

Building meaningful partnerships with our Latine communities:

Reflections from the community foundation field

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CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES
IN THE AMERICAS



CONECTANDO
COMUNIDADES
EN AMÉRICA

 HISPANICS IN
PHILANTHROPY

CFLeads
Community Foundations
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INTRODUCTION

Identity and culture for members of the Hispanic/Latinx community is as complex and rich as the history and trajectory of this population - NAMI, Sonoma County website

Why this? Why now?

The idea of a guide for community foundations has its roots in many conversations over the past years with Latines across the country and the experiences of community foundations that have sought to learn about and from their Latine communities, leading some of them to redefine how they view grantmaking and community partnerships.

We observed that community foundations across the United States are often disconnected from their Latine communities, even in cities and regions where Latines are the majority or largest under-recognized population. People of diverse Latine or Hispanic origin are usually not represented on the boards of directors, only a few are staff members, and even fewer are in leadership positions within foundations.

Yet it is one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Frey, 2021) contributing more than **\$3.2 trillion** in economic output in 2021 and accounting for **73%** of the growth in the U.S. labor force between 2000 and 2020 (Hoffman & Jurado, 2024).

Together with Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP), Connecting Communities in the Americas at CFLeads conducted interviews with 19 Latines working in or with community foundations nationwide. We asked them for their recommendations on how community foundations could engage with their populations effectively.

We began with the idea of a guide for community foundations, yet realized how we in philanthropy are often too prone to watering down the rich complexity of systems and relationships into neat, succinct 5-step processes adorned with acronyms.

This is not that guide.

Rather, it is a *reflection* on the words of these 19 professionals, accompanied by discussion points throughout the document to give structure and impulse to conversations. **We encourage community foundations teams to take time exploring this guide and use the discussion prompts for thoughtful reflection.**

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Part One: Overview



METHODOLOGY



Rochester Area Community Foundation

Our purpose for this document is to present community foundation personnel and boards of directors with authentic recommendations for practical and effective ways to engage their local Latine/Hispanic communities.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 professionals who work or have worked with community foundations across the United States. Qualitative in nature, this is not a representative sample for research purposes, but rather a collection of ideas that could be considered when engaging with Latine communities.

We began by identifying and sending email interview invitations to people we already knew and who were working in or near the community foundation space. Then we did a Google search online for additional community foundations whose websites showed their work with Latine communities. Of the 23 invitations that were sent, people from 15 organizations responded, resulting in interviews with 19 individuals. We tried to invite people from across geographic regions, ages, genders, and organization sizes.

The guide is divided into two parts. Part One provides an overview of the interviewees, a discussion on identity, what they feel is going well with Latine community engagement among community foundations, and opportunities for more meaningful engagement. Part Two is the primary section of the document and provides specific recommendations for reflection and action. We conclude with brief thoughts as authors and an Appendix with more details about the interviewees and the organizations they work for.



OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWEES AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

19 PEOPLE

15

Organizations



12 States



12

Community foundations,



2

Latine-led and focused community foundations



1 Direct service organization



National Latine-led and focused association



Corporate foundation



4

With specific funds directed to Latine communities, one with a Latine giving circle.

5



CEOs
or
Executive
Directors

3

VPs,
COO
(are or
were)

8

Program directors
or officers
(are or were)



3 community
fund officers



LANGUAGE, LABELS AND IDENTITY

There are so many labels out there...Latino, Hispanic, Latinx... and knowing which of them is most appropriate and respectful to use can be confusing.



Discussion points:

a. Using the word cloud, what identities have you heard being used where you live? Are there any missing?

b. How is this *diversity* in identity important when reaching out to your community?



During the interviews, we listened to how each person referred to themselves and their communities **and then used that same language** throughout the conversation. The way they self-identified varied greatly:

I identify as Hispanic.

I am Latina or Hispanic...I identify as a Texan who has lived here my whole life.

Latina New Yorker...a proud military spouse...a woman of faith...a mother.

At first, I said Hispanic...but I felt I was neglecting my Caribbean side...so I'm a proud Latina woman.

I use gender-inclusive language. Latinx. Although in Spanish, Latine is more grammatically correct.

I use Latinx, Latino and Latino/a interchangeably, depending on who I am speaking to.

I describe myself as Latino...my *latinidad* has been created by so many Latin cultures.

I call myself Chicana...but a lot of people have no idea what that is.

I am Mexican...I'm proud of the word, so I want to normalize what it is to be Mexican.

We used to say we were Spanish...then I used Hispanic for a while...then intentionally moving into Latino/a.

I always knew I was Hispanic - that was what I knew from my Nana.

Recognizing that labels tend to restrict rather than expand identity, how do we choose what expressions to use in our institutional communications? The short answer is... ask the members of your community. For our interviewees who work with Latine funds and giving circles, most had their community advisory committees decide which name to use.

Flexibility is key, as Adiee described:

“We respect any identity that somebody wants to claim and have as their own... we are open to that conversation and the terminology and are receptive to changes.”

In cases where the foundations also had LGBTQ+ funds, they chose to use Latinx, while others felt that it was a term used more by academics, not as familiar among their communities, or primarily used by younger people.

