



# The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in New Mexico: *A Race to Lead* Brief

## Introduction

The Building Movement Project's *Race to Lead* series investigates why there are so few leaders of color in the nonprofit sector and documents the challenges people of color face as they reach for and attain senior leadership roles. In 2019, the Building Movement Project (BMP) conducted an updated national survey to assess changes in the sector since the data collected in its original 2016 survey. *The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in New Mexico: A Race to Lead Brief* is part of a series of regional reports and includes findings from the more than 5,200 nationwide respondents who took the newest survey and the subset of 261 people who work for organizations in New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> This report also includes an analysis of interviews and focus groups that took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico in December 2019 as well as additional interviews. The report explores:

- 1 Data related to economic well-being and racial disparities in compensation;
- 2 The leadership aspirations of current nonprofit employees and the racialized barriers to career advancement and organizational funding;
- 3 The current racial composition of nonprofits in the area and how those demographics impact the experiences of staff; and
- 4 The range of perspectives shared by New Mexico nonprofit staff on how to advance race equity in nonprofit organizations and the sector at large.

This brief also explores the aspirations and challenges described by low-wage nonprofit staff in New Mexico and ways the sector can better support their livelihoods.

## Race and Inequality in New Mexico

A majority of New Mexico residents are people of color. White non-Hispanic/Latinx people comprise 37% of the state's population, according to census data, while 45% of residents are Hispanic/Latinx, 11% are Native/Indigenous, 3% are Black, 2% are Asian, 3% are multiracial, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander.<sup>2</sup>

New Mexico is characterized by stark economic inequality,<sup>3</sup> and consistently ranks among the states with the very highest rates of child and elder poverty.<sup>4</sup> The state has the nation's third-highest share of people who are working and still living under the poverty line, and people of color are overrepresented in this category.<sup>5</sup> The state's working poor population includes just 11% of white workers compared to dramatically higher shares of Native/Indigenous (35%), Hispanic/Latinx (28%), Black (20%), and multiracial (15%) communities, and of people of color overall (28%). In Las Cruces, the state's second-largest city and one that is overwhelmingly people of color, 29% of residents live below the poverty line.<sup>6</sup> Educational disparities alone do not account for these discrepancies; in Albuquerque, the state's largest city, college-educated people of color earn an average of \$4 less per hour than their white counterparts.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of this report's publication in 2020, the disparities in health illustrated by COVID-19 illness and deaths are of particular concern. New Mexico responded swiftly to the coronavirus threat,<sup>8</sup> but the virus overlaid with existing health inequalities has disproportionately hurt communities of color. Hispanic/Latinx and Native/Indigenous residents have been particularly affected by COVID-19 infections, and Native/Indigenous individuals comprise the majority of deaths from the virus in New Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

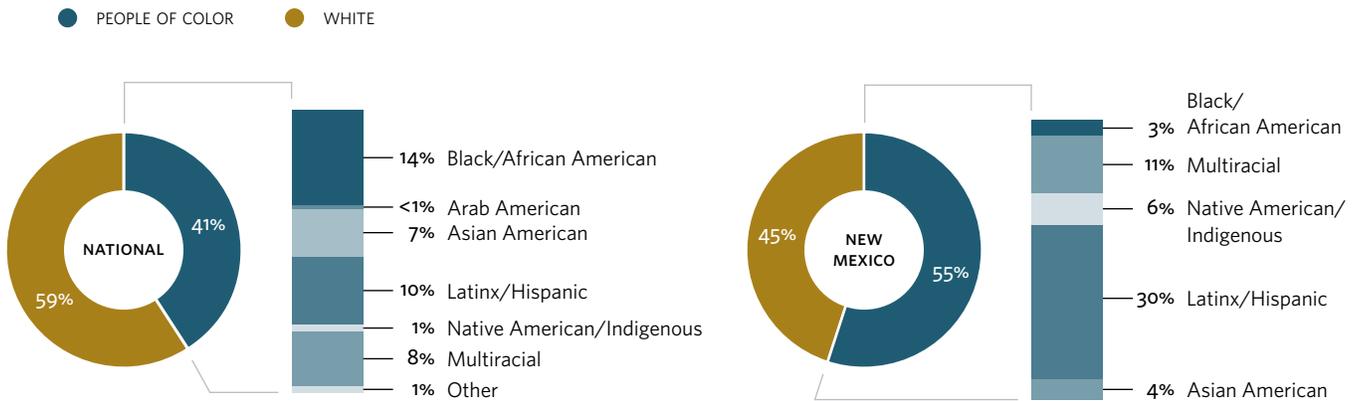
On top of COVID-19, ongoing police violence against Black people has claimed national and state attention. New Mexican activists—reacting to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black people at the hands of law enforcement—have called for increased attention to anti-Black police brutality and other forms of racism.<sup>10</sup>

## The New Mexico *Race to Lead* Sample

The New Mexico respondents to the *Race to Lead* survey work in Albuquerque (72%), Santa Fe (13%) Las Cruces (3%), and other areas of the state (12%). The survey sample in many ways reflects the state, differing most significantly from the national sample regarding race/ethnicity, with a larger percentage of people of color (55%) than white people (45%), compared to the national sample of 41% people of color and 59% white respondents.

As shown in *Figure 1* (on the following page), the New Mexico sample had a much larger share of respondents who identified as Hispanic/Latinx (30% compared to 10% nationally)<sup>11</sup> and Native American/Indigenous respondents (6% compared to 1% nationally). The state also had much smaller percentages than the national sample of Black/African American respondents (3% compared to 14% nationally) and Asian American respondents (4% compared to 7% nationally), and had no Arab American respondents compared to less than 1% nationally. Eleven percent of respondents were multiracial compared to 8% nationally.

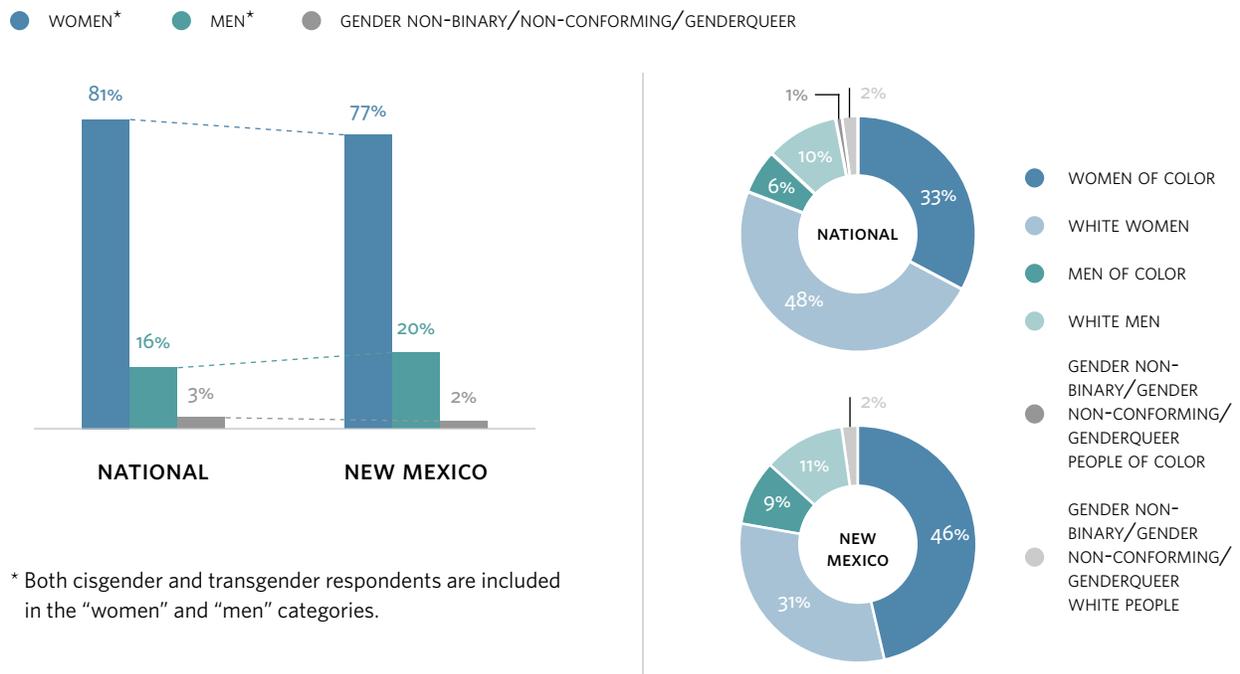
FIGURE 1 | RACE/ETHNICITY



Regarding gender identity, *Figure 2* shows that 77% of respondents in New Mexico were women (compared to 81% nationally), 20% were men (compared to 16% nationally), and 2% were gender non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer (compared to 3% nationally).<sup>12</sup>

Looking at race and gender in New Mexico, 46% of the sample were women of color, 31% were white women, 9% were men of color, 11% were white men, and 2% were white gender non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer respondents.

