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# CENTERING THE EXPERIENCE: BLACK-LED NONPROFITS IN AUSTIN

A Community-Led Survey In Partnership With Black Leaders Collective

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## ABOUT MEASURE

MEASURE, an Austin-based nonprofit, works to empower people impacted by social disparities and the accompanying narrative. MEASURE believes that, when used strategically, data provides a common language upon which community members can meet and increase their knowledge about the causes and work together to create equitable change and increase awareness.

## ABOUT BLACK LEADERS COLLECTIVE

The Black Leaders Collective (BLC) is a collaboration of Central Texas leaders representing grassroots community members, nonprofits leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, activists, educators, policymakers, and young professionals. BLC is leading a transformative movement that is intersectional and intergenerational. BLC is creating a mechanism for change that is Black-conceived and Black-led to define the priorities of the Black diaspora in Central Texas. The Black Leaders Collective welcomes the support of all Black leaders and allies in Travis and Williamson Counties.

## BACKGROUND

The Black Leaders Collective (BLC) was formed in 2020 against the backdrop of the police killings of George Floyd and Mike Ramos, the widening wealth gap, and racial disparities in health, education, and justice in Austin and surrounding cities. The BLC collaborates with more than 70 Central Texas leaders representing grassroots community members, nonprofit leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, activists, educators, policymakers, and young professionals.

According to the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy, “the combined funding to Black communities is 1 percent of all community foundation funding while the combined Black population is 15 percent, resulting in an underfunding of Black communities of \$2 billion” nationwide (1). National studies of funding recipients have found that Black and Brown-led organizations win less funding than white leaders, with vast disparities in unrestricted assets (2).

The BLC reached out to MEASURE to gain lived-experience data on inequities in philanthropy and funding opportunities for Black-led nonprofits in Austin, TX. The BLC requested that MEASURE create a survey to assess the issues that matter to Black-led organizations and to seek data on how Black and Brown organizations can be sustained over the future decades ahead. This report presents the findings of the survey of Black-led nonprofits in Austin, Texas.

## Historical Timeline

BLC and MEASURE reviewed historical events that have contributed to inequities for Black-led nonprofits. See [link](#) for larger view of historical timeline (3).



### Sources

1. Black Funding Denied: Community Foundations Support For Black Communities. (2020) Retrieved from: <https://www.ncrp.org/2020/08/black-funding-denied.html>
2. Rendon, J. Nonprofits Led by People of Color Win Less Grant Money With More Strings (Study). (2020) Retrieved from: <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/nonprofits-led-by-people-of-color-win-less-grant-money-with-more-strings-study/>
3. Historical Timeline for Black-Led Nonprofits (2020). Retrieve from: <https://tinyurl.com/BLCHistoricalTimeline>



## DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Data was collected using an online survey designed by MEASURE in collaboration with the BLC. Survey questions were adapted from Social Venture Partners Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) (4). Topics covered in the survey included: Strategic Direction, Program Design & Evaluation, Human Resources, Information Technology, Financial Management & Development, & Marketing. A survey link was distributed to all participants of the BLC via email starting in December 2020. The qualitative survey closed in March 2021 and had a total of 30 completed responses.

## DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Survey data were collected using Survey Monkey, an online survey collection tool. Descriptive analyses (i.e. frequencies and averages) for quantitative data were obtained using Survey Monkey's analytics tools. Qualitative data were extracted from Survey Monkey and reviewed by the research team for patterns and themes using a general inductive approach. Due to the ability to skip questions, the total number of responses per question may vary.

## WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

Of the those who responded:

- 94% had a position as executive director, president, founder, and or CEO of the organization.
- 100% were Black-led or Black serving.
- 86% had a board of directors with 10 or less members.

The organizations were part of various industries. The top three industries represented were:

- youth development (61%),
- education (58%), and
- healthcare and wellness (49%).

### Sources

4. SVP International. Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (Version 1). (2021) Retrieved from [https://www.socialventurepartners.org/svp\\_resources/organizational-capacity-assessment-tool/](https://www.socialventurepartners.org/svp_resources/organizational-capacity-assessment-tool/)

\*Respondents were permitted to skip any question they felt did not pertain to them, thus n's may vary by question.

