MOVING TOWARDS ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IN CONSERVATION AND LAND-USE PROGRAMMING

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Chapter 4: Thematic Findings from Case Studies

To answer our first research question, *What are best practices for moving towards anti-racist community engagement,* we conducted a thematic analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with the various organizations and coalitions that served as case studies. We found that the themes we identified reinforced the concepts highlighted in our literature review around best practices for community engagement, with an additional layer to work towards anti-racism.

Not all case studies we interviewed embody all of the concepts discussed here. Some of our case studies were smaller community-based or BIPOC-led organizations; others were larger nonprofits more similar to Forterra. Throughout our interviews we often heard about ideal scenarios for racially equitable and anti-racist community engagement beyond what an organization or group was currently implementing. However, the aspirations of one group were often in line with what another was already doing.

We organize our thematic findings here based largely on work on trauma-informed community engagement from Falkenburger et al. (2018), whose engagement model is based on principles, strategies, and practices, as described in the literature review. Our analysis here focuses on strategies for moving towards anti-racist community engagement: thoughtful approaches to working with communities (Falkenburger et al., 2018). Principles are akin to organizational values and as such are beyond the scope of this project. Some practices are identified to provide concrete examples that are related to the strategies; the data gathered in our case studies reflect the idea advanced by Falkenburger et al. (2018) that practices without underlying strategies or philosophies to guide the work cannot be understood to be anti-racist, as they are untethered to a deeper systemic commitment. As noted by one of our interviewees, the "moral underpinnings of the organization being fully committed to the work has to be there." We discuss practices further in Chapter 6.

We highlight concrete examples of how some organizations are moving towards anti-racist community throughout this section. A full collection of summaries of the learnings from each case study can be found in *Appendix I*. When relevant, we acknowledge the organizational context of our findings in the narrative.

4.1 Thematic findings: Strategies for moving towards anti-racist community engagement

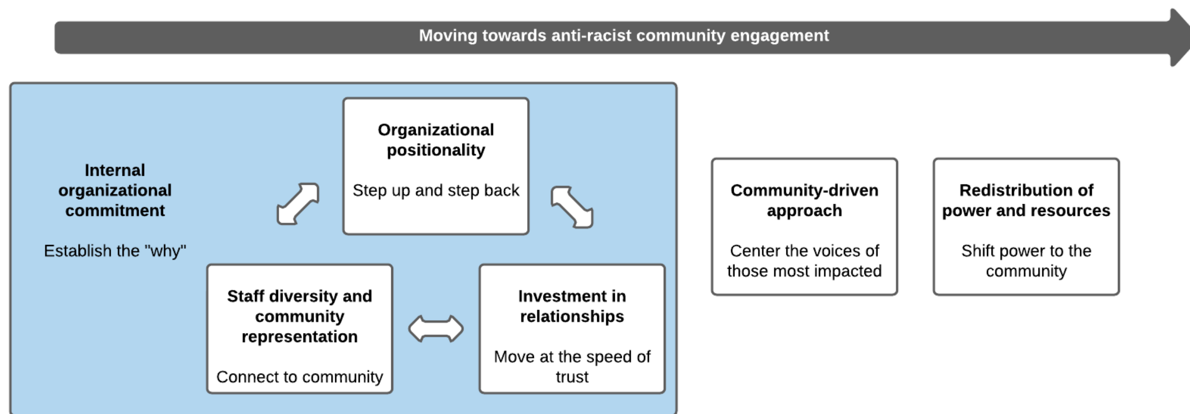
The themes and corresponding strategies we identified are detailed below:

- **Internal organizational commitment:** The organization establishes a commitment to defining and adopting an anti-racist approach to their work.
- **Organizational positionality:** Organizational actors acknowledge when the organization is not the appropriate primary actor in a given space.
- **Staff diversity and community representation:** Program staff are representative of the communities with which they are working.
- **Investment in relationships:** The organization invests in building long-term relationships based on trust.
- **Community-driven approach:** Projects are driven by the people who are most impacted.

- **Redistribution of power and resources:** The organization shifts decision-making power and resources to those who are most impacted and works outside of traditional hierarchies.

Each of these strategies aligns closely with ideas in the conceptual models for community engagement discussed in our literature review. Many of our interviewees referred to concepts that are depicted in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership (González, 2019), moving from marginalization to delegated power and community ownership, and our thematic findings reflect that progression as well. In addition, our research provided evidence of key aspects of an anti-racist approach to community engagement. These aspects include an acknowledgment of positions of privilege and power, a commitment to changing processes and programs that perpetuate racial inequities, and a willingness to cede power to the community. *Figure 6* displays our framework of strategies for moving towards anti-racist community engagement in conservation and land-use planning, based on our data analysis. This framework is discussed further at the end of this chapter.

Figure 6. A Framework for Moving Towards Anti-Racist Community Engagement



Source: Authors' creation (2021)

Theme 1: Internal organizational commitment. *The organization establishes a commitment to defining and adopting an anti-racist approach to their work.*

Throughout our interviews, participants noted that an organization's internal practices directly impact how its program staff engage with communities of color, and that an internal commitment is an important precursor to external community engagement. An internal commitment includes establishing organization-wide clarity of the goals of community engagement; building values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism into the organization's processes; and establishing concrete steps to achieve those goals. We depict this concept in *Figure 6* by presenting an internal organizational commitment as the background and foundation of anti-racist community engagement work.

One interviewee stated a point that was reflected in numerous case studies, that "probably the very first step that any organization should take before taking [their work] externally [is] making sure your staff and board and everyone are on the same page and clear." Others emphasized ensuring that the

organization as a whole has a clear "why" for their community engagement work that is supported by the organization's values. As expressed by one interviewee:

> If the "why" is because we want our customers to know that we care about anti-racism… meh. If it's because you actually want your community to have their needs met and you're devoted to this, then get really clear with the "why." I would support orgs *(sic)* starting there, and really envisioning almost a mission for that community engagement work.

Across these organizations, different words were used to describe efforts to advance racial equity through programming. Some interviewees described it as "DEIJ work," (diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice) while others specified efforts that are anti-racist or focused on racial equity. While several interviewees acknowledged that these terms are not interchangeable, the variance in usage across organizations suggests that what is more important than the specific choice of words is that a shared language and understanding is developed within the organization so that staff can begin to articulate how their work contributes to these efforts. One interviewee from a larger nonprofit organization noted that it has been an ongoing process for their staff and board to work on the meaning behind the words used in an initial commitment made in 2019, and that because all staff were required to engage with concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their everyday work, they have developed more clarity on their goals than board members who were only engaging with these issues on a quarterly basis.