FIGURE 2 | GENDER IDENTITY

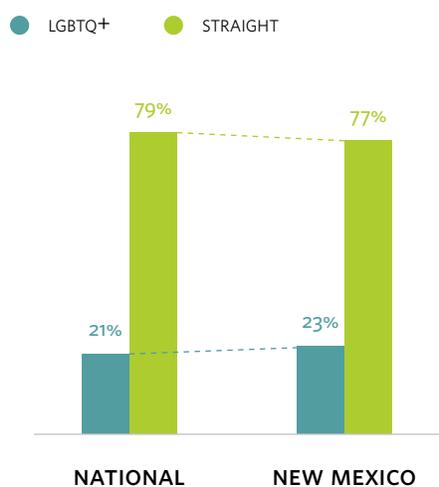


\* Both cisgender and transgender respondents are included in the "women" and "men" categories.

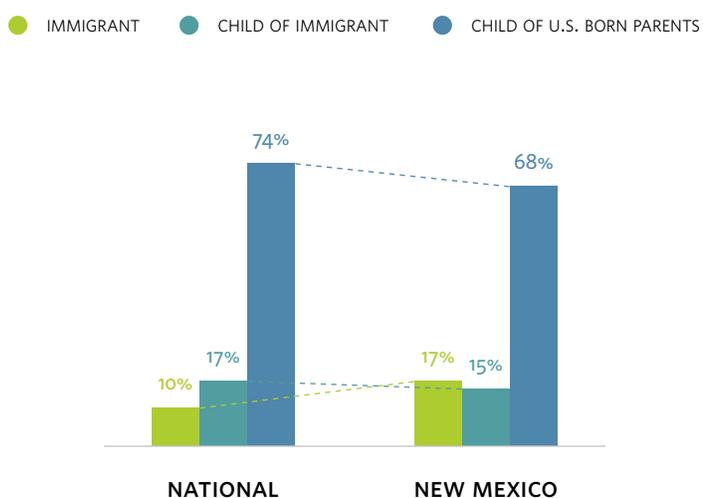
As *Figure 3* shows, respondents in New Mexico were slightly more likely (23%) to identify as LGBTQ+ than respondents in the national sample (21%). People of color had a similar likelihood of self-identifying as LGBTQ+ in New Mexico (20%) and nationally (22%), while more white respondents in New Mexico were LGBTQ+ (27% in New Mexico compared to 21% nationally).

The New Mexico sample had a larger percentage of respondents who indicated they were immigrants (17%) than the national sample (10%). A slightly smaller percentage of respondents identified as children of immigrants (15% in New Mexico compared to 17% nationally), and slightly fewer were children of U.S.-born parents (68% compared to 74% of the national sample), as shown in *Figure 4*.

**FIGURE 3 | SEXUAL ORIENTATION**



**FIGURE 4 | IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE**



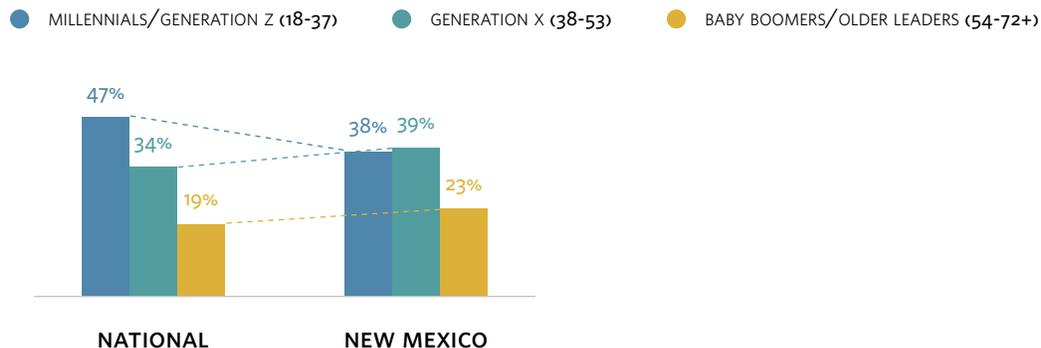
Respondents in New Mexico were more likely than respondents nationwide to work in line or administrative staff positions (35% compared to 26% nationally), as seen in *Figure 5* (on the following page). Respondents of color were somewhat less likely to be in line or administrative staff positions (34%) than white respondents (37%) whereas in the national sample people of color were more likely to be in line or administrative roles (31% for people of color and 23% for white respondents nationally).<sup>13</sup> New Mexico respondents were less likely to be in senior manager/director roles (27%) and executive director or chief executive officer (ED/CEO) roles (20%) than the national sample (31% and 23% respectively). People of color in New Mexico were somewhat less likely to be EDs/CEOs (19%) than white respondents (21%), a gap that is much smaller than in the national sample (17% for people of color and 26% for white respondents).<sup>14</sup>

FIGURE 5 | CURRENT ROLE/POSITION



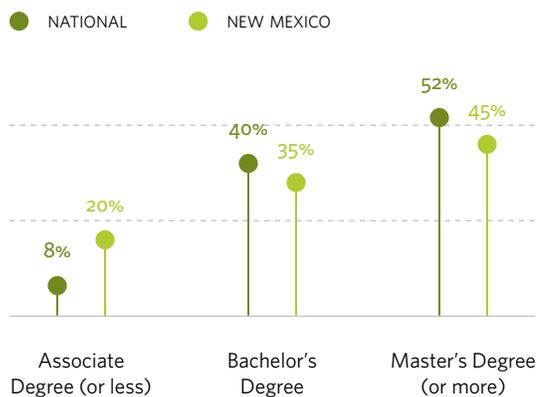
Figure 6 shows that the New Mexico sample was older than the national sample. Millennials<sup>15</sup> made up 38% of the state sample compared to 47% nationally, while 39% of New Mexico respondents were Generation X (34% nationally), and 23% were Baby Boomers or older leaders (19% nationally).

FIGURE 6 | AGE/GENERATION



The educational attainment of the New Mexico sample differed from the national sample, as seen in Figure 7. More respondents in New Mexico reported their highest level of education was an associate degree (20% compared to 8% nationally) and fewer had obtained a bachelor's degree (35% compared to 40% nationally) or master's degree or other terminal degree (45% compared to 52% nationally). Eighty-two percent of people of color and 79% of white respondents<sup>16</sup> from New Mexico had at least a bachelor's degree compared to 91% of people of color and 93% of white respondents nationally.

FIGURE 7 | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Another difference between the New Mexico and national samples is the type of organization employing survey respondents. The largest share of New Mexico respondents (19%) indicated that their organization focused on advocacy, while in the national sample the percentage of respondents who worked for advocacy organizations was 12%. The other top New Mexico employer types were organizations focused on human and social services (15% in New Mexico compared to 22% nationally), health and mental health (14% in New Mexico compared to 9% nationally), education (10% in New Mexico and 11% nationally), housing/homelessness (7% in New Mexico and 5% nationally), and community organizing (7% in New Mexico and 2% nationally).

## Economic Well-being and Nonprofit Staff in New Mexico

In New Mexico, people of color and white respondents were equally likely to report that their salary was less than \$50,000 annually (41% for both people of color and white respondents). Nationally, 28% of people of color and 26% of white respondents were in this range.<sup>17</sup> Consistent with national and regional reports on wealth and income,<sup>18</sup> other data shows that the circumstances for nonprofit respondents of color in New Mexico were overall less favorable than for white respondents.

*Figure 8* (on the following page) shows the percentage of New Mexico residents who chose survey responses indicating that they *often* or *always* face challenges related to inadequate or inequitable salaries. Although this figure was lower in New Mexico than the national sample, it showed a similar disparity in responses based on race. Respondents of color in New Mexico were more likely to report that they *often* or *always* faced the challenge of not being paid a salary that met their needs (41% compared to 34% of white respondents<sup>19</sup>), and were more likely to say they were paid less than colleagues for the same work (29% compared to 17% of white respondents). There were similar disparities between people of color and white respondents—in New Mexico and nationally—regarding increases in pay from their organizations (*Figure 9* on the following page). People of color in New Mexico were less likely to report having received a cost of living increase (33%) than white respondents (38%),<sup>20</sup> but similarly likely to report having received a performance-based raise (30%) as white respondents (31%).<sup>21</sup>

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

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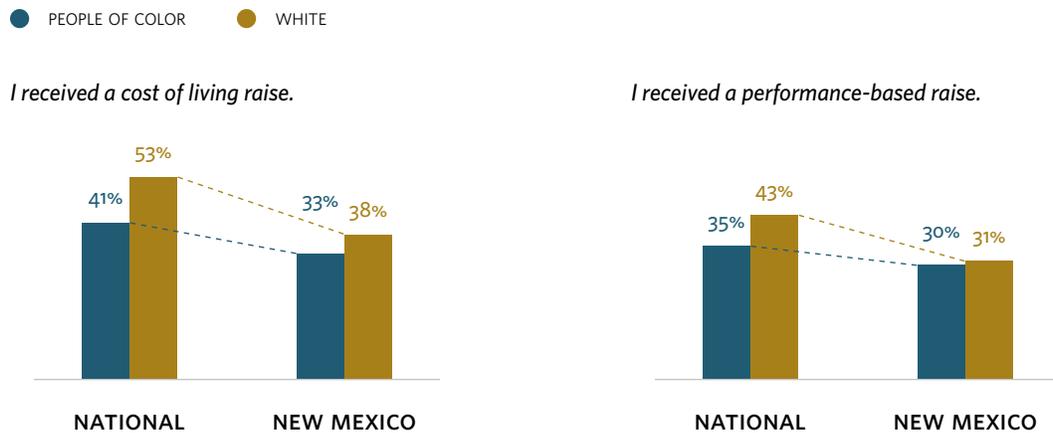
As a woman of color, I have found it hard to speak up about what I need and have seen several of my co-workers receive very high raises, when I am doing just as much work.”

