



FROM SIGHT TO INSIGHT

REFLECTIONS ON THE **POWER BEYOND MEASURE** INCUBATOR

ABOUT EQUIVOLVE

EQUIVOLVE ENVISIONS A WORLD UNBOUND — a vibrant society in dynamic harmony, untethered by the chains of structural inequality. We dream of a society that pulsates with life, where every person's potential is not just acknowledged but celebrated. We challenge norms, break barriers, and confront inequities head-on. We believe in shaking the foundations, rewriting narratives, and igniting a cultural renaissance that redefines what it means to live in an equitable society.

By focusing on areas where disparities are most evident - wealth and income, education, healthcare, housing, employment, criminal justice, environment, and transportation — we leverage our resources and expertise to influence change. In this endeavor, we work closely with leaders in government, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector, forming collaborative partnerships that amplify our impact.

Equivolve's mission to forge a world unbound unfolds through a suite of pivotal solutions. These offerings embody our pathway to change:



STRATEGIC RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Deep-Dive Studies
Data-Driven Insights



STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Strategy Design
Strategic Planning



COLLABORATIVE CHANGE & ADVOCACY

Backbone Support
Capacity-Building
Convening & Facilitation
Policy Insights



MEASURING IMPACT

Evaluation
Impact Assessment
Insightful Learning





IN HER OPENING REMARKS AT A FUNDER CONVENING that Equivolve recently hosted, Jasmine Haywood invited attendees to carefully interrogate the ways that they and the institutions they represent may be complicit in maintaining the status quo under the guise of being “strategic.” The gravity of those words demanded a moment of silence in that room and moments of reflection in the months that followed.

The stories that you will read in this report, and the insights we have gleaned along the way, are a result of our deliberate attempt to fully recognize, celebrate, and amplify the important work being done in these communities. We have sought to show up as full partners in this shared journey toward helping people realize their full potential, approaching this work with humility and a steadfast belief in the society that ought to be—one that is dynamic, representing the breadth and depth of capacities, voices, opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and undeniably vibrant.

As you engage with this report, I encourage you to reflect on these questions:

1. How are we, as funders, practitioners, or evaluators, ensuring that our strategies genuinely disrupt the status quo rather than simply reinforcing it?
2. In what ways can we more authentically partner with communities to amplify their strengths and honor their insights?
3. Are the methods we use serving the communities we aim to support, or are they perpetuating barriers to their success?

Jasmine’s challenge to confront our complicity in maintaining the status quo serves as a powerful reminder that equity should not be misconstrued as the ceiling of our aspirations but as the very foundation upon which we build. Our true North Star is an unbound society—a world where equity is the floor and where limitless potential and possibility define our collective future.

This is the foundation we must strive to build; this is the world that must be.

GLENN R. LOVE

Founder & Chief Executive Officer



THE 2021 PBM RESEARCH AGENDA urged readers to hold on to the belief that “if we give ourselves permission to dream, we can create a world

where our deepest hopes are fully realized.” This idea is at the core of the PBM Incubator. Our work is grounded in the awareness that there is more to life than surviving and achieving. People need nature, art, beauty, and community. We need to feel joy, awe, love, pleasure, and freedom.

Traditional evaluation methods and funding models can limit how programs tell their stories, often creating a disconnect in what they measure and the essence of what they really do. This disconnect can inadvertently further limited, deficit-oriented narratives that miss the presence of beauty and possibilities.

Our Incubator, in partnership with four organizations from across the country, pushed the boundaries of what evaluation can do. The teams are different in many ways—different geographic locations, populations, and focus areas, to name a few. But they are similar in that they have allowed themselves to dream and they are bringing those dreams to life for communities of color. The PBM Incubator was an opportunity for them to explore ways to authentically communicate those dreams through their evaluation, and in doing so, contribute to the creation of a better world. And as a bonus—or perhaps at the very heart of it all—we were able to come together in a process that was full of fun, learning, and community.