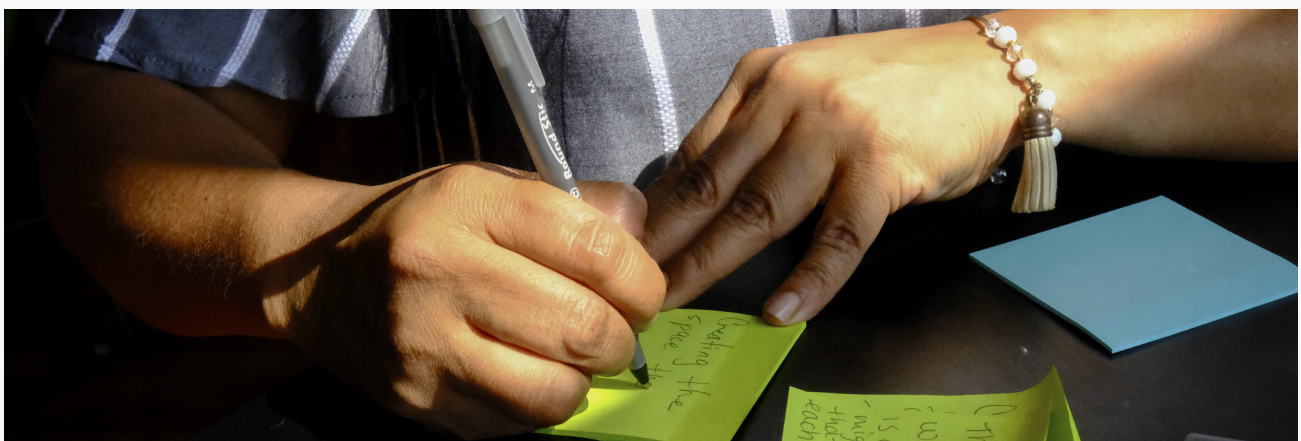
“We’ve adopted Latinx in all our communications...we’re very intentional about being inclusive of gender.” (Javier)

“We use Latinx only when talking to younger generations.” (Gilda)

While CFLeads has not adopted a specific identifier, Hispanics in Philanthropy uses *Latine* as the default identifier. Depending on their audience, they also shift from Latino, Hispanic, Latinx or 33 countries of origin.

HIP strives to honor and respect the individual identities across their network – or what they call a “collective corazón.” Their focus is on the priorities of the richly diverse cultures that make up Latin America and the Caribbean and people of Latin American and Caribbean descent in the US. That is why throughout the document you’ll also find a reference to *Latine communities* rather than a single community.

In this guide, we also used accents on names according to each interviewee’s preference, and did the same for terms like *Latino*, *Latina*, *Latinx*, *Latine*, and *Hispanic*.





LATINES AND PHILANTHROPY

Latine philanthropy, both formal and informal, has expanded in the United States, yet research on trends has been limited. In 2023, the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy conducted a comprehensive study using literature reviews, surveys, and focus groups of diverse Latine donors, philanthropic advisors, and nonprofit professionals to better understand Latine giving behaviors.



Latino Community Fund Georgia

The report, [Latinx Philanthropy: Understanding Generosity Trends Across Latinx Communities in the U.S.](#), revealed that Latine donors often prioritize family, faith, and local communities, and are more likely to engage in informal giving compared to their non-Latine counterparts. Major causes for Latine households include religious institutions, basic needs, healthcare, and education.



The research suggests that as Latine communities continue to grow, their philanthropy will reflect the evolution of their communities, shifting towards supporting a broader range of causes and long-term investments in future generations.

To learn more you can read the report in detail at: <https://hipfunds.org/latinx-generosity-report/>



HISPANICS IN PHILANTHROPY

About Programs Take Action Events Members Blog

HIP en Español



Donate

Latinx Philanthropy: Understanding Generosity Trends Across Latinx Communities in the U.S.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION RELATIONS WITH LATINE COMMUNITIES

During the interviews, we asked what participants felt was going well in community foundations' outreach and engagement with Latine communities and what opportunities existed for improvement. The responses highlighted roles that people from Latine communities could take on, including as donors, advisory committee members, consultants, bridgers, grantees, and partners.

What is going well

Interviewees from community foundations with Latine-focused initiatives readily identified several positive actions they saw, such as:

INTERNAL CHANGE

- ✓ When foundations have Latine staff and board members.
- ✓ When Spanish becomes one of the languages used by the foundation.

MORE INCLUSIVE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ When they offer fiscal sponsorship to grassroots initiatives.
- ✓ When they “go beyond the grant” to offer capacity building and networking opportunities.
- ✓ When they expand their funding to include organizations they've historically overlooked (amplify their definition of whose work is eligible for funding).

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

- ✓ When they show up at or convene in Latine community spaces.
- ✓ When they meet with Latine community leaders to hear about needs and opportunities.
- ✓ When leadership supports the work with personnel and investments in Latine communities.
- ✓ When giving circles are flexible with donation installments or accepting smaller amounts.
- ✓ When their communication is asset-based, amplifying Latine contributions, resilience, and agency instead of deficits.

