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Dear Friends of DC Fund,

It’s been an amazing journey, from the time Diverse City Fund (DC Fund) began with a group of activists huddling at the Emergence Community Arts Collective in 2010 and 2011. DC Fund is now proudly led by its first-ever Executive Director and we’re expanding our team, including a Program Manager, Administrative Coordinator, and Communications Intern.

With more capacity, we’re making strides such as increasing our grant sizes and bringing more clarity to who and what we fund. Our 2024 Programs are directly informed by our communities. We were inspired to make changes by hearing from changemakers – starting with the Compass Council that reflected over a series of sessions and gave us clear guidance on key issues – then diving into a program redesign process where we tasked ourselves continually to act on that guidance.

We continue to raise our voice and connect with other funders toward greater understanding of community-led grantmaking and strong, enduring commitment to resource social justice work. We are committed to keeping in close relationship with the community, listening and responding as a grassroots participatory grantmaker. This report is a way we share back with the community what we are learning and doing, and invite your continued collaboration towards justice.

In solidarity,

Board of Instigators
Sujata, Sheri, Sapna, Rubie, Richael, Rebecca, Nkechi, Jordan, Jay, Jane, Farah, Diana, Cathy, Brigette, Beth

FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am immensely proud to lead an organization committed to trusting and resourcing leaders of color who are building power within our communities.

DC needs a stronger local organizing and advocacy community, led by BIPOC groups that prioritize the needs of their leaders, families and communities.

DC Fund will continue to expand our support for these leaders as they take bold and impactful action towards systemic change. However you are connected to DC Fund, you’ve played a role in our journey and partnered with us to instigate and achieve change. I am grateful for your support and look forward to 2024 and beyond!

Tamira Benitez,
Executive Director
Executive Summary
Here’s a quick three-minute summary of what we’ve done in the past two years, and a sneak peek of our plans for 2024 to get you excited about reading the full report!

Let’s start with our impact

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN
In early 2022, DC Fund finished designing and began implementation of a new Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 with three main goals:

1) Build the collective capacity and power of the communities in which we work
2) Strengthen our own capacity and effectiveness
3) Advance our community-led model of grantmaking and intersectional racial and healing justice framework in philanthropy and beyond. You can learn more about our strategic plan here: https://diversecityfund.org/strategic-plan/

OUR GRANTMAKING
Since our last impact report, we’ve held seven grant rounds, including a special round. We disbursed over $2 million to support grassroots leaders and their advocacy and organizing with nearly 300 grants. Fifty-three percent of the groups that received grant funding had budgets under than $50,000.

CHANGEMAKERS: We could publish an encyclopedic report packed with our grantees’ stories (maybe we will ;-)) however, in this report, we’ll focus telling two stories: Sincere Seven and Voices Unbarred.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH
A key part to our Strategic Plan was to hire our very first Executive Director! In May 2022, we welcomed Tamira Benitez on board and she brought to the team Elizabeth Tibebu as our first full-time programs manager in early 2023. This past December Diverse City Fund welcomed Kush Kharod and Jaqui Santos as part-time team members. Our Board of Instigators transitioned from running programs and operations to working alongside Tamira and our communities to build the DC Fund our movements need right now.

COMPASS COUNCIL & GRANTEE SURVEY: Through a series of meetings from March through June 2023, a council of grantees, grantmaking team members, and Board of Instigator members helped Diverse City Fund redesign our programs to increase transparency and accountability. Additionally, DC Fund reached out to over 300 current and prior grantees and surveyed 77 grantees to learn about their relationships with DC Fund and their financial and organizational needs.
2024: Moving Towards the Programs Our Communities Need Now

Starting in 2024, we are launching new grantmaking programs, offering larger grants, and orienting ourselves towards a bolder focus on emerging and growing community groups addressing DC’s systemic racism:

**OUR PROCESS**
Integral to our model of shared power, DC Fund’s organizing communities were partners in designing our process via the Compass Council. They set the direction so that we can now move with a longer-term vision. 2024 marks the beginning of a new DC Fund chapter.