A nonprofit organization's board of directors has a vital role in establishing this internal clarity and commitment. "Get your board on board," emphasized one interviewee succinctly. Interviewees noted that the board needs to agree on both the focus of the organization's engagement efforts and the reason behind them. Our case studies highlighted that without board buy-in for an anti-racist, community-driven approach, community relationships that are built with program staff are inauthentic because they do not reflect the true values of the organization.

DEIJ Community for Conservationists: WeConservePA

In the summer of 2020, WeConservePA convened a self-selected group of individuals from conservation organizations based throughout the East coast to form a community that "provides a forum for people to share experiences, learn about and advance effective practices, and identify opportunities to individually and collectively promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in conservation work and environmental organizations" (WeConservePA, 2021). They hired a professional DEIJ facilitator, Marcelo Bonta, and have met regularly to create shared goals and establish strategies to bring back to their organizations. More recently, they have structured themselves through workgroup "pods" focused on Relationship Building, Strategic Planning, Structure, and Programming, and will soon be adding one related to Workplace Improvement. Meeting as a group has enabled them to push their learning and growth individually and organizationally.

Demonstrating internal commitment to racially equitable or anti-racist engagement practices goes further than simply articulating it. "If we're doing our job right, we're not doing anything without also thinking of racial equity and considering it and asking other folks to consider it as well," expressed one interviewee. Our interviewees noted that an organization's leadership can play an important role in ensuring that all parts of the organization continually question how they can better contribute to racially equitable practices. Examples from our interviews of how organizational

leadership incorporate this idea into their operations include making anti-racist work a part of every job description, examining hiring practices and required qualifications on job applications, and reconsidering organization or program metrics for evaluating success.

There is also a personal element to anti-racist work which can be supported by a wider organizational commitment. While levels of understanding about the concept of anti-racism varied between our interviewees, they consistently expressed the importance of learning and challenging their preconceptions. Many highlighted the benefits of discussion groups or book clubs, trainings for both staff and board members, and other opportunities for continuous learning about structural racism and other systems of oppression. These opportunities can also be facilitated by organizational leadership. One interviewee articulated how creating spaces for dialogue is important because of the iterative, ongoing nature of anti-racist work:

> The goal is to have anti-racism baked into our DNA, but we're never going to fully arrive as anti-racist. Anti-racism is not something you can just become, you know, you got your stamp, "we're there!" or "we got certified, we're anti-racist!"… It's a lifelong journey and really about an approach to how you do your work.

Our interviewees emphasized that committing to anti-racist work is a never-ending process because it involves continuous learning, and that an organization's board, leadership, and program staff all contribute to upholding that commitment.

Theme 2: Organizational positionality. *Organizational actors acknowledge when the organization is not the appropriate primary actor in a given space.*

Even when an organization is explicitly committed to anti-racist, community-driven work, it may still not be the right partner for a given project. Our interviewees emphasized that developing an awareness of the organization's role, reputation, and history within a community, particularly for non-community based organizations, is essential to building strong community relationships.

We heard consistently that larger, well-resourced organizations must be aware of the impact they have in spaces with smaller organizations and community groups. One non-community based organization recognized "the amount of influence [we carry]. And I think we have to be very diligent in acknowledging the spaces—if we're invited to be in spaces or whatever it might be—really acknowledging if we're the ones that should be in those spaces, or whether we should make space for others." Another person acknowledged that they would always represent the largest nonprofit organization in the room and being new in certain spaces meant that the most important thing to do to form relationships was to listen to the people who were already there. Furthermore, an organization must "be open to feedback and also know when you might not be the right person or right group to be in that space and to step back and support another group that's a better fit for the work," as expressed by one interviewee.

Part of what we categorize to be organizational positionality is also knowing where the organization or program lacks expertise or experience so that program staff know when to take a leadership role (step up), or to give space and support the capacity and leadership of others (step back). One interviewee expressed that "I have really stepped back and I'd like to step back even more from any sort of on-the-ground stuff, so I feel like that's sort of a way that we can really transfer over the leadership of those programs to folks who are in that community," acknowledging that they as an

organization do not have the same level of on-the-ground expertise that their community members do, and that the community is better positioned to determine solutions. Another interviewee from a larger, well-resourced organization questioned their role in the traditional grant application process, something they have experience in but recognize that that does not necessarily mean they should take the lead role: "Should we be the ones applying for this grant—we probably can get it, because we have all this infrastructure…but are we really the right people?"

Finally, a key element of this strategy to move towards anti-racist community engagement is being transparent with community partners about organizational capacity and constraints. In establishing mechanisms to engage with a community advisory group, one interviewee specified that, "I've been really clear and upfront in the work with them on where the power lines are and how we will continue to figure that out together." The idea of having clearly defined roles was reinforced by another interviewee: "there's a clear sense of roles and responsibilities and expectations and accountability that I think really creates a sense of we're all doing this together."

Theme 3: Staff diversity and community representation. *Program staff are representative of the communities with which they are working.*

Another strategy that emerged as a theme from our case studies is a commitment to diversity and inclusion at the program staff level. Internally, having a diverse staff serves an organization as diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and backgrounds are represented in the work. Externally, it can facilitate building trust with marginalized communities who have low expectations for outside organizations based on previous patterns of little or inequitable engagement.

At a surface level, as stated in one interview, "diverse organizations are healthy organizations are effective organizations," suggesting that the backgrounds and identities of staff can impact an organization's ability to pursue its mission. We heard that engagement practices are more effective if the diversity of a community is reflected in the identities of the people in the organization, because staff are better positioned to build trust with community members. Multiple interviewees recognized how their own identities impacted their reception, such as one white-identifying interviewee specifying that "I'm really cognizant that I'm not always the person, the right person to be at the front of the room, and so I've worked really hard to be aware of when I should be taking space or making space."

However, our interviewees noted that simply having a diverse staff does not by itself help create meaningful engagement, which is more authentic when staff members are actually from the communities with which the organization is working. Adrienne Hampton from Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition (DRCC) pointed out that almost "everyone of DRCC is a neighbor, and therefore community engagement looks more of like, knocking your neighbor's door, or asking them how they're doing, or [asking] 'hey do you want to go for a walk to the river?" We heard that connections and relationships are much easier to build when you have the depth of knowledge and contextual understanding that accompany a shared history of place. Blishda Lacet from COO took this idea one step further: "One of the things that I think that [we have] done really well and that, I think, has helped in shifting power to some extent, is that most of the staff look like communities…are from the communities… So there's not the sense of us versus them."