Areas of opportunity

Areas where interviewees thought community foundations could improve their engagement with Latine communities included:



Sharing about the work of community foundations more publicly increases opportunities to understand what is being done and ways to collaborate.



Talking to Latines and Latine-led nonprofits about data that shows gaps that need to be addressed; offering to collect data together.



Going beyond Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) training and investing more strategically as an organizational culture over the long term.



Encouraging staff to spend time in the community – and then following the community's lead.



Challenging negative narratives about Latines, especially surrounding migration.



Matching actions and investments to what the foundation communicates.

Part Two of this document addresses many of these opportunities in its recommendations.

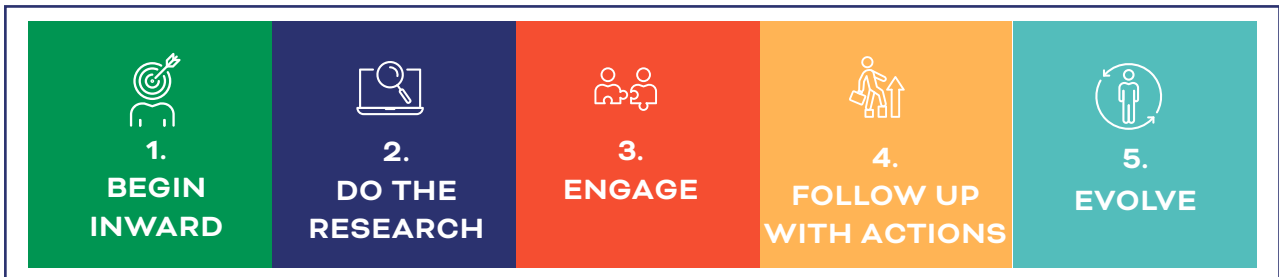
Part Two: Recomendations



- ★ *Start now*
- ★ *Be a listener*
- ★ *Show up as the learner*
- ★ *Hello! I'm here, I'm so glad I came - be grateful*
- ★ *Don't go anywhere empty-handed – food, cookies, coffee*
- ★ *Be accessible*
- ★ *Don't rush, take the time to engage and learn*
- ★ *Appreciate the differences*
- ★ *Be humble, be gracious, be a hospitable guest*
- ★ *Be genuine*
- ★ *Make a real commitment – long term*
- ★ *Put your money where your mouth is*



The following recommendations come from the 19 interviews on how community foundations can begin or improve engagement with Latine communities. This is what emerged from the conversations:



1. BEGIN INWARD

So you want to start engaging Latine communities more intentionally. Where can you begin?

Óscar recommended, “Start with your house first.” And this sentiment was repeated, interview after interview. This means doing what José called “self-work” - recognizing, naming, challenging, and changing power structures personally and inside the institution before attempting to build new relationships. This is what many communities of color have been insisting on from philanthropy.

Carlos emphasized beginning with the boards of directors,

“I think the very first thing that a board needs to be discussing is, Why do we exist? What are we trying to change?”

Maria del Carmen explained that her foundation began inward-focused work even before the COVID pandemic. They wanted to ensure the change was throughout the institution – in Human Resources, Communications, and other departments

“from the leadership all the way down... We need to look like our community.”

This is the acknowledgment that, in most places, members of Latine communities have not traditionally been represented in community foundations and therefore these foundations are either invisible to them or considered **not for them**. In several places like California, Georgia, Colorado, and Washington, Latine community foundations and funds have sprouted up to exercise a philanthropy that is **“by us, for us.”**

Óscar went further to say,

*“I think it’s necessary and important to make the invisible visible, and **talk about the legacy of discrimination, racism and underinvestment in communities that are struggling.** This inequality didn’t manifest itself on its own, it was the result of decision making by those in power.”*

- Reflect on who is at the table



Some interviewees talked about **having a seat at the table** in community foundations. It was implied that doing outreach with Latine communities should involve both bringing new people to the table and expanding seats internally for staff and board members.

Sometimes though, that table might need to look a little different, as one person explained,

“When you have very different people at the table that are bringing voice to things that hadn’t been voiced before, we have to be able to morph the table - it just can’t stay the same.”

In other words, **processes and ways of communicating that have been taken** for granted at board and team meetings in community foundations for decades might not feel welcoming or be effective for groups that have historically not been part of those conversations. We need to reflect on **what our assumptions are** and openly talk about how they might vary among new participants.

Óscar related equity work to the positioning of people at the table **during board meetings**, not only metaphorically but in reality.

*“You can’t talk about equity if you have staff sitting in the back row. And so, we made a bigger table, so that staff and board sit together at the board meeting, something that had never been done before at the organization... That’s what I mean... **We’re going to lean into that uncomfortableness, invite different viewpoints and perspectives, and sit in the space of the other in a very meaningful and constructive way.**”*

Marisa and Natalia emphasized the critical role of **internal work** necessary **to validate the external work** of a foundation.

