

Webinar #3: Notes from Breakout Groups

Questions discussed:

- How can public/private funders and evaluators effectively partner to advance equity in the arts sector's evaluation practices?
- What challenges do those partnerships face?
- What specific strategies can funders and evaluators implement to advance equity in the arts sector's evaluation practices?

Group #1: Lisa Forsberg, facilitator

- A barrier - foundation's own strategic plan/goals driving what they want to see from grantees, often without leaving room for organizations to define success.
- Funding rules are not applied equitably.
 - Large organizations are deemed too big to fail
 - Small organizations are deemed fragile even if viable.
- Foundations need focus on relationship-building as much as grant-making processes
- It's been hard to learn from foundations about what hasn't worked
- Need to look at sustainability in ways other than financial.
- We need to interrogate the way foundations look at financial sustainability.
- Serve BIPOC communities vs. just BIPOC organizations
- Challenges: Alignment of goals and transparency.
 - Do folks attend DEI professional development just to be more successful in applying for funds?

Group #2: Sharmalene Mendis-Millard, facilitator

- Amidst unbalanced power dynamics, how do you move forward?
 - Agreeing on terms
 - Process is agreed upon
 - Mutual benefits - thinking transformationally rather than transactionally.
 - Being able to speak about difficult issues.
- Challenge - how to tailor evaluation to context while hitting the markers to compare across sites. How necessary is it to compare results across sites?
- Protecting status quo/protecting structures can be an overriding force.
- People outside the arts sector might be good evaluators - bring new perspectives.
- How can we embed flexibility into funding processes so organizations can define success for themselves?

Group #3: Morgan Kasproicz, facilitator

- Creating an environment to reframe data to be central to a shared learning experience.
- Is the word 'evaluation' an issue in and of itself?
- In contrast, should funders and evaluators seek to build a learning mindset?

- Consider expanding the definition of success and who gets to define it.
- Challenge: changes in leadership, which happens often these days, can put pressure on funder staff and grantees.
- Power is a force resisting change.
- Equity-focused evaluations can take more resources and can be a challenge to implement.
- Transparency - important to center throughout evaluation processes.
- Language of equity - folks may be good at talking the talk rather than walking the walk. This can happen in evaluation as well. It's a challenge for funders to recognize these tendencies.

Group #4: Patti Saraneiro, facilitator

- Have we conflated racial equity with racial inclusion and racial justice?
- Need to look at what equity means.
- Funders are struggling to address the history of unfairness and how to go forward.
- Yes, there are challenges around partnerships. But some funders are embracing participatory grant making (e.g., Wallace).
- Need to examine how to co-develop objectives.
- A discussion topic moving forward: artistic reparations and creative justice.
- We also need to decolonize our imaginations.