At the same time, internal organizational culture can impact how welcome people might feel at the organization. One interviewee framed this idea as inclusion: "diversity without inclusion is just a waste of your time. Because people are going to leave when they don't feel empowered and they don't feel as though they actually belong and they're just there to check off a diversity box." People will likely not feel welcome in an organization without a broader organizational commitment to creating an internal culture that encourages and supports diverse perspectives. Another interviewee highlighted the value of this commitment:

> A really huge and important thing is also making sure that the staff is representative of those communities. And that has been a huge focus of what I feel like I have been working on over the past five-plus years, is trying to figure out how to make the organization a place where people with many different backgrounds could work.

This interviewee recognized both the value of staff representation and the internal challenge that it presents, as it creates a need to change internal organizational dynamics as well as specific processes such as hiring practices. This component of the strategy is particularly important for community engagement that aims to be anti-racist.

Theme 4: Investment in relationships. *The organization invests in building long-term relationships based on trust.*

One of the more salient aspects of authentic and equitable community engagement, cited by all of our interviewees, is a focus on building relationships over time.

For organizations who are not community-based, "the first thing you have to do is just be present and listen, and then sort of adjust your goals accordingly," as stated by one interviewee. The importance of listening in order to build authentic relationships was emphasized throughout our case studies, with interviewees expressing how the simple and deliberate act of listening accomplishes multiple goals. Listening allows program staff to hear diverse perspectives within the community, learn about community priorities, and begin to understand the community's context and history.

Listening is also crucial for developing long-term relationships with community leaders and groups, laying the foundation for a community-driven approach described below. Some of our interviewees recognized that this process involves constant reflection, recognizing that they may identify community leaders and develop connections with them but also that there might be other groups within a community with whom those leaders are not connected. One interviewee noted that they aspire to far-reaching outreach to understand the range of needs within one community: "we have good connections with a lot of the community leaders around the city now, but are trying to broaden out from there." Another interviewee from a community-based organization highlighted how they might work with a regional group or organization in an area, but also want to pay attention to the hyper-local impacts of their projects: disaggregating metrics for measuring pollution, for example, and focusing outreach on "getting together like you would for a neighborhood community clean air workshop or [festival]," creating spaces where community members can show up and be themselves and share what is most important to them and their families.

Community engagement from the perspective of a climate justice organization: Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

- Hyper-localized: the majority of staff are local residents and part of the community
- Creating spaces where people can show up and be themselves
- Involving, building power, and creating opportunities to provide input on issues that directly impact folx
- Understanding barriers to engagement, including individual capacity, the pandemic, and the inequitable circumstances not addressed by the city (physically challenging jobs, inability to find or pay for childcare services, etc.), as well as distrust of government and public systems

Listening is the first step to building trust, a process that "needs to be authentic and in the long term," as summarized by one interviewee. Another illuminated further, "it's being mindful that we're not tokenizing people, that we're really listening and learning and moving at that speed of trust." Other interviewees also highlighted the need to build trust, emphasizing that that process is especially important and challenging when working with historically marginalized communities, and recognizing that a community's history and an organization's reputation both play a role here. One interviewee stated, "I think one of the bigger mistakes we make as environmental organizations, is to pop in, pop out. We pop in, we have a project, get it done. Pop out." Centering community-based work in long-term relationships is a fundamental strategy that changes the dynamic which is expected particularly of white-led environmental organizations. As expressed by Kip Le Warn from the Delaware River Watershed Coalition, speaking of what organizations in their coalition have determined to be best practices: "I think more and more the overall consensus is, rather than primarily having transactional relationships, moving more towards transformative relationships, less of that parachuting in and out." Many of their coalition members have recognized that for relationships to be transformative, they need to be built with trust over the long term rather than single transactions based on individual projects or grant deliverables.

Our interviewees acknowledged that building authentic relationships takes time. Program staff who are not from a particular community would sometimes attend meetings hosted by other local community groups to learn about the community's priorities, hear what's already happening, and begin to explore how their work might contribute to those efforts. As noted by Robin Schwartz from DRCC: "first, go out into that community and see who's already there doing the work. And try to reach out to them and ask how [you] can support."

Theme 5: Community-driven approach. Projects are driven by the people who are most impacted.

One of the central strategies highlighted by our interviews was also a concept that we identified through our literature review: the importance of a community-driven approach. This strategy is a core component and goal of the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership conceptual model. A community-driven approach acknowledges community assets and centers the voices of people who are most impacted throughout the project, ensuring that the community plays a leadership role and is involved in decision-making processes.

A fundamental tenet of a community-driven approach is acknowledging that people closest to the issues are best positioned to solve them. One interviewee expressed this idea clearly: "solutions come from the communities that are most impacted by the inequities." As noted by another interviewee, the organization's role is to "[empower] our program participants to pursue [activities] for themselves or to recognize actually how much knowledge they already have on their own," supporting community member growth and contribution.

Furthermore, we heard that a community-driven approach means not assuming that program or organizational goals are the same as those of the communities involved. Instead, the organization first learns what priorities are within the community and then plays a supporting role in helping them achieve their goals. One interviewee noted that community engagement should be about "what can we do… to assist these communities to achieve the goals that they want—not what are our priorities and then try to bring people along with our priorities." Rebecca Fedewa recounted an example of this in action, describing a decision Flint River Watershed Coalition (FRWC) made to not pursue a project that might have otherwise made sense for their overall mission because the impacted community did not want it. One large, non-community-based organization focused on "how do we make ourselves less of the story and make the community more of the story." With a community-driven approach, the community members are driving the project, and the role of the larger organization is to support the community in achieving their goals. This idea also relates directly to the theme of organizational positionality and knowing when the program or organization should support the work of others instead of leading the work themselves.

"How do we make ourselves less of the story and make the community more of the story?"

One interviewee confirmed what was reflected in the community engagement conceptual models discussed in the literature review, that "…the journey to community-driven projects happens in stages." They noted that informing, involving, and otherwise reaching out to people in a community to hear about their vision are the first steps towards community-driven projects, as is depicted in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. Our case studies demonstrated the idea that the process of relationship-building described above can eventually lead to a community-driven project approach. One interviewee summarized this aspiration: "So as an org *(sic)*, you already have developed relationships in the community, you aren't there without being invited there, they know who you are, you're in that space and you have shared goals and a shared vision together." We heard that program staff from organizations who have demonstrated a commitment to relationship-building are often asked to participate in a project based on their expertise, having developed trust that the organization will continue to show up in support of the community's goals.

