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AIDS Foundation Chicago



**AIDS
FOUNDATION
CHICAGO**

Racial Equity Assessment Report

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Mortén Group

PREPARED BY
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INTRODUCTION

In September of 2020, AIDS Foundation Chicago (also referred to as AFC in this report) partnered with Morten Group, LLC to co-facilitate an organization-wide, participatory assessment of knowledge, experiences and opinions related to racial equity (RE) strategies, policies and next steps. Morten Group would then present these findings and guide organizational leadership and staff through RE strategies and policies.

This report contains a description and analysis of the data collected through anonymously completed surveys with AFC staff, Board, and other stakeholders.

DATA METHODOLOGY

Morten Group employs two major philosophies: a participatory action model for data collection and an asset-based model for data analysis for all diversity, racial equity, and inclusion analysis.

“Participatory action” refers to the collection of the data through multifaceted engagement of a variety of stakeholders invested in the assessment process. A participatory action model is vital for this type of project, as it is the best model through which to understand the opinions and experiences of many different stakeholders at multiple levels.

To aid in the accurate analysis of the collected data, Morten Group staff also used filtering tools to parse data and look specifically at different stakeholders’ opinions and experiences based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, role, and length of tenure at the organization. This information is then able to be compared and contrasted to general survey results as a check to ensure that all feedback is shared in a robust, thorough, and inclusive way.

“Asset-based” refers to a method of analysis emphasizing the strengths and assets of an organization. Instead of working from a standpoint of “weaknesses,” asset-based analysis operates on the assumption that the opposite of a strength (or asset) is a need, or challenge – defining the path forward not as a series of flaws in opposition to the “right” thing, but rather as the normal issues that arise over the course of an organization’s lifetime. These can be reassessed and reimagined for continuous, sustainable growth. This model also works to utilize current strengths to address identified needs, thus presenting a more holistic approach to the assessment process overall.

To compile this assessment Morten Group used a survey data collection tool. The survey was used to develop a more comprehensive picture of AIDS Foundation Chicago’s current understanding and approach to racial

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equity from the perspective of key stakeholders at the organization. A total of **195** stakeholder responses were collected for analysis and inclusion in this report.

Morten Group’s research team, including staff experienced in survey design and guidelines for ethical data collection, worked with AIDS Foundation Chicago leadership to support the development of the survey and interview tools. During data analysis, Morten Group analyzed the interviews and surveys separately to support evaluation best practices, though many recurring themes appear across both data collection vehicles. The data collection for this assessment was conducted over the month of November 2020.

Near the end of each data report (survey and interviews), stakeholder feedback and key themes emerging from the interview and survey processes are shared as potential next steps and training ideas.

AIDS FOUNDATION CHICAGO RACIAL EQUITY SURVEY ANALYSIS

Over a three-week period, a total of 195 surveys were submitted online, with a 62% full completion rate. Survey takers ranged widely in age (from 22 to the mid-70s), with the majority (66%) concentrated in the 20s, 30s and 40s age groups. Over 50% of all AIDS Foundation Chicago survey takers self-identify as people of color, with 46% self-identifying as white or Caucasian. Please see the section below for other general demographic data of AIDS Foundation Chicago community survey takers.

Survey Demographics

It is important to note that all survey takers self-identified and selected their responses for each question. AFC survey participants submitted the tool anonymously. All quoted phrases in the report are unedited statements and are incorporated into this report to highlight trends to note or themes. In some cases, words or phrases might be marked out to protect the anonymity of stakeholders.

Key Stakeholders taking the survey represented all levels of the organization’s structure: Board, C-Suite, leadership, directors, managers and professionals at multiple levels, associates, and others who chose “Other – Write-in” as their response. The largest grouping of participants self-identified at the managerial (21%) or associate/coordinator level (20%).

Staff/Stakeholder Level	Percentage
AFC or CHH Board of Directors	15%
Vice President, Senior Vice President, or C-Suite	7%

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Director or Senior Director	11%
Manager or Senior Manager	21%
Professional or Senior Professional	14%
Associate or Coordinator	20%
Other - Write In (Required)	12.4%

Over 59% of survey takers have worked at AIDS Foundation Chicago for three or fewer years, with 15% working 11 or more years. When controlling for race/ethnicity these percentages shift a bit – survey takers who indicate they are African American or Latinx were more likely to be newer to the AFC. LGBTQ survey takers were slightly more likely to have worked longer at the foundation.

When invited to describe their gender identity, the majority of respondents (58%) were female, while 31% identified as male. Over 6% percent of survey takers identify as trans female or gender nonbinary. Respondents who preferred not to answer comprised 5% of survey takers. When reviewing the data via race/ethnicity, analysis revealed that there are slightly more African American and Latina women completing the tool than men of the same groups.

Gender Identity	Percentage
Female	57.7%
Male	30.9%
Gender nonbinary/expansive	4.6%
Trans female	1.7%
Prefer not to answer	5.1%

While the majority of AIDS Foundation Chicago participants self-described their sexual orientation as heterosexual (57%), the LGBTQIA community is also widely represented, with 23% identifying as gay, 11% as queer, and 4.5% as lesbian. The stakeholders also included asexual, pansexual and bisexual folks. About 6% preferred not to answer the question on sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation	Percentage
Asexual	1.1%
Bisexual	3.9%
Gay	23.0%
Heterosexual or straight	57.3%

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Lesbian	4.5%
Pansexual	3.4%
Queer	10.7%
Prefer not to answer	6.2%

When asked, “*How often do you attend religious or worship services, not including weddings or funerals?*” the majority (57%) indicated that they never or seldom attend. About 15% of survey participants attend services at least once a month or more. Most responses self-identified as a member of one of the three largest faith groups – Christian (UCC, Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and other denominations), Jewish, or Muslim. Additional belief systems listed included agnostic, pagan, spiritual and more.

Survey takers were asked to “*indicate if [they] experience health challenges, including but not limited to physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and anything that impacts health.*” While the majority (46%) indicated that they do not have any challenges at this time, 37% reported experiencing health challenges occasionally and 17% face these issues often.

Personal Knowledge of Racial Equity at AIDS Foundation Chicago

Next, AFC survey participants characterized their own knowledge of issues related to racial equity (referring to the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.)

