

## SPARC Learning Collaborative

### Need Statement.

People of color in Minnesota, specifically African-American and American Indian households, experience homelessness and housing instability at rates that are 7-8 times higher than their representation within the general population in Minnesota. In addition, Minnesota’s homeless response system historically and currently produces disproportionately poorer “homeless to housed” and “housing stability” outcomes for African-American and American Indian populations than for White or other populations.

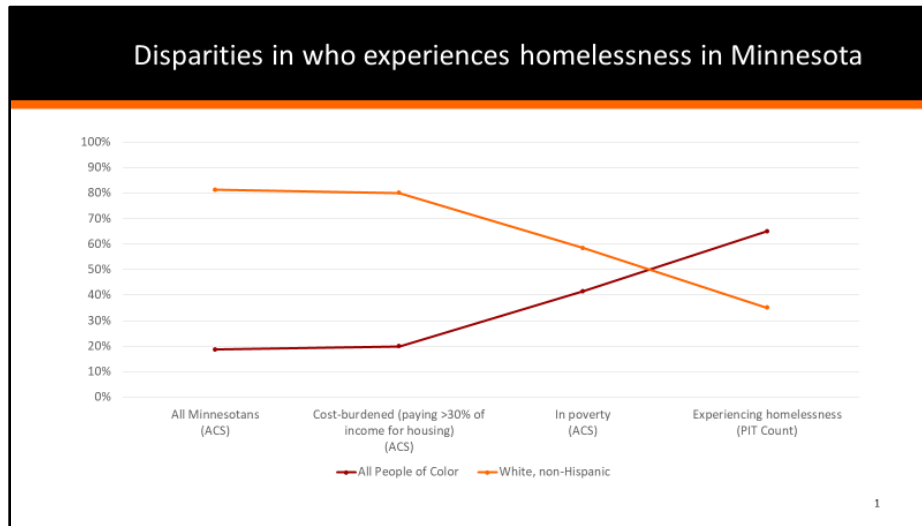


Figure 1. This picture shows that substantially more people of color, as a group, are experiencing homelessness even compared to the disparities for who experiences poverty.

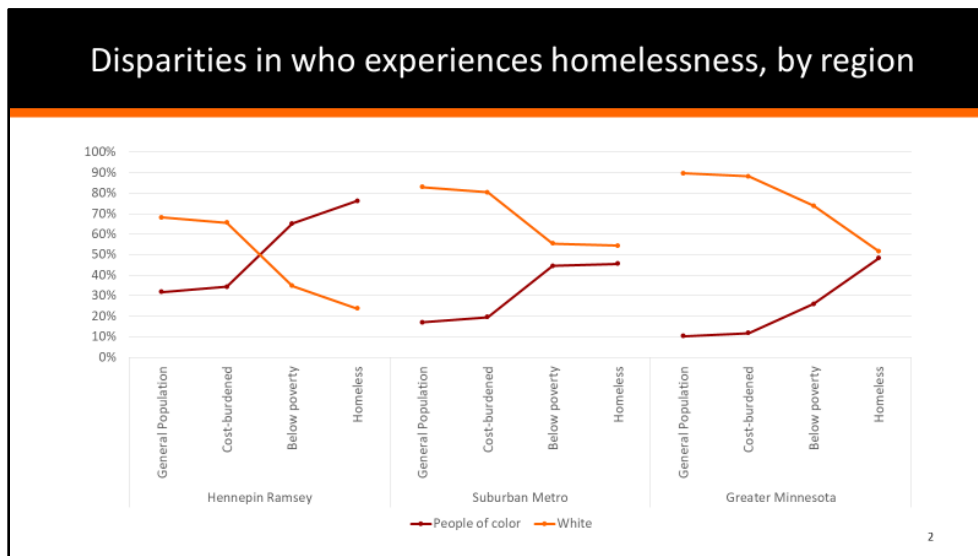


Figure 2. This graph shows us that same breakdown for three regions of the state: Hennepin and Ramsey counties, the five suburban metro counties, and the rest of the state. In general, this picture shows us that disparities are more acute in greater Minnesota, where people of color are five times more likely to be homeless than we would expect based on their representation in the general population.