We also heard that larger, primarily white organizations can shift towards community-driven projects by building community capacity. Capacity-building could mean supporting smaller, community-based organizations through grants or leveraging network connections to share resources. Communities of Opportunity, for example, co-designs grants with community groups and organizations and provides technical assistance in writing the application (more details on this grantmaking model are highlighted below). In addition, knowing the landscape of other organizations that might be able to help address community needs can be an important area of

expertise to build for an organization hoping to work at a community level. In the words of one interviewee: "if a community doesn't particularly care about your very, very specific focus of work you can connect them to another organization that more closely matches their specific needs. Then that's still a win because it's just sharing power in a different way."

Features of an innovative grant-making model: Communities of Opportunity

- Requests for proposals (RFPs) are co-designed with community partners
- Community partners bring expertise from relevant lived experience or by identifying as a member of the community who would be served or impacted by the RFP
- Designed for partnership and transparency between funder and grantee to achieve mutually identified goals
- Includes a process for work plan and milestone co-development
- COO offers technical assistance for the grant-writing process
- Anti-bias training for RFP committee members, which includes people who are representative of the communities

As with building relationships, a community-driven approach takes significant time and resources. One interviewee emphasized that one of the largest challenges is "the speed at which environmental organizations want to work and making sure we're slowing down enough to ensure that community is leading." Many organizations are accustomed to accelerated timelines and complying with grant deliverables and find that shifting to a long-term approach and trying to assess success based on trust, which does not have tangible metrics, can be a challenging process. However, our interviewees emphasized that committing time and resources long-term is a vital component of moving towards community-driven projects.

Theme 6: Redistribution of power and resources. *The organization shifts decision-making power and resources to those who are most impacted and works outside of traditional hierarchies.*

Throughout our interviews, we heard that while a project itself might be community-driven, it is also important for the organization seeking to engage with the community to establish opportunities for community members to hold decision-making authority, effectively shifting power to them. In the words of Robin from DRCC, "we're not working for the community necessarily; we're providing a space for the community to prioritize their needs and then we are providing a pathway to policymakers for the community to then go on and voice their needs or advocate for themselves." This idea also maps closely onto the concept of deferring to community as depicted in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. In addition, redistribution of power and resources is particularly important for anti-racist community engagement; an anti-racist approach actively dismantles racist systems that hold power and resources in the hands of few. This approach means that an organization must be willing to cede power and control to the community.

For some organizations, shifting power means establishing ways for community members to serve on the organization's board. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative has a unique model in that the entire 35-member board is made up of community members who are democratically elected and representative of the community. Athens Land Trust provides another example, highlighted below. The board has tremendous influence over an organization and is a decision-making space where

organizational strategy and goals are defined; bringing community members into this space shifts power to people who are the most impacted and also increases transparency and accountability between the organization and community partners.

Community Leaders through Board Membership: Athens Land Trust
Athens Land Trust (ALT) makes it a point that board members come from the communities they serve, with roughly one-third of their board of directors being made up of community members. These individuals are familiar with ALT's programs; some have been vendors in their farmers market, others went through the affordable housing program and became homeowners, and others were community garden members. These community members' experiences with ALT's programming bring important perspectives to the board and inform how ALT can extend those programs to additional community members. In addition, ALT has other opportunities for community members to engage, provide input, and serve in leadership positions, such as the Housing Committee and the Farmers Market Advisory Board. These groups also serve as pathways for individuals to serve on the board of directors.

Our case studies emphasized that there may be other ways to shift power and that discovering those is an ongoing, reflective process. As noted above, some of the elements of a community-driven approach, such as building community capacity, also begin to shift power. Blishda from Communities of Opportunity reiterated: "We are constantly needing to…dismantle a system that sometimes we take for granted, and also know when we are not able to impact that system in that moment and make note of that." Articulated by another interviewee, "To me, to do anti-racism really is about doing work in a different way, that's not top down." Our case studies underlined that redistributing power and resources to groups who have historically had less of both is fundamental to taking an anti-racist approach.

The Community Accountability Council at Solid Ground
In 2019, Solid Ground established a Community Accountability Council (CAC) to be involved in the co-design of programs. The council is made up of community members who meet monthly to discuss the root causes of poverty and ways to address them within the community (Solid Ground, n.d.). Members also participate in leadership development, advocacy, and social justice training to engage decision makers. Council members are asked to bring their opinions, share their experiences, and commit to supporting Solid Ground's work to end poverty. In exchange, CAC members receive a monthly honorarium of $75 and dinner at meetings. Childcare and transportation to and from meetings is also provided. The council has had an increasing amount of impact on decision making at Solid Ground since its inception. Today, the CAC engages with the Board of Directors at Solid Ground and is incorporated into the formal process for board recruitment.

4.2 In Summary: A framework for anti-racist community engagement

In seeking "best practices," our research did not suggest concrete practices for organizations to employ, but rather holistic strategies that define approaches and goals for the work. These strategies, identified through our thematic analysis, add an additional layer to the conceptual models for community engagement discussed in our literature review (Chapter 2) to arrive at a framework for moving towards anti-racist community engagement, depicted in *Figure 6*.

Although the models in our literature review acknowledge the influence of power dynamics, they do not speak directly to racist systems and institutions that perpetuate racial inequity. The strategies described here seek to address this gap, closely mirroring many of the additional important concepts already identified by practitioners and referenced in Chapter 2. For example, Wilson's (2018) conclusions that relationship-building, valuing the contributions of all parties, and deferring to local wisdom are all important elements of design justice closely reflect key themes that came up in our research. Wilson (2018) also highlighted the importance of acknowledging past collective traumas to allow a project to move forward.

In addition, these themes reflect concepts described in resources related to anti-racist organizational development, which were largely beyond the programmatic- and community engagement-focus of this project. For example, *Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book for Social Change Groups* from Western States Center (2003, p. 62) lists features of programs within an anti-racist organization as:

- designed to build and share power;
- designed to help people analyze and address root causes;
- people most affected by issues/problems centrally involved in program planning; and
- opportunities for constituents to move into leadership roles in the organization.

Our research reinforced ideas in this resource book,[4] that "transformation begins with developing a comprehensive understanding of how racism and oppression operate" and "there is no cookie cutter approach to anti-racist organizational development" (Western States Center, 2003, p. 56), and additional exploration of these materials has contributed to our understanding of how an internal organizational commitment is the first step towards anti-racist work.