—Hispanic/Latinx Woman Survey Respondent

FIGURE 8 | SALARY CHALLENGES



FIGURE 9 | RESPONDENT COMPENSATION



Other findings point to additional economic disparities between people of color and white people in New Mexico. For instance, people of color were one and a half times more likely (67%) than white respondents (45%) to report that their household was low-income or working class during childhood. Nationally the gap was only slightly wider: 62% for people of color and 38% for white respondents. To describe their *current* socioeconomic status, people of color in New Mexico were also more likely to say they were low-income or working class (34%) than white respondents (25%),<sup>22</sup> compared to 25% of people of color and 15% of white respondents nationally.

People of color in New Mexico were much more likely to report they were currently financially supporting family outside their household, rates similar to national findings: 34% of people of color and 18% of white respondents in New Mexico compared to 31% of people of color and 16% of white respondents nationally. In response to whether they relied on another source of income to cover household expenses, white respondents in New Mexico

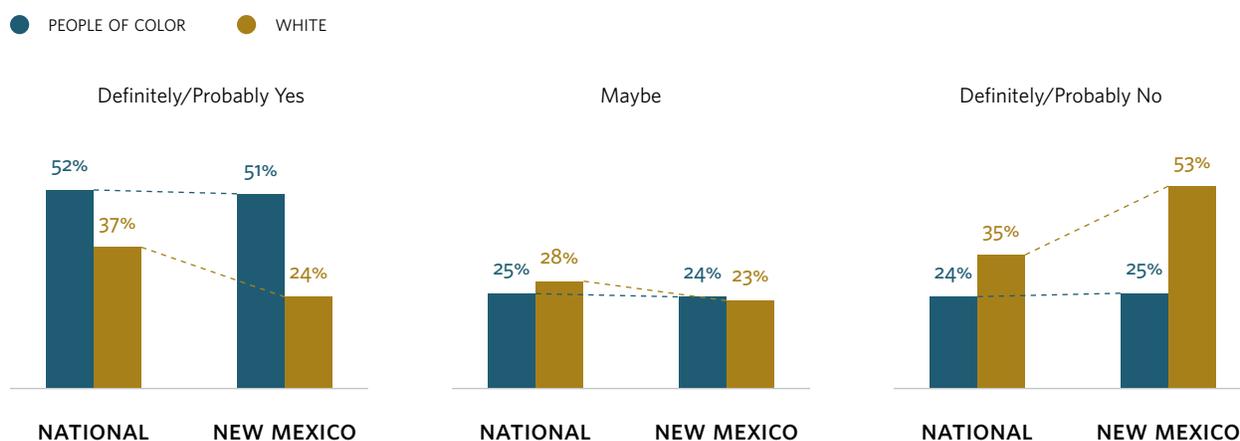
were slightly more likely to say this was the case (55% compared to 52% of people of color), similar to national responses (56% of white respondents and 51% of people of color).<sup>23</sup>

These differences in remuneration could reflect both the failure to appropriately compensate people of color as well as the broad disparities between funding for organizations led by and employing large numbers of people of color versus white staff. People of color in New Mexico were more likely to report that their organization had an annual budget of \$1 million or less (36%) than white respondents (31%), higher rates than national responses of 24% of people of color and 26% of white respondents.<sup>24</sup> Financial disparities among employers affect the well-being of nonprofit employees, as described in more detail later in this report.

## Aspirations and Barriers to Leadership and Access in New Mexico

One of the main findings in the national *Race to Lead* report series was that respondents of color were more interested in pursuing nonprofit leadership positions than their white counterparts. This was also true among survey respondents in New Mexico. More than half of respondents of color who were not already leading a nonprofit indicated that they *definitely or probably* wanted to pursue a role as nonprofit executive director or chief executive officer (ED/CEO): 51% of people of color in New Mexico and 52% nationally compared to just 24% of white respondents in New Mexico and 37% nationally, as seen in *Figure 10*.

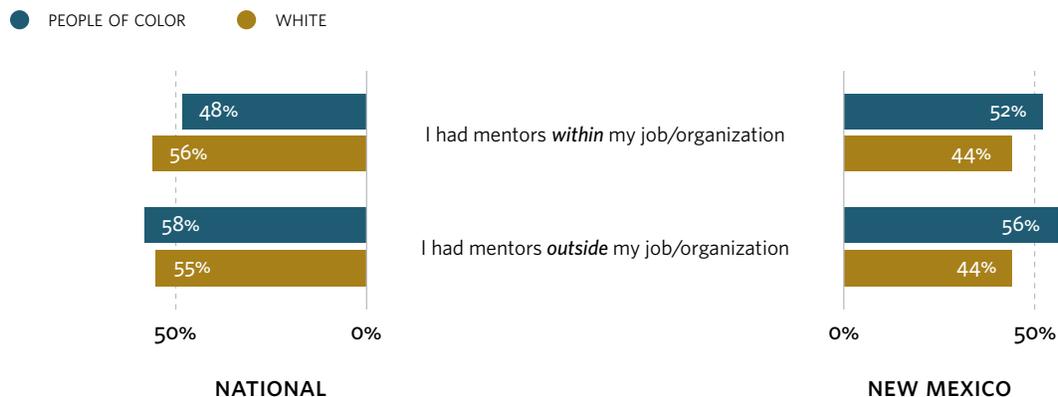
FIGURE 10 | LEVEL OF INTEREST IN TAKING A TOP LEADERSHIP ROLE (AMONG NON-EDS/CEOS)



Both nonprofit executives and aspiring leaders need career support, and several positive trends related to mentors and networks for people of color were present in New Mexico that diverged from the national findings. As *Figure 11* shows (on the following page), people of color in New Mexico were more likely to report that they had received advice, support, and connections from mentors inside their organizations (52% compared to 44%

among white respondents)<sup>25</sup> and outside their organizations (56% compared to 44% among white respondents). In contrast, nationally, white respondents were more likely to have internal mentoring (56%) than people of color (48%), and less likely to have mentorship from outside their organization (55%) than people of color (58%).

FIGURE 11 | MENTORS



Regarding their professional networks, more people of color in New Mexico said their network had a positive impact on their career advancement (78%) than white respondents (72%). In contrast, nationally white respondents were more likely to say networks had positive career impact (80%) than people of color (74%).

The greater access to workplace mentorship reported by people of color in New Mexico may be a function of the state’s demographics, in which people of color are a majority, and suggests the possibility that formal workplace mentorship is more readily available to nonprofit workers of color compared to peers nationwide.

Nonetheless, New Mexico findings show that people of color still face racialized barriers and report that they lack elements of career support that are key to professional advancement in the nonprofit sector. For instance, people of color were more likely to say they *often* or *always* lacked role models (33% in New Mexico and 43% nationally) than their white counterparts (19%

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

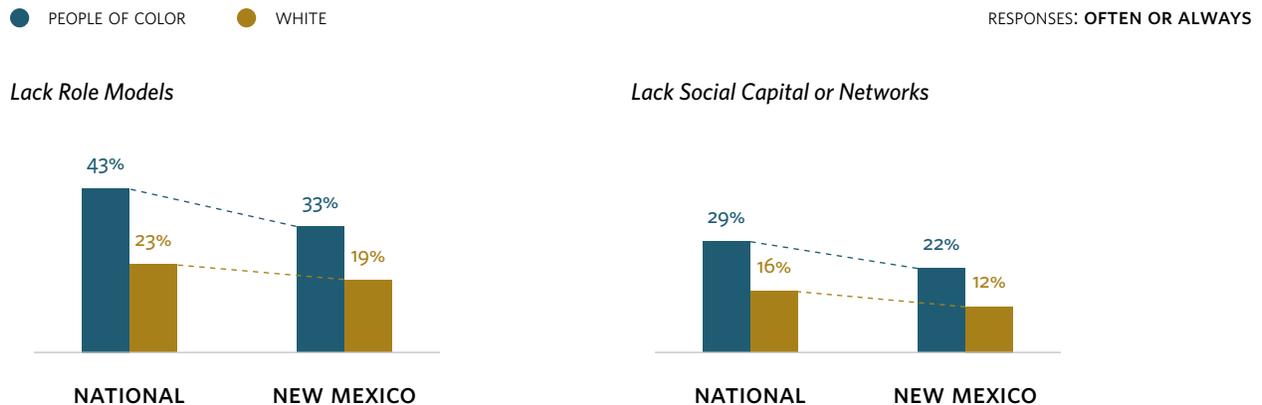


Race/ethnicity only recently became a positive ... because of the agency being culturally specific and wanting it reflected by having the agency led by a Latinx person. Long-term networks/connections and track record of work were helpful in my advancement – in previous positions/organizations [the positive value of racial/ethnic diversity] was not as recognized.”

