

Strategy Refresh Process Update and Request for Feedback

Thank you for taking a few minutes to learn about Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's strategy refresh process and our initial thinking, and then providing us with your honest feedback.

Listening and learning from stakeholders like you have brought us to this point, when we share back, listen again, and validate or challenge our initial thinking based on your feedback. This document is an overview of what we've done, what we're thinking, and how you can contribute additional feedback to shape our work over the next several years.

WHAT WE'VE DONE

- In late 2016, we undertook an extensive community assessment that explored public data and engaged over 2,000 residents across the region we serve. The findings of that study (ACloserLook.net) informed our 2018-2021 strategic plan and our priority areas of community engagement, economic opportunity, and educational attainment. We believe philanthropy can make a measurable difference in these areas.

- Throughout the implementation of our strategic plan, we have sought to evolve our approaches and respond to emerging community needs. For example, in 2020, we responded quickly to COVID-19 through emergency grantmaking to nonprofits addressing basic needs and launched our Bridging Divides, Healing Communities initiative to support projects to strengthen relationships and build trust at the local level at a time of heightened polarization.

While those efforts weren't in our plan, they are in line with our priorities and values, and demonstrate our commitment to being both strategic and responsive. At the same time, due to the pandemic and its effects, in some ways we have not made as much progress as expected on our strategic priorities—which brings us to our current strategic refresh process.

- *In 2021, we interviewed community partners and leaders about each of our priority areas as part of a strategy review process. We wanted to know what was working, how the community has changed, and what they see is needed for improvement. These insights, combined with results from program evaluations, shaped our understanding of which efforts to sustain and how our work needs to evolve over the next several years.*

We believe our current priority areas and respective strategies are still relevant and compelling longer-term. At the same time, using what we learned, the specific objectives and initiatives under each strategy were revisited in the context of pandemic-related challenges and other changes in the region.

The sustained commitments and potential shifts we've drafted also meet criteria important to us:

- They are centered on fostering socioeconomic and/or racial equity.
- They recognize the effects of the pandemic.
- They are informed by the listening and learning we have done so far.
- They really matter to our residents.
- They are relevant to all the regions we serve.
- They fit with our mission and values.
- Our staff have the capacity and resources to implement these objectives.
- Provided resources, our community partners can implement the work involved.
- Philanthropy can make an impact.

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WHAT WE'RE THINKING

Based on what we've heard from our grantees and community members so far and our strategic criteria, we are considering the following sustained commitments and potential shifts in 2023-2025.

Community Engagement — Increase involvement, foster connections and harness the skills and expertise people can bring to organizations and communities.

STRATEGIES: Arts organization support and arts education as vehicles to increase involvement

CONTINUE

- Arts Build Community (ABC) initiative (including research, grantmaking, capacity-building, and donor engagement)
- Involvement of residents who led community research phase and help make grantmaking decisions
- Support of a strategic plan for arts education
- Capacity building to strengthen arts organizations in their ability to engage new audiences
- Support donors in learning about, connecting with and supporting ABC work over time

EXPAND

- Support for BIPOC-led and -serving organizations (e.g., grantmaking to Black Arts Council, capacity building)
- Number of residents serving in leadership roles as bridges between communities and arts organizations
- Funding for agencies and artists to provide arts education in Pittsfield schools

STRATEGY: Bridging Divides, Healing Communities initiative

CONTINUE regional grantmaking and convening to incubate and learn from projects (e.g., youth film challenge) that strengthen relationships and drive positive local change

EXPAND support for youth engagement by adding grantmaking for service opportunities and activities that provide youth with more agency

STRATEGY: Board service and leadership

CONTINUE nonprofit board leadership conferences and seminars

EXPAND

- Funding for smaller nonprofits to work with consultants over time
- Fostering of board leadership service among leaders of color

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Economic Opportunity — Strengthen entrepreneurship and the conditions that allow the economy to grow and residents to prosper.

STRATEGY: Support early-stage and existing businesses

EXPAND

- Funding for early-stage business accelerators especially for communities that have been historically overlooked for economic investment
- Cost-effective strategies to provide capital to enterprises
- Support for local minority and women-owned businesses to expand revenue through contracting

Educational Attainment — Increase educational attainment across the age continuum as a pathway to greater economic mobility.

STRATEGIES: Support early childhood development, college and career readiness, and completion for adult learners.

IMPROVE AND EXPAND current grantmaking and programming:

- Parent-child visiting program
- Parent education for childhood literacy
- Quality of early childhood development programs
- Scholarship support for qualified lower-income applicants to pursue degrees and certificate programs
- Resources for school-to-work programs and collaborations with employers

LEVERAGE American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Career Vocational and Technical Education (CVTE) funding opportunities.

INTEGRATE support for adult learners into our scholarship program.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do these shifts resonate with you based on your experiences? Is there anything else in these areas that we should consider? And is there anything we're missing? That's what we're hoping you'll share candidly with us.

Please bring your thoughts into your interview, listening session, or survey participation. We have hired Fio Partners as a third-party consultant to gather your feedback as a key community member, and we hope their role ensures you feel comfortable being candid.

We are your community foundation and we deeply value your continuous feedback and participation. Thank you for your time and for contributing to Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's strategy refresh.