# RESULTS SUMMARY: STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, & UNMET NEEDS

These Black-led organizations are strengthened by:

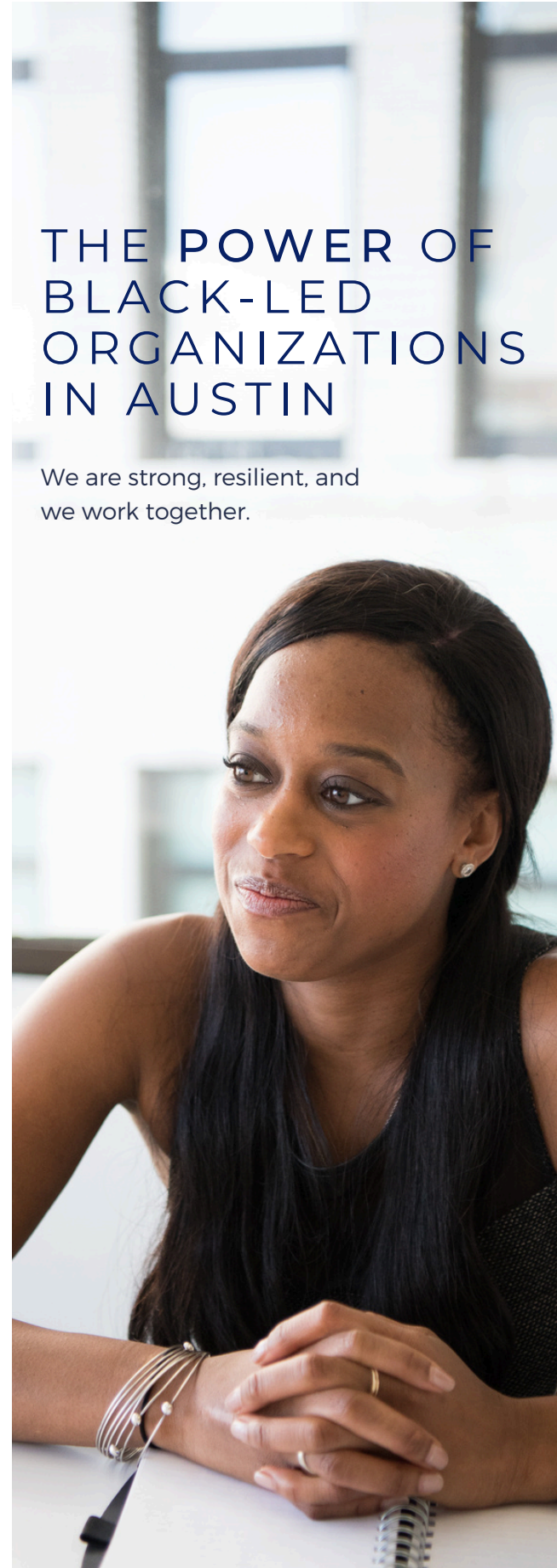
- Boards which reflect the organization's stakeholders and community
- Experienced leaders with a deep understanding of issues in their sector
- Near universal alignment of services and programs to mission and goals
- Partnerships with other organizations

**Opportunity exists** in leveraging organization boards for fundraising.

**Unmet Needs:** Survey results reveal a widespread need for more stable funding along with the technical assistance and infrastructure to support planning and development.

## THE POWER OF BLACK-LED ORGANIZATIONS IN AUSTIN

We are strong, resilient, and we work together.



83%

Have boards that reflect the organization's stakeholders and community.

96%

Agree their services align with the organization's mission.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

When asked about funding development capacity:

- Of the 28 respondents, only 46% require board members to fundraise and of the 30 respondents, only 40% have a strategic plan to track fundraising efforts.
- Of the 28 respondents, about 60% of organizations have a list with past and/or prospective donors' information.

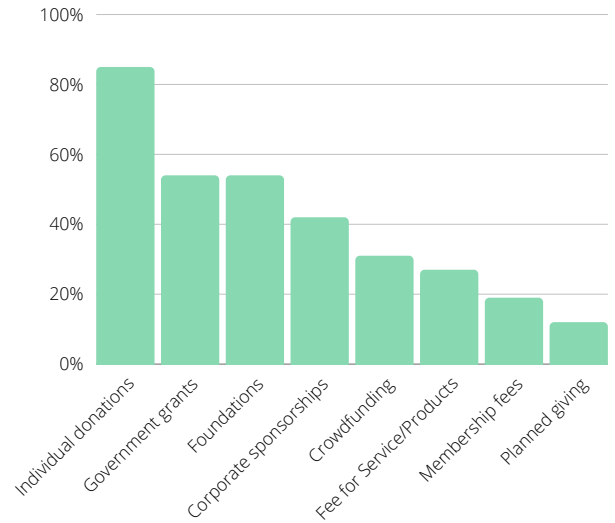
When asked about staff capacity:

- Of the 29 respondents, less than half (43%) of respondents believe that their staff have the fundraising skills and expertise to carry out fundraising activities, yet, 82% of respondents agreed that their staff uses strong financial judgement.