—Hispanic/Latinx Woman Survey Respondent

in New Mexico and 23% nationally), as seen in *Figure 12*. People of color were also more likely to say they *often* or *always* lacked social capital or networks (22% in New Mexico and 29% nationally) compared to white respondents (12% in New Mexico and 16% nationally).

FIGURE 12 | ROLE MODELS AND NETWORKS



People of color in New Mexico reported racialized barriers to career advancement that were similar to the national findings. While more people of color said race had a positive impact on advancement in New Mexico (45%) than people of color nationally (32%), almost as many people of color reported that their race had limited or challenged their career. As *Figure 13* shows (on the following page), 42% of people of color in New Mexico said their race had a negative impact on their advancement, a figure lower than people of color nationally (49%). A majority of white respondents said their race had a positive impact on their career trajectory, including 65% of respondents in New Mexico and 67% nationally.

People of color in focus groups in Albuquerque described that their networks opened access to employment and connected them with new organizations for collaboration and partnership. Many participants—including people of color of all ages as well as white Millennials—observed that New Mexico’s professional networks are largely segregated and that larger networks are dominated

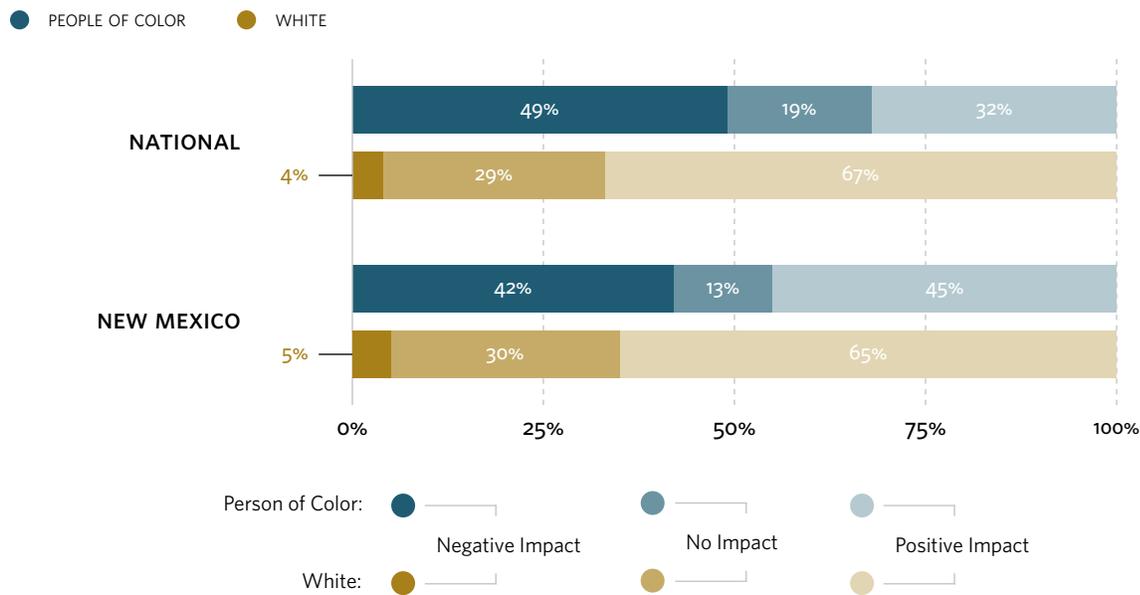
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I believe that I was passed up for a ... director position because I am a ... Chicana. When the previous director ... stepped down, she recommended a ... white male colleague. I think this was because she was not taken seriously by upper management and didn’t want the program to suffer if another woman of color was at the helm. That white, male director constantly mansplains things to me while simultaneously assigning me his work that he can’t handle or doesn’t understand.”

—Chicana Woman Survey Participant

FIGURE 13 | IMPACT OF RACE ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT



by white leaders. Both people of color and some white participants described barriers to accessing larger, well-resourced networks, including expensive fees for membership and networking events. Describing the state’s “tri-cultural myth” that suggests that white, Latinx, and Native/Indigenous communities have similar prominence, some focus group participants and interviewees emphasized that this perception of the state ignores “invisible” groups including Black, Asian, and many Native/Indigenous people, and minimizes the state’s historic and continued racial oppression of Native/Indigenous, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, and Black people. Overall, these focus group conversations suggest that people of color in New Mexico face numerous obstacles to overcoming systemic barriers despite the state’s demographics in which people of color are a majority.

Professional networks and relationships are closely tied to access to finding, and people of color in New Mexico—and nationally—were more likely than white peers to say they *often* or *always* lacked relationships with funding sources (31% for people of color in New Mexico

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



You can force your way in [to the network], but to really be at the table and to be a member, the culture of the network has to shift to make it more welcoming.”

—Person of Color Generation X/Baby Boomer  
Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 14 | LACK OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDING SOURCES



and 35% nationally compared to 17% of white people in New Mexico and 25% of white people nationally) as shown in *Figure 14*. Notably, white respondents were eight percentage points less likely to report this challenge in New Mexico than nationally. In the focus group for Generation X and Baby Boomer people of color, in which most people held ED/CEO roles or had other significant development and fundraising responsibilities, participants described the challenge of raising funds in New Mexico. Leaders of color observed that many foundations lack internal diversity and speculated that this contributes to the lack of funding for organizations led by people of color. Participants also described the conflicting considerations between the opportunity to access corporate philanthropy to support their organizations and their feelings of distrust for corporations that have inflicted harm on communities of color.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

It’s difficult to fundraise when you don’t have rich friends or contacts ... It’s also difficult to reach out to funders when they have their own agenda on how to serve your community.”

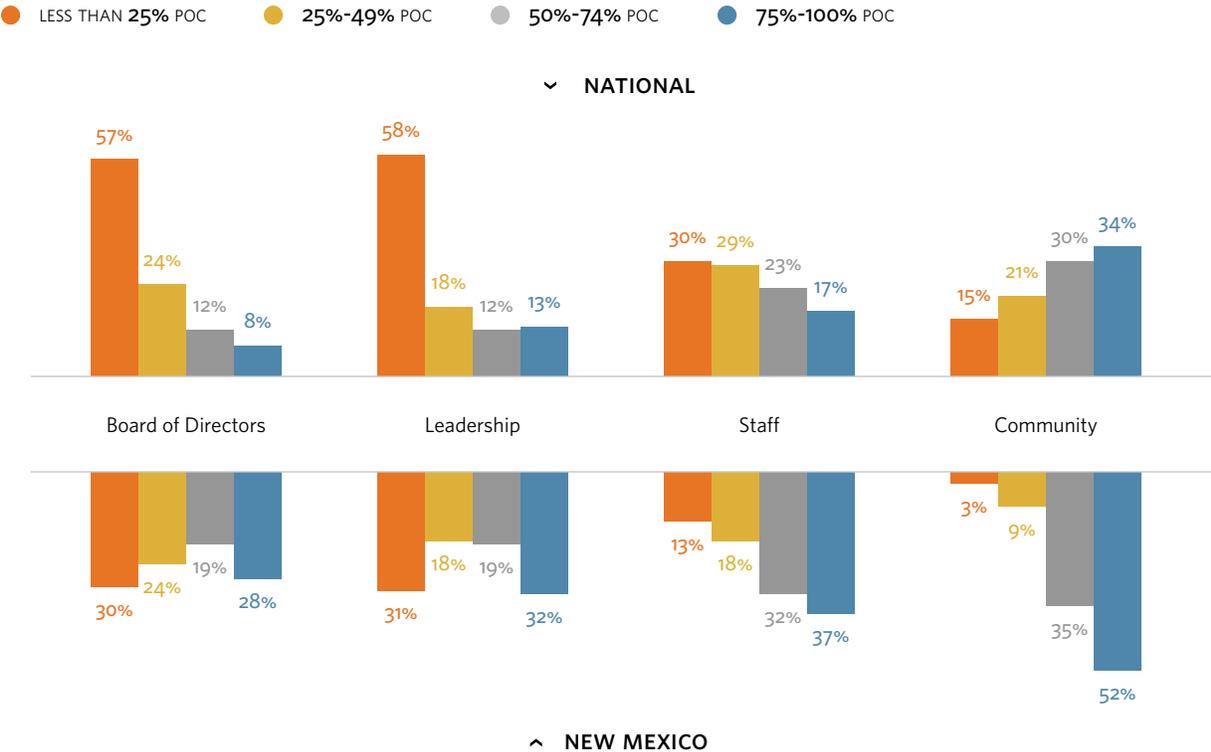
—Native American/Indigenous Woman  
Survey Participant

# Organizational Demographics and Experiences

Survey respondents reported on the racial composition of the nonprofit organizations they worked for by indicating the percentage of people of color among the board of directors, staff in top leadership roles, staff outside of leadership, and the community served by the organization using a scale with four percentage categories: less than 25%, 25-49%, 50-74%, and 75-100% people of color.