**NEW GRANTMAKING PROGRAMS**
We redesigned our programs to bring more power and equity into our grantmaking work. DC Fund has always funded groups at the very beginning of their community organizing and advocacy journey. We are making a bold commitment to these emerging groups. This year we are making a much-needed update to our grant sizes. After almost 13 years of offering $5,000 grants as a maximum, we are increasing our grants to up to $10,000 for launching groups and $25,000 for growing groups. We are also introducing a rolling fund to offer additional support for current grantees with emergent needs.

**NEW CAPACITY & COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAMS:**
This year we’ll offer more scholarships, new skill-building workshops, and spaces for thought partnership and community-building among grantees and other funders. We are also building a learning plan on healing justice and other political strategies with our communities.
IMPACT REPORT
OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

In 2021, the Board created our strategic plan based from feedback from DC changemakers of color. Our communities said: DC needs a stronger local organizing and advocacy community, led by BIPOC groups that prioritize the needs of their leaders, families, and communities. DC Fund plays that vital role in launching and growing movements. So, we are doing the work to show up strong for our movements in three ways:

1. Build the collective capacity and power of DC BIPOC organizations working for systemic change. Let’s be clear: Unrestricted funding allows organizations to decide how to best use their money. DC Fund grants have always been unrestricted and will continue to be so. Our grantees don’t need more strings, they just need more money. In 2024, we’re increasing the power of our grants by at least 2x. Our old grants capped at $5,000 will now go up to a maximum of $10,000 or $25,000.

2. Strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of Diverse City Fund. DC Fund is powering up and building out the necessary infrastructure to be the partner movements need. While continuing our grantmaking programs we worked with our communities to design our NEW grantmaking and capacity building programs. 2024, Here we come!

3. Advance DC Fund’s “community-led” model of grantmaking and intersectional racial justice framework in philanthropy and beyond. We know that the people most impacted by problems know what solutions are needed. We believe in ensuring they have the capacity and power to carry out this change.
OUR IMPACT: Grantmaking

Since our last report in 2020, we’ve held seven grant rounds, including a special round in response to foreseeable defunding of social services after COVID protections and support were removed from DC. We disbursed **over $2 million through almost 300 grants** to support grassroots leaders and their advocacy and organizing work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Grants</th>
<th>Total Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>$584,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>$770,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>$711,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53% of DC Fund grant recipients operate with $0 to $50,000. Often, changemakers fund their work from their own pockets and few donations, and they are not compensated for their work.
OUR IMPACT: Going Beyond Grants

Our movement leaders require more than just grant funding. In addition to increased funding and trust, DC Fund grantees also need opportunities for skill development. Over the past year, DC Fund has allocated and leveraged over $25,000 towards capacity-building support for grantees. This has greatly expanded the number of leaders we’ve been able to assist beyond just grant funding. We’ve provided partial scholarships for Movement Matters training, Georgetown University’s Nonprofit Management Certificate Program, and other opportunities as requested by our leaders.

GRANTMAKING: VOICES UNBARRED

In 2019, Diverse City Fund gave $5000, no strings attached, to Voices Unbarred. This group, a community of theater practitioners working directly with people currently and formerly incarcerated in the DC area to creatively reimagine the prison system and advocate for change, was founded a year earlier. They had no staff and had never received a grant before.

In 2023, Voices Unbarred celebrated their 5 year anniversary. The group now has a home with Ally Theater Company, and has 15 staff members including Lori Pitts, the organization’s founder. As Lori grew her project into an organization, DC Fund supported her development as a leader. In 2020, DC Fund supported Lori, and other grantee leaders, to complete Georgetown University’s Nonprofit Management Executive Certificate.

CAPACITY BUILDING: SINCERE SEVEN

This program was a key in the haystack — opening the doors of the nonprofit world.
— Perry Redd, Sincere Seven, Executive Director

Sincere Seven is a workers rights advocacy organization fighting for justice and equality. During Summer 2023, DC Fund was able to support two members of Sincere Seven, Perry Redd and James Jones, in attending Georgetown University’s Nonprofit Management Executive Certificate program. Sincere Seven has been serving the DC community for over 25 years, and has been a DC Fund grantee since 2014. Through this program, Perry and James were able to grow their skillset, and continue their work of meeting community and organizational needs.

Read more about our grantees at diversecityfund.org/grantees/
FINDING DIRECTION
WHAT GRANTEES SAID

In 2023, we sent out a grantee survey to current and prior grantees from the previous three years. We wanted to assess two main things:

- Our partnership with grantees
- Their needs for future programs

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

How are we doing?