When asked to characterize their own knowledge related to racial equity on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most knowledgeable), the majority of survey takers at AFC (55%) self-identified as having an intermediate (5-7) knowledge of the term.

When asked how well members understand the term on a scale from 1-10, 37% shared they were proficient (between 7-10). Fifty-five percent of the general group rated themselves between a 4 and 6 (foundational to intermediate). Only 10 of 132 survey takers answering this query rated themselves a 4 or below.

Large numbers of respondents were able to apply examples and well-developed phrases, as seen in the selected quotes near the end of this section. When asked to explain their rating, large numbers of the survey respondents cited that they were involved in continual learning: workshops, reading, films, panels, graduate studies, and self-improvement work that was always expanding their knowledge of racial inequity. A number of these quotes also highlighted that the learning is never done. A few acknowledged the need for more discussions or that their only experience with the topic was statistical reports.

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When filtering by race and ethnicity, larger numbers of white people expressed this as an area for growth than people of color (also referred to as BIPOC) at the foundation.

Academic/Formal Learning via Workshops or Trainings

- *“I have been to a number of trainings, conferences and so on about racial equity, read 2-3 books, and had multiple conversations.”*
- *“I have learned a great deal in a relatively short time through workshops, reading, attending/listening to panels. However, as a white person, I have still so much to learn and, obviously, no lived experience.”*
- *“AFC has provided a number of trainings including ‘undoing racism’ and ‘unconscious bias,’ along with continued discussions with my team and messages from the CEO have helped me become more knowledgeable and aware of issues.”*

Lived Intersectional Experiences

- *“As a [BIPOC] individual, I have been discussing and understanding race and its role in my ability to navigate the world academically, professionally, and in a personal sense. While I do carry privilege in the sense of the way I appear based off of my skin color, I do still experience many issues and barriers around my racial identity.”*
- *“I am a [BIPOC]. Racial equity, or lack thereof, is directly tied to my lived experience.”*
- *“I chose the rating because I know that the world views and treats me and people who look like me differently based solely on that. I have always known the disparity. As a child, the adults instruct you how to behave around people that are not of color and as an adult, I instinctively or automatically act in an altered state to reduce those perceptions.”*

Open/Wanting to Learn More

- *“I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of race equity and barriers to achieving race equity. As a white person, I think I still have much to learn especially in regards to healthy solutions that would help bring about race equity.”*
- *“Though I identify as POC, I know I have much to learn about others' perspectives, lived-experiences, trauma, etc that will better inform my knowledge.”*
- *“I think I have a lot to learn and that I'm not aware of all the areas that this covers”*
- *“I have only baseline knowledge of the history of slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining, etc. I think I could go deeper.”*

AFC Specifically Mentioned

- *“AFC has done a fantastic job providing trainings and opportunities to discuss race equity, undoing racism, ableism.”*

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- *“Through AFC and my own pursuits, I have learned a great deal about racial equity and justice, including the history of white supremacy culture in the U.S., the experiences of people who are the target of racism, my own complicity in racist structures and systems, and paths toward achieving true racial equity individually, collectively, and systematically.”*
- *“I’ve become more racially aware since working at AFC, but I feel as if I have a long way to go to more fully understand issues connected to racial equity, especially as a white person.”*

AFC’s Relationship to Racial Equity

When asked to describe how AFC discusses, explores or applies the concept of racial equity at the organizational level the responses ranged greatly. The majority of survey takers across all groups were able to point to specific ways that racial equity is routinely discussed and in what formats and forums at AIDS Foundation Chicago. It is important to note that of the total responses (124), over 20% (27) responded with “I don’t know”, “I’m not sure”, some verbiage about being a recent hire, or “NA.” The following list indicates where racial equity is discussed at the foundation per the survey takers:

- Small group discussions
- Workshops, specifically the Undoing Racism Workshop and Unconscious Bias
- Racial Healing Circles
- Meetings
- Seminars/Webinars
- Race and Social Justice Committee
- Surveys

In addition to talking about areas where AFC builds understanding and knowledge about racial equity work, about 30% of survey respondents shared examples of events/places where they felt AFC was taking concrete steps and or engaged in practice. Some examples of implementation include:

- Integrated into the foundation mission and organizational goals;
- An intentional part of the strategic plan;
- Seen in HR policies and practices (also several mentioned workshops);
- Having POC on the board; and
- Naming racism as a roadblock to health equity/public health crisis.

Staff and Board Culture Around Racial Equity at AFC

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Survey-takers across all stakeholder and demographic types shared both strengths and constructive critique about the culture around racial equity (RE) via an open-ended response section.

Though the majority of this feedback (149) focused more on opportunities for improvement, more than 50 strengths-focused responses were gleaned when developing themes for this project. Areas of strength included: incorporating RE into staff meetings, trainings and workshops; the “Yammer” staff forum; diversity among front line (and some middle management) personnel; the reality that many people want to learn/discuss/engage around the issue; an effort to hire within a lens of racial equity and other DEI principles, and; developing learning spaces where people of color lead/facilitate the conversation.

When writing about areas of improvement for AIDS Foundation Chicago’s racial equity efforts, key themes emerged around several areas including:

- Needing to move beyond discussions and produce outcomes – 42% (62);
- Concerns about majority White leadership / calling for more diversity in senior leadership – 21% (31)
- Equitable pay for direct-service staff – 18% (27)

Stakeholders across all demographics and position levels at AFC shared that while racial equity is talked about at the organization, there are some issues that require attention.

