

GUIDE TO GRANTMAKING



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Kalamazoo Community Foundation (KZCF) continues to transform our grantmaking process and philosophy. At every step of this change, we are strongly committed to **centering community voices and working alongside partners.**

We know that inequities that have resulted from racism, sexism, queerphobia and other oppressive structures cannot be removed simply by providing our financial support. That's why in addition to grantmaking, we continue to examine how our internal processes can be more **equitable.**

Over the past few years, we have been taking a critical look into who is accessing our dollars, who may be facing barriers to partnership with KZCF and how we can continue to be more **accountable and accessible** to communities of color and others who have faced and continue to face oppressions. We also know that these oppressions are a direct result of systems that were created without consideration of many of Kalamazoo County community members' identities and experiences.

This reality calls out for all of us to **reimagine our work** with a deep focus on racial equity and racial justice, so we can work together to address the most urgent issues in our community. It is also important that we approach this work in an **intersectional** manner, with an awareness of how identities and different forms of discrimination combine and overlap in the experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals.

For us, a keystone of that reimagination is building more trust with our partner organizations. Through feedback and listening sessions, partners have told us what it will take to have the **open, trustworthy and lasting** connections needed to build a more equitable community. As a result, we are continuously pursuing partner recommendations and adapting our grantmaking processes to ensure greater accountability and impact.

Our evolving approach emphasizes the **participation, decision-making roles and visibility** of the people most impacted by structural racism. It explicitly acknowledges a need to change the power dynamic and balance grantmaking among organizations that provide direct services and those that are organizing and building **systemic change.**

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and learning more about how we can best partner with you in the community.

KZCF GRANTMAKING TEAM

VISION

Kalamazoo County is the most equitable place to live.

MISSION

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

GRANTMAKING PRIORITIES

Our current grantmaking priorities are Equity and Education. We believe in the ability of organizations from all sectors to advance equity in our community. We also believe that efforts at the intersection of these priorities (advancing equity while improving education-related outcomes) can lead to sustained individual and community prosperity.

EQUITY DEFINED

Making sure 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 DEFINED

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.

PARTNERING WITH KZCF

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations that serve Kalamazoo County are eligible for funding consideration if their inclusion policies and practices align with our Inclusion Statement (see below) and if they fall into the following categories:



