



Advancing Racial Equity in Postsecondary Education Philanthropy: A Call to Action

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Socio-political crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and openly racialized politics, are prompting grantmakers to (re)consider their role as agents of change in the accountability and reimagining of postsecondary institutions. Based on research findings from a study with grantmakers about their commitments to racial equity, this article explores the process of transformation as moving beyond reactionary responses that uphold the status quo to bringing about enduring organizational change.

In addressing the root causes within beliefs and values that have upheld white supremacist structures, the authors suggest two pathways of change: (re)forming networks to connect with more BIPOC-led knowledge bases; and pivoting the focus of transformation from student-focused initiatives to structural, institutional changes.

The call to action is supported by a framework of reflections and concrete approaches that could be adopted to centralize equity and transformation.

[#Postsecondaryeducation](#) [#Raciaequity](#) [#Decolonization](#) [#Fundingagendas](#)

Background & Context



- **Grantmakers have started to shift from broadly-focused education equality and improvements to race-conscious or actively antiracist commitments.** This has prompted a reflection on what role grantmakers play in bringing about structural changes that centre racially just futures for U.S. postsecondary education.
- Traditionally, grantmakers have operated out of **white-dominated networks of knowledge and expertise that have slowed progressive change movements.** This has resulted in continued increases in college completion rates, but racial inequalities have persisted and grown.
- In configuring new roles within the transformation process, grantmakers would need to identify practices that have historically favoured limited change and neoliberal upgrades. It is suggested that **questions of *what, how, and for whom* they fund, should be probed.**

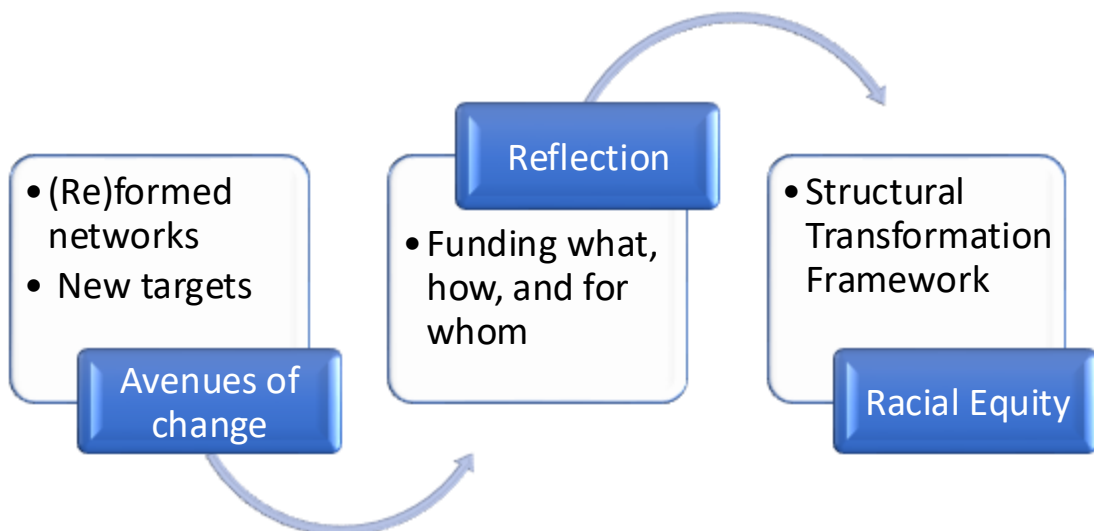
ERNOP Research Note

Academic articles on philanthropy through a practitioner lens

Take aways & Learnings



- Two avenues towards transformative change are proposed:
 1. **(Re)forming networks** involves the process of shifting sole focus from networks that are representative of white and elite interests to centring BIPOC communities. This would help shape more inclusive funding agendas.
 2. **Changing the target** refers to the goal of transformation. While grantmakers have historically aimed at student-focused initiatives, they now recognize the need to intervene on white supremacist structures and the institutionalized actions that maintain these structures.
- The authors offer a **transformative framework tool** to reflect on and revise their approach. It considers status quo grant making practices, constraints that fortify the status quo, and alternative approaches.
- The Call to Action is for postsecondary education grantmakers to **use these moments of socio-political discourse to actively embed their learnings** about grant making and racial equity. This is a means towards lasting change, rather than upholding historical and unjust status quos.



A pathway for postsecondary education grantmakers to effect lasting racial equity

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