Racial disparities in our homeless response system are caused by systems and structures that are designed to create such disparities. Failure to address these systemic and structural barriers inhibits our collective goal of ending homelessness. Specific attention, resource, and energy must be dedicated towards proactively reimagining policies, practices, attitudes and actions to pursue equitable power, access, opportunity, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all<sup>1</sup>.

Recent reports and events (like those funded by Pohlad Family Foundation—Marc Dones at MCH Conference) are increasing awareness and generating discussion about racial equity among homeless/housing providers and planners. These discussions, however, are unlikely to lead to real and system-wide changes without the proper focus, resource, and leadership that can guide good intentions into meaningful action.

### Overview

To advance the work of the SPARC Initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities), the Center for Social Innovation (C4) proposes to launch a Minnesota SPARC Learning Collaborative. Building on the work of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the involvement of C4 staff in previous learning collaboratives, the SPARC Learning Collaborative will provide focused, time-limited training and coaching for teams representing communities across targeted geographical regions.

To advance this approach, we propose working with partners across the State of Minnesota to conduct a year-long SPARC Learning Collaborative that will bring together teams from across the state to acquire skills and knowledge that will help them make equity-based change within their jurisdictions. To ensure strong representation from different geographic regions within the state, we will recruit teams from rural and tribal areas as well as those from urban and suburban communities. We will especially focus on tapping into and building upon local capacity, including exploring the possibility of contracting with local experts to be part of our training and coaching team.

This proposal outlines our organizational expertise and capacity, our team’s approach to the proposed work, proposed staff, and estimated pricing for a SPARC Learning Collaborative.

### Corporate Capabilities

The **Center for Social Innovation**, LLC (C4), is a woman-owned, mission-driven small business dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable people by generating creative solutions to complex social problems. Our team includes clinicians, educators, trainers, researchers and evaluators, and people with lived experiences of recovery from mental illness, substance use, trauma, and homelessness. C4 staff brings clinical training and field experience in homelessness and housing, behavioral health, social work, health care, public policy, training, and technical assistance (TA). We actively recruit and employ people in recovery, and more than one-third of our staff has lived experience.

C4 promotes best practices to address complex public health problems. Over the past decade, C4’s focus has continuously moved “upstream” in pursuit of effective prevention and early intervention strategies that can interrupt pathways into homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and addiction. Broadening our focus in order to

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<sup>1</sup> SPARC Racial Equity Commitment Statement, Center for Social Innovation, 2018.

prioritize prevention and confront systemic drivers of injustice has deepened our impact. Using state-of-the-art research, training, and technology, we in turn help individuals, agencies, and communities deepen the impact of their own work.

C4 has earned a reputation as an innovator, a disruptor, and a convener of disparate stakeholders that is able to navigate complex issues. For example, C4 leads the national Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS, 2011-present), a flagship initiative of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to advance wide-scale adoption of recovery-oriented supports, services, and systems. BRSS TACS brings together people in recovery and peer-run organizations, providers, policy makers, researchers, federal staff and other federal, state, and local leaders. From 2006 to 2011, C4 assembled a Steering Committee of peers, federal partners, researchers, providers, and other leaders in the field of homelessness to provide strategic direction to the SAMHSA's Homelessness Resource Center. The project delivered innovative training and technical assistance to homeless service providers nationally. C4 is also a national TA provider for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and leads many of HUD's online and adult learning efforts including their current Community of Practice TA model and provides TA to HUD Continuums of Care (2010 to present).

Through multiple Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants from the National Institutes of Health, C4 has partnered with leading developers of evidence-based interventions to create a series of practice improvement and client engagement tools. These include mobile applications, video games, simulated learning tools, and interactive online learning courses – which aim to widen access to research-based practice for vulnerable populations. All of these C4 initiatives paved the way for Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC).