As noted throughout the above sections and depicted in our framework, each of these strategies interrelate. An overall internal commitment provides the solid foundation for moving towards anti-racist community engagement within the other strategies. Staff diversity and representation of community, for example, will not lead to authentic community relationships without an internal organizational commitment to change, and while relationship-building and community-driven projects are important strategies for genuine community engagement, they will not be anti-racist without first stating an explicit commitment to dismantling racist systems and then creating a strategy for action. Organizational positionality, staff diversity and community representation, and investment in relationships all move an organization towards more community-driven engagement practices and also demonstrate an organization's awareness of its own position of power and privilege and potential willingness to give up power. Our concept of a community-driven strategy is closely aligned with the stages in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership of collaborating with and beginning to defer to community but is couched within a broader commitment and prior work aimed at understanding and working against racist systems. Finally, redistribution of power and resources is necessary to fully defer to community and to address structural racism. *Table 3* provides a summary of best practices for moving towards anti-racist community engagement, building on the list of themes and strategies included at the beginning of this chapter to include key elements.

[4] The resource book also includes many other concepts, suggesting that organizations can be categorized as an All White Club, an Affirmative Action or Token Organization, a Multi-Cultural Organization, or an Anti-Racist Organization (Western States Center, 2003).

The implications of these findings for organizations like Forterra who are hoping to move towards an anti-racist approach in community engagement are summarized by one interview participant: "That means that community engagement is going to be way longer than any of our systems allow for, way messier than any of our dominant culture feels comfortable with… and then way more expensive."

Table 3. Best practices for moving towards anti-racist community engagement

Theme	Strategy	Elements
Internal organizational commitment	The organization establishes a commitment to defining and adopting an anti-racist approach to their work.	♦ Explicit commitment to anti-racism ♦ Commitment demonstrated at all levels of the organization: board, senior leadership, and staff ♦ Defining racially equitable outcomes across program areas
Organizational positionality	Organizational actors acknowledge when the organization is not the appropriate primary actor in a given space.	♦ Awareness of organizational strengths and weaknesses ♦ Transparency around organizational capacity ♦ Acknowledge history of engaging with communities of color ♦ Acknowledge positions of privilege and power held by the organization
Staff diversity and community representation	Program staff are representative of the communities with which they are working.	♦ Increase diversity of program staff and senior leadership ♦ Prioritize representation from historically marginalized communities ♦ Create a culture in which people of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable working
Investment in relationships	The organization invests in building long-term relationships built on trust.	♦ The practice of listening ♦ Identify leaders within the community ♦ Building trust over time ♦ Reach underserved and underrepresented communities
Community-driven approach	Projects are driven by the people who are most impacted.	♦ Solutions from people who are most impacted ♦ Acknowledge community assets ♦ Decision-making power ♦ Build community capacity
Redistribution of resources and power	The organization shifts decision-making power and resources to those who are most impacted and works outside of traditional hierarchies.	♦ Community ownership ♦ Diverse and representative Board of Directors ♦ Ongoing feedback and accountability ♦ Redistribution of resources ♦ Transformative relationships

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Appendix I. Case Studies

I.1 Athens Land Trust

Athens, GA
Justin Merrifield, Director of Conservation; Mallory O'Steen, Farmland Protection and Outreach Manager; Dr. Sherman Green, Farmer Outreach Specialist; Heather Benham, Executive Director

Background: Athens Land Trust is a conservation and community land trust located in Athens, Georgia. They work to achieve goals of conserving land and providing affordable housing. The organization's work in housing serves to provide permanently affordable homeownership opportunities for lower income families and communities. Athens Land Trust's Conservation Program protects and improves natural habitats and farmlands. Their program areas also include work in community agriculture, financial education resources, youth development, and neighborhood revitalization.

Community Engagement: Athens Land Trust engages with community members in various ways to build their capacity for long-term success. They provide education and resources to empower the community and its members. A prominent example is the Conservation Program's work with farmers. Athens Land Trust works closely with disadvantaged farmers to provide education on federal programs that provide financial assistance that farmers can apply to and works with them every step of the way to help them see success. These farmers are mostly BIPOC, and Athens Land Trust works to establish trust between the organization and farmers through staff on the ground. Dr. Sherman Green plays an important role in this work, through his lived experience, knowledge, and understanding of the farmers' circumstances. They also prioritize community leadership and decision-making. Roughly one-third of their board of directors is composed of community members. Smaller committees and advisory groups within the organization provide additional opportunities for community members to serve in leadership roles and pathways to director positions on the board. In addition, their youth development programs allow those they serve to become leaders, allowing staff to take a step back from that role. These programs serve as the first jobs for many participants and provide an opportunity for both staff and youth to learn and build relationships. As youth participants gain more experience they are able to take on more responsibility and drive the direction of the work, shifting decision-making power to the community.

Lessons: One of the biggest lessons to be learned from Athens Land Trust is bringing in leadership from the community. This is most notable in the organization's board, which includes a substantial number of individuals from the communities they serve. They have made a deliberate effort to create these opportunities, resulting in a diverse board that can provide a variety of perspectives. By being intentional and making that space, Athens Land Trust establishes a community-driven approach that is grounded in the priorities of the communities they serve.

The importance of staff representation was also learned here. The Black farmers who Athens Land Trust works with have had negative experiences with government and do not trust outside help easily. In order to build that trust between the farmers and the organization, it is crucial that the

farmers feel comfortable with the staff they interact with, with staff who look like them and have shared experiences and backgrounds providing a basis to build connections and trust.

Additionally, Heather noted that a shared responsibility is also important when doing community engagement work, stating "it's not any one department's role to be the outreach arm of the organization, everybody is doing outreach and needs to be doing outreach," emphasizing the importance of an organization's commitment to this area of work.

I.2 Communities of Opportunity

Seattle, WA
Blishda Lacet, Program Manager at
King County Department of Public Health

Background: Communities of Opportunity (COO) is a public-private partnership between King County and the Seattle Foundation, created in 2014 to address economic and racial inequities through place-based work and systemic change. The partnership has since expanded and is now supported by the King County initiative, Best Starts for Kids. Communities of Opportunity describes themselves as "an inclusive table where community members and leaders, organizations, and institutions share power, voice, and resources." Their work is grounded in values of process equity, community engagement, innovation, and being driven by quantitative and qualitative data. Priority areas for COO include safe, affordable housing; health and well-being; economic opportunity; and community connections (generative relationships and partnerships at the level of individual, family, and community).

Community Engagement: Communities of Opportunity is a unique model that combines funding and governance from both philanthropic organizations and government entities. Governance is structured for community voice in that there is a majority of decision-making seats for community representatives (either at-large or from funded partners). As such, COO serves as a space for shared and continuous learning (both internally and externally), capacity building, and creating connections between sectors and communities that advance social, economic, and racial equity in the region. The 'community,' that COO engages with is a wide network of community leaders, organizations, funding partners, and COO-funded partners. Some COO-funded partners are compelling examples of place-based work that support community priorities to advance justice and shift systems and policies towards greater equity, resulting in healthier and thriving communities for all.