501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations



Organizations with a 501(c)(3) sponsor



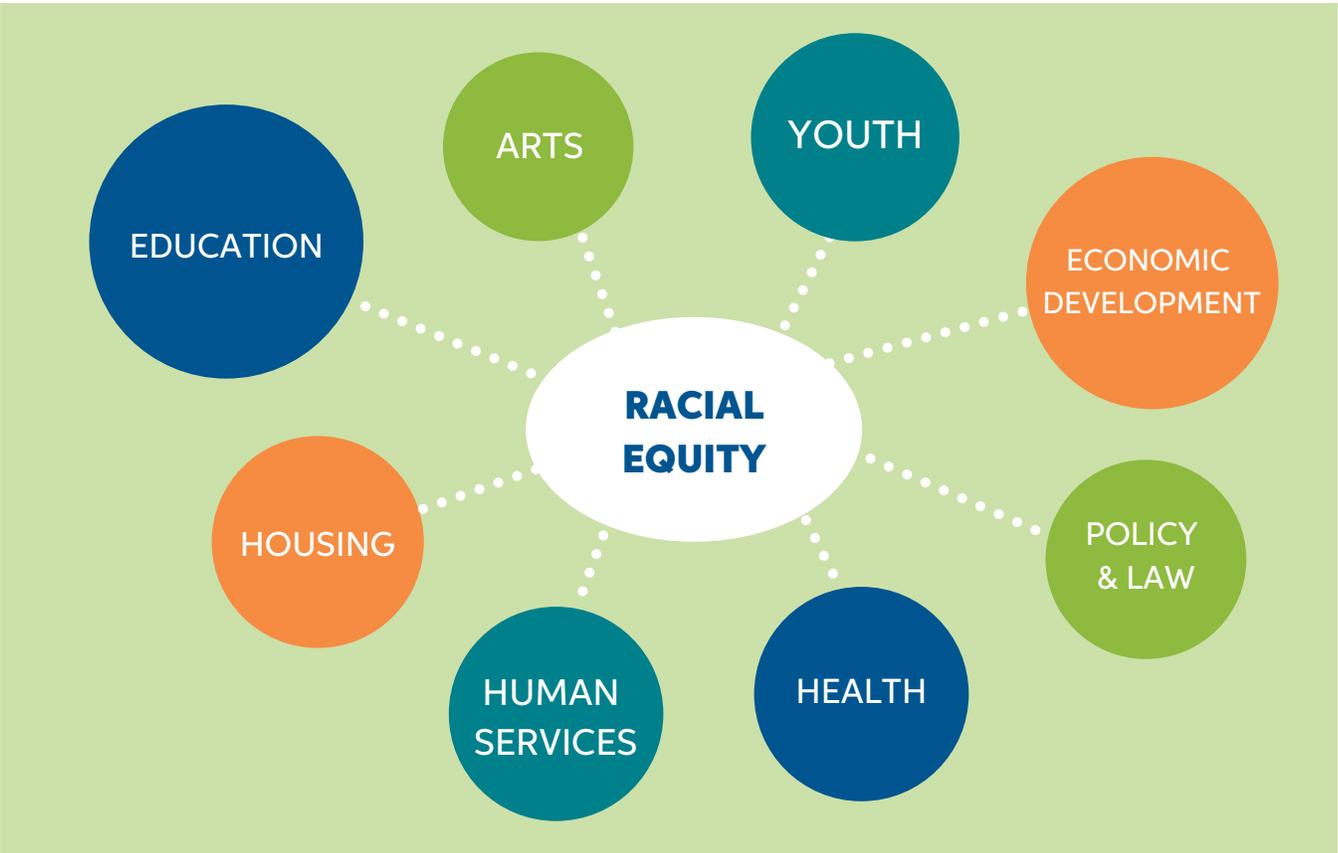
Religious institutions and governmental agencies

OUR INCLUSION STATEMENT

- No person is excluded from agency services;
- Wherever practical, all people will be considered in employment or volunteer participation, regardless of ethnicity, race, age, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, economic background/circumstances, physical and/or mental disabilities, veteran status, marital status, resident immigration status, and philosophy/religion, or any other discriminatory reason.
- The organization is continuing to intentionally increase inclusive practices.

EQUITY ACROSS SECTORS

While the graphic below does not name every sector we support, it shows that we believe racial, social and economic equity can be advanced in ALL sectors. Our nation's systems and structures cause disparate harm to BIPOC communities, so we believe that racial equity is central to achieving a just society. And because education is a pathway to prosperity, we prioritize work at the intersection of racial equity and education.



HOW WE PRIORITIZE REQUESTS

The greatest opportunities for creating an impact are with organizations that produce lasting change with and for our community. So, to best serve our grantmaking priorities, we partner with and prioritize funding for organizations who are pursuing all of the following goals.

PRIORITIZING INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

We work with partners who reflect the diversity of our community. Everyone who interacts with an organization should be able to authentically embrace and celebrate their identities and cultures. A continued commitment to maximizing access to services, practicing anti-racism and improving inclusive practices is essential to a strong partnership.

Questions we ask

- Does this request demonstrate a strong commitment to racial equity?
- Is the program or organization accessible to people with multiple oppressed identities (including intersections of race, ethnicity, economic status, immigration status, LGBTQ+ identity and disability)?

CENTERING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Because people and communities of color are disparately impacted by the inequities in our society's systems and structures, partner organizations can best serve Kalamazoo County when they center and amplify BIPOC voices, expertise and leadership. This includes creating space and opportunities for BIPOC individuals to **build power** in civic, cultural and political sectors.