Comments relating to “*AFC needing less talk and more action,*” were regularly shared. There was concern expressed that “*AFC was diverse externally but not internally,*” articulating a feeling voiced by a significant number of folks that, while the topic of RE is raised by the organization, implementation is incredibly slow and often staff feel excluded from updates or conversations related to that work. According to a number of respondents, racial equity is still not reflected in hiring practices or through transparency in how decisions are made. Lastly, a large number of participants expressed that equitable pay was a central equity issue in their experience at AFC. Though not a dominant theme, it should be noted that five survey takers felt that the impact of some of the racial equity discussions are painful or emotionally exhausting for BIPOCs. The following quotes highlight feedback from the open responses:

Moving Beyond Discussion Into Action and Outcomes

- *“The intention to address race equity is there, especially after everything that's happened in 2020, I have no doubt about that. I do think that many folks - in SLT, on the Board, and throughout the organization at all levels - don't fully understand how much things have to change to really center race equity, in our organization and in our work. And based on some behaviors and reactions that I've observed in these conversations, I know we have work to do with our organizational leadership and Board, at minimum, to match the intention with actual will and outcomes we're looking for.”*

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- *“We also have done a survey like this before where the results were presented at an all-staff meeting and it took months before senior leadership presented action items. I hope this survey doesn't make the staff feel as siloed as the previous one did.”*
- *“It is not enough to add numbers of POC to the Board and Sr. Leadership if they have no real power. Policies and procedures need to also consider incentives and paths for professional growth, if a staff member (especially POC) wants it.”*

Majority White Leadership/Strategies to Hire More Diverse Group of Senior Leaders

- *“Firstly, I would say that I think the senior leadership team may better instill confidence in their abilities to address racial equity at AFC if it were more diverse than it is now. Many members on the team do a great job of stepping up and stepping back and of identifying areas of improvement, however, I think that many other staff members at AFC may not be satisfied until the team is more diversified...”*
- *“Within AFC Senior Leadership, six out of nine folks are white. Race-related issues seem to have always been an issue that AFC is afraid to speak openly about - which is a reflection of too many white folks at the table. AFC is a wonderful company but far too dominated and directed by Senior Leadership and a Human Resource team that is not robust and has far too great a voice in hiring decisions and promotion decisions.”*

Equitable Pay

- *“I deeply believe that you cannot address racial equity without addressing economic equity. I think AFC is addressing this through the compensation study. I don't have enough insight how/when this was accomplished.”*
- *“I think AFC should consider raising its salary for direct service staff, as many of these staff members are people of color, and predominantly Black.”*
- *“For leadership, are we helping to close education and wealth gaps by providing development opportunities & promoting staff of color? Proportionally, who is doing the grunt work at the agency and are they compensated fairly for it (NOT just fairly as compared to other orgs)?*
- *“There is some sense of cultural literacy however, I think that there are topics of interest like lack of compensation that are overlooked. I do believe that compensation is connected to racial equity.”*

A majority of respondents (142) also provided feedback on AFC's external work with clients and those served in relation to racial equity, discussing what works well and where they see areas of growth. Overall, 65% of survey-takers (93) reported feeling satisfied with the current external work with clients. The staff driving that community-based work were described in multiple areas of the survey as “dedicated” and “a strength of the organization.” Some respondents felt that the programs target the populations that are in most need of services and that staff reflect the clients they serve. One survey participant wrote that because the staff reflected the communities they serve they are more willing to approach the work with a “lens of empowerment rather than a savior complex.”

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Two core areas of improvement included representation (41%) and partnerships (50%), both focusing on increasing opportunities for BIPOC. It is also important to note that a number of survey respondents did not feel comfortable assessing this area of the organization's work, writing that they did not have direct experience. Quotes representing the core themes are shared below.

What Works Well (Satisfaction with Current External Work)

- *"AFC is very intentional with the services that they provide and the way in which they provide them. AFC adheres to what the client needs at the moment and is very flexible with the delivery of services."*
- *"I personally think that where AFC strives is putting our clients and the communities we serve at the forefront of our mission to achieve racial equity. We relentlessly advocate for marginalized populations, appropriately direct a majority of funding and services towards communities of color, and strive to be inclusive and motivate all others to join in the fight for racial equity."*
- *"I think we are excelling in this area. We recently re-did our RFP process for funding and re-evaluated which organizations were receiving grant money from us. We added several smaller community agencies that are doing fantastic work with specific populations. I think our programs and services really showcase AFC's commitment to health equity and justice."*

Room to Grow: Representation

- *"What works well is having employees within AFC that represent these communities to bring insight as to how to approach these communities with a lens on empowerment rather than savior complex. What needs improvement is allowing for growth and job opportunities for members of the community we serve without tokenization."*
- *"We have staff at AFC that are so passionate about the work & providing expert care to clients. That being said, they don't always represent the population they serve and I think that's a problem."*
- *"Area for improvement is having staff that also speak the language of the clients."*

Room to Grow: Partnerships

- *"I think that our work with subcontracted agencies can improve if agencies that score a low number for the year get more support. The focus should be on improving and creating room for other organizations to improve, especially in communities of color where funding is not heavily distributed like the northside."*
- *"I think there is effort to bring smaller POC-led organizations to the table and authentically engage them in the work. I think AFC is still defining what success looks like with clear metrics."*
- *"Opportunities for improvement includes providing additional general operating funding to agencies on the south and west sides of Chicago. Investing in the communities so that boutique clinics can be built just like in the loop and north side."*

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Questions from Stakeholders

When participants were asked what questions they have regarding racial equity at AFC, 138 people responded. Many of the feedback questions that were around actionable steps internal to AFC. This includes addressing pay equity, moving decisively on racial equity plans, and the lack of diversity and inclusion in the leadership team. As expressed powerfully by one respondent, *“Compared to other places I've worked, AFC is much more aware of racial issues and discusses them more openly. However, in terms of leadership, it is still largely composed of mostly white men and promotions rarely seem to happen to women or POC. From chatting with coworkers of color, they also do not seem satisfied with how they are treated at AFC.”*

Questions varied widely, with the following key themes emerging:

- How to proceed after training and tools have been given
- How to promote more BIPOC into leadership positions/diversify the leadership team
- How to diversify the Board with people from a lower income bracket
- How to assure adequate compensation/lack of exploitation for BIPOC people – especially women of color
- What can white people at AFC do to take the pressure off of BIPOC people to undo racism?
- What can AFC do to hold partners and funders accountable for systemic racism?
- What can AFC do to increase transparency around professional growth/ compensation?
- When will antiracism trainings be required for all staff, board and newly onboarded staff?
- Can we take some of our resources to help dismantle systemic racism with our partners?

