

A decorative background featuring a network diagram of interconnected nodes and lines, with some nodes highlighted in blue and others in grey. The nodes are arranged in a complex, non-linear pattern, suggesting a web of relationships or data points.

Illinois Racial Equity and Racial Justice Landscape Study



**Great Cities
Institute**

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Landscape Study Research Overview

Goals

- To better **understand the existing network of organizations and leaders** working on racial equity, racial justice and social justice and the **relationships between and among them**.
- To **better understand existing Black population centers**, including their social, economic, and political context and conditions.
- To create analysis and **recommendations that support creating a shared understanding** of the state's racial equity and racial justice landscape and **how to build equity**.

Research Methodology in Brief

Define Black population centers



US Census analysis

Determine organizations in landscape



IRS & Guidestar analysis, survey and interview of organizational leaders, internet and media research

Foster understanding about and connections in landscape



Outreach (surveys, interviews, focus groups), Census data, as well as traditional internet and historical research

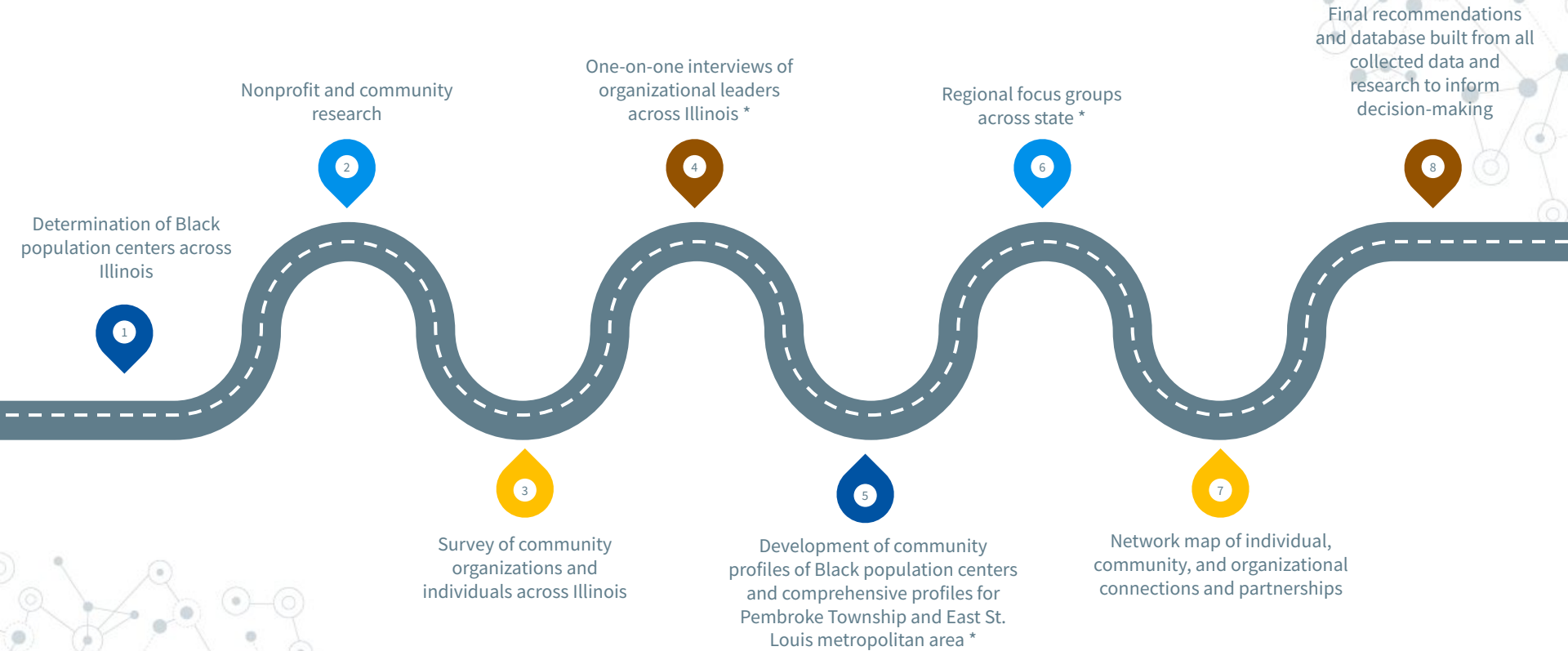
Recommendations



Analysis of all the foregoing quantitative and qualitative research and inputs; development of Black population centers profiles and landscape of organizations, and study report

Project Roadmap

The eight steps of the landscape study, from start to finish. Steps in which we groundtruthed our findings to date with participants are marked by an asterisk.