“...we can try to connect with communities through our external work, whether it’s our grantmaking or donor engagement, but if we don’t have that equity culture inside that is really deeply rooted, you know, then there’s a gap there.”

“You cannot do external work until you have healed internally and have created a culture internally that understands and embraces diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and that may take you 2 or 3 years. And that’s okay. I’d rather people wait than cause harm, irreparable harm, in communities because they weren’t prepared.”

This brings us to the topic of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) training and similar approaches. A few of the interviewees mentioned it as part of this internal process at their foundations. We asked Óscar Chávez about his thoughts on the real impact of DEI work in his institution and whether it was enough. Now the President & CEO of Community Foundation Sonoma County, Óscar is a Mexican immigrant who formerly served on the board and their DEI committee. He explained that the board and team’s first attempt to address it failed and that they are revisiting it now.

*“When I was on the DEI Committee, we struggled to implement some of the strategies in the work, particularly because **staff and board were at different levels of understanding**...and I think that’s partly the result of asking people to bring their lived experiences to this work, which could be perceived as sort of “off limits” in the workplace. These are **things we don’t talk about** and so we didn’t quite get that pre-work done...So now we are **making a second attempt** at this, and we are level setting and trying **to build a common language**, so that the board and staff understand the terms that we use. We are being very mindful of the **level of safety that is required to do this work**. In other words, if you don’t create the authorizing environment to normalize talking about race, people can’t be honest about this work.”*

We asked, how did you know that it wasn’t working the first time around?

There was a lack of understanding of the recommendation, and we were asked to get more data to prove what what we were advocating for was actually the case rather than just based on our experience. The recommendations were rejected, and while that felt like a failure, I think failure is healthy.. We failed forward, as many people say, and from that experience, we learned that we have to all move.... we don’t want to engage in “equity theater.”

Discussion points:

1. Evaluate your foundation’s equity journey through group dialogue. Establish agreements to create a safe space and ask each person to rate the foundation’s progress internally. Share and explain individual ratings and what differences in perspectives might mean.
2. What sort of internal work might still need to be done?
3. What next steps could you take? What will you commit to as an organization? As leadership?



- Hire people who look like us.



Several individuals mentioned hiring staff from Latine communities as an important step towards embracing their communities, and even more so in regions with larger Latine populations.

One interviewee emphasized,

“For other community foundations that are trying to do the outreach, hire more people who look like the people that they’re serving in the community.”

This emphasizes the need for people to see themselves reflected in the foundations that serve their communities – from race and cultural background to gender identity and more. Natalia added that the makeup of the staff and board **will influence who identifies with the foundation** and will want to become part of the work.

“I’ve had folks of color come to me and say, I came to you because they [other organizations] didn’t have any people of color on their staff.”

Natalia and others stress that this extends beyond Latine populations to include any group in your community that has historically lacked representation.

“Be thoughtful about hiring practices... that could be around disability, that can be around sexual identity, that can be around gender identity. It doesn’t have to just be racial, and I don’t think we should be thinking about racial equity exclusive to those things...so that’s where the intersectional work also comes in.”

Maria del Carmen felt that for the whole organization to experience internal change, you need leadership change – including finding the right CEO or Executive Director to lead the process. She felt that the new CEO at the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts has been able to build on the down-to-earth, culturally sensitive, and authentic work of the previous leadership. She emphasized including staff members’ suggestions to define what is needed from the new leader and help design future improvements or new initiatives.

She also mentioned that as the foundation does its internal work, it might be time for some board members to step down and let new people come in. In the ideal sense, this would be voluntary, demonstrating a commitment to the evolution of the organization.

- And then support their leadership.



But it’s not about **simply hiring** either. No matter how diverse the staff is, they need to be fully supported by the leadership. As the Co-chair of the Latino Giving Circle hosted at the Rochester Area Community Foundation, Annette Ramos felt that their program officer was really empowered to do the work that she needed to do. Her recommendation to others was,

*“Hire trusted and vetted Latinx community leaders. Not in the cultural appropriation way, but as **a real sustainable relationship and partnership that’s based on mutual benefit.** Hire them, pay them well, and most importantly, empower them to bring critical theory to the table, to bring intentionality of inclusion and equity.”*

Maria del Carmen also emphasized that hiring someone to spend time in community was critical, *“asking what the priorities are and collecting data.”*

Marisa **offered caution** when hiring someone on the assumption that they would then be able to use their network to attract donors or other forms of Latino participation.

*“When you’re asking individuals to open their networks to the institution and provide their social capital... you have to make sure as an institution, you are **ready for that, right?....** There still has to be trust and development, **based on the institution’s actions, relationships, and behaviors.**”*

Patricia and another participant agreed,

*“We have to be just as **intentional about the inclusion.** It’s got to happen in their **policies and shared power** on the board. It has to happen through **leadership structures.** It has to happen through **pay equity.**”*

*“Make them feel included in the decision making and **allow them to make those decisions.**”*

Discussion points:

1. Examine the foundation’s goals for Latine community engagement. Define the purpose of reaching out to Latine communities. How are institutional practices already reflecting this? What practices might need to adjust to better reflect the stated purpose?
2. Are there any Latine members on your staff or board? Have a conversation with them about how they felt coming in, how they feel now, and what their recommendations would be. Consider using an anonymous method like a survey or form to collect this information.
3. Have you wanted to hire a more diverse staff but not had any applicants? What might be the possible reasons? Who could you reach out to in your community to help change that?