C4's work on the SPARC Initiative has demonstrated that the field is ripe for conversations about racism that offer concrete solutions and that without a focus on racial equity, collective solutions will be not only incomplete, but ultimately ineffective.

### Proposed Team

C4's team combines years of experience working in the homelessness assistance network with expertise in racial equity initiatives, organizational change, and technical assistance to drive and sustain systems-level change. Below are brief bios of the proposed team.

**Jeff Olivet** is Founder and Principal of jo consulting and has worked in homelessness, behavioral health, and public health for 25 years. As a teacher, writer, and policy leader, he shapes new directions for organizations across the United States and internationally. He specializes in creative approaches and best practices for large and small organizations. Mr. Olivet has worked as a street outreach worker, case manager, coalition builder, activist, national trainer and technical assistance provider, as well as a curriculum developer, writer, and inspirational public speaker. From 2010 to 2018, he was CEO of the Center for Social Innovation, where he led the growth, development, and strategic direction of this dynamic company. Mr. Olivet is Principal Investigator on multiple research studies funded by National Institutes of Health, and he founded the SPARC Initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities), a multi-city effort to address racial inequity in homelessness. His blogs and *Changing the Conversation* podcasts are widely circulated, providing thought

leadership for the field. Mr. Olivet is deeply committed to social justice, racial equity, gender equality, and inclusion for all. With a BA from the University of Alabama and an MA from Boston College, he divides his time between Cambridge, Massachusetts and Washington, DC.

**Keisha Edwards** is a Senior Associate with C4's SPARC initiative and she has nearly twenty years of experience in racial justice work, supporting school districts, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to develop and design innovative training curricula, customized coaching packages, measurement tools, professional development and instructional products, and custom pilot tests for operationalizing racial justice in the workplace. She specializes in finding creative and meaningful tools and resources clients can use to further their mission of integrating and better employing racial equity in their work. Through her work with SPARC, Ms. Edwards creates, designs, and delivers training curricula; provides short- and long-term consultation to communities and organizations; and creates effective measurement tools and products for external distribution to diverse stakeholders to enable and strengthen implementation and operationalization of racial equity initiatives.

**Cheri Epps** is a Training and Technical Assistance Specialist on the SPARC team. Previously, she was the Director of Transitional and Community Programs at the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) working for more than 22 years providing supportive services and transitional housing services to people experiencing homelessness. She served as a racial justice educator, facilitator, and coach for BPHC's Racial Justice and Health Equity Initiative Professional Development Series and served on the Anti-Racism Committee. Ms. Epps has a M.S.W. from Simmons College and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Alcohol and Addictions Counselor.

**Nastacia' Moore** is a SPARC Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator and she provides technical assistance and training to eight HUD Continuums of Care and other communities across the country in developing systems-level responses to historical racial inequity. Prior to joining C4, Ms. Moore was the lead HMIS trainer for the Indiana Balance of State where she trained providers on HUD's new data standards, policies and procedures; led the Point in Time (PIT) count; and monitored system performance measures. She also monitored federal awards for Housing Opportunities for People with Aids (HOPWA) grantees and HOME tenant-based rental assistance re-entry grantees and acted as Indiana's SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) state lead for SAMHSA. Ms. Moore is the former Program Manager of a Permanent Supportive Housing program for families in Dayton, OH where she oversaw five case managers; facilitated leases and landlord contracts; and conducted Housing Quality Standard inspections. Her depth of knowledge of the homeless services system informs her SPARC work.