Questions we ask

- Is this request informed by the communities most impacted?
- Does this request demonstrate lasting change for communities experiencing racial bias and discrimination?

HOW WE PRIORITIZE REQUESTS (CONTINUED)

COLLABORATING TO ACHIEVE SHARED OUTCOMES

When we evaluate requests for funding, we always ask how organizations are partnering and collaborating. This is because we recognize the collective power when organizations work together toward achieving shared goals. Coordinating work and directing resources toward shared outcomes often means that impacts (and relationships) become stronger.

Questions we ask

- Does this request demonstrate established relationships with existing local partners?
- Is this work fulfilling a unique and targeted need that is not already served in the community?

COMMITTING TO LEARNING AND GROWTH

Our partners are energized by opportunities to learn and grow. Like us, they understand that learning is continuous, lifelong and vital to pursuing equity and justice. They are willing to explore complex and uncomfortable information, listen to lived experiences and apply what they have learned to pursue equitable practices.

Questions we ask

- Does the organization demonstrate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) competencies at the leadership level?
- Are multiple identities and perspectives present to lead the work?
- Is there evidence of growth in and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion?

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO PARTNERSHIP

The high demand for funding means we do not have the capacity to fulfill every grant request and must prioritize those that most closely align with our vision, mission and priorities. In the interest of transparency, we're sharing some reasons requests do not advance for further consideration:

- The people and communities most impacted are not involved in significantly informing the work
- Partnerships and collaborations that could strengthen the request are underdeveloped
- There is an opportunity for the program's objectives to be met by partnering with existing organizations or community-based projects
- The request lacks a demonstrated racial equity strategy
- The organization does not have a demonstrated commitment to advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- There are indications that the organization is not welcoming to community members of all religious backgrounds; this may include bias in marketing and communications or actively proselytizing (pursuing recruitment/conversion) during the delivery of a service
- The request does not demonstrate the potential for lasting change or impact over the course of community members' lifetimes

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

OPERATIONAL VS. CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FUNDING

Desires expressed by our partners and emerging best practices have led us to prioritize **operational funding** that covers our partners' day-to-day and ongoing needs. Operational costs may include wages and overhead expenses as well as programs, materials and supplies that help the organization fulfill its core mission. This approach allows partners greater access to flexible funding.

While we are prioritizing operational support, we also fund programs and **capacity building** projects. We define capacity building as the organizational, institutional and human resource developments that increase an organization's effectiveness or capabilities. Additionally, we are open to considering **capital campaigns** and projects (e.g. fundraising for construction projects, building improvements, equipment purchases) at around the \$25,000 level. Exceptions exist for those projects that align most closely with our investment priorities of equity and education.

OTHER AVENUES FOR SUPPORT

FIELD-OF-INTEREST FUNDS

Some of our donors choose to focus gifts on the issues and causes they care about the most through the option of a field-of-interest fund. Grants are available from each fund in alignment with the particular interest area. Each fund has its own goals and deadlines separate from our general grantmaking cycle. Read more below and see our website for more details on applying for funding in your organization's area of interest.

LGBTQ Equality Fund

This fund's purpose is to support the LGBTQ+ community through advocating for human rights and equality, promoting social justice and unity, celebrating social and cultural contributions and strengthening organizations that serve the LGBTQ+ community's physical, health, social or emotional needs. In particular, it supports programs that facilitate leadership development, and programs that impact BIPOC community members who identify as LGBTQ+, youths and families; transgender people; and multiple generations. To learn more, contact David Feaster at dfeaster@kalfound.org.

Environment Fund

This fund exists to ensure the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people in environmental health and sustainability issues. This fund supports community-driven projects and activities that advance environmental justice in Kalamazoo County, including programs and efforts related to climate equity, food systems, waste and lead. To learn more, please contact Kari Benjamin Hamann at kbenjamin@kalfound.org.