98% of our grantees reported feeling very satisfied or more than satisfied in their relationship with DC Fund.

Grantees felt a sense of trust in DC Fund and our work as a result of the transparency and accessibility we offer in our grantmaking process, our consistency, and our commitment to using more equitable practices in transferring our decision-making.

How else can we help?

60% of our grantees reported needing support with training for their group or organization’s leadership, including fundraising, board development, financial management, and communications.

How were funds used?

1. General Operations
2. Stipends to participants/partners
3. Direct programming/supplies
4. Staff salaries/growth
5. Other

"It's really a problem of capacity; trainings are unhelpful when the problem is capacity"
In the same survey, 77 grantees responded to two key questions:

1) How would your work improve with a larger grant?
2) How can DC Fund improve grantmaking?

How would your work improve with a larger grant?

Group/Org Organizational Capacity/Work Continuity & Sustainability

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
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- [ ]

Group/Org Work Expansion

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
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How DC Fund can improve grantmaking?

- Increase grant sizes.
- Increase digital engagement such as more online grantee forums.
- More virtual and in-person spaces for groups working on the same issues to get together and develop joint efforts with each other.
GRANTMAKING TEAM FALL 2023

All DC Fund grant decisions are made by our volunteer Grantmaking Team – people of the global majority active in liberation work in DC. We know that when impacted people and people with direct experience advocating, organizing, and healing, make decisions, the outcomes are transformative.

We are grateful to our incredible Grantmaking Team who led us in reviewing and awarding funds to our 2023 Grantees. **Our 2023 Grantmaking Team included:** Charnal Chaney, Chioma Iwuohs, I-Ra Abubaker, Jabari Zakiya, Jourgette “Ms. J” E Reid-Sillah, Keri Nash, Kristi Matthews-Jones, Manon P. Matchett, Nkechi Feaster, Qaadir ElAmin, Shannon Jeffries, Sherri Davis, Thomas Blanton, Travis Ballie, Winnie Huston, Kush Kharod, Niciah Mujahid, Herbert Robinson, Jaquelin Santos- Castillo, L Cedeño Miller, Tineshea Woodson, and Roberto Tijerina

The Grantmaking Team was supported by: K.C. Atha (fall) and Ericka Taylor (spring) as facilitators. The grantmaking retreats were documented by photographers Kayla Daley and diantejenkins.com.

**What keeps you coming back?**

“What keeps me here is the community and the process. Being part of a community that is committed to shifting power and funds to the people doing the work, including those who are not necessarily in the nonprofit sector is so powerful. In terms of the process, I love that we do things differently. My mother founded and runs The WIRE and I’ve helped her through her work and I’ve seen a lot. Diverse City Fund does grantmaking differently, it’s especially different than how the government administers their grants. Government grantmaking programs create competition, tension and conflict in the communities and it is not even that much money. We do the opposite.” - **Charnal Chaney, Grantmaking Team Member since 2022**
OUR PLAN FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS
The affirmations and recommendations made by the Compass Council were pivotal to the design of our 2024 programs. The Compass Council is an advisory council made up of Board of Instigator members, Grantmaking Team members, and grantee partners that comes together for a limited time to be a compass in DC Fund’s growth journey.

**Meet the Compass Council:** Ms. Minnie Elliott, Resident Leader at Brookland Manor/Brentwood Village Residents Association (Grantee); Brenda Perez–Grantmaking Team member since 2014; Parisa Norouzi–Executive Director, Empower DC (Grantee); Niciah Petrovic Mujahid–Coalition Director, Fair Budget Coalition (Grantee) and Founding Director, Herb & Temple (Grantee); Jay Forth–Board of Instigator Member since 2021; Perry Redd–Executive Director at Sincere Seven (Grantee) and Grantmaking Team member since 2022; Kristi Matthews-Jones, Executive Director at DC Girls Coalition (Grantee) and Grantmaking Team member since 2016; and Sheri Brady–Board of Instigator Member since 2015.

**Facilitator:** Richael Faithful (Board of Instigator since 2020).

Compass Council members were invited by the Executive Director, based on recommendations from the Board of Instigators and community leaders. Each Compass Council member received a stipend, with the exception of Board of Instigator members.