Example quotes highlighting these themes are below:

Action and Outcomes

- *“What are the action steps? What are realistic expectations for ‘improvement’ and ‘change’ when it comes to racial equity, internal to AFC as an organization (not related to our work) once the plan is done, in the first few years (say years 1-3)?”*
- *“How are we preparing to address and make room for the many intersections within racial equity, so that it doesn't feel like a cheap, blanketed statement?”*
- *“I'd like to hear some clear direction on what the measurable goals are related to racial equity.”*

Need for Diverse Leadership and Equitable Compensation

- *“What is the plan for creating a pipeline for Black people and people of color to advance up the ranks at AFC into leadership positions? Do we have one? What does or could that look like?”*

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- *“What sources are used to identify candidates for position openings. How do salary amounts compare across AFC for women and BIPOC versus white counterparts?”*
- *“When will BIPOC be given the same opportunities as white folks for upward mobility or promotions? When will BIPOC be fairly compensated?”*

In their assessment about what is working well and where there is room for improvement in AFC’s racial equity work, respondents rated on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the best) how AFC handles diversity in the core area of racial and ethnic identity- defined as “an individual’s awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that individuals choose to describe themselves based on factors such as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.” An overwhelming majority of the 126 survey respondents rated AFCs work in this area as intermediate (53%) or proficient (37%). Only 12 of 126 people (<10%) answering the question rated the organization a 4 or below. When filtering by demographic or stakeholder type there was little difference from the general (full) output.

When asked if their rating in response to the previous question would be the same for all levels of AFC, 54 stakeholders responded with a “no” and 32 with a “yes” response before expounding on their opinions. Additionally, more than 20 survey respondents stated that they were “unsure” or “didn’t know.” Those selecting “no” cited power/position balance issues between direct staff and some in leadership, having a lack of diversity/intersectionality at the decision-making table, and a continued theme of mostly white and male senior leaders and Board Directors compared to mostly intersectional BIPOC in direct service and middle management positions. It should be noted that in this and other sections of the survey stakeholders explained that in their opinion this trend must improve in order to properly address racial equity internal to AIDS Foundation Chicago.

Quotes that highlight “No” responses

- *“There is a noticeable difference in races in different levels of the organization and in speaking with colleagues of color I do not think they feel supported or listened to by higher ups at the organization.”*
- *“‘Ground level’ staff is much more focused on fostering healthy discussions and employment of racial and ethnic diversity. Non-leadership staff are often the people within AFC who bring up efforts to improve racial and ethnic diversity and related issues.”*
- *“I don’t think that everyone at AFC is invested in the issue or fully understand how their positionality impacts the conversation. For example, you will at times have a white gay man or cisgender white woman who are part of senior leadership engage direct services staff of color (lowest paid tiers) on arguments via Yammer on race and social issues as though they are all impacted equally. At times during these lengthy and heated discussions, the white counterparts will take it upon themselves to whitesplain the problems to people of color and defensively attack them when their comments portray the organization negatively.”*

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- *“From organizational leadership and Board, we have heard multiple times comments stating that they do NOT believe that our work as direct-client-working-staff is as important as other administrative work positions like the data teams. It also happens to be that us as direct-client-working-staff are the most racially diverse staff and the higher up positions that are valued more are the least racially diverse staff in the organization.”*

Quotes that highlight “Yes” responses

- *“Management and staff seem to have their finger on that pulse. Especially through recruitment of diversity for both staff and board.”*
- *“I do feel that AFC leadership is consistent with messaging and executing on initiatives to make AFC inclusive and diverse. I did not give a 10 based on comments I heard from staff (of color) in training I took.”*
- *“Yes, as I mentioned in the prior section, AFC has struggled with lack of representation at upper levels. Thankfully, I think steps have been taken recently to improve this, but there is more work to do.”*

Welcoming Environment at AFC

A welcoming environment was described by participants as one where there is representation of diverse identities in all roles, primarily in leadership (39), a place that celebrates all identities, especially Black, Indigenous, people of color and trans people (38), and, finally, a brave space to be their authentic selves (28). Words and phrases used most often to describe what a welcoming environment looks like by AFC survey completers include:

Respectful, open, accessible, sense of community, belonging, respect, humility, compassion, treating everyone the same, inclusive, empowering, common sense of purpose and fulfillment, spaces for truth, reconciliation and healing, no judgments, happiness, smiling, lots of snacks, friendly, willingness to help one another, professional, and courteous.

Feedback in this section was extremely diverse. Some that felt that a welcoming environment was created by social events and cultural celebrations (112) that were inclusive of more people’s religions and cultural backgrounds. There were also 94 respondents who named specific policies and procedures that they felt were needed to have a truly welcoming environment. Examples of these include:

- Flexibility in hours/vacation/sick time to show value for working families and people with mental/physical health needs
- Clear process outlined for harassment or mistreatment due to race/gender/physical ability
- Zero tolerance for racism with an oops ouch framework to address harms

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Finally, 48 survey respondents across the organization felt that welcoming was equated with representation of all levels of the organization and opportunities for advancement for all staff. Examples of these include:

- Equal representation of all races, religions, sexual orientation, sexual identities, acknowledging pronouns
- Professional development and possibilities of upward mobility for everyone (esp. for BIPOC), providing skills and training in advance, pay rates and increases fair across teams
- Senior leadership is reflective of populations served

Quotes highlighting survey takers' feedback are shared below:

Support and Respect

- *"One that would be professional and courteous to all employees, regardless of position, race or color."*
- *"A welcoming environment at AFC looks like accepting and welcoming each new staff/client as a contributing member toward the organizational and personal goals. Being trusted to utilize our unique experiences and insights to contribute to the overall team and mission in general."*
- *"An environment that is comfortable, inclusive, empowering. Where staff are encouraged to express themselves fully and where other staff are supportive of that."*

Diverse Leadership and Opportunities for Growth

- *"A welcoming environment would be what we have now, plus way more people that reflect our priority populations (Black and Latinx people) at the Director and above levels (especially within SLT)."*
- *"Considering that I am a person of color. I would like to see more people who look like me. This would include staff on the same level as me as well as supervisors/managers."*
- *"Seeing myself represented in various roles throughout the organization, especially leadership roles...when I first started at AFC, I met with all of the senior leadership team individually and many of them are a) white and b) have experienced upward mobility at AFC. I know that this is not the experience of most BIPOC in the organization, though. That kind of environment makes it hard to stay motivated. So, I envision a welcoming environment would be one where opportunities for professional development, promotions and mobility are all encouraged and made available to all staff."*

Representation

- *"From a Board level, a welcoming environment looks like a younger and more racially diverse Board. Including folks who will voluntarily step down to make room for more contemporary leadership approaches and perspectives."*
- *"People entering the environment see themselves reflected in the staff and images, etc."*

