

Philanthropy New York

Board Committee Racial Equity Commitments

FINANCE

- The Finance and Audit Committees developed a vendor questionnaire for all audit and finance vendors assessing their organizational commitment to racial equity. The questionnaire met with quite a bit of resistance when deployed in the field.
- We have moved a total of \$500,000 into a savings account with a Black-owned bank.
- In 2023, the committee would like to examine moving PNY's small investment account (\$3.5M) to a Black-owned asset management firm that can provide similarly cost-effective and low risk strategies as our current portfolio. This work has not yet been undertaken due to staffing changes. Work will start in 2025 with an examination of PNY's Investment Policy and Reserve Policy.

AUDIT

- Applied a racial equity lens and questionnaire to the RFP process to engage PNY's next auditing firm. After working for three years with our former auditors in an attempt to support the firm in DEI work without any significant progress, the decision was made to move to hire a new firm with a stronger commitment to DEI. In 2025, The Finance team conducted its first audit engagement with PKF O'Connor Davies. PKFOD has been ranked #1 for overall diversity, and their commitments extend to hiring, employee resource groups, and a DEI committee.

COMMITTEE ON MEMBERS

- This was the first committee to receive racial equity training. Initial efforts focused on the internalized and interpersonal aspects of racism. The committee constructed meeting agendas to create better conditions for committee members to bring their full identities to each meeting, inviting folks to speak from the multiple hats they wear: personal identity hat, PNY member hat, and positional role/institution hat.
- In 2021 and 2022, the Committee on Members served a critical role in helping to shape PNY's Strategic Framework process by providing feedback and helping us to practice "organizing" principles. The committee served as a sounding board for critical concepts in the framework. In 2023 and 2024, the Committee used a line of inquiry that centered PNY's values of community and equity to analyze the current dues structure and make recommendations for 2025 adjustments. In particular, the Committee addressed inequity in the relative burden currently shouldered by the mid-size foundations in our membership and inequities faced by grantmaking public charities that do not have significant endowments.

- **2025 Update:** We've focused on deepening the committee's ability to exercise one of its key roles – serving as ambassadors for PNY—in the context of PNY's commitment to racially equitable philanthropic practices. We continue to intentionally recruit committee members who are equipped with an integrated understanding of the need for equity-centered change within organizations. In addition, we have also focused on structuring committee meetings to support relationship building grounded in equity principles of leading with curiosity and listening deeply. Together, these practices have supported the committee to take on the more nuanced work of engaging other members to connect the dots between the work of the PNY community and the work of the members' organizations.

GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATING

- The Committee began reshaping the interview tool in 2022 in an effort to better understand the role of board members as ambassadors for racial equity work within their own institutions. The Committee, with guidance from the Board, then broadened the criteria used to identify potential board members to address questions of positional power and authority when selecting board members. The Committee also revised the call for nominations to better reflect PNY's desire for both lived and learned knowledge and expertise of anti-racist practices to inform board discussions.
- In 2024, the Committee deepened interview conversations with candidates to explore their comfort and consent around engaging in anti-racist work.
- **2025 Update:** The Committee aligned the nominations form and interview questions with the new Board Evaluation, launched in spring 2024, to ask how a candidate embodies PNY's values and to ensure accountability to Strategic Framework commitments. Additionally, the Committee included new nominations and interview questions to better assess the mindsets and practices that candidates would bring to the Board.
 - New Nominations Form Question: PNY is guided by its core values of *Community, Leadership, Learning, and Equity*. Please describe how the nominee has embodied these values in their professional role(s)?
 - New Interview Question 1: Over your first Board term of 3 years, what kind of leadership do you anticipate will be needed personally, as a Board member, and as a leader within the philanthropic sector (me/we/community)?
 - New Interview Question 2: How do you anticipate navigating between your institutional role and your role as a Board leader when there is conflict or tension between your organization's priorities/stance and PNY's priorities/stance on critical issues?

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

- The Committee started in 2023 by expanding representation within Committee membership, including non-member organizations Nonprofit New York, FPWA and HSC.
- The Committee then developed a set of questions to guide a racial equity impact analysis of the Public Policy Slate.

- In 2024, the Committee has strongly amplified PNY's public policy efforts, including championing [A Day Without Human Services](#) to advocate for more equitable pay and encouraging membership support for grantee organizations' participation in the strike. The committee has engaged in meetings with elected officials to advocate for a stronger nonprofit ecosystem and supported the development of a responsive communications protocol to guide PNY's engagement with relevant racial justice issues.
- In 2025, the committee centered guidance from movement organizations to highlight movement leader concerns around the NYC Charter Revision Commission ahead of the 2024 election. The committee sponsored a briefing with New Yorkers Defending Democracy and Make the Road NY and drafted a communications piece sent to members that outlined the ways that the charter revisions could obstruct the power and impact of community voice.