As *Figure 15* shows, New Mexico survey respondents work for organizations that have larger percentages of people of color among their boards and leadership compared to the national sample. This pattern was also true among the composition of staff and the community served at survey respondents' organizations. However, there were clear contrasts between the demographic composition of the leadership of organizations employing survey respondents and the communities those organizations serve. As noted above, census data shows that almost two-thirds of New Mexico residents do not identify as white. More than half the *Race to Lead* survey respondents from New Mexico indicated that the constituency served by their organization was at least 75% people of color (52% of New Mexico respondents compared to 34% of respondents nationally). Compared to national respondents, New Mexico respondents were more likely to report that people of color made up more than 75% or more of their organization's board of directors (28% compared to 8% nationally) and staff in top leadership roles (32% compared to 13% nationally).

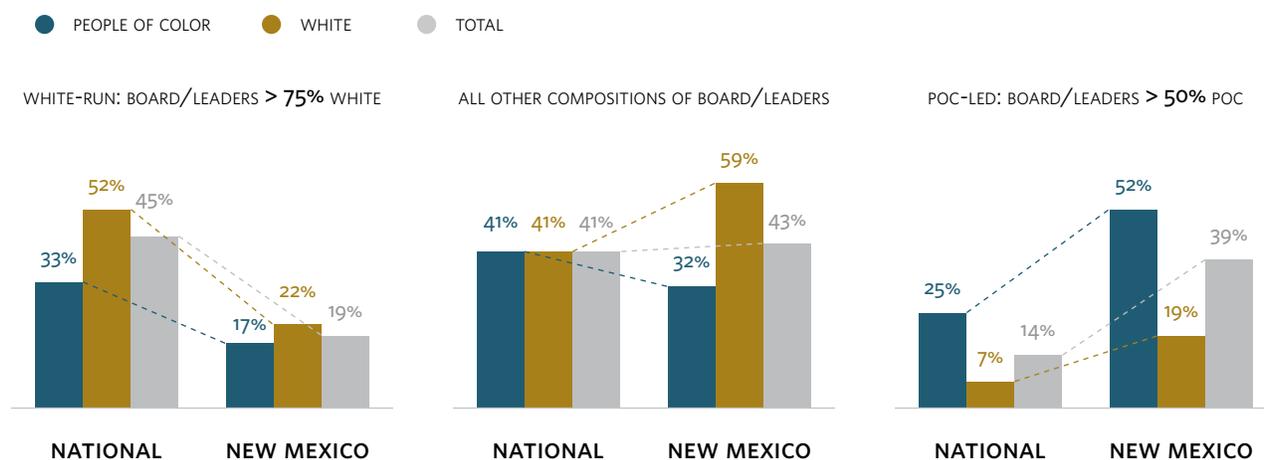
FIGURE 15 | RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS



To assess the experiences of survey respondents in organizations with different degrees of leadership by people of color, BMP's *Race to Lead Revisited* report published in June 2020 categorized nonprofits into three types based on the racial composition of both their boards of directors and staff in top leadership roles.<sup>26</sup> The White-run category consists of organizations in which both the board and staff leaders are less than 25% people of color, meaning that white people constitute at least 75% of those in the top levels of leadership. The POC-led category includes organizations that have 50% or more people of color on the board of directors and in staff leadership. The third category of All Other organizations includes groups that do not meet the threshold for either the White-run or POC-led designations.

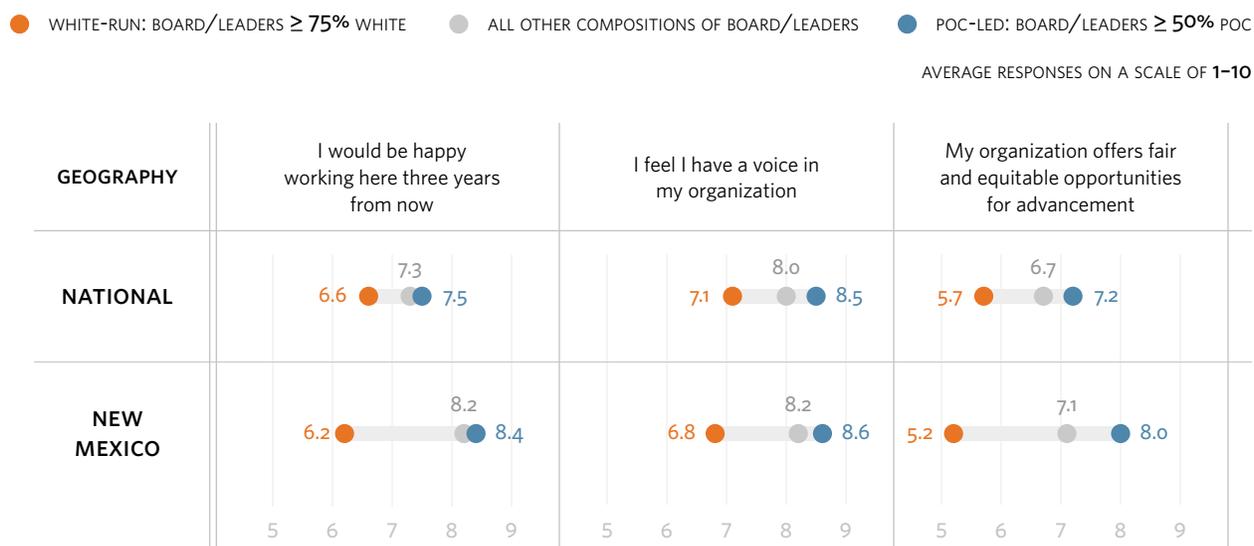
Nationally, 45% of respondents reported working for organizations where the board of directors and staff in top leadership roles were at least 75% white; in New Mexico, just 19% of respondents worked for White-run organizations (*Figure 16*). In contrast, 14% of respondents nationally worked for POC-led nonprofits—in which at least half of the board and staff leaders are people of color—compared to 39% of New Mexico respondents. The remaining 41% of respondents nationally reported working for organizations in the All Other category that did not meet either threshold; 43% of New Mexico respondents worked for this organization type. As *Figure 16* shows, people of color from New Mexico were much less likely to report working for White-run organizations (17%) compared to the national sample (33%), and white people from New Mexico were more likely to report working for POC-led organizations (19%) than nationally (7%). Although the limited size of the New Mexico sample did not allow for a meaningful analysis of the distinct experiences of people of color and white respondents within these three organizational types, New Mexico responses echoed the broader national trends that staff of POC-led organizations report the most positive workplace experiences.

FIGURE 16 | RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATION



As Figure 17 shows, New Mexico respondents who worked for POC-led or All Other organization types indicated higher average agreement with three positive statements about their nonprofit organization than respondents who worked for White-run organizations. In response to the statement “I would be happy if I worked at this organization three years from now,” respondents in White-run organizations had an average level of agreement of 6.2 compared to 8.4 for respondents in POC-led organizations and 8.2 in All Other organization types. The same pattern holds true for agreement with the statement “I feel I have a voice in my organization,” for which the average agreement was 6.8 in White-run groups compared to 8.6 in POC-led groups and 8.2 in All Other organization types. Finally, for the statement “My organization offers fair and equitable opportunities for advancement and promotion,” the average level of agreement for respondents in White-run groups was 5.2 compared to 8.0 in POC-led organizations and 7.1 in All Other organization types.

FIGURE 17 | WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BY RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



The positive ratings of respondents in organizations that have more people of color on the board and in senior staff positions were echoed in the focus group with Millennial people of color. The focus group participants who looked forward to a future with their organization praised their workplaces’ diversity in staff, leadership, and board, and those in less diverse organizations were not as enthusiastic about staying with their organizations in the near future.

Although addressing racial equity in the sector extends beyond diversifying the composition of staff and boards, in both survey data and focus groups, the majority of New Mexico participants agreed there was insufficient racial diversity in nonprofit leadership, particularly in light of the state’s demographics. Among respondents in the state, 78% of people of color and 73% of white respondents agreed with the statement “One of the big problems in the nonprofit sector is that leadership doesn’t represent the diversity of the United States.”<sup>27</sup> Those rates are

somewhat lower than rates of agreement among national respondents (89% of people of color and 80% of white people). Some people of color from New Mexico focus groups and interviews noted that their organizational boards and leadership were diverse, and some focus group participants said their organizational bylaws stipulated that the board of directors reflect the community. Still, participants were emphatic that more work is necessary to build the representation of people of color in top leadership roles—at New Mexico organizations large and small—and to support organizations led by people of color.