In a series of meetings between March 2023 and June 2023, the Compass Council assessed the organization’s current programs and offered recommendations to make DC Fund programs more responsive to our communities’ short-term and long-term needs.

**Key Affirmations and Recommendations**

- Continue funding root cause work and continue deepening DC Fund’s understanding of this work to address systemic issues.
- Separate funding pots to create equity among groups just getting started and more established groups.
- Recognize that DC Fund cannot be everything to all groups, and that’s okay. Helping groups getting started and groups that are more established does not need to be mutually exclusive. However, DC Fund needs to find the right balance.
- Consider providing a fund grantees can access outside grant cycles to address emerging needs.
- **AND YES, INCREASE GRANT SIZES!**
NEW GRANTMAKING PROGRAMS

Our main goals for the restructuring of our grantmaking and capacity building programs are to:

1. Enhance equity and power in our grantmaking process
2. Better support the emergence and growth of the systemic change efforts of DC community organizing, advocacy, and healing justice groups

With the guidance of the Compass Council and insights from the grantee survey, we redesigned our grantmaking and capacity-building programs to strengthen and sustain a vibrant ecosystem of racial and social justice work by more intentionally supporting DC’s Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) groups. We made two major updates:

1. Increase the size of individual organizational grants. Since 2011, we have awarded up to $5,000 to our grantees regardless of their capacity, size, or budget. This year we are increasing grant sizes to $10,000 for launching groups and $25,000 for growing groups.

2. We created grantee groupings to facilitate equity in our grantmaking by recognizing our grantee partners have specific needs as they launch, grow, and sustain their work.
The Compass Council and the grantee community recommended that we create a rolling fund that allows grantees to access additional funding when challenges emerge.

### A Rolling Fund

The Compass Council and the grantee community recommended that we create a rolling fund that allows grantees to access additional funding when challenges emerge.

**2024 Rolling Fund**

*for emergent challenges*

“**Well, damn! Now what?**”

-A DC Fund grantee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRANT SIZE</th>
<th>• Up to $5,000</th>
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| ELIGIBILITY             | • Current DC Fund grantees  
                        | • Request funding for time-sensitive, unique new/emerging challenges or circumstances within the campaign or project that prevent accomplishing a DC Fund-funded goal/activity |
| DECISION-MAKING         | • 2 GT members & 1 Staff |

**Capacity and Community Building Programs**

Unrestricted funding is our primary way to build capacity within BIPOC-led groups. Our capacity and community-building supports will offer a starting point for emergent groups.

**In 2024, we'll offer:**

- Scholarship opportunities
- Skill building webinars for folks just getting started
- Spaces for thought partnership
- More community spaces for groups to connect with each other
- Individualized support
- More resources beyond dollars!
SO MUCH GRATITUDE

OUR WORK IS COLLECTIVE WORK

We are grateful for every single partner who chooses to be part of our Diverse City Fund community. Together we are committed to transform systems of oppression into systems where we all prioritize the safety of our most impacted communities of color, we take collective responsibility for our care, wellbeing and futures, and we value and build toward systems that are transformational, equitable, sustainable, and life-affirming.

Meet Our Staff

Instigators: Jaqui Santos, Communications Intern (part-time), Kush Kharod, Admin Coordinator (part-time), Elizabeth Tibebu, Programs Manager (full-time), and Tamira Benitez, Executive Director (full-time)

Meet our Board of Instigators: Sujata Bhat, Sheri Brady, Jordan Carter, Rubie Coles, Rebecca Ennen, Richael Faithful, Nkechi Feaster, Jay Forth, Farah Fosse, Cathy Meals, Sapna Pandya, Brigette Rouson, Beth Sadler, Jane Thompson, & Diana Alonzo Watkins

DC Fund Staff members primarily facilitate our daily operations, grants management and provide capacity building and professional development support to our grantees.

The Board of Instigators (BOI) is a group of volunteer activists, organizers, and DC area residents who commit to multi-year terms. Collectively, they are responsible for steering our strategic planning, participating in the broader philanthropic community, fundraising, and the designing our grant programs.

We are grateful to our peer philanthropic partners and our amazing donors who sustain our work so we can sustain changemakers of color working towards liberation of Black, Indigenous, and People of the Global Majority in DC.