

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Racial Justice and Equity Strategy & Learning Partner

Background

Humanity United (HU) is a foundation dedicated to cultivating the conditions for enduring freedom and peace. HU supports and builds efforts to transform the systems that contribute to human exploitation and violent conflict. HU was founded by The Omidyar Group, a diverse collection of independent organizations and initiatives that pursue different ways to improve the lives of people and societies.

Program Context

Humanity United was founded with the guiding principle that all humans possess inherent dignity. For many years, our work has focused on the systems that contribute to human exploitation and violent conflict in locations around the world. This focus has required us to grapple with underlying issues like the role of trauma in conflict, the importance of local agency, and accountability, among others. Unfortunately, like many US-based organizations, we never explicitly confronted the role of structural racism in our work, in our own communities, how it impacts our own partners and staff, and how it also contributes to systems of exploitation and violence in the United States and around the world.

Over the last two years, HU has supported community-level racial justice and equity (RJE) efforts with the goal of supporting thriving Black communities. This work has initially focused on two pillars: **Thriving Communities** and **Building Power**. These pillars are viewed not as individual subsets but as interconnected areas of work that will benefit from our investment. We specifically chose to work on issues affecting “communities” and harnessing “power” because of HU’s deep history in engaging at the community level to address challenges, as well as our belief that local, community change involves building and shifting power:

As part of this effort, the RJE team plans to explore what we’ve learned so far from the initiative and how those learnings will inform its future direction. We anticipate that this critical reflection would use a ‘*what, so what, now what*’ strategy framework and would seek to:

1. **WHAT:** Examine the lessons learned, what we learned about our assumptions, and how we showed up to support our partners and communities.
2. **SO WHAT:** Make meaning of what we’ve learned and HU’s role within this system, understand the consequences and implications of the work, and what were the gaps and limitations.
3. **NOW WHAT:** Deepen our understanding of the opportunities by exploring unanswered or new questions through engagement with (new or core) partners on the ground. This work might include continuing the work as is or pivoting based on insights from partners. It will also involve exploring participatory strategy development and grantmaking.

Scope of Work Humanity United is seeking a consultant (or team of consultants) to help us implement our learning plan internally and with grantees and take those learnings to build out a strategic vision for the work moving forward. This work would include working with us for at least two years (2023 – 2024). We believe the consultant will help us to implement our learning plan and build a strategy through activities such as:

- Being in relationship with us and our grantee partners, including building trust to enable grantees to feel comfortable sharing challenges with the work (or even with working with HU)
- Being able to ask questions around grantee-driven work, surfacing new insights
- Developing strategy and learning materials to support the RJE team and grantees
- Facilitating strategy and learning meetings with staff and with staff and grantees
- Synthesizing learning log information, meeting notes, grant reports and/or other sources to generate insights that can feed into learning meetings

Qualifications for this work include:

- Understanding of core concepts in our work, including racial equity, emergent strategy, systems change, and learning
- Strong relationship building skills, including across culture and communities
- Willingness to travel to meet with grantees and HU in person
- Strong adaptive, ideally liberatory, facilitation skills and comfort using a wide range of approaches
- Ability to solicit and gather information to use during learning dialogues
- Ability to synthesize and find meaningful patterns across a variety of sources of qualitative/narrative information
- Experience working on issues of human rights or racial justice or related field
- Planning and coordinating logistics for strategy and learning discussions and producing notes and follow-up documentation.

We are seeking a partner whose strategy and learning processes have helped teams to strengthen their connections and trust with community partners, discover new ways of working together, are systems enabled, and ultimately strengthen their impact.

Key Questions

The below questions represent a set of **illustrative** strategy and learning questions we have been exploring. We anticipate these questions might be further refined as we engage in learning with the consultant and our grantee partners:

Our questions to strengthen our practice of supporting grantees and systems change:

- What are the ways in which we can bring the most value to our grantees and advance work on racial justice and equity through how we operationalize (and continue to adapt) the concept of “accompaniment” with them and their issue areas? What we can offer, what do we need to get better at, what we legally can’t offer, and what they are asking for.

- How will we communicate our availability and boundaries for specific accompaniment actions?
- How can we adapt our budget allocations to maximize the (financial) value we bring to our grantees and their systemic change efforts?

Questions surfaced by grantees as opportunities for collaborative learning and strategy:

- When could grantees adapt to act on timely new needs and when should they prioritize meeting their mission and goals?
- How can grantees continue to strengthen their organizations as we develop into the next phase of the RJE work? How do organizations build the leadership capacity of their staff?
- Given grantees' heavy reliance on participation, how do we find the right moments, actions, and participants?
- How can HU support visibility and participation with grantees? What does HU anticipate as the ripple effects of increasing an organization's visibility and participation?
- How can we allocate resources in a meaningful way that leverages learning from the initial community, while also exploring what it means to move to 'new' spaces and places? Does 'success' look differently in other spaces or places?
- How can we best influence and work with systems that uphold inequality? How do we balance different views (e.g., work with vs. abolish)? How do organizations continue to work at the intersections to impact the system? Is this a role for donors?

Methodology/Approach

We anticipate this process consisting of cycles of reflection, learning and action with our partners. We expect a successful consultant team will work closely with the RJE team and its partners to develop and facilitate a reflection and strategy development process. This process will include facilitating reflection on our past work, designing and leading regular strategy sessions, developing documentation, ensuring progress towards completion, and building the capacity of the participants to continue to engage on iterative cycles of learning and strategy adaptation. We expect a proposal for a more precise methodology to be led by the consultant, with inputs and final approval by Humanity United and partners.

Key Deliverables

- Articulate the project approach, including how you will engage with staff and partners and what your processes will be to listen to the needs, develop responsive approaches, implement, and adapt along the way.
- Document reflections on lessons learned through the existing strategy as well as a progress reports, interviews, communications materials, etc.) and monitoring of current reports/news/developments alongside RJE team
- Working closely with RJE and partners, document the contours of the current system we are seeking to change
- Document progress made towards strategy development as you facilitate strategy conversations. Develop and refine strategy documentation and accompanying materials.

- Refine the set of learning questions/hypotheses in coordination with partners and a process to regularly reflect on those jointly with an eye towards adaptation.

Timeline

The Consultant will initially support Humanity United for a set period from May 2023 to April 2024, with the recognition that we may wish to extend the learning relationship beyond this time period.

Proposal Process

Proposals of up to five pages must include:

- Your qualifications, responding to the list included above, including:
 - A description of your role and outcomes in at least 2 relevant learning facilitation projects
 - A description of your role and outcomes in at least 2 relevant experiences working in with diverse partners, ideally related to racial equity work
- A description of how you would approach the project
- A brief overview of some of the challenges and needs you see in doing this work
- A detailed budget
- Contact information of two references which can include those at HU you have worked with if relevant.

Please submit any questions about the TOR via email to Vijay Simhan (vsimhan@humanityunited.org).

Please submit final proposals by April 21st to vsimhan@humanityunited.org.