Data Identified and Collected

81

Black population centers (30%+ African American/Black population)

314

Survey responses

88

Interviewees and focus group participants across the state

1,725

Orgs and initiatives collected for network map

264

Additional orgs and initiatives identified via research

Statewide Organizational Landscape Highlights



1,572

Organizations or groups statewide in the landscape

143

Identified as community builders

(Organizations that have described or identified their work as organizing, building power, or working on/for rights, equity or justice)

165

Identified as grassroots groups

(Individuals, groups, coalitions, and/or organizations identified through social media and archival research that are unincorporated)

Defining Racial Equity in the Landscape

Racial Equity Described Across a Broad Spectrum of Fields

Agriculture

Black culture and Black history

Civil rights

Criminal justice and reform

Diaspora/Latine

Economy and economic development

Education

Employment

Environment and environmental
justice

Food sovereignty

Gentrification and segregation Health

Housing Immigration

Indigenous history

Labor and labor rights

Legal services

Political representation

Students

Systems change

Voter engagement

Wealth generation

Wellness

Workforce diversity

Youth



Defining Racial Equity in the Landscape

Six Categories of Racial Equity Work Across the State

- Systems change (147 total descriptions)
- Community survival and support (184 total descriptions)
- Workplace values and culture (89 total descriptions)
- Building coalition and activism (65 total descriptions)
- Storytelling and truth-telling (33 total descriptions)
- Civic engagement (11 total descriptions)

Defining Black Centered in the Landscape

Participants reported that work that is Black centered

- Serves Black people of all ages and Black communities at all scales (68 descriptions)
- Happens in a Black workplace and a Black community (40 descriptions)
- Focuses on Black experiences (26 descriptions)
- Engages in work to change a system (24 descriptions)
- Has Black and/or Latine leadership (22 descriptions)
- Closes gaps caused by racial disparity and shifts narratives from the past to the future (16 descriptions)
- Is antiracism work and antiracist (10 descriptions)
- Improves economic conditions for Black places and builds Black community (10 descriptions)
- Builds coalitions and organizes and advocates for change (5 descriptions)

Findings and Recommendations

Bolstering Racial Equity & Justice Work

Supporting racial equity and racial justice work and advocating for systemic change.

Redefining Public Sector Involvement

Ways to reimagine a public sector that serves people of color equitably.

Encouraging a Focus Beyond Chicagoland

Building racial equity through increasing visibility and developing connections across the state.

Acknowledging the Universal Lack of Resources and the Need for Collaboration

Identified need for increased resources and collaboration.

Shifting Grant-Maker Expectations to Support Racial Equity

Identified relationship building and co-decision making modes with grant-makers to support systems change work.

Adapting to Community Need

Ways grant-makers and the public sector can develop more flexibility, accountability processes, and co-creative models that are more responsive to the needs of communities of color.

Highlighted Findings

- A common thread is that so **much of racial equity and justice work is rooted in history and in the social, political, and economic structural racism** of society writ large and also of each individual place.
- **Calls for systems change are loud and clear**, as both a first step toward and an ultimate goal of racial equity and justice work locally and at the state level.
- Many participants reported **focusing on education and youth engagement** as areas for racial equity work to be built and bolstered.



Highlighted Findings

- Individuals and leaders of organizations **report a severe disconnect between themselves and the public sector agencies or government representatives** who are meant to work for them in their community or for the population they serve.
- Many **community members outside of Chicago reported feeling unseen**, even completely overlooked especially in terms of political representation, the provision of public services and the allocation of private and public resources.
- Multiple leaders in areas across the state reported **a desire to cultivate connections, share experiences and learn from others who are engaged in racial equity and racial justice work** with the purpose of creating a deeper understanding of equity work and greater local and statewide impact.



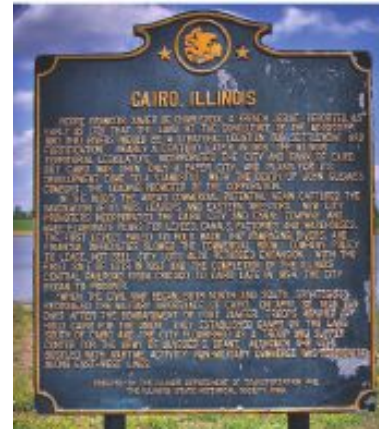
Highlighted Findings

- Participants consistently discussed the grave **lack of financial resources available** to meet need as their most significant obstacle.
- Racial equity leaders shared that **as a result of competition for resources, innovative ideas are seen as a commodity to be protected instead of scaled out**, and potential lessons learned about effective practice remain solely with program managers and participants.
- The GCI research team found a **lack of data on voter turnout rates and civic engagement** that was reliable, consistent, and publicly available at the local level statewide.



