



EQUITY INVESTMENT RATIONALE, ADOPTED JULY 2017

Background

The West Side Community Organization (WSCO), along with six other Saint Paul District Councils, engaged in a two-part series led by CultureBrokers LLC in Spring 2017. The purpose of these meetings was for each District Council to develop an Equity Investment Rationale (a phrase coined by CultureBrokers) a statement that, “provides a solid foundation, ensuring alignment of strategy and actions, and building acceptance of and commitment to this course of action in stakeholders (i.e. employees, volunteers, funders, customers)....[that] presents your organization’s motives, beliefs, considerations and authority for undertaking this difficult and rewarding work.”

Following a board- and membership-approved Equity Investment Rationale, a full Equity Strategic Action Plan for each organization is envisioned.

Equity Investment Rationale

The West Side Community Organization powers the people of the West Side to work together to create a thriving, vibrant neighborhood for all. Founded by resident activists over 40 years ago, WSCO advocates for institutional, structural, and systemic change that bring justice and opportunities to all.

As the only Saint Paul neighborhood south of the Mississippi River, the West Side is geographically isolated but rich in natural assets and unique topography. As of 2011-2015, the West Side is home to nearly 16,000 residents. Our community is racially and ethnically diverse (more than half are residents of color, including 29% Latinx, 15% Black, 7% Asian, and 5% mixed race or American Indian). The West Side continues its legacy as an immigrant hub today: about one in every six West Siders were born outside the U.S., more than one in three speak a language other than English at home, and one in seven have limited English language skills. The West Side is also economically diverse, yet often described as a high-poverty place (specifically, as an Area of Concentrated Poverty, a term used by the Metropolitan Council). Most of the residents living close to the poverty

line are also residents of color.

As the only neighborhood organization and the District 3 Council, WSCO aims to serve all residents and businesses of the West Side, actively engaging them in decisions that directly affect their daily lives. To bring our vision of “a just, united, self-reliant, and bold West Side where all of our people are connected, safe, healthy and successful” forward, WSCO undertook a crucial strategic planning process in 2016, which helped us better articulate our values, goals, and decision-making processes. It also brought into focus that justice and equity must be the foundation of all aspects of our work.

To embed justice and equity into our work, our decisions, and into our consciousness, we developed a Strategic Sieve to guide our discussions. The following questions will be directly addressed by WSCO board and staff throughout our work:

1. Does this opportunity increase the power of the people of the West Side to create a vibrant community?

2. Does this opportunity match with one or more of our strategic goals?

- Host and amplify West Side voices
- Grow, promote, and protect West Side assets and resources
- Build economic and cultural bridges
- Ensure sustainability

3. Does this opportunity specifically elevate people on the West Side who have been historically under-served or under-represented?

- Communities of color
- Children and youth
- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- LGBTQIA
- the intersectionality thereof

4. Does this opportunity provide opportunities to improve our financial position without increasing staff burden?