When ask about accounting systems:

- Of the 28 respondents, 75% indicate their organization follows a budget that is closely monitored, 69% have a detailed accounting system to keep track of budget, and 64% have a system to protect financial data.
- Less than half (44%) have comprehensive written financial policies.

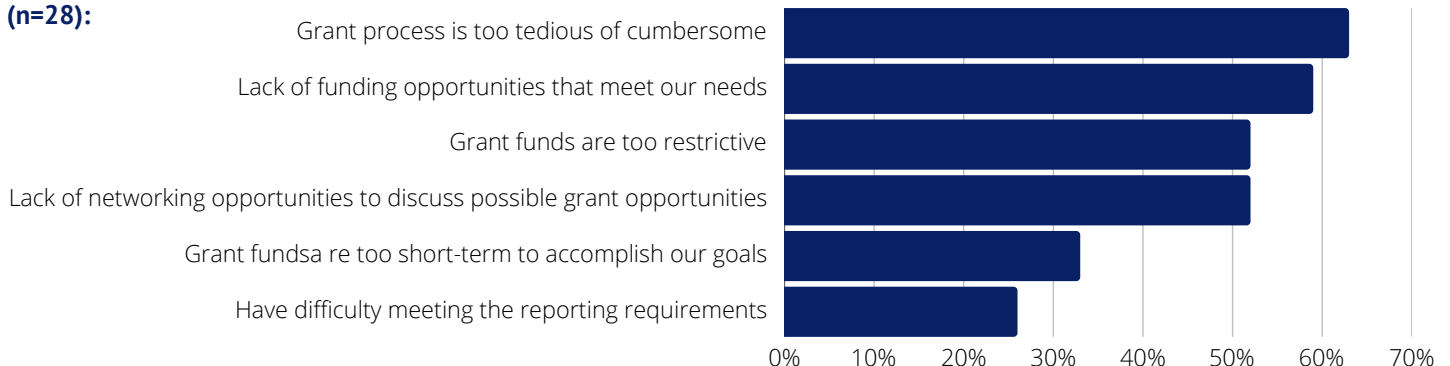
**Figure 1. Types of funding sources cited by respondents (n=26):**



## The survey results highlight a lack of stable funding across these organizations.

Of the 28 respondents, **75% of leaders** responded that they **do not have stable funding sources** that covers more than 50% of fiscal needs and over one quarter (29%) indicated their organization does not have enough money to make timely payments required for operation.

**Figure 2. Challenges and barriers faced when securing funding (n=28):**



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

When asked about the organization's board of directors, of the 29 respondents:

- 83% of organizations hold regular board meetings, with agendas agreed upon by the board chair and CEO/ED and recordings shared with relevant parties.
- **Almost 83% of organizations reported that their organization's board reflects their stakeholders and community** and 62% of organizational boards are made up of members with different areas of work and expertise.
- The majority of organizations (86%) have boards that have 10 or less members.
- Only about two-thirds (69%) of organizations reported that their board members are provided with written expectations of their roles upon joining the board.
- Only 48% of organizations reported having a well-developed support system to handle legal issues that may arise within the organization.



**The survey results highlight Black-led organizations in Austin have boards that represent the communities they serve but still need a stronger strategic foundation.**

### Strategic Plan

Most organizations (96%) reported having a strategic plan that was updated in the last 5 years or sooner. When asked about how strongly they disagreed or agreed with statements about their strategic plan, in general, responses showed a need further support to develop clear goals and measures with well-defined time frames.

## PROGRAM DESIGN & EVALUATION

### Program Alignment with Mission and Goals

When asked how strongly they disagreed or agreed, of the 28 respondents, the overwhelming majority of organizations (96%) strongly agreed or agreed that their organization's services and programs are aligned with the mission and goals of the organization.

### Program Evaluation

When asked about the evaluation of the organization's programs:

- Of the 29 respondents, 83% regularly assess their programs to determine the potential of expanding to meet additional needs.
- Of the 29 respondents, more than half of organizations (62%) indicated that their organizations have a set of key performance indicators and
- Of the 30 respondents, 60% are regularly reviewing progress reports on goals to guide decisions.



**The survey results highlight Black-led nonprofits are mission driven, however, they need data and evaluation support.**

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

When asked about about the organization's technological tools:

- Of the 29 respondents, an overwhelming majority of organizations have email, a high proportion have a website and internet access (89% and 82% respectively), 75% have telephone, and 25% have fax.
- Of the 28 respondents, 85% indicated they have internal systems for communication and collaboration.
- **Of the 28 respondents, a majority of organizations (79%) did not have systems for collecting and analyzing large volumes of data.**

## HUMAN RESOURCES

When asked about their organizational makeup:

- **Of the 29 respondents, 79% of respondents agreed their organization is made up of experienced leaders with a deep understanding of issues in their sector.**

When respondents were asked to describe strategies used to establish relationships and promote development within and outside their organization, of the 28 respondents, a majority mentioned collaboration, partnerships, or coalitions with other organizations and networking events as a strategy. Less than half of the organizations mentioned training, leadership training in particular, personal connections and building personal relationships, and mentoring or fellowship as a strategy. A few of respondents mentioned any online avenue, i.e. digital marketing, online community forums, website or social media as a strategy.



