

Diversity Initiatives in the US Community Foundation Movement: What Lessons for Canada?

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Abstract

Explaining that “one of the great challenges facing not-for-profit agencies today is to fully reflect the diversity of their communities,” Nancy Johnson examines efforts to address this challenge in the US and Canada. She makes the case that diversity is of particular relevance to community foundations, pointing out that in Canada such foundations have “defined a 'special role' for themselves as representatives of the whole community.” Serious initiatives in the US to address the issue of diversity have contributed to the knowledge of diversity practices and tools in the field as reflected in changes in many individual community foundations. Overall, however, progress to increase diversity of community foundation governance, outreach, grantmaking and fund development over the last decade has been disappointing throughout North America. Further progress will require incorporating diversity issues into all aspects of foundation life—from grantmaking priorities to governance profiles, from the choice of vendors to selection of investment vehicles. Ms. Johnson concludes that unless strides are made to better reflect the age, ethnicity, gender, and racial diversity of communities, economic prosperity and social vitality will suffer, accompanied in all likelihood by increased support for ethno-specific funds established outside community foundations.

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