Animal Field-of-Interest Fund

This fund was created to protect and care for animals through: training therapy companions for individuals with disabilities, providing food for companion pets of seniors, providing housing/shelter for companion pets of residents in domestic assault shelter programs, spay/neuter sterilization, and veterinarian costs for the care of dogs and cats. To learn more, please contact Kari Benjamin Hamann at 269.381.4416 or kbenjamin@kalfound.org.

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Youth Advisory Council at Kalamazoo Community Foundation is a youth-led grantmaking group composed of high school students from Kalamazoo County. The mission of the YAC includes a commitment to funding organizations that have a strong focus on racial equity and positive educational outcomes. This means that for the young members of our community who have been historically excluded, we must correct imbalances, expand opportunities and improve access to resources in Kalamazoo County.

The KZCF YAC supports nonprofit organizations they believe can achieve significant impact with youth in Kalamazoo County through an annual grantmaking round. In addition to non-profit organizations, religious institutions and governmental agencies that serve youth in Kalamazoo County may also submit requests. YAC grants have a separate application, evaluation process and requirements from our general grantmaking. The annual YAC grantmaking round generally begins in Spring. You can follow us on social media @kalfound for YAC grantmaking updates and announcements For more information on Youth Advisory Council grantmaking, visit **kalfound.org/YAC**.

SPONSORSHIP

Organizations can apply for additional support through event sponsorship. We sponsor events that align with our community investment priorities of equity and education, are hosted by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, or support donor relations and other organizational goals. Interested parties can apply at **kalfound.org/sponsorship**.

OUR TRUST-BASED GRANTMAKING JOURNEY

Although we have been working toward greater equity in grantmaking for many years, the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice have accelerated our transformation. We began applying new practices in early 2020, including reducing paperwork and converting grants to support our partners' greatest needs. The success of these measures inspired us to continue the journey to increase trust and equitable practices in our grantmaking. In Fall of 2020, we contracted with Freedom Lifted, a third-party consulting agency, to engage our community partners in helping shape the future of our grantmaking. Through anonymous surveys and focus groups, our partners helped us understand the nature of their current relationships with KZCF and shared changes they would like to see.

WE WANTED TO KNOW ...

HOW DO PARTNERS FEEL ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP?

HOW DO PARTNERS PERCEIVE OUR RACIAL EQUITY STRATEGIES?

HOW CAN OUR PROCESSES SERVE PARTNERS BETTER?

SO WE ASKED OUR PARTNERS ...

68 partner organizations participated in focus groups

49 answered surveys



AND PARTNERS SAID THEY WANT ...



MULTI-YEAR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



A STREAMLINED APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS



MORE INTERACTION OUTSIDE THE GRANT CYCLE



BOLD, CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATIONS

SO WE'RE ADAPTING . . .

Ultimately, we heard a call for trust-based philanthropy – an approach that addresses the inherent power imbalance between funders, partners and the community. We are incorporating feedback and taking actions that live up to the principles of trust-based philanthropy.

PRINCIPLE	OUR ACTIONS
 <p>GIVE MULTI-YEAR, UNRESTRICTED FUNDING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed the majority of our 2020 grants • Expanding general operations funding • Exploring expanded multi-year funding opportunities
 <p>DO THE HOMEWORK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing to more proactive engagement with partners • Eliminating “hoops” partners needed to jump through • Researching and sharing best practices in collaboration with other philanthropic organizations
 <p>SIMPLIFY & STREAMLINE PAPERWORK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifying our application to one Letter of Inquiry form with clear questions • Shifting final reporting paperwork to an informal reflection conversation
 <p>BE TRANSPARENT & RESPONSIVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming more clear about what we do and don't fund • Communicating about changes in our processes through multiple channels • Responding to partner challenges that surface through grant reflections and feedback • Responding with greater urgency to crises that are emerging (natural disasters, pandemics) and ongoing (systemic racism, housing insecurity, gun violence)
 <p>SOLICIT & ACT ON FEEDBACK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using feedback to inform our grantmaking and other engagement • Adding more checkpoints for receiving feedback to our grantmaking and reflection processes
 <p>OFFER SUPPORT BEYOND THE CHECK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering non-monetary support through equity series, workshops and trainings • Asking our partners about other opportunities to support them during grant reflections • Leaning in to opportunities for policy and advocacy • Seeding exploration of a ‘Justice Hub’ incubator to provide technical and capacity building support to grassroots organizations and social justice movements

