as the co-chair of the national Diversity in Philanthropy Project and Betsy Campbell has contributed reflections about our diversity efforts for a Council on Foundations publication. Stephen, Betsy and other staff have also spoken about diversity and inclusion at various philanthropy gatherings. The lessons they have shared include the need for external support in reviewing data, leading discussions, and broaching difficult topics; the importance of finding a definition of “diversity” that is meaningful to the organization and staff; and the need to promote inclusiveness to ensure that all staff members are meaningfully engaged in the process.

Through engagement in the Diversity Project’s discussions and workshops, RBF staff and trustees have learned that an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion is crucial to fulfilling the RBF’s mission. And although the RBF Diversity Project began officially in 2008 and is reaching its natural conclusion, it is clear that engaging with these issues will be an ongoing process at the Fund.

As official review processes draw to completion and data collection systems are finalized and put in place, the next step is to continue working to embed this commitment to actively promoting diversity and inclusion into all aspects of the RBF’s institutional culture and work.

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The Mission of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund advances social change that contributes to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We, the trustees and staff of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, are resolutely committed to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We believe the Fund has a moral obligation to do its part to address past and current injustices to groups that have been historically disadvantaged and socially, politically, and economically excluded. Our commitment is shaped by our values, our work, and the philanthropic traditions of the Rockefeller family. We define diversity as including, but not limited to, individual and group differences based on race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, religious belief, and physical ability. Creating a genuinely inclusive environment and ensuring that diverse voices are present and active in all aspects of our institutional life will enhance our organization's effectiveness.

In pursuing our social change mission, we seek to manage our philanthropic programs and organizational culture in a manner that embraces diversity and inclusion. We strive to maintain the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and accountability, and are committed to:

- recruiting a diverse board of trustees and staff;
- fostering open and effective cooperation among the board and staff;
- engaging with and funding diverse constituencies;
- working with grantees to achieve our shared diversity goals;
- identifying and working with diverse vendors, contractors, and consultants;
- advocating public policy that advances social inclusion; and
- promoting intercultural understanding.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund will continue to support ongoing efforts to advance excellence and effectiveness in the philanthropic community. Achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion is a continuous process which we believe will contribute to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.