Thalia Becerrill, Sonoma County Community Foundation

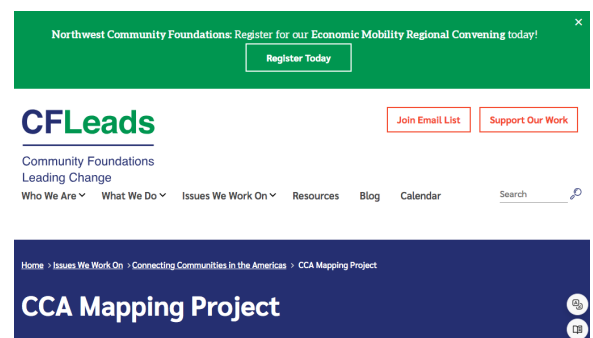


2. DO THE RESEARCH

Marla and others recommended doing some research on your Latine communities, based on questions like:

- ✓ What is the population in your region? Where do they come from? Where do they live?
- ✓ Which nonprofits in your region are Latine-led and/or serve a largely Latine population?
- ✓ How do income levels compare? Health indicators? Education indicators?
- ✓ How do these relate to the community foundation's mission, strategic vision, and programs?

These are also questions that many of the Mapping Project grantees of the Connecting Communities in the Americas initiative at CFLeads have been asking and the answers have contributed to a change in how their foundations work. You can find examples of how they carried out this work at bit.ly/CCAMapping and bit.ly/CompletedCCAMapping.



To do this work, Annette R. referred to the types of people you should invite.

*“It is critical to any foundation that’s looking to develop Latinx philanthropy to ensure that you have not one, but a **real representation of trusted community leaders at the table.**”*

Erika agreed,

“...people who are working directly with the population that you’re trying to serve, like nonprofit leaders, educators, social workers, and healthcare professionals. They see the needs that exist in real time and understand them in ways that leaders who no longer are involved in day-to-day direct service do not.”

Carlos Martínez, CEO of the Latino Community Foundation in Denver, insisted that foundations need to use research to prepare for the future.

*“How educated are we with the **demographic changes** that are going to be taking place in our communities? And how are we responding to them?...Look at **how our boards are being developed**, to really look critically about where our role fits in, and as it fits in, **how do we change the way we do our grantmaking** to reflect that?”*

He also challenged community foundations to develop a **higher risk tolerance** in their support of newer nonprofits and grassroots initiatives.

Discussion points:

1. What information do you already have on the Latine community? Where could you get more? Who could be your community partners for this?
2. If your foundation has not done so already, how can you find out who the nonprofits are in your regions that are Latine-led? What might be a suitable setting to have a conversation with them about their work and concerns?
3. Brainstorm on your team and board about these questions: Why is this important? How does it further your strategic vision?



3. ENGAGE

Get out into the community and ***be with us.***



Angela Rowlings, The Boston Foundation

Cindy said,

*“It’s all about relationship building ... You need to take your time and listen and be an active participant in the conversation.... **That engagement piece is really what’s going to make a difference with the Latino population.**”*

Gilda added,

Engage in a learning journey...invite people to listen to you...and listen to us.”

Relationship-building is an important value in many communities, but particularly emphasized in Latine cultures. Building authentic relationships takes time, and cultivating trust may be gradual.

Recommendations from our interviewees included:

- Don't expect Latinos to just show up.

*"Unless the Latino community is specifically invited to something so **many of us feel like, well, that's not for us.**" (Eileen)*

- Work authentically and for the long-term.

Ariel and Adiee explained,

*"So it's **starting small**, I think,...so that it's not, What do we want from them? It's, **How do we give? How do we give in this relationship for a while?**...but even more important is to authentically invest in someone or in a service or way that builds that relationship and capacity.*

*"You need an understanding that **building trust and rapport is going to take time.** So if you're really wanting to engage with the Latino community and make an impact...you want sustained efforts that are going to grow these relationships over time."*

- Build trusting relationships with Latine leaders over time who can serve as bridges to the rest of the community.

Carlos and Ariel approached this idea from different perspectives, with these suggestions,

*"**Invite** nonprofits over for lunch, ask questions, ask what would work/not work....**be honest about funding.**"*

*"There's a level of **authenticity** that opens up for engagement and relationship building that is very difficult to mimic, even with the best development skills and the best intentions."*

Once trust starts to develop, Marla explains, these leaders can serve as mediators to validate and connect you to others within the larger community.

- Spend time at community events – show a genuine interest.

Several interviewees gave suggestions for **how to relate to their community** when you show up at their events and activities.

*"You don't want to drop in on a parachute...I don't feel like that fosters connectivity. Meet in person, **visit their community or neighborhood.** Show you are not above that." (Marla)*

*It's like, hey, we'd like to come in and meet you, and we'd like to tell you who we are and what we do. And then **we want to hear from you what you think** we can do to help you achieve your goals." (Eileen)*

- Others talked about community foundations immersing themselves in Latine networks.