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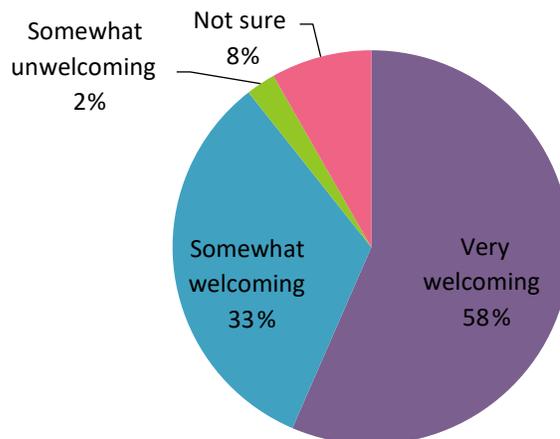
- *“An organization where new staff feels seen and embraced and not ignored by people in leadership positions because that is not someone I work with. An organization where the team looks for racial equity at all levels of a project. An organization that allows everyone a seat at the table and not only those who are well connected with friends in positions of power. An organization that genuinely creates opportunities for growth and seeks to hire internal candidates before searching for talent outside the organization.”*

Brave Space

- *“All staff would feel comfortable around each other. When biases or microaggressions are expressed they would be identified and discussed openly. All staff would be comfortable no matter their religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, etc. Staff would also educate one another and work specifically towards understanding race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. A welcoming environment isn't a utopia, it is a place where everyone is treated with respect and when interpersonal issues come up they are dealt with respect and understanding.”*
- *“A welcoming environment at AFC looks like assessing individual needs for all, accepting people as themselves, and providing opportunities for everyone to contribute and advance. It also includes that everyone is equally treated and greeted.”*
- *“It would be an environment where there is acknowledgement that what happens outside of AFC impacts our staff, clients and partners and that space is made and action is taken to address these impacts and that people can bring their whole selves to the work without penalty.”*

General, BIPOC, and LGBTQ Feedback on Racial Equity at AFC

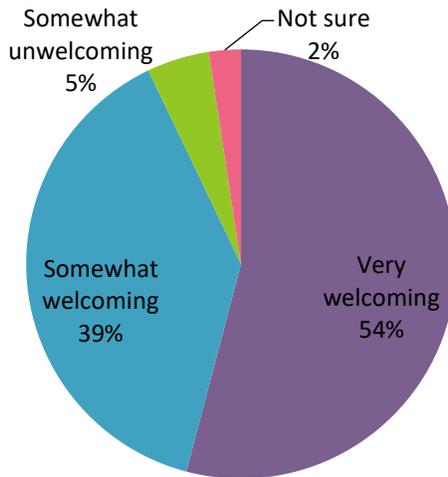
When asked “To what extent are most staff at AFC welcoming to those participating in AFC programming?”, the vast majority (over 89%) selected “very” or “somewhat welcoming” while about 2% chose “somewhat unwelcoming.”



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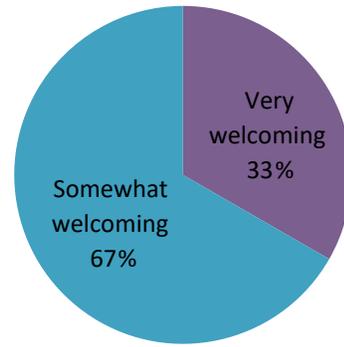
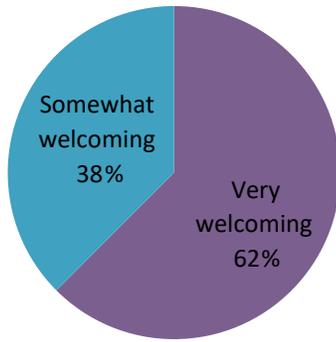
When filtering for race/ethnicity, 5% of BIPOC identifying respondents selected “somewhat unwelcoming” and 12% are not sure.

Like the question above, the majority of AFC survey takers (54%) feel that staff are “very welcoming” to other staff, with 39% selecting “somewhat welcoming” and 5% selecting “somewhat unwelcoming.” The percent of BIPOC survey takers selecting “somewhat unwelcoming” nearly doubles to 9% when reviewing additional reports.

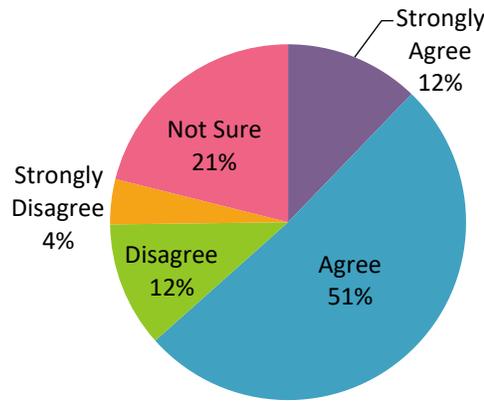


Respondents shared that most Board members at AFC are “very welcoming” (62%) or “somewhat welcoming” (38%) to other Board members (left graph below). It is interesting to note that the percentages flip when analyzing BIPOC only surveys (right graph below).

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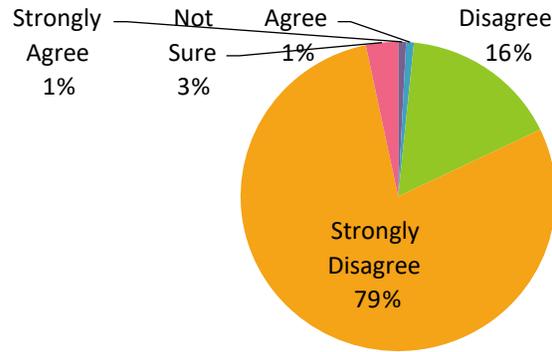


When asked if “Staff members who hold diverse identities are provided with the resources they need to be successful in their roles at AFC,” the majority of general survey takers (63%) either agreed or strongly agreed. A large group (21%) are not sure, and tend to be new to AFC (employed 1 year or less). When comparing BIPOC survey data to the general group, a large percentage (57%) agreed or strongly agreed with this question, with 21% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

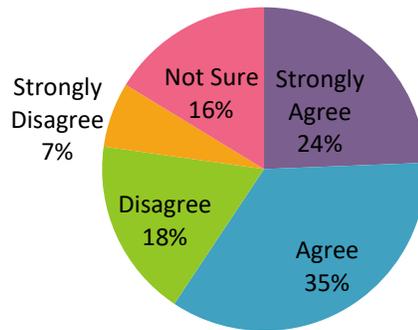


An extremely large percentage (95%) of total survey completers disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “At AFC, I have felt pressure from others not to interact with people of a racial or ethnic identity different from my own.” This number shifts a bit when filtering by race/ethnicity. Twenty-two percent of BIPOCs disagreed with the statement and 78% strongly disagreed. No person of color agreed, strongly agreed or were not sure about this question.