**The survey results highlight Black-led organizations in Austin are building TOGETHER.**

## MARKETING

When asked about marketing tools and strategies:

- Of the 29 respondents, 69% of organizations have marketing materials that are used consistently.
- **However, of the 28 respondents, most organizations (64%) do not produce an annual report.**
- Of the 29 respondents, 69% believe they have a clear sense of what their stakeholders value.
- Of the 29 respondents, 59% of organizations proactively work to influence policy-making in areas relevant to their mission.

### Strategic Partnerships

When asked about strategic partnerships, of the 29 respondents, the overwhelming majority 93% of organizations build partnerships with other groups or organizations to help fulfill their mission and goals.

When asked to describe the ways their organizations built partnerships, the methods identified include: connecting their audience to services provided by other organizations, partnering on an event, providing staffing or services for another organization, reaching out directly or establishing the relationship over time, attending events, promoting the work of other organizations, working on a project or grant together, through personal relationships, and as part of organizational alignment or participating in a collaborative.

## OUR EXPERIENCE MUST INFORM CHANGE: ADDRESSING UNMET NEEDS BY FUNCTIONAL AREA

### Financial Management and Development

- Provide technical assistance in creating strategic fundraising plans and written financial policies.
- Provide/fund detailed accounting systems and systems to protect financial data.
- Fully leverage board members for fundraising, shifting towards fundraising requirements.
- Give additional focus to planned giving programs as a potential funding source.

### Strategic Direction

- Recruit board members from different sectors and with different areas of expertise.
- Provide board members with clearly written expectations of their roles upon joining, such as time commitment and responsibilities.
- Provide more legal support to organizations.

### Program Design & Evaluation

- Provide technical assistance training on how to develop performance indicators and use data to track progress and help guide decision-making.

### Information Technology

- Provide/fund systems for collecting and analyzing large volumes of data.

### Human Resources

- Provide training and mentoring opportunities, which are particularly important as organizations grow.

### Marketing

- More organizational capacity to capture data and outcomes could help to increase the number of organizations that produce an annual report.





## LIVED- EXPERIENCE DATA & STORYTELLING

“We are committed to authentic relationship building over time. We be cultivating solid relationships means we act with integrity and follow through on our commitments. We do two programming focuses to build relationships, and create a path to economic sustainability for artists, creatives and entrepreneurs  
-Black-led Nonprofit Leader in Austin, TX

“Our main focus is on aid, relief, and community care. We collaborate with other organizations to create assessments that gauge our communities needs in order to put funds directly into Black and Brown Trans peoples hands.

- Black-led Nonprofit Leader in Austin, TX

our experience  
makes us

# EXPERTS



## DISCUSSION

Pushing for change in the nonprofit space begins having a Board of Directors that understand the complex issues the organization is solving. While we've seen studies that have shown a lack of board diversity, Black-led nonprofits in Austin maintain boards that reflect their population served (5).

Nonprofits should embrace evaluation as a means of showing the difference the nonprofit is making.

Why is it important to create metrics for evaluation?

- Create community-based expectations that direction of the organization
- Provide focus for an organization
- Keep the organization accountable to serving the community
- Help the organization raise awareness and funding
- Challenge what we believe is acceptable in performance measurement (Shifting from just the quantitative approach to include a qualitative approach)
- Influence policy, behavior and helps to align world changing efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Historically and structurally, philanthropy has underfunded Black-led organizations in Austin, TX. Through this survey partnership, the Black Leaders Collective and MEASURE centered racial equity by elevating the voices of Black-led nonprofits. This survey revealed that Black-led nonprofits in Austin are mission-driven and are working to address complex issues in their communities. Black-led nonprofits deal with challenges with identifying proper metrics and need more data and evaluation support. The collection of quality data can help these organizations strategize more creatively and efficiently, which can help bolster and expand their impact. As part of a more significant effort, we hope philanthropists and other organizations that provide capacity-building support, use this Black Paper to understand the needs and priorities of local Black-led organizations and to mobilize resources to support them.

Sources:

5. Lauren Azevedo, Tia Sherèe Gaynor, Kyra Shelby, Genesis Santos, The complexity of diversity and importance for equitable philanthropy, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, (2020). 10.1002/nml.21448, 31, 3, (595-607),