Familiarize yourself with the organizations or programs that already exist.

*“We Latinos are doing this work, and many times at the grassroots level. You want to build trust so that you’re within this network of organizations that have been doing this work, and **you’re learning with them, alongside them, and from them.**” (Adiee)*

Involve direct service providers from the beginning.

*“Where can you **break bread** with the community and really understand what the needs are?” (Carla)*

Recognize that Latine communities are not monolithic.

Have someone on staff who is **paid to spend time** out in the community.

Be aware and **humble** about why there might be mistrust.

“Just be good partners, and don’t rush... You do the work that it takes to, just because I think there’s a skepticism... What is this entity trying to extract from my community?” (Marisa)

- “If you are gathering with community members, be mindful about how accessibility is being prioritized.” (Erika).

- Ask around to see what community spaces would be most convenient to meet in.
- Check what times work best.
- Offer language interpretation so that everyone feels included and valued.
- Offer food and refreshments.
- Offer childcare so that parents have more accessibility.
- Be transparent about what the foundation is hoping to learn, able to offer, and whether or not funding opportunities are available.
- Compensate people for their time and sharing their experience at the meeting in the same way you would plan to pay an external consultant.

As Patricia emphasized,

*“It is not for us to reach out to that community in a way that fits into the existing model, because we know that community foundations historically have been exclusive. And so to do that differently, you have to **rethink the entire model**... I think it’s really **relinquishing power** in the way that community foundations know it.”*

- Commit to being learners.

*“Recognize them as leaders so that they can do that outreach and networking that is so critical to ensuring the growth of these kinds of initiatives... being **responsive and open to ideas** the committee brings them...It’s about **empowering them** to do the work and trusting them to do the work.” (Annette J)*

Carlos emphasized that, rather than charity:

*“...it’s about building our **collective assets** to solve issues.”*

Gilda and Óscar would like to see **foundation donors positioned as learners and partners** of nonprofits and grassroots groups, recognizing them as experts in the field.

“Invite us to educate your Donor Advised Fund leaders... They can be the connector versus, you know, gatekeepers for the money...”

Discussion points:

1. Based on the recommendations so far, discuss the differences between doing outreach with Latine communities and inviting them to the table.
2. How can you identify and connect with local Latine leaders in your community? Do you have partners who could introduce you?
3. In small groups, or collaboratively, create an ‘elevator pitch to present yourself and the foundation as a learner and partner.
4. Establish who in the foundation should be out in the community and how much time per week. Integrate community engagement into your strategic plan.





4. FOLLOW UP WITH ACTIONS

Revisit your grantmaking policies and processes.

*“It is through relationships that you build understanding, and it is through understanding that you can **develop a grant program that is going to be more meaningful.**”*
(Óscar)

There are many ways that deepening community relationships will lead to more effective foundation work. An interviewee explained how they worked with **newer nonprofits and emerging grassroots groups**, in many cases led by people of color. They often:

*“...**didn’t qualify because of our guidelines** and the application process, so anytime they applied, we would **question it more than the others**, just because they were a new organization for us. And I started to question that and say, well, most of these are people of color, and this is their first time really applying for a grant. Let’s give them a shot and see where things go...Don’t just riddle them with questions, but **accompany them, build relationships** to see where they fit in - or **how your community foundation should adjust.**”*

Part of this is, as Erika mentioned, is being aware of **power differences** when partnering.

*“Funders ultimately hold the power of the purse, and they should not disregard the **interpersonal dynamics** that emerge as a result.”*

Javier and Carlos emphasized the need for a **long-term vision of strengthening local organizations** that goes beyond funding projects. So just like a community foundation needs to invest in its own staff to fill the needs of community engagement, local nonprofits and grassroots groups need operational support to deepen the impact they are doing.

*“**Fund for sustainability [of organizations]**...serve as a pipeline of Latino fundraisers.*

*“**View nonprofit sustainability not by what is in the bank**, but how developed the board is, how connected the executive director is, and how they are working together in the community.”*

Javier also returned to the concept **of intersectionality** - understanding that supporting Latine communities contributes to lifting the well-being of the whole community.

*“We need to do a little bit better, I think, on our end to understand the intersectionality of these issues...to uplift this idea that **queer issues are Latinx issues**, that **housing issues are Latinx issues**. And honestly, **the issues are so linked together**, right?, that you can’t have progress without supporting Latinos.”*

Discussion points:

1. What support does or could your foundation offer to grantseekers, especially if they are newer? Define ways to make this information readily available and accessible.
2. Evaluate your foundation's support for grassroots organizations. What percentage of your grants go to grassroots groups? Are there specific funding streams or initiatives dedicated to them? How flexible are your grant requirements for smaller, community-based groups? What non-financial support (capacity building, networking) do you offer? Are there any barriers in your current grantmaking process that might hinder them from accessing funding?



- Learn and be flexible about Latine ways of giving.



