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“They’re not attuned to equity issues, and sometimes come off as dismissive.”

INSIGHT

A lack of transparency around how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is valued and integrated into a funder’s work can lead to questions about a funder’s commitment to DEI.

Funders need to be transparent about how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are valued and integrated internally in order to authentically engage grantees on these issues. Not doing so can lead organizations to question the funder’s commitment to DEI, and the extent to which DEI informs organizational culture and plays into both funding and internal processes.

“I’m just not sure they’re the right group to help with [our sensitive DEI issue].”

Insights

Interviewees mentioned in multiple contexts that GCE did not appear to them to be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Organizations questioned whether and how DEI played into the funding process and GCE’s internal practices.

Participants would welcome a more direct and transparent approach to the values of DEI at Luminate. Participants sometimes ascribed frustration with systemic discrimination problems happening in Silicon Valley onto GCE as well, due to their perception that GCE’s approach was aligned with more negative aspects of Silicon Valley’s culture. Some participants even spoke about not bringing up DEI-related issues with GCE, saying that they didn’t think GCE would be able to help or even understand. For these participants, their perception of GCE was of an organization that was heteronormative, white, and male.

Several participants also found it noteworthy that there was no diversity data on the Omidyar Network / GCE website. They also remarked on the fact that the team did not ask for any diversity data during the investment process.

Participants were generally aware that GCE used DEI considerations in their assessment of an organization, but it seems that not all ILs involved grantees in the collection or reporting of that information about the organization.

THEMES

- > Trust & Power
- > Funder Identity & Culture

Recommendations

Transparency is key to fostering an equitable playing field amongst grantees. Transparency ensures that information about funding processes and support are made clear to all, rather than offered through informal channels only to grantees in a position to initiate a discussion or inquiry. To increase transparency, and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI):

- Be explicit about the role DEI plays in your organization and how you are integrating DEI-related efforts and considerations into your funding approach, strategies and external relationships.
- Consider finding ways to diversify your network and the organizations you fund, by, for example, intentionally engaging with organizations beyond the types of entities and approaches that you are most familiar and comfortable with, and questioning your frame of reference for what is 'a fit.'
- Be transparent about your strategic priorities, and keep grantees informed as to how they may be changing.
- Develop processes that are used consistently with all organizations, providing a clear and collaborative route for creating tailored outputs – for everyone, not just for organizations who proactively initiate this process.
- Clarify the steps, inputs and outputs of the funding process, and the process for accessing alternative types of support. Pay particular attention to communicating what is required from the grantee early on in the process.

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of key people involved in relationship management with the grantee. This is particularly important for creating a deep and trusting relationship and provides clarity over who the grantee should direct questions to.
- Clarify what alternative types of portfolio support are available to grantees, why they are being offered, and particularly how this support is intended to help achieve the organization's goals.⁴
- Clearly communicate your identity, where the cultural roots of your funding approach lie, and how those inform your strategies and practices.

⁴ Portfolio support can include consulting around DEI.