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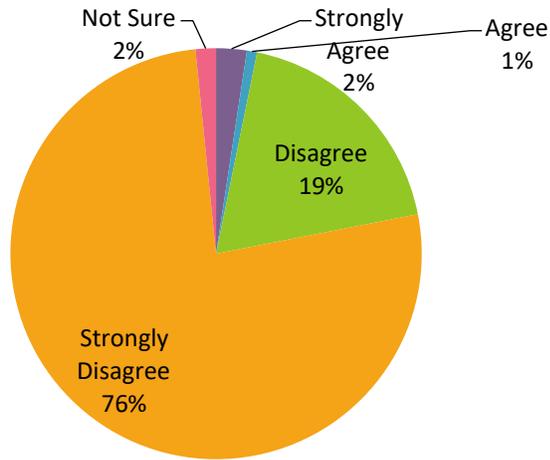


While 59% of all general survey takers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I have been encouraged by others to interact with people of socioeconomic backgrounds different from my own"* at AFC, a significant percentage (25%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. These percentage breakdowns remained similar when filtering for race/ethnicity, staff position, and gender identity.

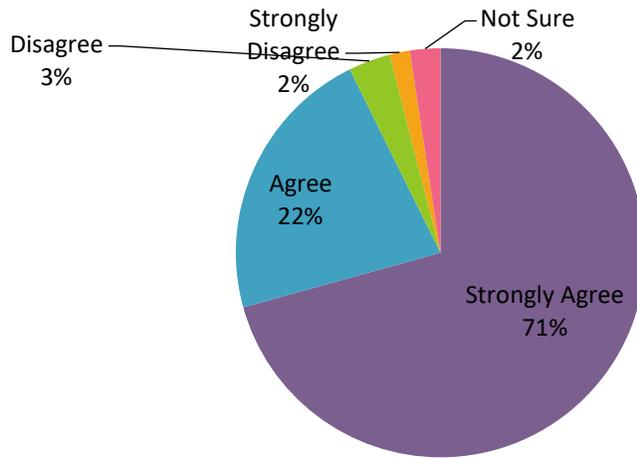


Ninety-five percent of the general survey population disagreed or strongly disagreed with the sentence, *"At AFC, I have felt pressure from others not to interact with people of a different sexual orientation than my own."* Both the filtered BIPOC survey report and the survey highlighting LGBTQ survey responses had similar percentages.

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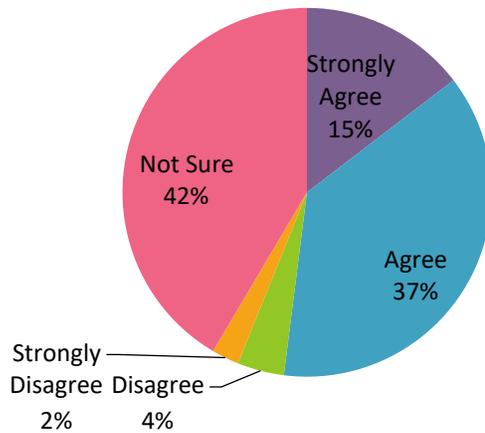


Another large percentage (93%) of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that *“It is important that the diversity of our Board reflect the demographic diversity of AFC clients.”* Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (5%) tended to be older, and none identified as being a front line or middle management staff. BIPOC surveys takers were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree (96%) with the statement LGBTQ folks indicated (94%).

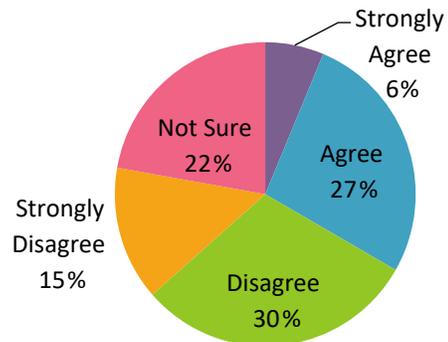
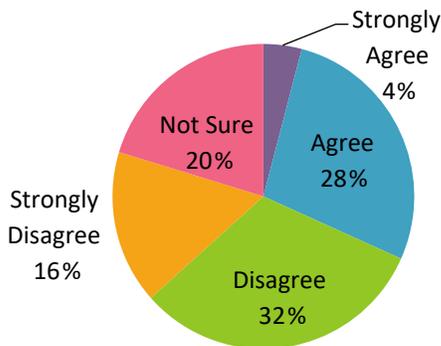


When asked whether *“The AFC Board addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion in its membership and decision-making processes, a majority of general survey takers,”* 52% agreed or strongly agreed; 42% were not sure and 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Review of additional filtered reports did not reveal significantly different results.

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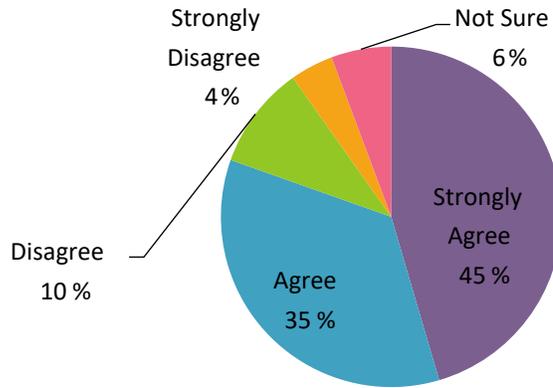


While 32% agreed or strongly agreed that "Racism is a problem at AFC," 48% of the general population disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 20% of survey takers reporting that they are not sure (left below). Worth noting is that when filtering by race/ethnicity (right below), a similar percentage (33%) of BIPOC agreed/strongly agreed while a slightly lower percentage (45%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question. The filtered LGBTQ surveys show that 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed.