Several executive directors and CEOs of color described the frustrating experience of being the only leaders of color in the room with other nonprofits, funders, and government officials. Similarly, 36% of survey respondents of color in New Mexico said they *often* or *always* feel the stress of representing their communities, as did 33% of people of color nationally. Local leaders of color interviewed for this report said they have to prove themselves in ways that white leaders do not and face unequal expectations from other nonprofit leaders, funders, staff, and clients. Some of these leaders described their effort to overcome “imposter syndrome” and the idea that they do not belong in the circles they navigate in their professional lives.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

My organization is ... majority people of color now and it started ... not very representative of our community. I think now there's an opportunity ... to think about more systemic change and how we can do our work in a way that's based on the values of the community that we are working with.”

—Person of Color Millennial/Generation Z  
Focus Group Participant

“

I think that we need leaders that are people of color ... you have to be part of something in order to understand or represent it. In this field, that becomes incredibly important ... for the work that we do.”

—Person of Color Generation X/Baby Boomer  
Focus Group Participant

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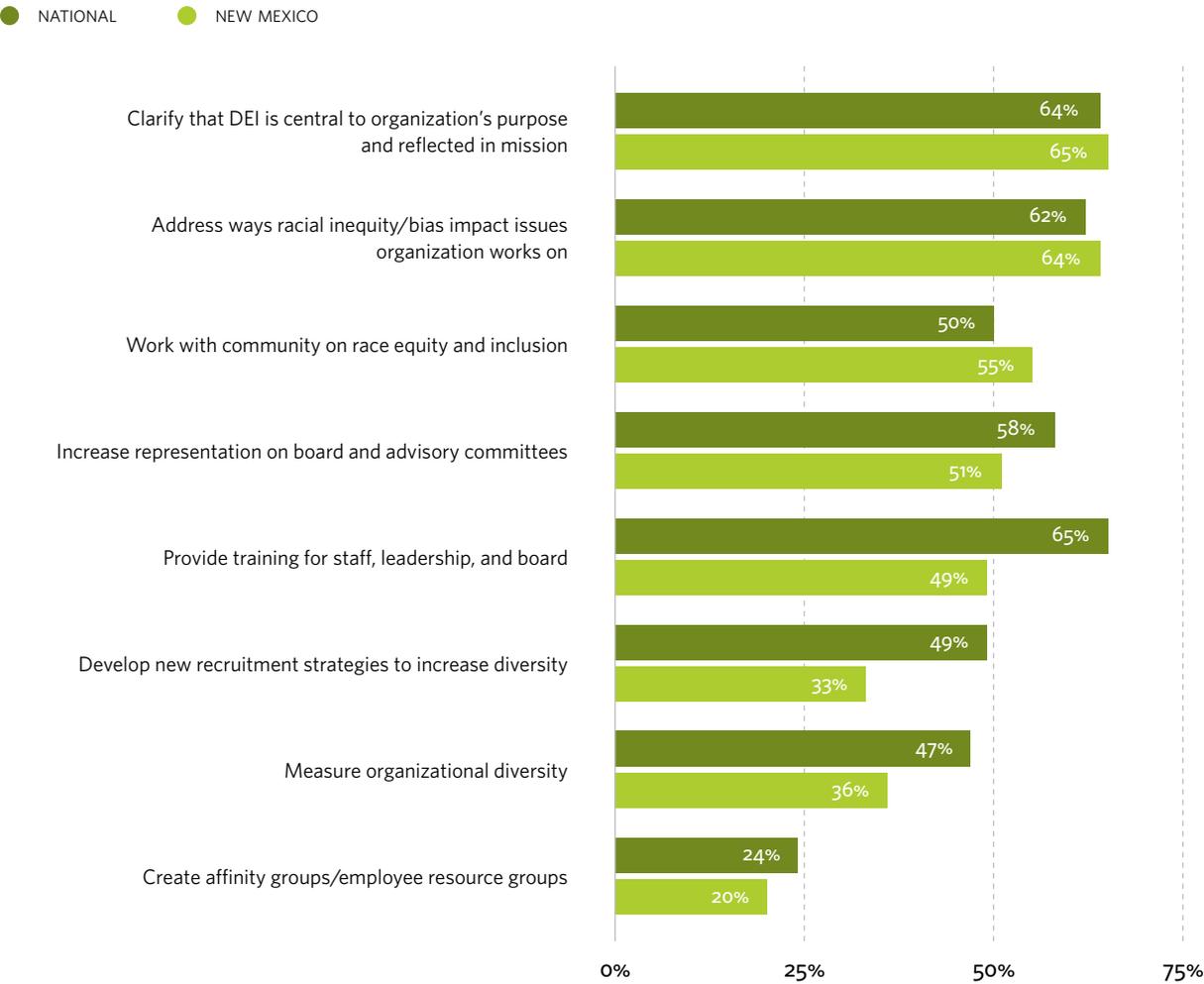
Even though we're a [decades-old] organization, we have a fantastic reputation, we have really good financial reporting – we still always get asked a lot of extra questions. ‘Do you have an investment policy?’ ‘Does your board have training?’ Those sorts of things that I don't think they would ask the American Heart Association or the Red Cross.”

—Woman of Color ED/CEO Interviewee

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives

Nonprofit organizations across the United States are taking steps to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. This trend was apparent in New Mexico as well, with 73% of respondents in the area reporting that their organization engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. In New Mexico, 79% of white respondents and 69% of people of color reported that their organization had engaged in these initiatives, compared to 75% of white respondents and 73% of people of color nationally.<sup>28</sup>

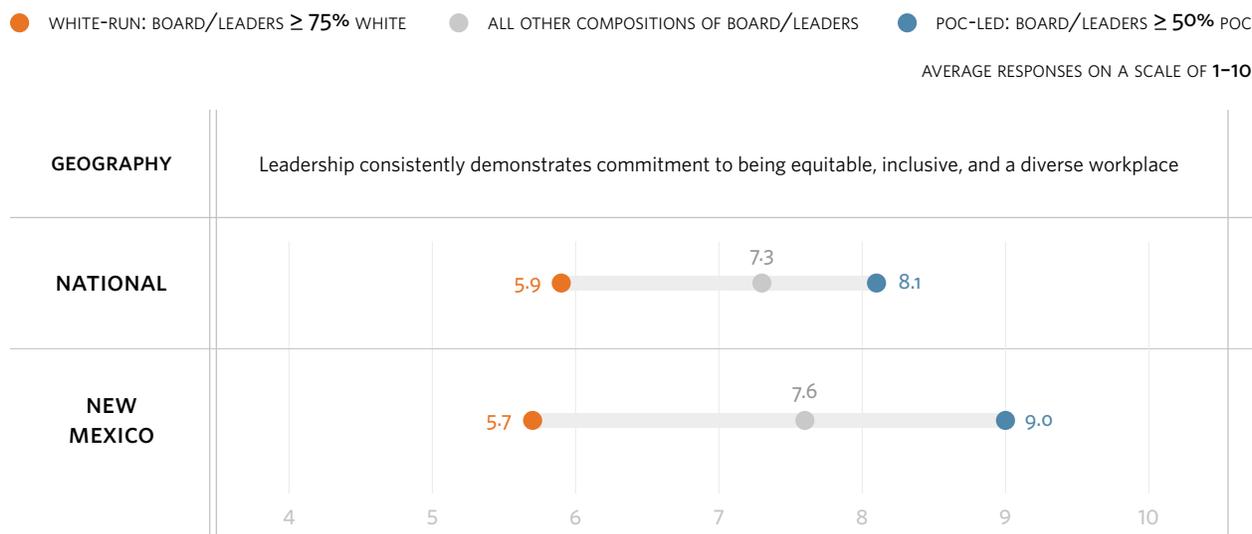
**FIGURE 18 | CURRENT DEI INITIATIVES**



Respondents who reported that their organization had ongoing DEI efforts were asked to indicate what specific actions their organization was taking. As *Figure 18* shows (on the previous page), respondents most frequently said their organization was *clarifying that diversity, equity, and inclusion is central to the organization’s purpose and is reflected in the mission* (65% in New Mexico compared to 64% nationally), *addressing ways that racial inequity and bias impact the issues the organization works on* (64% in New Mexico compared to 62% nationally), and *working with the community on race equity and inclusion* (55% in New Mexico compared to 50% nationally). Other strategies were less common in New Mexico than among nationwide respondents, including *increasing representation on board and advisory committees* (51% in New Mexico compared to 58% nationally), *providing training on diversity, equity, and inclusion* (49% in New Mexico compared to 65% nationally), measuring organizational diversity (36% in New Mexico compared to 47% nationally), and *developing new recruitment strategies to increase diversity* (33% in New Mexico compared to 49% nationally). These latter strategies are focused on diversity tracking, recruitment, and training, and may be less common in New Mexico as a reflection of the higher organizational diversity reported in the state compared to organizations nationwide.

Survey respondents working for POC-led organizations were significantly more likely to agree that their organizational leadership was committed to DEI (average agreement of 9.0 on a scale of 10 as the highest level of agreement) compared to respondents working in White-run groups (average agreement of 5.7 on a scale of 10) or All Other organization types (average agreement of 7.6 on a scale of 10), as seen in *Figure 19*.

