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December 8, 2022

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New report highlights Racial Leadership Gap Among Michigan's Nonprofits

LANSING- Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) in partnership with Data Driven Detroit (D3) and the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy today released the results of a collaborative, first-of-its-kind report that highlights the nonprofit racial leadership gap across Michigan.

The [Michigan Statewide Nonprofit Leadership Census](#) identifies the percentage of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) nonprofit leaders statewide to provide a clear understanding of the racial and ethnic composition of staff members and boards at nonprofits statewide. The report which identifies equity issues facing different communities across the state-- focused on six regions in Michigan: Lakeshore/West Michigan, Metro Detroit, Mid-State/Central Michigan, Southern Central Michigan, Tip of the Mitt, and the Upper Peninsula. "We prioritized data equity for this report," said Nellie Tsai, social innovation officer at MNA. "Community stakeholders were involved in the entire process from the survey design to the outreach. We intentionally shared the survey analysis with the respondents first to get their feedback and to ensure that our interpretation matched their expectations, understanding that this was their information we were presenting."

The first phase of this project- [The Detroit Nonprofit Leadership Census](#) survey was conducted in February 2021. The survey's results constitute the first-ever detailed dataset about the demographics of Detroit's nonprofit leaders, board members and staff, as well as their connections with local funders. The survey was then expanded in January of 2022 to collect data from nonprofits statewide. The expanded survey closed on April 1, 2022, after capturing nearly 600 responses from nonprofits from every region and 89% of counties in Michigan. The distribution of survey responses generally matches the overall distribution of nonprofits in Michigan. Specifically, the respondents are representative of the state's nonprofits at the state level.

Key findings include:

- Metro Detroit reported the highest percentage of BIPOC-led organizations (**38%**), while Tip of the Mitt reported the lowest (**1%**).
- The budget range reported for most responding nonprofit organizations was concentrated in two groups: more than \$50,000 but less than \$250,000 or \$1 million to less than \$5 million.
- At the state level, the majority of nonprofits (**93%**) reported only one executive director who is more likely to be at least one of the following characteristics: White, female, aged 45-64 years old, and one who has served in the leadership role for no more than five years.

- Reporting at least one BIPOC executive director was associated with more organizations reporting multiple executive directors, younger directors, as well as a higher percentage of BIPOC members on its board and staff.
- Housing was determined to be a pressing equity issue in Michigan. Notably, BIPOC-led organizations are much more likely to choose race and ethnicity as one of their community's most pressing equity issues.

MNA collaborated with D3 to administer the survey and additional data support for the project was received from the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University with funding support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. "This survey represents the first step in better understanding how Michigan's nonprofits are serving and representing their communities, and in using data to connect leaders across the state to each other and to funders," said Noah Urban, Co-Executive Director of D3. "By conducting this research and creating this directory, we aim to elevate the work of all nonprofits statewide, especially those smaller nonprofits who may be less well-known but are nevertheless deeply connected to the communities they serve."

The findings challenge the way the nonprofit sector has approached the racial leadership gap. This report is an intentional effort to bring more attention to the challenges faced by diverse people as they strive to obtain leadership positions within Michigan's nonprofit sector. Click [here](#) to view the report in its entirety.

About MNA:

Michigan Nonprofit Association is a nonprofit 501 © (3) founded in 1990, to strengthen nonprofits and the communities they serve by advancing collective power, knowledge, systems, and strategy. MNA is a statewide membership organization dedicated to promoting and supporting anti-racism and social justice in the nonprofit sector. For more information, visit www.mnaonline.org

About Data Driven Detroit (D3):

Data Driven Detroit (D3) is metro Detroit's community data hub. We collect, analyze, interpret, and share accessible, high-quality data and information to drive informed decision-making. Our work is focused on increasing data-driven outcomes and facilitating collaborative processes throughout metro Detroit and Michigan. For more, visit www.datadrivendetroit.org.

About the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy:

The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy is an academic center at Grand Valley State University established in 1992 with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Through professional education; research, evaluation, and consulting services; and bold thinking to advance the field, the Johnson Center supports a philanthropic ecosystem defined by effective philanthropy, strong nonprofits, and informed community change. Learn more at johnsoncenter.org.

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