Lessons: One of the most unique approaches that COO takes as a funder in this space is with an innovative model for grant-making. In grant-making, COO has a concept of "co-design," which means that when a request for proposals (RFP) is initially developed, it is done with input and feedback from community partners who bring relevant expertise (including expertise from relevant lived experience or identifying as a member of the community who would be served or impacted by the RFP). The co-design process takes time–between one and a half and two years–but at the end of it, the grant is actually designed for partnership and transparency between funder and grantee, and towards operational flexibility to achieving mutually identified goals and includes a process of

workplan and milestone co-development. Grantees offer unique perspectives given their place in the community as well as aspects of the grant that are most important for their own success as an organization, including measurement indicators and the inclusion of other stakeholders in the process. Part of the thought behind this approach, Blishda explained, is that when examining the traditional process for designing RFPs, COO recognized that continuing to use the same structures, policies, and practices that created the inequities we see today would not dismantle the systems of racism.

Relatedly, in this example of co-design, COO as a funder also offers technical assistance to write the grant application itself, recognizing that larger organizations often have the resources (i.e., an experienced grant writer on staff) to write proposals but smaller ones do not. On their side, COO also requires anti-bias training for their entire review committee and ensures that there are people on the committee who are representative of the communities.

Lastly, Blishda offered that one of the more concrete ways that COO is trying to measure their impact in terms of advancing equity is by asking partners, "how many communities that [you're] supporting, community leaders, are now in positions of power, are on school boards, are part of an advisory group, are in any sort of decision-making process?" This, Blishda explained, indicates a shift in power dynamics and highlights the extent to which community members are feeling more comfortable and empowered to actively seek leadership roles in their community.

I.3 Cultivating Community

Portland, ME
Anna Sommo, Community Programs Director

Background: Cultivating Community is a Portland, Maine-based nonprofit with a mission to grow sustainable communities by expanding access to healthy, local food; empower children, youth, and adults to play diverse roles in restoring the local, sustainable food systems; and model, teach, and advocate for ecological food production. Their organizational values include justice, inclusion, equity, relationship, compassion, process, learning, and digging in. The organization provides farming- and food system-related resources to Maine's New American population, many of whom are recent immigrants and refugees from East Africa.

Community Engagement: Cultivating Community views their role as an organization as "facilitating people to do something that they want to do." The organization has transferred the leadership of some of their programs to the youth who are participating, demonstrating a community-driven approach. They have also made an effort to build community capacity and to stay connected to their communities, particularly by bringing people who have participated in their programs into the organization as staff. Anna highlighted an example of a woman hired as staff to run their farm stands, who emigrated from Djibouti and remains very connected to the Somali-Djibouti community in Portland. That close connection makes it easier for the organization to know

what community members want and need, and for people outside of the organization to provide feedback on the organization's activities.

Lessons: A major lesson of this interview was the importance of fair compensation, both for staff who are working on community-based projects and for the leadership of the people participating and driving a program. In addition, while bringing people who participate in programs into an organization as staff is an important step, the organizational culture also needs to be changed to allow for people with different backgrounds to feel truly welcome and fully participate. Anna also noted that staff members have improved the organization's overall cultural competency but could benefit further from institutionalization.

I.4 Delaware River Watershed Coalition

Trenton, NJ
Kip Le Warn, Engagement Coordinator

Background: The Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed is a coalition of partners that protects and restores the land and waters in the Delaware River Basin. They bring together over 150 member organizations and other stakeholders to advocate for a healthy and protected watershed. The Coalition convenes member and non-member organizations, builds capacity, coordinates communications, and advances policy at the federal and state levels. Their core values are diversity, equity, inclusivity, collaboration, leadership, trust, and sustainability.

Community Engagement: The Coalition primarily aims to build the capacity of its member organizations, supporting them in their community engagement and other efforts. They have created numerous resources for their partners and others to use, including two volumes of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Toolkit: Volume 1 focusing on Internal Organization Practices, and Volume 2 on External Engagement Practices. Within these toolkits, the Coalition emphasizes the importance of establishing internal organizational practices to advance DEIJ work before moving towards external engagement activities. Additional specific recommendations for community engagement are found in their toolkits.

Lessons: Kip acknowledged the challenge of taking time to learn as an organization while not wanting to stop the important external work: "I think folks are walking the tightrope of taking the time to teach themselves and not lean on marginalized communities to be the educators, but also not getting stuck in analysis paralysis," which they acknowledged is especially challenging for environmental organizations because "there's more sure answers in their work and they want [to know] exactly what to do and how to say, or the best way to do things, where this work is touchy-feelier than many folks are open to exploring." They highlighted how a long-term focus on building trust can help to create more authentic, transformational relationships, which is especially important for environmental organizations which have a history of one-off interactions with communities. Transformational relationships lead towards sharing power with communities: "not just, 'hey, we're

doing this project in your community, please say that it's okay'…but 'okay, we know that we might be doing this project—what are the needs that you have, does this project connect with that?"'

I.5 Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

Roxbury, MA
Jose Barros, Community Organizer & Planner

Background: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) is a nonprofit organization based in Boston, Massachusetts, in the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury. The organization's mission is to empower Dudley residents to organize, plan for, create and control a vibrant, diverse and high-quality neighborhood in collaboration with community partners. Created in 1984 by residents who wanted to reclaim a neighborhood that had been destroyed by disinvestment, dumping, and arson fires, DSNI obtained eminent domain authority to purchase land and protect housing affordability for area residents. The organization created a community land trust (CLT) in 1988, which has since become a model urban CLT with over thirty acres of land, 227 units of affordable housing, an urban farm, a greenhouse, commercial buildings, and parks. The board and staff at DSNI lead with a set of twelve values, including 'development without displacement,' 'collective resident leadership and control,' and 'power in organized community.'