**FIGURE 19 | LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT TO DEI**



In response to a survey question about what strategies had the most potential to increase diversity in the nonprofit sector, New Mexico respondents gave the highest ratings to increasing the diversity of nonprofit boards (average rating of 8.2 overall, 8.2 for people of color, and 8.3 for white people). In focus groups, most Generation X and Baby Boomer people of color and many Millennial people of color worked in organizations with already diverse boards, some as the result of recent or ongoing efforts to increase representation of people of color. For other participants, diversity efforts appeared successful in some areas but were lacking in others; one leader of color described a board of directors that was inclusive in terms of race but not accommodating to people who spoke languages other than English.

Many white Generation X and Baby Boomer focus group participants—most of whom were executive directors or CEOs—and about half the white Millennial participants worked for organizations with majority-white boards of directors. Some white participants said their organizations were considering efforts to expand board diversity but were unsure how to do so effectively; other focus group participants described that their organizations had recruited board members of color but experienced attrition because new members did not feel welcome. Still other focus group participants expressed hesitation about recruiting people of color to board positions without work to ensure they would be comfortable and empowered. One focus group participant of color emphasized the need for a “critical mass” of people of color—not just one or two individuals—in order to impact an organization.

Both people of color and white focus group participants discussed strategies to increase diversity through staff recruitment, including designing job descriptions and adjusting position requirements to be open to the widest possible pool of applicants, and emphasizing that the

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

[DEI language is] in our value statement and our value statement goes in every ... job description that you have to sign and all of our job announcements ... You have to be committed to these things and this has to be a priority for you. That was very intentional.”

—Person of Color Generation X/Baby Boomer  
Focus Group Participant

“

We did bring people of color onto the board. It was not a place that felt safe or welcoming or any of those things that would make a person want to stay and they all left, all but one.”

—White Generation X/Baby Boomer

“

From doing DEI work and trying to bring DEI work into my organization ... white employees ... have a hard time with trainings – they get kind of this defensiveness.”

—White Millennial/Generation Z  
Focus Group Participant

organization is committed to diversity and inclusion and seeks prospective candidates that share those values. As with reflections about board diversity, many white focus group participants said their organizations struggled with low retention among staff of color.

Nationally, training on diversity, equity, and inclusion was one of the most common strategies reported by survey respondents (65%), but was less common in New Mexico (49%). For those who did participate in DEI trainings, respondents in New Mexico had more positive assessments of training effectiveness: 91% of New Mexico respondents reported trainings had a positive impact, including 87% of people of color and 95% of white respondents,<sup>29</sup> while nationally 86% of respondents reported positive impact from trainings, including 79% of people of color and 91% of white respondents. Several white focus group participants in organizational leadership roles described efforts to engage DEI consultants and attempt to address feedback that internal organizational environments were unsupportive to staff and board members of color.

Asked about strategies that would best address diversity, equity, and inclusion not only within individual organizations but in the sector at large, New Mexico survey participants gave high ratings to leadership development programs for people of color, which was rated 8.3 out of 10 overall, with 8.4 among people of color and 8.1 among white participants. Focus group participants emphasized that leadership programs should focus less on developing the skills of individual people of color, among which there are numerous qualified, talented, and prepared potential leaders, and instead invest in making spaces where people of color can lead from their own life experiences and envision new systems and aspirations for leadership in the nonprofit sphere.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I've been through diversity trainings with non-POCs and afterwards [I think] 'That was useless.' But [white staff will say] 'Oh that was amazing.'”

—Person of Color Millennial/Generation Z  
Focus Group Participant

“

You have leadership development that's coming from a white, Eurocentric, colonized perspective versus asking what do we want to see, what do we need to see, how are we really going to shift leadership ... You need to have leadership development that really focuses on the history and then also being able to envision something different that's not based on that other dynamic.”

—Person of Color Generation X/Baby Boomer  
Focus Group Participant

As noted earlier in this report, survey respondents in New Mexico identified that enhanced philanthropic support for nonprofits led by people of color was the most potentially effective strategy to improve the sector's diversity, rated 8.1 overall, 8.6 for people of color, and 7.6 for white participants. Focus group participants echoed the need for more funding for organizations led by people of color and challenged funders to address their own leadership composition and internal practices that contribute to the lack of diversity in their operations and decision-making.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

It's crazy to me that philanthropy [will say] 'we have a race equity lens' and then they continue to fund organizations that have no people of color in leadership and there's no accountability for that cycle. So I do think there needs to be a space for that conversation and it's hard to get that space [with] the power dynamics.”

—Person of Color Millennial/Generation Z  
Focus Group Participant

“

All the big nonprofits get all that money that people are donating and then smaller organizations are trying to get the scraps ... Just give us the money and we'll know what we need to do with it and where to allocate it ... instead of giving it to the mega-nonprofits that already have all that money.”

—Person of Color Millennial/Generation Z  
Focus Group Participant

# Opportunities for Change

The nonprofit sector's widespread investment in DEI activities provides an opening for change on racial equity. One overarching recommendation is that nonprofits take on the challenging work described below with peer organizations with similar goals. For more in-depth descriptions of the change efforts outlined below, see *Race to Lead Revisited: Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*.

## OPPORTUNITY 1

### Focus on Structures and the Experience of Race and Racism

Structural analysis of race and racism, especially for white-dominant groups, is a critical foundation for race equity work. This work must be coupled with efforts to understand and validate the individual and collective experiences of people of color in nonprofit organizations.

## OPPORTUNITY 2

### Policies Have Meaning ... If Enforced

Groups committed to DEI efforts must examine and change organizational policies to reflect the organizational commitment to equity. A realignment of policies and practices is only effective if they are acted on consistently and universally.

## OPPORTUNITY 3

### Put Your Money ...

Organizations led by people of color simply need more funding. To interrupt the cycle of replicating the inequities the sector is committed to fight, funders need to examine their own practices and ensure organizations led by people of color receive the resources needed to thrive.

## OPPORTUNITY 4

### Reflecting the Community: Racial Diversity in Action

Recruiting and retaining racially diverse staff and board leaders takes a sustained investment of time and resources. It also requires shifting power by listening to staff and board members of color and changing organization policies and practices accordingly.

## OPPORTUNITY 5

### Responsibility and Results

Organizations committed to DEI must establish thoughtful and measurable ways to assess progress based on a widely shared plan for what should change, who is responsible, and how results will be documented and reviewed annually.

# Low-Wage Work in Nonprofits: The New Mexico Experience

The Building Movement Project (BMP) has longstanding relationships with nonprofit organizations in New Mexico. Over recent years, leaders in the sector have increasingly raised concerns about how difficult it is to secure sufficient funding to pay staff a living wage. In response, BMP began research on the nonprofit workforce in New Mexico, particularly those employees in low-wage positions, and exploring how the state's nonprofit sector can support living wage jobs.

This section explores the low-wage nonprofit workforce in New Mexico, including worker aspirations for job and career development, and the barriers and challenges these critical staff encounter as they navigate the sector. It also addresses how the nonprofit sector can better support individuals in its lowest-paid positions, including supporting these employees toward more financial security while also achieving better outcomes for nonprofit constituents and communities served.

This portion of the report includes national data from the 2019 *Race to Lead* survey and research from New Mexico, including interviews with frontline community health workers and case workers, questionnaires collected at a conference in 2019, and interviews with nonprofit executive directors and CEOs both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>30</sup>

## National Data on Workers Earning the Lowest Wages

The subsample of *Race to Lead* survey respondents from New Mexico is too small to meaningfully disaggregate by income, but national survey data gives an indication on the conditions facing low-wage workers.<sup>31</sup>

All national *Race to Lead* survey respondents worked full-time and disclosed their annual wages. The data in this section includes staff *not* in executive director or CEO roles. Respondents who earn less than \$35,000 annually constituted 8% of the sample. Among these respondents, 39% were people of color and 61% white people. The median age of respondents in this income category was 31 compared to 40 for all respondents and 42 for those earning \$50,000 or more. Millennial and Generation Z respondents were a larger share of this income category (69%) than among survey respondents overall (47%) or among those making more than \$50,000 (39%). On average, respondents earning \$35,000 or less annually had worked three years on the job and seven years in the sector; among respondents overall, the average time on the job was four years and time in the sector 13 years, while respondents earning \$50,000 or more had an average of five years in their current job and 15 years in the sector.

Many respondents (43%) in this low-wage group worked for small organizations with an annual budget of \$1 million or less, including 48% of people of color in this income bracket and 40% of white respondents earning the same.<sup>32</sup> These employees were similarly likely as those in other income categories to report that they grew up in a low-income or working class household: 50% among those earning less than \$35,000 annually, 47% of survey respondents overall, and 46% of respondents earning \$50,000 or more.<sup>33</sup> They were significantly more likely than other respondents to *currently* identify their household as low-income or working class: 57% among this group compared to 22% of all survey respondents and 12% of those earning \$50,000 or more. The respondents earning the lowest wages were highly educated: 76% had at least a Bachelor's degree, a rate much higher than the national average of 36% among those age 25 and older,<sup>34</sup> and lower than the 92% of survey respondents overall and 95% of those earning \$50,000 or more who had completed this education level. Employees in this category reported high aspirations, as well: 34% wanted to be an executive director or CEO eventually, including 44% of people of color and 28% of white respondents.