As we highlighted with the HIP research earlier in this document, part of the learning piece is understanding that **a culture of giving is very deeply embedded into Latine ways of being** – it just might not look like mainstream philanthropy. As Erika said,

*“Just because we haven’t always shown up in formal philanthropy doesn’t mean that we don’t have a deep history of supporting our communities...**so think about what more informal community care looks like** and the value it holds for us.”*

The Latine leaders that you are building relationships with can tell you what giving looks like in their communities.

Javier emphasized getting to know **the younger generations of Latines** as an important piece for future growth, but possibly in different ways than it has previously been approached.

*“They could be your **key additions to diversify your donor pool**. They can be your **key leaders** to give you more progressive ideas on where to invest their resources. They can be an extension of your work as a funder... **young people that are looking to do the community work**, rarely see philanthropy or fundraising as a driver for that.”*

Annette Ramos and Annette Jimenez talked a lot about how they have made adjustments to their **Latino Giving Circle donation guidelines** at the Rochester Area Community Foundation so that everyone felt included, no matter how much they were able to give.

*“Yes, we have **payment options**, so everyone feels that they can be a part of this initiative...and you know, somebody who gives us 25 bucks, we’re going to treat them as valued as our \$1,000 donor.”*

They also stressed the importance of **onboarding** new giving circle members and the advisory committee **on what all the community foundation does**, so that they feel like part of a larger effort.

Discussion points:

1. Identify people within your community who could talk to you about different forms of giving and generosity within Latine communities.
2. How could you incorporate these into a broader definition of philanthropy? How could the foundation highlight examples of this?



El Horsfall, Austin Community Foundation

- Address language barriers.



According to the American Community Survey ([Census.gov](https://www.census.gov)), about 1 in 5 people in the United States speak languages other than English at home, and for about 61% of those, that language is Spanish. The assumption that English is the universal language in the U.S. has created language barriers in philanthropy, healthcare, education, and other areas of life. It also represents a **structural cause for inequities and hinders the well-being of a community**.

One community foundation recognized the need to address the language barrier in their community, where 1 in 5 are Latine and 18% of families speak Spanish at home. They integrated Google Translate into their website so readers can choose their language and recommend that language translation and interpretation be included in the **Communications budget** at foundations, especially for community meetings and as a way of considering equitable access.

Ariel Rodriguez, Executive Director of the nonprofit Empower in Wichita, Kansas, emphasized language access as a venue for sharing the impact of a community foundation's work.

"...make sure your resources are out there, both in English and Spanish, and make sure that you are thinking of ways that you're talking about your impact."

Within the Latine communities, we recognize that there are also many individuals who speak Indigenous languages, so the topic of language access both through community foundations and in public services should be ongoing.

You can find information from the American Community Survey about your state, county, and town on [census.gov](https://www.census.gov) in the 'Why We Ask Each Question' section

Discussion points:

1. How can your team engage with social service professionals and community leaders to discuss the language barriers they encounter? To what extent are these barriers currently recognized or overlooked?
2. What role can the foundation play in addressing language barriers in the community and ensuring equitable access to important information?

- Use your voice and positioning to help change the narrative about Latine contributions and advocate for Latine needs.



Latine communities would benefit from community foundations promoting a more positive narrative about who they are and their longstanding contributions to the well-being of the United States.

Óscar shared his own story of being "labeled".

*"You know, as a kid, I was not the labels that everybody gave me. I was not "at risk." I had a very loving home with parents who had to work 14 hours just to make ends meet. I was not broken - I was broke, right? We were poor and yet, I was given all of these labels. So, our Latino communities are not the labels we give them. **They have agency, they have resilience,** and so I think it's important that we, our work, and our messaging reflects of the beauty and the strength and the collective resilience of a community."*

Javier and Carla emphasized a needed shift to recognize the economic contributions of Latines in the United States and how to strengthen them:

*[Examples like] “youth development, leadership development, ESOL programs, actually have become the main components of upper mobility for Latinos...**economic mobility work**... we know that those programs exist, right? but they’re underfunded and they’re understaffed.”*

*“**By growing our workforce**...being as inclusive as possible, and providing the skill sets that are needed for this influx of population... helping to grow our workforce is going to make us that much stronger from an economic perspective.”*

Another interviewee gave an example of how her foundation president stepped up for an underfunded school district.

*“The majority of the school district is Hispanic, like 97-98%, and they’re some of the most underfunded schools...So standing up for that population and using the community foundation’s voice to say, It’s not that the superintendent is doing anything wrong, the parents aren’t doing anything wrong, the students definitely aren’t. If they just had adequate funding, a lot of this would go away. **So using that community foundation power and leadership voice to stand up for those issues.**”*

Discussion points:

1. Discuss the various narratives about Latines that exist in your area. How would you feel if these were the dominant narratives about your community? Identify three actions your foundation can take to reinforce the positive narratives or challenge the negative ones.
2. What are ways in which the community foundation can partner with others to build a positive narrative about the richness, resilience, and contributions of the Latine community?