Community Engagement: Staff members like Jose Barros are direct liaisons between DSNI and the community. Jose has been working for DSNI for 25 years and lives two minutes away from the office; thus, he is as much a part of the community as the residents he engages with. When developers enter the neighborhood with a proposal for a new housing development, Jose explains that he will reach out directly to area residents by phone to ask them to come to the monthly Sustainable Development Committee meeting to ask questions and voice concerns they may have. His approach to community engagement is targeted based on the development proposal, going to specific streets that will be impacted and asking residents to come to meetings to ask questions and voice their concerns.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative has a unique governance model in that their board is made up of 35 members who are both from the community and are democratically elected by community members. A specific number of seats are held for separate groups, including racial and ethnic groups, churches, agencies, community development organizations, and businesses, ensuring full representation of the community. Jose explained that the board will sometimes defer decision-making to the community when "there are things that are bigger than the board" or when they believe that a decision would benefit from additional input from the community. Thus, while DSNI has gone to great lengths to create a fair and transparent process for electing representative community members to the board, the board still shares power with the community at-large, sidestepping the traditional hierarchy present in nonprofit organizations.

Lessons: Jose's work as Community Organizer & Planner is an excellent example of a community-based organization employing area residents to truly meet people where they are at. Embedded in the community for decades, Jose plays an integral role in both the community and at DSNI given his

institutional knowledge and expertise. He expressed gratitude to DSNI for the opportunity to spend time with community members, which may sometimes mean helping a non-English speaker identify junk mail as such or knocking on a neighbor's door to talk to them because he knows they aren't getting text messages on their flip phones. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative relies heavily on a relationship built on trust and mutual accountability to engage residents in community development decisions.

I.6 Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

Seattle, WA
Robin Schwartz, Development and Community Advocacy, and Adrienne Hampton, Climate Policy and Engagement Manager

Background: The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition (DRCC) is an alliance of community, tribal, environmental and small business groups that are united in their efforts to address ongoing pollution and cleanup plans for the lower Duwamish River in Seattle. The river is a 5.5 mile-long Superfund Site, directly impacting residents in riverfront neighborhoods with potential exposures from contaminated sediments on neighborhood beaches and in recreational water areas. Together with other members, DRCC works with stakeholders and community members to address environmental justice, workforce development challenges, local wealth building, and climate resilience policy and infrastructure.

Community Engagement: Like other community-based organizations we interviewed, a vast majority of DRCC staff are from the community itself; therefore, not only are staff representative of the community, but 'community engagement' looks like engaging with neighbors by knocking on their doors and asking them how they are doing. Adrienne Hampton describes this as "hyper-localized," and likens community engagement to social gatherings such as a neighborhood community clean air workshop or the Duwamish River Festival, creating spaces where people can show up and be themselves -- leading with what is most important to them and their families. It also means involving, building power, and open opportunities to provide input on issues that directly impact folx.

Lessons: There were several key takeaways from our interview with DRCC. First, an important component of community engagement is knowing who is *not* showing up and then finding out how to reach those people who are not as vocal, busy in the community or at work, or non-English speakers; perhaps, too, the event isn't as accessible as it should be to the community. DRCC acknowledges that this is a challenge, but they also see it as their shared responsibility.

Second, one way to both engage with community members and increase capacity is to provide the space for them to gather, organize themselves, and prioritize their needs. Robin explains that DRCC does their job best when they "[pay] for a space for community to come, [let] them figure it out, and [let] them figure out what they want and then using [their] areas of potential influence to reach out to the mayor or to Department of Neighborhoods (...) to bring them in to hear the community's voice."

Lastly, DRCC cites some of the known barriers that people in their community face when it comes to participation, mostly related to more pressing issues such as capacity, the pandemic, and the equity gap driven by inequitable circumstances not yet addressed in the city, such as healthy income levels (e.g., physically challenging jobs, inability to find or pay for childcare services, etc.). However, they also suggest that people living in marginalized communities historically distrust the government to work in their favor because more affluent neighborhoods are often prioritized first. Marginalized communities do not grow up expecting systems (such as the school system or local government) to work for them like middle- and upper-class white Americans do, which is another part of the reason why it is hard to engage with everyone in the community; on a basic level, there are more pressing issues at hand. Adrienne summarizes her beliefs with this thought: "It is better to foster close knit systems and take matters into our own hands and out of systems that have historically failed us."

We are grateful to Adrienne Hampton, who provided additional context and content for this summary after our interview.

I.7 Flint River Watershed Coalition

Flint, MI
Rebecca Fedewa, Executive Director

Background: The Flint River Watershed Coalition (FRWC) has been working in Flint, Michigan since 1998 with a mission to protect, promote, and improve the Flint River and its watershed. FRWC pursues its work through partnerships, education programs, scientific projects, and involvement in the community.

Community Engagement: One way that FRWC attempted to gain the trust of the community impacted by their work and understand their needs was a partnership with the Michigan State University Planning and Zoning Center. This partnership resulted in the 2014 publication of "A Guidebook to Community Engagement: Involving Urban and Low-Income Populations in an Environmental Planning Process."

They also liaise with community leaders to listen to the community's agenda and adjust their own goals to act to support that. When a recent rainstorm destroyed a dam, the opportunity arose for FRWC to replace the man-made lake it fed with nature trails, but the community spoke up in defense of the lake. Rather than attempt to pursue what it saw as the more ecologically important outcome, FRWC supported the community in its desire to restore the dam and the community's lake.

When seeking grants to do work around Flint's lakes, FRWC has purposefully included neighborhood leaders in developing proposals, including the project's direction and scope, and has made shifts in programming due to the community's input. FRWC has also committed to hiring students from the neighborhood to work on the project if it receives funding to move forward.

In the summer, FRWC hosts picnics as a way to interact with the community and during the school year they run a K-12 education program in local schools.

Lessons: FRWC made efforts to identify and involve in their programs community members who they were not reaching, particularly people of color. The experiences of FRWC show the importance of organizations planning projects with the impacted community, not for them. Additionally, an organization can fulfill its mission while aligning its priorities with those of the community.

I.8 The Nature Conservancy, WA Chapter

Seattle, WA
Hannah Kett, Puget Sound Cities Program Manager

Background: The Washington (WA) Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was established in 1959 and has evolved its mission over the six decades it has been in existence; in more recent years, they have expanded their work to finding ways to bring people and urban nature together in both rural and urban environments. Today, the organization states its commitment to dismantling environmental racism and learning from Indigenous peoples in Washington State and throughout the Pacific Northwest. The WA Chapter works in partnership with other regional, national, and global offices of The Nature Conservancy. The Puget Sound Cities Program works both on a regional level, focusing on policy changes and funding structures for stormwater management and nature in regional cities, as well on a more local level, working with community-based partners primarily in south King County and Pierce County.