HOW TO APPLY

We have recently made several changes to our grantmaking process, including simplifying the application to a single Letter of Inquiry, taking on more fact-finding and research ourselves and eliminating steps for our partners. More details are available on our website.

1 SUBMIT AN ONLINE LETTER OF INQUIRY

This is your first step after making sure your request aligns with our eligibility requirements, funding goals and priorities. The Letter of Inquiry, or LOI, is an online form that asks a few high-level questions (see next page) about your proposal and organization.

2 YOUR LETTER OF INQUIRY IS REVIEWED

All grant requests are first reviewed by our grantmaking team according to our community investment priorities, eligibility requirements, funding approach as well as your organization's potential impacts in Kalamazoo County, organization practices and policies, and details of your request. Requests of \$25,001 or more are sent on to be evaluated by our Community Investment Committee. Requests above \$50,000 are then sent to our Board of Trustees for evaluation.

3 GRANT DECISIONS ARE COMMUNICATED

We reach out to inform you of the grant decision. Requests may be approved for a full or partial amount and we will provide you with a grant agreement. When signed and returned, a grant check will be issued. If it is determined that your request is not in alignment with our grantmaking priorities and funding approach, is not fully developed, or if we are unable to fulfill your request due to volume, we will notify you that your request has been declined. Feedback will be shared and we will discuss future opportunities for application.

4 OUR RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

We offer ongoing support to our grantee partners. You may contact your Community Investment Liaison or any member of our grantmaking team at any time with questions about your grant or ideas for how we can offer non-monetary support for your work. In addition to regular contact, your Community Investment Liaison will reach out to schedule an annual reflection conversation. This informal conversation replaces our final report form.

LETTER OF INQUIRY QUESTIONS

Tips:

- Answer as clearly as possible. Because our online form must be completed in one session, we recommend saving your answers to the questions below in a Word document before submitting.
- Submit one comprehensive grant request per year. You can submit your request any time if applying for less than \$25,000 (specific deadlines if higher).
- We recommend that 501(c)(3) organizations claim their free GuideStar profile and complete the Gold Seal of Transparency to expedite applications across multiple funders.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

- Will your proposal benefit Kalamazoo County Residents? (Yes/No)
- Type of Organization: [501(c)(3) Nonprofit/Educational Institution (public school, college, university)/Governmental Agency/Church/None of the Above]

Note:

If your organization type does not fall into the categories listed, but you have a Fiscal Sponsor for your program/project, please select "None of the Above", then "Yes"

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

- Organization name, address, phone, website
- Executive Director name, email, phone
- Grant contact name, title, phone (if different than above)
- How long has your organization existed? (Less than a year / 1 - 2 Years / 2 - 5 Years / 5+ Years)

GRANT INFORMATION

- Proposal Name
- Describe your Proposal (Recommend max 400 words)
- How will your proposal impact racial equity and/or education in Kalamazoo County? Please note specifically, how does this proposal impact BIPOC communities? (Recommend max 400 words)

GRANT INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

- Amount of request
- Period of time covered by the funding request (start and end dates)
- How will you use these funds? (Upload existing program budget or outline your expected budget in comment box)
- What percentage of your agency's programs and services target residents of Kalamazoo County? (If your organization supports residents of areas other than Kalamazoo County, please list those areas.)
- What's informing you that this is a need in the community (e.g., specific data, engagement in community, etc.)? (Recommend max 400 words)
- Please tell us about the demographics of the population you support. Specifically note how you support BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Briefly describe how the population you support is involved in the work of your organization, and how are they are informing your organization's programs and practices. (Recommend max 400 words)
- Please describe your most significant collaborations and partnerships.