Highlighted Findings

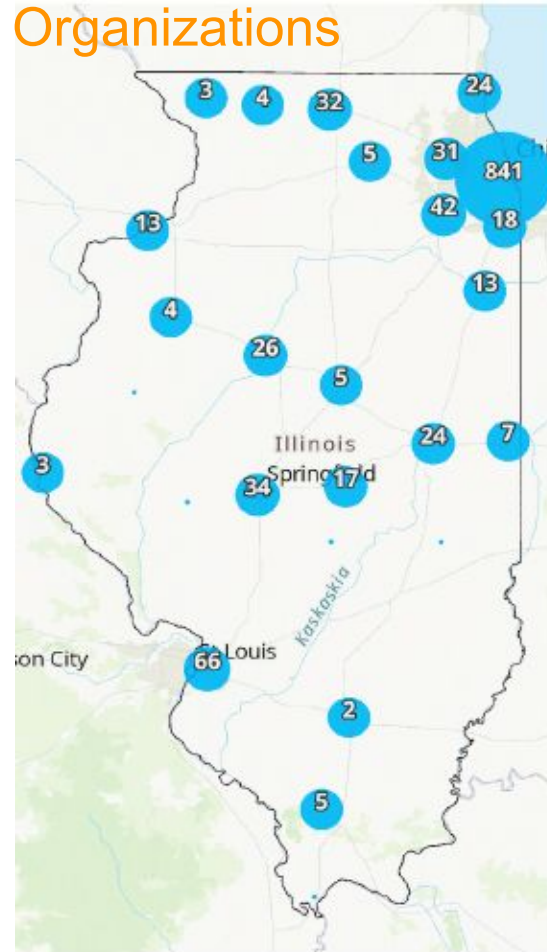
- Racial equity leaders reported that they **felt left out of community resource decision making** because they do not see grant-makers engage the community.
- Participants reported **feeling forced to focus on short-term wins at the expense of long-term vision** and system change work because of short-term funding cycles of one to three years.
- Participants reported that they believed that **it is hard for grant-makers and organizations to spend time examining their institution's assumptions or biases**, or to be nimble in meaningfully shifting to a new focus, especially after they have set an agenda.



Interactive Profiles of Black Population Centers



Statewide Landscape of Organizations



Highlighted Recommendations

- **Allow organizations space to reflect and learn from the work they do** to refine their approaches internally as an organization and externally with their communities and with other racial equity leaders and organizations.
- Contribute to **shifting existing narratives about rural communities and communities of color** by funding training and leadership of youth, community members and grassroots organizations to allow for a larger presence of community power in the nonprofit ecosystem.
- **Encourage government to engage with community groups** to provide clarity on which policy and budget decisions they can meaningfully participate in and to repair broken trust and build common understanding.

Highlighted Recommendations

- **Reject investments in statewide projects or organizations that do not have a statewide lens** by adjusting granting terms to ensure true community representation.
- Use the collected data to **inform the public and community organizations about Black population centers across Illinois.**
- **Fund efforts to gather data on voter engagement, voter turnout, and civic participation** across Illinois at multiple scales so it can be put to use to catalyze changes for equity and civic engagement and increase voter engagement.
- Develop a larger **“investing in an ecosystem”** strategy that seeks to connect organizations seeking common outcomes to work together in new ways.



Highlighted Recommendations

- Encourage **longer-term investments with more flexibility** and adaptability to realities defined by organizations.
- Ask organizations and communities about **how they define success** and allow for those definitions to have an effect in grant applications
- Establish a process to check **grant-maker organization and institution's assumptions or biases**. Being in relationship with grantees and present in the public conversation allows for grant-makers to learn and adapt.
- Create a mechanism for grant-making focus to shift, being **nimble and acknowledging when a previous investment potentially was “wrong” or caused harm**. The learning organization allows past mistakes to inform improvements for the future.

Thank you

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The logo for the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), consisting of the letters "UIC" in white inside a dark blue circle.

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