



***Choosing Promising Ideas And  
Proposals***

***A Tool For Giving  
That Closes The Gaps***

*Moving Philanthropy Closer  
to Racial Equality and Social Justice*

**By**

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**Version 2.0  
released September 1, 2006**

**Prepared with support  
from the Ford Foundation**

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# **MOVING PHILANTHROPY CLOSER TO RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

## **Working Drafts of Tools to Assist Progress**

### **Introduction and Overview to Three Tools to Assist Progress**

*By Steven E. Mayer, Ph.D., Vanessa McKendall Stephens, Ph.D., and Betty Emarita*

See accompanying PDF

### **Moving Past the Silence: A Tool for Negotiating Reflective Conversations About Race**

*By Vanessa McKendall Stephens, Ph.D.*

See accompanying PDF

### **Becoming a Catalyst for Social Justice: A Tool for Aligning Internal Operations to Produce Progress**

*By Betty Emarita*

See accompanying PDF

### **Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals: A Tool for Giving that Closes the Gaps**

*By Steven E. Mayer, Ph.D.*

For more information about all of the tools, visit [www.effectivecommunities.com](http://www.effectivecommunities.com).

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# **CHOOSING PROMISING IDEAS AND PROPOSALS: A TOOL FOR GIVING THAT CLOSES GAPS**

One of three tools from  
Moving Philanthropy Closer to Racial Equity and Social Justice  
**Effective Communities, LLC**

By  
Steven E. Mayer, Ph.D.

## **Purpose**

Closing the equity gaps in our society's systems and markets is an important goal for social justice. The strongest ideas or proposals for closing these gaps are, by our definition, those that address the mechanisms that can change those gaps.

This tool will help a philanthropic organization – whether foundation or nonprofit – make the best use of its resources to close gaps in racial equity and social justice. It will help the user identify strengths and weaknesses of a particular proposal, idea or organization, and make decisions on how to strengthen efforts intending to address racial equity. For further information on racial equity and social justice, see the introduction and overview to all three of the tools in this set.

This tool can be used to:

- Choose among competing proposals for funding;
- Monitor the progress of a project or organization over time;
- Assess the readiness or capacity of an organization to address racial equity; and
- Identify areas of an idea or organization that need strengthening.

## **Who Can Use This Tool**

This tool is designed primarily for program staffs, committees or boards of philanthropic organizations.

# Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

## Description

This tool allows the user to examine and judge competing ideas or proposals for their strengths in five action areas, each considered important in contributing to progress.

Posing these five action areas is tantamount to posing a theory of action, in which more action in these areas contributes to greater progress in closing equity gaps. Good ideas or good proposals are those that can...

- *Increase philanthropic resources dedicated to racial equity and social justice.*
- *Offer leadership, especially across divides.*
- *Strengthen organizations, networks and associations.*
- *Craft solutions and advance them from ideas to policy to practice.*
- *Reduce barriers, change conditions and transform local economies.*

## Instructions: Using The Tool

The tool can be used by one proposal reviewer, or by a group where a consensual decision is made. The process as presented is not too prescriptive, and local variations are encouraged. Use the tool to encourage thought and judgment about the quality of ideas and proposals.

1. ***Read and reflect on the proposal.*** Read the proposal, and evaluate how well it addresses the five action areas. You may evaluate the proposal for other criteria as well, such as eligibility or dollar amounts. The primary challenge, however, is to read the proposal for its equity-increasing, gap-closing potential.
2. ***Record your evaluation.*** As you evaluate the proposal, record its relative strength in each item in the first column, Time 1. Check 0 for no strength, 1 for mildly strong and 2 for very strong.
3. ***Summarize your ratings.*** On the last page of the tool, carry forward your summary judgments for each area to create a one-page summary scorecard for the proposal.
4. ***Compare proposal summaries.*** If you are judging multiple proposals and are fairly consistent in your judging practices, the “best” proposals will have the highest scoring summaries.
5. ***Address differences of opinion.*** If more than one person is doing these ratings, there likely will be differences of opinion. These could be at the summary level, at the area level, or at the individual dimensions level. These differences could be the basis for excellent discussion, leading to a more informed resolution.

The second column, Time 2, can be used to monitor progress later on, at a second point in time. Use the above process to complete the tool, but focus on changes from Time 1 to Time 2.

## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Action Area 1: Increase Philanthropic Resources Dedicated to Racial Equity and Social Justice

<b>Item</b>	<b>Time 1</b>	<b>Time 2</b>
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
Uncovering a community's assets and what it can give	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Finding new donors of time, talent or treasure	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Increasing the flow of resources into RE/SJ efforts	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Using philanthropic resources better	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Improving access to institutional resources	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b>Summary for this area:</b> <i>Increase Resources</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

**Notes / Bases for judgment:**

## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Action Area 2: Offer Leadership, Especially Across Divides

Item	Time 1	Time 2
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
Broadening civic participation in efforts to improve quality of life	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Building trust through opportunities for dialog, healing and reconciliation	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Creating new relationships from which opportunities can emerge	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Raising the profile of RE/SJ work	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Improving communications of this kind of work	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

<b>Summary for this area:</b> <i>Offer Leadership</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
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<p><b>Notes / Bases for judgment:</b></p>
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## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Action Area 3: Strengthen Organizations, Networks and Associations

Item	Time 1	Time 2
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
Developing the organization's vision and priorities for enhancing RE/SJ work	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Improving the organization's ability to make progress	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Strengthening personal, leadership and organizational skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Strengthening collaboratives, partnerships, associations and networks	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Listening, reflecting, learning and shaping improved efforts	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

<b>Summary for this area:</b> <i>Strengthen Organizations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
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**Notes / Bases for judgment:**



## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Action Area 4: Craft Solutions and Advance Them from Ideas to Policy to Practice

Item	Time 1	Time 2
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
Assisting the learning and teaching process about inequity, injustice and their root causes	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Compiling data about local trends, challenges and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Assembling wisdom and lessons that build support or guide action	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Crafting solutions and move them toward action and implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Strengthening bases of support for advancing solutions	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

<b>Summary for this area:</b> <i>Craft Solutions</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
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**Notes / Bases for judgment:**

## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Action Area 5: Reduce Barriers, Change Conditions and Transform Local Economies

Item	Time 1	Time 2
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
Creating a culture of accountability and cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Moving policy proposals from formulation to successful implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Changing the rules to increase opportunities for good outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Opening markets, stimulating investment and creating assets that benefit more segments of the community	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Spreading innovation and improvements to other arenas	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

<b>Summary for this area:</b> <i>Reduce Barriers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
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**Notes / Bases for judgment:**

## Choosing Promising Ideas and Proposals

### Summary For All Five Action Areas

<b>Action Area</b>	<b>Time 1</b>	<b>Time 2</b>
	To what extent would a gift help this organization achieve progress in this area?	To what extent has this organization made progress in this area?
<b><i>1. Increase Resources</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b><i>2. Offer Leadership</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b><i>3. Strengthen Organizations</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b><i>4. Craft Solutions</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b><i>5. Reduce Barriers</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
<b><i>GRAND SUMMARY FOR THIS PROPOSAL</i></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2

**Notes / Bases for judgment:**