ANNUAL REFLECTION PROCESS

WHAT TO EXPECT

Our newly streamlined reflection process is an informal one-hour conversation between you and a KZCF Community Investment Liaison. In replacing the formal written report we have used in the past, we hope to reduce the amount of time, stress and paperwork that our partners shoulder during the reporting process. This is a step in our shift to a trust-based philanthropy model intended to build equity and share power in our partnerships.

DISCUSSING YOUR REQUEST'S IMPACT

Our conversation should take around an hour to complete and does not require that you write anything out in advance or plan extensively. Your Community Investment Liaison will help guide the conversation by asking questions like:

- What successes and challenges has your organization experienced over the past year while implementing this program/project?
- What have you learned, and how are you incorporating learnings into your work going forward? (including feedback from participants and sector learning)
- Who was able to access the services you provided? Demographic information or participation numbers are helpful here.
- How could KZCF better support your work moving forward?
- How have you adapted to increase the accessibility and inclusion of your organization and services?

You'll also have the chance to bring up any questions, topics you would like to discuss or feedback you have for us.

CONTINUING TO GROW OUR PARTNERSHIP

We will ask for ideas on how we can better support your work. After meeting, we will follow up on your questions and reach out for any additional clarifications.

QUESTIONS?

To learn more about our grantmaking process and priorities, contact any member of our grantmaking team at 269.381.4416 or visit kalfound.org/grants.

KEY TERMS

Anti-racism

An active approach to dismantling racism and inherent white advantage; institutionally, this can include developing a shared understanding of systemic racism and how it acts as a barrier; growing awareness of institutionalized white power and privilege; developing anti-racist leadership; pursuing multicultural diversity, equity and justice; collaborating on anti-racism work; and developing shared leadership and inclusive decision-making that are accountable to BIPOC individuals and communities who are most directly affected

BIPOC (pronounced bye-pock)

An acronym of solidarity that stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color

Capacity building

Organizational, institutional and human resource developments that increase an organization's effectiveness or capabilities

Capital campaigns

Fundraising to meet a specific financial goal within a time period; objectives may include construction projects, building improvements and equipment purchases

Equity

Making sure 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 (BIPOC), people with disabilities, women and LGBTQ+ people

Field-of-Interest Fund

An option that allows donors to direct donations toward an area of interest; grants are made in alignment with the purpose of each fund, with separate goals and deadlines from our general grantmaking cycle

Intersectionality

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap or intersect especially in the experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals; intersectional programs and policies are intentionally designed for people with multiple oppressed identities can adapt to better assist each community member, regardless of how their identities intersect

KEY TERMS

Justice

The ability to live in a world free of oppression (including the process of seeking such an equitable society); justice can only be achieved through understanding and naming the painful racial history that has led to current realities; pursuing proactive strategies toward dismantling white supremacy and systemic racism; and creating space and opportunities for those most impacted by issues to build civic, cultural, and political power

LGBTQ+

A term of solidarity for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intended to be inclusive of all others who self-identify as LGBTQ+

Operational funding

Funding that covers day-to-day/ongoing needs; including wages, overhead expenses, programs, materials and supplies that help an organization fulfill its core mission

Power building/sharing

Deliberating shifting power from historically over-resourced and over-represented groups to historically under-resourced and under-represented groups, so influence, decision-making, self-determination and the ability to shape the community are shared more equitably

Racial equity

A desired state of the world in which race is no longer a predictor of outcomes; advancing racial equity requires systemic change in policies, practices, mindsets and culture

Structural/systemic racism

A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms come together to perpetuate inequities between racial groups