**Maya Beit-Arie** is a Project Coordinator for C4's SPARC initiative and she supports various project activities including performing internal and external equity reviews; drafting needs assessments, training curricula, reports, proposals, and research protocols; participating in research collection, analysis, and presentation; and coordinating research activities with external stakeholders. Prior to her work with C4, Ms. Beit-Arie worked in research on the intersectionality of homelessness as a method of improving housing outcomes for diverse urban populations. These study topics included the impact of severe mental health conditions on housing outcomes for young adults experiencing homelessness in Boston, and on different cultural interpretations of home among adult populations experiencing homelessness in London, England. She also worked in project management for two years in Tanzania where her work focused primarily on community

organization and stakeholder engagement in the fields of education equity and public health in youth and young. Ms. Beit-Arie holds a BA in Social Anthropology and Human Geography from the University of St. Andrews, where she received the Principal's Medal, the university's highest achievement award for academic excellence and community service.

### Proposed Scope of Services

The Minnesota SPARC Learning Collaborative is designed to accomplish the following goals:

1. Increase the capacity of communities to understand and respond to racial inequities in homelessness
2. Assist communities in developing structural change objectives
3. Implement effective strategies to reduce the number of people of color experiencing homelessness

### Structure and Timeframe

The Collaborative will occur over **12 months** and will combine three in-person **Learning Sessions** and **virtual coaching** through specific, time-limited **action periods**. During the Collaborative, teams of 4-7 people representing the HUD Continuum of Care, housing and homeless service providers, funders, people with lived experience of homelessness and other key stakeholders from each local community will focus on five stages of work:

1. Community Engagement
2. Data Analysis
3. Action Planning
4. Implementation and Evaluation
5. Sustainability

**Learning Session 1** will be two days long and will include a **one day training** on the intersection of racism and homelessness, **strategies for community engagement**, and **guidance on data collection and analysis**. Local data collection and analysis may including HMIS and cross sector data analysis, three to five key stakeholder interviews, and up to two listening sessions with people of color experiencing homelessness. The training will include didactic teaching sessions, large group discussion, and small group action planning, and will cover issues such as:

- Terms and definitions
- Historical context
- Racism and homelessness
- White privilege
- Implementing equity-based strategies

This curriculum builds on the work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva,<sup>2</sup> Ijoema Oluo,<sup>3</sup> Patrisse Cullors,<sup>4</sup> and others. Through our work training dozens of communities around the United States, the team has refined this curriculum and learned that bringing together knowledge-building sessions with small group work is an effective way to raise the

<sup>2</sup> Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 3rd Edition. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Oluo, I. (2018). *So You Want to Talk About Race?* Seal Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Kahn-Cullors, P., & Bandele, A. (2017). *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*. St. Martin's Press.

equity literacy of a community and jumpstart thinking on the part of leadership and stakeholders about how they can move from knowledge to action.

Following Learning Session 1, **Action Period 1** (months 2 – 4) will focus on convening community stakeholders, conducting data collection and analysis, holding listening sessions, and compiling the information into a concise presentation for Learning Session 2 and for use in the wider community. During this period, each team will participate in **monthly virtual coaching sessions** on webcam via Adobe Connect in which the coaches will provide guidance for how to move through the process and to troubleshoot barriers and challenges. In particular, the SPARC coaches will provide support and guidance as needed for collecting data and conducting listening sessions with people of color who have lived experience of homelessness. Each team’s coach will be available as needed by email and telephone between coaching sessions.

**Learning Session 2** will be one day long and will occur at month five. Teams will share local data in a storyboard session, identify commonalities across communities and share lessons learned during the first Action Period. Each SPARC coach will work with their team to begin translating their findings into strategic action planning including identifying Structural Change Objectives. During **Action Period 2** (months 5 – 11), the Minnesota teams will identify

2-4 structural change objectives and create an implementation plan that includes concrete steps to sustain the effort. While each community SPARC works with must identify its own Objectives, communities often draw on one another’s ideas and previous successes to craft their Objectives [See Sample Structural Change Objectives to the right, which have been drawn or adapted from SPARC communities’ objectives]. Strategies will include those that focus on issues internal to the homeless services system (e.g., staff and board diversity, leadership development of people of color; anti-racism training, organizational policies and procedures) as well as those that cut across multiple sectors (e.g., legal strategies to address issues such as landlord discrimination, cross sector data sharing/analysis, homelessness prevention models, collaboration across multiple systems to address homelessness). During the monthly virtual coaching calls, the coaches will share Change Metrics, tools and lessons learned from other SPARC communities.

