VISION: Kalamazoo County is the most equitable place to live.

MISSION: To mobilize people, resources, and expertise to advance racial, social, and economic justice.

For 97 years, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation has worked to dedicate individual contributions and resources to organizations serving people and families in Kalamazoo and address the most urgent needs in our community. Our grantmaking efforts prioritize a focus on racial equity and racial justice – and prioritizes resources aimed at the intersection of racial equity and education, as a pathway to prosperity.

But programmatic funding alone cannot dismantle systemic inequities in Kalamazoo County and across Michigan. To achieve our Vision of Kalamazoo County being the most equitable place to live, we must collaborate with our community to ensure everyone has access to the necessary resources to live a healthy, safe, and prosperous life.

Each of the following priorities has been identified through nearly 100 years of grantmaking and our more recent work in partnership with community members through Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Kalamazoo (TRHT). Over the last five years, the members of the TRHT Design Teams (Education, Housing, Law, and Economy) have enabled the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to learn from their lived experience, professional expertise, and collective advocacy efforts.

Systemic racism - unjust barriers woven into our public systems - make it more difficult for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) people in Kalamazoo County to thrive. The efforts we make to eliminate these barriers will lead to healthier families, an equitable education system, and improve the chances for all people in Kalamazoo to achieve economic stability.

We acknowledge the historical roots of philanthropy and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation maintains a vested interest in legislation and rules that impact philanthropic institutions and donors. We strive to apply an equity lens across all organizational efforts to achieve our Mission and Vision.

EQUITY: Ensuring everyone can access the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so life trajectories improve, disparities in outcomes are reduced and unjust systems are changed, especially for community members who have been historically excluded, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color, people with disabilities, women and LGBTQ+ people.

EDUCATION: Increasing educational attainment from cradle to career, reducing disparities in academic outcomes and eliminating bias in discipline, curricula, and school culture to achieve individual and community prosperity.

CORE NEIGHBORHOODS: At times, as a strategic priority, KZCF focuses our efforts on four neighborhoods in Kalamazoo. These neighborhoods, Edison (49001), Vine (49008), North side (49007), East side (49048), are selected based on demonstrated gaps in access to opportunity in education, literacy, home ownership, economic stability, access to healthcare, and justice involvement.
Equitable School Funding
Public schools should be financially supported by tax dollars at a rate that enables districts to meet the educational and developmental needs of each child at their neighborhood school.
- This funding must be distributed equitably among districts to meet the needs of the children in each community.
- Public school employees (teachers and support staff) should be supported with equitable wages reflecting the critical role they play in society.

Early Learning
All children should have access to high quality and affordable early education and care in the location and times needed to support their family’s needs.
- Early learning educators must be compensated at a level reflecting the critical role they play in society.
- The early learning system is hampered by significantly high turnover rates which impedes the secure attachments needed for child growth and development.
- Care that is affordable, dependable, and experienced provides stability for the rest of the workforce.
- Michigan should provide a full day of early learning and care for three-and four-year-olds at little or no cost to families and caregivers.

Higher Education Scholarships
- Rules governing endowed scholarships should endeavor to meet the financial needs of individual students and consider the full cost of attending school including books, housing, living expenses and wraparound services (like early learning and care) for their family.

Housing

Housing Equity
All municipalities in Kalamazoo County should adopt a housing equity ordinance to ensure renters have equal protections when seeking housing and the City of Kalamazoo Housing Equity Ordinance must be enforced and operationalized in earnest. Municipalities across Kalamazoo County must create an array of emergency housing and temporary affordable housing to support community members in need of safe and dignified living arrangements.

Eviction Mitigation
Michigan must pass legislation with the intent to reduce the number of evictions.

Law

Justice
The Criminal Justice system should reflect a commitment to equal treatment, accountability, fairness, and transparency ensuring that all individuals feel safe and secure in their communities.
- Kalamazoo County must adopt, collect, and utilize a transparent data system and process during police involvement and arrests. (CCJT/ALPACT)
- The Kalamazoo County Community should make significant reforms to the treatment of and resources available to youth, including a youth resource center which can provide referrals to youth development organizations, diverting arrests, and pre-charge diversion.
- We support local, State and Federal legislative solutions to reduce gun violence in our community.

Civil Rights
- The civic health of Kalamazoo is critical to our success and all citizens in the community should be enabled and empowered to participate in public discourse and decision making.
- Public decision-making must be informed by the community and the public should be encouraged to participate in civic life.
- Attacks or attempts to limit the civil rights of individuals in our community must be prevented, especially for community members who have been historically excluded, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color, people with disabilities, women, and LGBTQIA+ people.