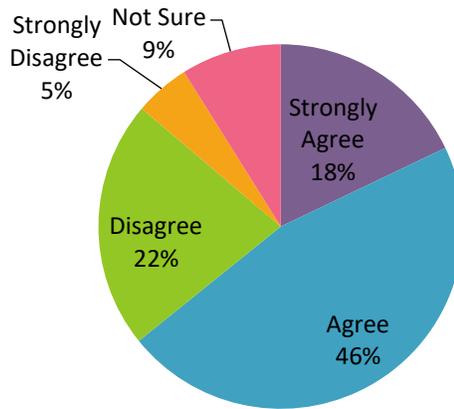
Though the majority (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I would feel comfortable openly expressing discomfort with racist jokes or statements made by others at AFC, if I heard them," 20% of the total survey takers were either not sure or disagreed/strongly disagreed.

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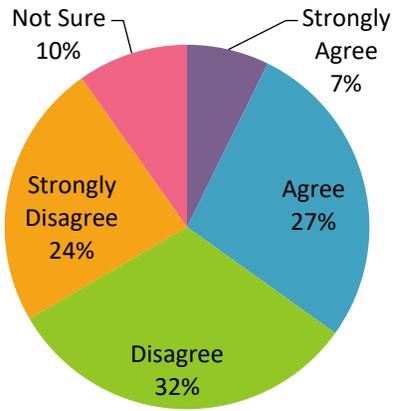
Comparatively, 15% of people of color disagreed/strongly disagreed with the question, with 8% not sure. Fourteen percent of LGBTQ folks disagreed/strongly disagreed, with 2% not sure.

While the majority of respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that *“AFC is clear in its creation of racial equity policies, procedures, and long-term goals,”* a significant percentage (27%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Another 9% were unsure. 68% of People identifying as LGBTQ agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. When filtering by race/ethnicity, 56% of BIPOC agreed or strongly agreed.

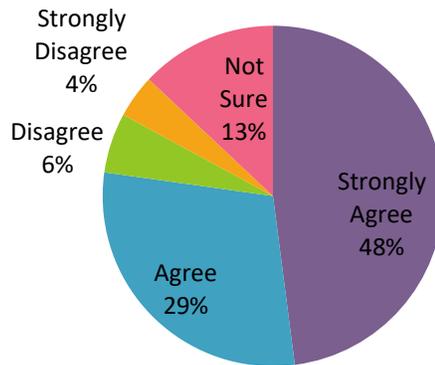


When presented the statement, *“AFC is not clear in its implementation of racial equity policies, procedures, and long-term goals,”* 10% of survey participants were not sure, 34% agreed or strongly agreed, and 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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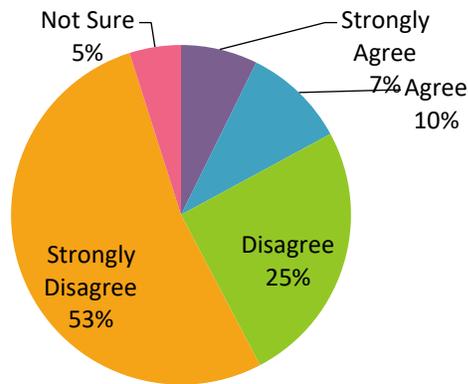


Though a small percentage, it is extremely important to note that **10% of survey participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “If I were to experience racial harassment or discrimination at AFC, I would feel comfortable reporting it to a supervisor, HR representative, etc.”** Another 13% were not sure. A large majority of the general group – 77% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Amongst LGBTQ survey takers the percent of those disagreeing, strongly disagreeing, or not sure of the statement is similar (20%). For BIPOC, the merged percent of these three responses is 23%, like the general sample.

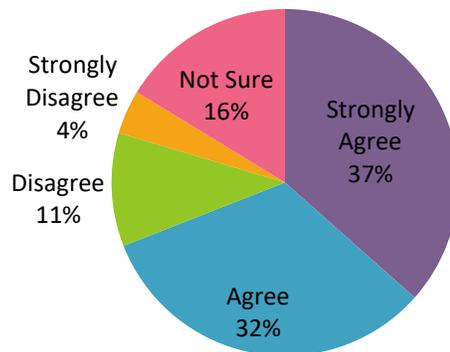


While 17% of total participants agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “If I were to witness (see and/or hear) racial harassment or discrimination at AFC, I would not feel comfortable reporting it to a supervisor, HR representative, etc.,” the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed (78%). Five percent are not sure. Other filtered surveys yielded similar results.

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Of those surveyed, 69% agreed or strongly agreed that if they were to report racial harassment or discrimination within my role at AFC, [they are] confident that the organization would respond to it appropriately," while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixteen percent were not sure. Filtered responses were similar, with the same percentage for BIPOC and LGBTQ folks slightly more like to agree/strongly agree than the general sample (74%).



When asked what topics or areas should be included in a successful Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) responses fell into three major categories highlighted in gray below. Each category includes response counts highlighting the theme and related quotes.

Organizational REAP should reflect the population that AFC serves from the top down, be inclusive to the entire AIDS Foundation Chicago community and look intentionally at the roles that different intersectional people play in the process (37).

- "One that is co-created by community!"
- "Topics to include: what would happen if I reported racial harassment at AFC? How is racial harassment dealt with at AFC? What is the pipeline plan for recruiting and advancing Black and people of color at AFC? What is the role for white people in racial equity at AFC? What overall does AFC want to accomplish in terms of racial equity? What would success look like?"

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- *“I think the plan should be measurable, held accountable, and continuously revisited every year (or more than a few times a year). Topics should include background on racial equity, case studies, maybe examples or best practices of organizations that have a REAP.”*
- *“Some ideas: Review grant making portfolio for inequities; Review programming for balance of black led community support; Review staffing and leadership promotion process; Host continued mixers with staff, AB and Board on DEI so we can work through it together.”*

The REAP should examine outreach/hiring/recruiting of diverse staff at all levels and the board of directors at AFC (17).

- *“REAP should address: staff and board recruitment and representation; Racial equity goals, vision, objectives, timeline; Intentional targets for improvement; Performance metrics; The plan must be enterprise wide and outline key goals and desired outcomes for every business unit, every individual staff member, and across the Board.”*
- *“It should certainly deal with hidden bias among Board, senior staff, and managers. Potential board members are asked about fundraising prowess; it should be made clear that any meaningful contribution is important, even if the dollar value is low (it's all relative).”*

A sustainable REAP will look at data regularly to examine staff pay/compensation/raises and any pay equity issues that may be tied to race/ethnicity.