Community Engagement: Activities in the Puget Sound Cities Program are grounded in a community-led decision-making process, meaning the communities they work with dictate what role TNC plays in supporting them. Sometimes TNC leverages the significant philanthropic relationships it has to offer pass-through grants (i.e., re-granting) along with technical support from TNC staff. Other times, it supports community-based organizations in navigating regional policy or addressing other implementation challenges they face. In addition to collaborating on strategy, TNC focuses on building support for projects through advocating for funding and developing communication tools to share the story of the work. In many of their examples of community engagement, TNC provides more "background support" for smaller community-based organizations, striving to make the story more about community partners than about TNC.

Lessons: This interview highlighted several key learnings for larger nonprofit organizations, particularly for those who may have the capacity to act as funders through grant-making programs. First, as a larger organization, TNC has the resources to support staff like Hannah in building strong relationships with community partners over longer periods of time. Hannah pointed out that TNC is always going to be the largest organization in the room but is relatively new to the city space and renewed urban space; therefore, it is even more important that there is sufficient time dedicated to listening and learning in the process of forming community partnerships.

Second, espousing values including openness, honesty, and a willingness to "show up" consistently over a longer period of time have been crucial to building strong relationships with community partners; the trust built has allowed for harder conversations about the impact that white dominant organizations have had on partners' programs and has also shaped TNC's approach to partner engagement.

Lastly, Hannah noted that "as a science-based, outcome-driven organization, I think our challenge is that outcomes look different if you are really working with community and allowing community to lead." Communicating these differences in perspectives back to leadership and funders at TNC is a challenge; however, this is a key step in preventing external pressures from changing TNC's agenda with community partners over time.

I.9 Seattle Audubon

Seattle, WA
Claire Catania, Executive Director

Background: Seattle Audubon, a certified chapter of the National Audubon Society is a nonprofit operating in the greater Seattle region. Their mission is to advocate and organize for cities where people and birds thrive. They provide education, community science projects, and advocacy work on protecting birds, largely in urban areas. Their Urban Conservation Program works to enhance urban habitats and reduce the impacts of those environments on birds and wildlife.

Community Engagement: Seattle Audubon engages with the community on bird walks, education programs, and projects that benefit birds and neighborhoods. They run community science projects that encourage community members to contribute their valuable knowledge to the understanding of birds in the area. They strive to provide programming in marginalized and diverse areas and in meaningful ways with communities. Claire stated that they hope to co-create programming within communities, with community members inviting Seattle Audubon to collaborate.

Lessons: Claire emphasized that an important first step to making real change is recognizing an organization's current areas that lack equity. Thus, it is crucial to examine internal processes including hiring practices, board recruitment, and staff culture to make sure equitable engagement work can move forward authentically. Determining how to implement racially equitable community engagement in the organization can be challenging when staff do not feel that community engagement is part of their job, showcasing the importance of establishing that commitment and expectation. This internal recognition also includes acknowledging the conservation field's often elitist nature, exclusionary past, and colonial foundation in order to do better.

Building towards community-driven projects and empowering communities to take the lead and shape programming was another important idea Claire highlighted, noting that the first step would

be developing a shared mission and vision with community members. She expressed that community ownership is what will make a program sustainable and successful.

1.10 Solid Ground

Seattle, WA
Tiffany Lamoreaux, Anti-Racism Initiative Manager

Background: Based in Seattle, Solid Ground was founded in 1974. Its mission is to end poverty and undo its root causes, racism, and oppression. They engage in programs to help people stabilize and thrive to get out of poverty, including housing provision, emergency food resources, and transportation services.

Solid Ground instituted the Anti-Racism Initiative in the early years of the 21st Century to focus internally on its systems and structures. It includes three overlapping areas:

1. **Learning and development** in the form of anti-racism training;
2. **Employee support**, such as race-based caucusing designed for white staff to hold each other accountable for undoing institutionalized racism; and
3. **Performance**, including equity goals in hiring practices.

A big part of anti-racism efforts at Solid Ground is bringing the people most impacted into the decision-making process.

Community Engagement: Recognizing that the community knows best how to meet their own needs, Solid Ground coordinates a Community Accountability Council (CAC) composed of community members to function as a think tank to co-design programs so that the impacted community has a voice during the design phase of programs, not just after their effects can be seen. The CAC experiences Solid Ground's programs on the ground, providing a different perspective from what anyone else in the organization sees, and in recognition of the value it provides, Solid Ground reimburses the members $75 each month in gift cards to help pay their expenses. The CAC has been incorporated into Solid Ground's formal board recruitment process so the council members have a say in new board members, giving the community a greater voice in the organization's direction.

Lessons Learned: Community members can be effectively included at every stage of a project's development, but their expertise has value, and they must be compensated for it. Additionally, Tiffany highlighted that anti-racism is not an end-goal, but a journey and an approach to how work is done.

I.11 WeConservePA

Harrisburg, PA
Sara Painter, Director of Outreach and Development

Background: WeConservePA is a coalition of conservation organizations from across Pennsylvania, including land trusts, watershed associations, environmental advisory councils, and conservation districts. Their goal is to help people protect, wisely use, and enjoy what nature offers. Originally the "Pennsylvania Land Trust Association," WeConservePA is now made up of 70 organizational members and additional individuals, working on policy advocacy and other shared practices.

Community Engagement: WeConservePA provides support for member organizations looking to learn from each other. After the protests of the summer of 2020, they noticed that many conservation groups issued statements related to their commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ), and formed a community council of organizations to support each other's continued learning in that area. While community engagement is not a specific focus of the group, they have been building greater cross-organization understanding of how to better listen to the communities that each organization works in, emphasizing the importance of relationship-building.

Lessons: The community of practice arose with a strong commitment to co-creation, trying to avoid traditional paternalistic and decision-making hierarchies and instead focus on building community with each other. Sara noted that this messy work was frustrating for many people representing the organizations at first, because they have been used to complying with grant deliverables, metrics, and reporting. Relatedly, she recognized the challenge of funding DEIJ work since it has to come out of unrestricted funds and does not have clear deliverables or easily measurable outcomes.

Sara also emphasized that work that aims to contribute to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice must begin internally: "The DEIJ work requires an internal process and internal learning and understanding and a journey." Many organizations in their learning community started by thinking about how to increase diversity of their staff and board before focusing on their work with external partners and stakeholders. She further highlighted the challenging history of the conservation field, which has historically excluded diverse and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities as well as people of color. As a group, they specifically use the term "justice" in their "DEIJ" work to allude to the concept of environmental justice, which acknowledges the efforts of many people of color to advocate for their environmental needs.

Finally, Sara recounted a time when it felt necessary to create alternative pathways to power to continue working with a consultant for the DEIJ group, sending two people from the group to talk to board members rather than organizational leadership in order to get continued support for their efforts.