Mark Sobhani, Connecting Communities in the Americas at CFLeads



5. EVOLVE AS A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Carlos put it simply,

*Be future-oriented.
Include us in creating a vision for the future
that is more inclusive and equitable.*

Discussion points:

1. Where do you go from here to be inclusive in community planning and support? Create a timeline to implement the reflections from the guide and consider assigning co-leads to ensure the foundation is accountable for moving these ideas forward.



Sonoma County Community Foundation

Conclusion

“

Power that is not used is dangerous... because power is never quiescent, it is never neutral. If I do not use my power – however relative it is – if I do not find out what it is and learn to use it, someone else is using it. The power you do not use is being used against us, against me, against our children, against our world.

”

This quote from Audre Lorde serves as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to actively pursue equity and justice. At HIP we reflect on this message regularly in our gatherings, so we'd like to share that with you.

Together, CFLeads and HIP have developed this as a starting point for meaningful engagement with your Latine communities. We are deeply grateful to the 19 Latina, Latino, Latine, and Hispanic leaders who generously shared their expertise and wisdom to help us work towards equitable and just opportunities for all.

As you move forward in reconnecting with or initiating engagement with the Latines in your communities, we urge you to take these steps.

- ✔ **Build Genuine Relationships:** Engage with community members authentically by participating in shared experiences and actively listening to their perspectives.
- ✔ **Challenge Harmful Narratives:** Be proactive in addressing and countering stereotypes and misinformation.
- ✔ **Commit to Ongoing Action:** Use the insights gained to inform and drive continuous equitable actions within your foundation.

We encourage you to embrace this opportunity with openness and commitment. Your efforts in fostering authentic partnerships and advocating for justice will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society for all.



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Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Isabel Media Studios



APPENDIX

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM	LOCATION
Marisa Magallanez	Albuquerque Community Foundation		Albuquerque, NM
Adiee Gonzalez Carla Molina	Austin Community Foundation	Hispanic Impact Fund	Austin, TX
Monica Reyes Cindy Milan	Berks County Community Foundation		Reading, PA
Maria del Carmen Rodriguez	Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts		Springfield, MA
Ariel Rodriguez	Empower		Wichita, KS
Erika Van Dyke	Grand Rapids Community Foundation	Somos Comunidad	Grand Rapids, MI
Carlos Martínez	Latino Community Foundation of Colorado		Denver, CO
Gilda Pedraza	Latino Community Fund		GA
Eileen Torres	Lorain County Community Foundation	Hispanic Fund	Elyria, OH
Annette Jimenez Gleason Annette Ramos	Rochester Area Community Foundation	Latino Giving Circle	Rochester, NY
Marla Bilonick	National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders		Washington DC (national)
Óscar Chávez José Castro Gambino	Community Foundation Sonoma County	Latino Leadership Fund	Santa Rosa, CA
Patricia Mejía	Spurs Sports & Entertainment		San Antonio, TX
Natalia Siegel	Triangle Community Foundation		Durham, NC
Javier Juarez	The Boston Foundation	Latino Equity Fund	Boston, MA

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Questions for Latinx residents working with CFs

a. Name, organization

b. How do you refer to your community: Latino, -o/a, -x, -e, Hispanic, etc?

c. What is your (organization's) relationship to a local community foundation?

d. If you(r organization) already has a (formal) relationship with the CF, what has made this relationship work well?

e. What could be improved?

f. On a scale from 1-5, where 5 is the strongest/highest, how much do you feel the Latinx community where you live...

_____ Is understood by the CF

_____ Is respected by the CF

_____ Trusts the CF

_____ Engages with the CF

_____ Has been invited for shared decision-making by the CF

_____ Feels supported by the CF

_____ Feels the CF is there for them

g. Do you have any comments about the responses you just gave?

h. We know that the Latino community is very diverse. Are there groups in this community that are more represented than others? Are any groups being left behind in your area?

i. For CFs who want to begin engaging the Latinx community, where should they start?

j. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

B. Questions for (non-)Latinx working at CFs

a. Name, organization, how long they have worked there

b. How do you refer to your community: Latino, -o/a, -x, -e, Hispanic, etc?

c. What is your foundation's connection with the local Latinx community? (mention all types of connections: donors, direct services, grantees, partners, etc.) OR...

d. What is working well in engaging the Latinx community?

e. Where could it improve?

f. On a scale from 1-5, where 5 is the strongest/highest, how much do you feel the Latino community feels...

_____ Understood by its community foundation?

_____ Feels respected by the foundation?

_____ Trusts the foundation?

_____ Engages with the foundation?

_____ Has been invited for shared decision-making by the CF

_____ Feels supported by the foundation?

_____ Feels the foundation is there for them

g. Do you have any comments about the responses you just gave?

h. We know that the Latino community is very diverse. Are there groups in this community that are more represented than others? Are any groups being left behind in your area?

i. What advice would you give to community foundations wanting to work more with the Latino community?

j. Is there anything else you would like us to know for this report?



Building meaningful partnerships with our Latine communities:

Reflections from the community
foundation field



Editors: Hilda Vega and Inarú Meléndez Vázquez

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES
IN THE AMERICAS



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