**Sample Structural Change Objectives**

1. Design a Coordinated Entry System (CES) that takes into account historical marginalization and increased risk of homelessness for specific racial/ethnic groups.
2. Create or Adopt a new system for prioritization of housing and other resources that includes criteria to address racial inequities.
3. Develop leadership program for emerging leaders of color in the homelessness system.
4. Ensure ongoing training and opportunities for staff skill development on racial equity and anti-racism strategies.
5. Expand health coverage for people of color experiencing homelessness through 1115 Medicaid waiver.
6. Develop legal precedent to combat fair housing violations at the local level, along with other legal strategies.
7. Reduce number and impact of evictions on families of color.
8. Include racial equity measures in long-term strategic plan to end homelessness
9. Create strategies to increase diversity of boards and executive leadership of organizations working in homeless services.
10. Focus on advocacy strategies to ensure inclusionary zoning at the local level.

**Learning Session 3**, at the end of the 12 months, will be one-day meeting and include a storyboard session in which teams present their structural change objectives and implementation plan. Teams will share their successes and challenges and plans for sustaining positive change.

The Minnesota team members will be expected to attend all three Learning Sessions (4 days), actively participate in the virtual monthly coaching calls, and work with their team to create and gain input from other community members on their Structural Change Objectives and implementation plan. Team members are expected to spend about six to eight hours per month on the SPARC Learning Collaborative.

The SPARC team will maintain a listserv of participants to share information and resources among teams. Throughout the year, SPARC coaches will meet monthly to discuss their teams’ challenges and the strategies they are using to meet them. The SPARC coaches will funnel successful strategies back to the teams to ensure promising practices and workable solutions are conveyed to all the participants. All SPARC coaches will have experience and expertise in racial equity and an understanding of the homelessness system.

The following table outlines the five stages of focus, along with activities, deliverables, and proposed timeframes. Our team is open to discussing and revising these if they do not align with expectations.

| <i>Area of Focus</i>             | <i>Activities</i>  | <i>Deliverables</i>  | <i>Timeframe</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|--|------------------|
| 1. Community Engagement          | Initial Learning Session with community engagement strategies<br>One day training<br>Second Learning Session with presentation of findings<br>Final Learning Session with structural change objectives and implementation plan | Educational materials/handouts for training and community engagement.<br><br>Racial Equity Framework for each community                            | Months 1-12      |
| 2. Analysis                      | HMIS and cross-sector data analysis<br>Up to 2 listening sessions<br>3-5 key stakeholder interviews  | Guidance document on conducting community data analysis, structured interviews and listening sessions<br><br>Storyboard of findings from each team | Months 1-5       |
| 3. Action Planning               | Second Learning Session<br>Monthly virtual coaching sessions with teams<br>Developing and refining structural change objectives<br>Creation of implementation plan with specific sustainability goals                          | 2-4 well-crafted structural change objectives from each team<br>5–6 page implementation plan with specific sustainability goals from each team     | Months 5-7       |
| 4. Implementation and Evaluation | Monthly virtual coaching sessions with teams<br>Identified change metrics for structural change objectives   | List of Change Metrics to evaluate progress  | Months 8-12      |

|                   |   |  |          |
|-------------------|---|--|----------|
| 5. Sustainability | Final Learning Session with sustainability plan | Storyboard of team's accomplishments<br>Specific sustainability goal and plan from each team | Month 12 |
|-------------------|---|--|----------|

At the end of this year long process, participating communities will have developed internal leadership and capacity to continue the work well beyond the SPARC Collaborative and will be part of a cohort of colleagues across their region with whom they can continue to communicate as they work to sustain progress. Additionally, the SPARC team is interested in working with communities who have been through Learning Collaboratives to explore ongoing support and connection among participating communities.