- *“Racial equity plays a factor in hiring/recruiting and commands resources to make it so. Annual examination of hiring and compensation across the org to ensure it reflects racial equity representative of the community served. Proportional equity in targeting of outreach and programs and resources devoted to it.”*
- *“My REAP would look like paying people who are black and brown the adequate amount of money at this organization and that it stops hiding behind ‘This is what the market pays people in these roles.’ It's a garbage excuse and the people who have done the incredibly hard work on the ground get treated like their roles aren't worth the same pay as the people pushing paper higher up. These roles are mostly filled with black and brown people. So, step one would be to pay people better, and what they deserve, not what ‘the market’ deems appropriate, and for sure it's better than we accept for payment within our grants. Stop cutting off your most important people at the knees by not paying them enough.”*

REAP RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING FEEDBACK

As respondents concluded their surveys, they were invited to share ideas on the REAP Program, as well as any closing thoughts. This final section includes that feedback.

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While many different types of stakeholders – staff and Board – can highlight a range of examples of the ways that AFC talks about racial equality internally, there is a strong consensus amongst long-time and frontline (as well as some middle management) staff that more internal action steps need to take place in a timely and collaborative manner with all at AFC (32). Another large group of people noted that the workshops, trainings and forums where racial inequities are discussed are positive for many and also sometimes a cause of stress for BIPOC (18). There needs to be more clarity about how racial equity policies, procedures and long-term goals are implemented at AFC (26).

Less mentioned recommendations and examples were also provided, including:

- Upward mobility and professional development/hiring programs for BIPOC staff (11)
- More transparency around what the Board does and how they make decisions (9)
- A few survey respondents pointed out that while front line staff wages have been compared to other organizations and have been found competitive this does not discount that the wages themselves are inadequate and unjust (6)
- The CEO and senior leadership team should clarify main internal and external racial equity goals internally and externally (6)
- Board needs to clarify how they address diversity amongst membership and within their decision-making process (4)

Additional Closing Comments

At the very end of this survey process, forty-five participants shared final perspectives on racial equity work at AFC, the next steps for the organization, and some powerful insights into their own experience and feedback for the foundation. Though not all of these quotes are aligned with key themes, similar sentiments were shared by other staff throughout the report; for example, at least one non-cisgender person stated that they did not feel supported at AFC, with other comments also indicating a need for additional education and support around gender diversity and inclusivity. Phrases in each quote are bolded by the evaluator for emphasis.

*“I love my department at AFC. It's diverse and the folks in it are so talented, brilliant and committed to our work. I also know that **my role here is not sustainable for me in terms of being challenged and most certainly in compensation.**”*

*“This survey is focused on racial equity; however, **I would like to mention gender equity/organizational issues with gender diversity.** There is mention of diverse gender identities sometimes, and we work with these communities. However, staff is not adequately informed about non-cisgender identities.”*

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“If AFC, or any organization, truly believes in racial equity, compensation is one of the top ways to show that you are actually trying. The wealth gap is very real and the least a true anti-racist organization could do is to pay its employees fairly.”

“AFC is at a better position than they were in a few years ago and I would like to see the agency speed up the process. I would like to see more people of color as the decision-makers and not always the frontline staff that get paid in pennies. I'd like to see other staff members be held accountable if they are performing poorly the same way a black person would be held accountable. I'd like to be respected regardless of age and race and not be considered the 'help' even with staff that have the same title as me!”

“I strongly believe AFC is on the right path as it relates to racial equity, but not all staff are quite there. Given the systemic nature of racial equity over time, it is challenging to understand and embrace the negative impact on people of color when you come from a place of privilege. Yet, I am hopeful because I see and hear staff openly discuss these issues and who seem to genuinely understand why role modeling, advocating and putting in place policies and procedures that address and confront racial equity in the workplace, with clients and community. This is by far the most engaged agency I have ever worked for that has taken on the issue of racial equity and is actively involved in bringing about change.”

CONCLUSION

Overall, the AFC survey data indicates a wide discrepancy of understanding on what racial equity looks like in action at the Foundation. An important step for the staff and Board to embrace and work towards racial equity will be understanding that this is not “extra work,” and that addressing racial equity is the very nature of what this organization is seeking to address, particularly with regards to their stated goal of reaching zero rate of infections by 2030. Data from [“Awake to Woke to Work”](#) indicate that it takes approximately seven years to see significant change as an organization moves toward racial equity. This means that HIV/AIDS has not flattened out in this country due chiefly due to continued racism, stigma, and structural inequities, a fact that has been well documented by sources like the [Center for American Progress](#) and [The Center for HIV Law & Policy](#), among others. To not consider racial inequities and disparities in the same way as other social determinants of health would indicate a deliberate lack of understanding and willingness to address perhaps the obvious and pervasive root cause of HIV/AIDS continued spread.

AFC has more than demonstrated their deep interest and commitment in doing this hard and critical work; with consistency, resources, and direct and clear action planning, the organization is poised to get the job done. It will continue to be difficult and uncomfortable to name and center racial equity in addressing this

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decades-long pandemic. Efforts to disrupt what are considered traditional power structures and systems will be met with challenges, and AFC must be prepared to respond with a clear mandate of how far the organization is truly willing to go in its efforts to achieve racial. As the noted author, activist, and Black lesbian Audre Lorde noted “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” New tools must be developed, new strategies employed, and diverse and reflective perspectives must be included and leveraged.

Morten Group knows that AIDS Foundation Chicago is firmly on the road to embedding and improving racial equity in its operations, through grantmaking, Board recruitment, hiring and staffing (including addressing pay disparities and compensation rates), and organizational programs and policies. Despite a range of understanding, experience, and perspectives reflected in the data, the interest and desire in improving racial equity through ongoing education and efforts as a means of combatting HIV/AIDS is a resounding theme reflected by the organization’s staff, Board, stakeholders, and culture. The work must be supported, sustained, and deepened, and AFC’s success in this area will depend on the continued support and efficacy of senior leadership and staff at every level of the organization. What may seem impossible is, in fact, quite attainable through those continued and ever-improving efforts.