Earning higher wages was associated with an increased likelihood of receiving raises and promotions, even after taking into account age, years on the job, and years in the sector. Respondents earning less than \$35,000 annually not only reported lower earnings but fewer opportunities for financial and professional growth. Most respondents (78%) had not received a cost of living increase at their job in the past three years, compared to 52% of employees overall and 45% of those earning \$50,000 or more. They were also more likely than respondents at higher income levels to report that they had not received a performance-based raise during the same period: 83% compared to 64% of all respondents and 58% of those making \$50,000 and more. Most of these respondents (79%) had not received a promotion to a position with more responsibility or higher pay in the past three years, compared to 59% of all respondents and 54% of those earning \$50,000 or more. Finally, they were more likely to say there were few opportunities for advancement at their job: 48% compared to 40% of all respondents and 37% of those earning \$50,000 or more.

Almost two thirds of the group of respondents earning under \$35,000 (68%) said their salary was *often* or *always inadequate*, compared to 44% of all respondents and 37% of those earning \$50,000 or more. They were also more likely to say their salaries were *often* or *always inequitable*, meaning that they were paid less than colleagues for the same work: 36% compared to 25% of all respondents and 23% of those earning \$50,000 or more.

Among workers earning less than \$35,000 annually, 17% currently provide financial support to family members outside their household, including 27% of people of color and 10% of white respondents, compared to 20% of all workers and 23% of those earning \$50,000 and more.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

We have employees ... making \$25 an hour, which is a decent wage. But they're still having to go to get food boxes and those kinds of things. Because they have kids and a partner who's now unemployed all of a sudden [due to COVID-19].”

—ED/CEO of Color Interviewee

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the lowest-earning nonprofit workers relied on another source of income such as income from a spouse or partner or an additional job to cover household expenses: 64% compared to 53% of all respondents and 50% of respondents earning \$50,000 or more.

Nonprofit staff making less than \$35,000 annually—both people of color and white respondents—had similar responses about whether they would be happy to work for their organizations in three years, responding with an average level of agreement of 6.5 out of 10 compared to 6.6 for all respondents and 6.7 for those earning \$50,000 or more. However, they were much less likely to agree that they have a voice in their organizations, responding with average agreement of 6.2 out of 10 compared to 7.0 for all respondents and 7.2 for those earning \$50,000 or more.

## Low-Wage Work in New Mexico

Interviews and questionnaires collected from frontline nonprofit workers in New Mexico provide further context on the conditions of staff earning low wages. Much like *Race to Lead* survey respondents, many respondents from this group expressed desires to obtain more education and advance to more senior positions, and hoped for the sector to invest in higher wages in the short term while also opening up more long-term opportunities for training, promotion, and advancement.

Nonprofit staff interviewed for this report expressed enthusiasm and commitment to their work and their clients but also wanted more support from their organizations. Some expressed frustration that many nonprofit organizations espouse values of social and economic justice yet avoid raising wages for their own

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I really want to go back to school and get another master's degree in social work so I can do therapy. I like working with adults ... but I also really want to do child welfare and work with children, especially in the tribal communities. Most of our tribal communities don't have people available to do child welfare or they're such closely-knit communities a lot of people know each other.”

—Nonprofit Worker Interviewee

“

When I was in food service ... we had great benefits, employee assistance programs, scholarship opportunities. And here there's none of that. It's like, 'Oh, well, we offer good health insurance,' and then that's about all we get. Here there's no maternity leave or anything like that. ... I know one of the [supervisors] had to come back early because she didn't have enough time saved. We don't have sick leave. I know the providers [do], like the doctors, behavioral health clinicians, the psychiatrists – it's different depending on what you are. ... If you're just an hourly case manager like us, we don't get sick leave ... if you have to call in sick, you better hope you have PTO to cover it.”

—Nonprofit Worker Interviewee

staff, leaving employees to struggle with low pay. Frontline workers described the stress and anxiety of working without retirement funding and with minimal paid leave, and suggested that nonprofits that are not able to offer higher wages could make other investments in employee well-being, such as time off for “mental health days” to recharge, particularly for those exposed to secondary trauma from working directly with clients. Interviewees and questionnaire respondents also emphasized the need for more investments in worker safety and expressed frustration that these safety needs were reduced to financial considerations. One participant who works with clients navigating domestic violence shared that a request to the organization’s executive director for more security personnel was minimized and dismissed with the response, “We’re just not going to pay for it.”

More than half of the New Mexico executive directors and CEOs that BMP interviewed for this report said they have low-wage workers among their organization’s staff. Some directors described making efforts to assure that all staff earned well more than minimum wage, and to provide paid time off and health insurance. But many—including those whose staff were paid closer to a “living wage”—said their organization’s finances did not allow them to offer health insurance or retirement benefits. Some organizations employed staff on a contractual or part-time basis that resulted in staff lacking income stability and being ineligible for benefits. Many organization leaders were aware of the financial strain on their lower-paid staff, noting that even those who make a living wage struggle to care for their families, especially given the financial strain and escalating challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic and financial demands.

Executive directors and CEOs of New Mexico organizations expressed a desire to raise salaries and offer more comprehensive benefits for employee stability. One executive director suggested group healthcare insurance

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

[Frontline workers] see so many really hard situations that they need that break and they need that space and they need that time to get their energy back. And so, if you take care of your employees, then your employees are going to take care of you and the community that they’re working with. We’re going to have a better outcome.”

—Nonprofit Worker Interviewee

“

I understand that things like funding are tight, but just try to take better care of your employees. We don’t choose nonprofit work because it pays super well, and we care about the work, so care about us and provide us something. Offer us a mental health day or just something little. It makes a huge difference.”

—Nonprofit Worker Interviewee

that would allow nonprofits across the state to offer employees care with reduced costs. Several executive directors noted the role that foundation and government funders could play in lifting up wages, benefits, and working conditions for nonprofit workers by providing larger and more predictable grants that help organizations assure a living wage for workers. As one director suggested, “If a foundation says ‘Everybody in your organization needs to be making at least X amount’” as a condition for consideration for the foundation’s support, it would help raise sector wages, adding that “one foundation isn’t going to make that happen, so it’s got to be a collective commitment from foundations to invest in that.”

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

If we’re going to fight for a living wage, which we have, I think we got to walk our talk and I think I pay staff pretty well. We have a hundred percent healthcare coverage. ... I wish there was other things we could do, like provide healthcare for partners and families. We’re too small. We don’t really have retirement accounts. Those are some things that I think we should institutionalize.”

—ED/CEO of Color Interviewee

“

You can’t raise people’s salaries when you’re piecing together \$5,000 grants from foundations.”

—ED/CEO of Color Interviewee

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## Endnotes

- 1 The Building Movement Project distributed and conducted the 2019 *Race to Lead* survey online for eight weeks in the summer of 2019. The result is a convenience sample of those who work for pay in the nonprofit sector in the United States.
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- 11 This figure only includes Hispanic/Latinx individuals who identified as people of color. Most individuals in New Mexico—and nationally—who chose Hispanic/Latinx as their only racial/ethnic identity (as opposed to those who indicated they were Hispanic/Latinx among multiple racial identities) also said they identified as a person of color (89% in New Mexico and 95% nationally). Among white respondents in New Mexico, 9% said they were Hispanic/Latinx compared to less than 1% nationally.
- 12 Due to rounding, some percentages that appear in the figures throughout the report may not precisely reflect the absolute numbers or add to 100%. There were no gender non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer people of color respondents.
- 13 Differences in this report are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated. We did not detect a statistically significant difference in this comparison. Where there are large differences between comparison groups, sample size and statistical power may contribute to lack of significance.
- 14 See endnote 13.
- 15 Generations are categorized based on by birth year as follows: Generation Z (1998 or later); Millennial (1982-1997); Generation X (1966-1981); Baby Boomer (1947-1965); and older leaders (1946 or earlier). In the national survey sample, a handful of respondents indicated they were Generation Z (born 1998 or later). In the New Mexico sub-sample, there were no respondents who identified as Generation Z.
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- 26 Kunreuther, F. and Thomas-Breitfeld, S. (2020). *Race to Lead Revisited: Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*. Building Movement Project. <https://racetolead.org/race-to-lead-revisited/>
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- 28 See endnote 13.
- 29 See endnote 13.
- 30 Three interviews took place in Summer 2019 and 14 in May 2020.
- 31 One percent of survey respondents in New Mexico reported annual wages under \$20,000 and 17% reported annual wages under \$35,000.
- 32 See endnote 13.
- 33 See endnote 13.
- 34 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020, March 30). *U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html>



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For more information, please visit  
The Building Movement Project at  
[www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org)

or contact us at  
[info@buildingmovement.org](mailto:info@buildingmovement.org)