STEPHANIE MOORE

Senior Associate & Project Lead

“I put my hand on my heart, that means I feel you. Real recognize real and you lookin familiar” – JAY-Z¹

WE ALL HAVE AN INHERENT NEED TO BE SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD. The Zulu greeting, “Sawubona” meaning “I see you,” isn’t just about sight. It’s about insight—the profound ability to fully recognize and appreciate someone’s identity and potential. It’s about understanding their inherent worth and finding ways, both big and small, to help them flourish.

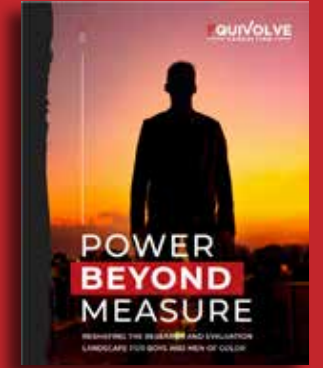
We have all experienced this. Perhaps it was a teacher, a coach, or a family member who saw something special in you. They dedicated their time and energy to help you become your best self. They saw you.

Members of community organizations often play these vital roles.

Yet, the true impact of these visionaries often remains hidden—not because they aren’t making a difference, but because traditional research and evaluation methods fail to capture the full scope of their work. These conventional methods, lacking the necessary nuance for these contexts, often obscure the real magnitude of their potential, presence, and impact. Without tailored approaches to evaluation, we miss the opportunity to fully recognize and cultivate the transformative possibilities these community-driven efforts offer.

Released in 2021 amidst the continued killings of Black people and the growing visibility of the the movement for Black lives, the Power Beyond Measure (PBM) research agenda challenged the philanthropic community to confront the historical and systemic forces that harm boys and men of color, and people of color more broadly, impeding their ability to thrive. This agenda was designed to foster ongoing dialogue on how best to support people of color, offering strategies for researchers, evaluators, and funders to help these communities thrive in their lives, families, and broader society. The report underscored the urgent need to shift power within the research and evaluation fields, which have historically been unwelcoming and oppressive toward people of color.

¹ Jay-Z, “All Around the World,” track 7 on *The Blueprint²: The Gift & the Curse*, Roc-A-Fella Records; Island Def Jam Music Group, 2002, compact disc.



THE PBM STRATEGIES

Center Boys and Men of Color

Promote Community Power and Capacity Building

Learn & Use Diverse Research Approaches

Research, Support, and Engage in Systems-Level Change

Disseminate and Translate Results With and For Boys and Men of Color

Practice Equity to Advance Equity

INCUBATING INNOVATION

THE POWER BEYOND MEASURE INCUBATOR, an initiative led by Equivolve (EQ), and supported by The California Endowment, sought to increase access to evaluation as a tool for advancing equity and opportunity. Launched in January 2024, the PBM Incubator aimed to advance the PBM research agenda and build evaluation capacity within BIPOC organizations and communities. The Incubator expanded the focus beyond boys and men of color and aimed to apply PBM strategies to benefit communities of color more broadly, including populations of all genders.

The PBM Incubator offered organizations serving communities of color an opportunity to begin rewriting the narratives of their impact. It brought these community superheroes together in a supportive learning community and provided tools and frameworks to help them tell the stories of their transformative work.

Participants

The PBM Incubator supported four teams in conducting equitable² and culturally responsive evaluations³ for programs serving communities of color.

Driven by EQ's vision of a dynamic and vibrant society free from structural barriers, we sought applications from organizations dedicated to cultivating joy, community, connection to nature, and other wellness-related outcomes for communities of color. These outcomes, often difficult to measure and frequently overlooked in evaluations, are central to our mission.



PBM Incubator participants and coaches, together on Zoom for the final Jam Session.

Following nationwide recruitment and a rigorous selection process, EQ invited four evaluation teams to participate in the Incubator. These teams, composed of community organizations conducting internal evaluations, met all the preferred criteria: BIPOC-led, committed to culturally responsive and equitable evaluation, serving communities of color, and evaluating programs that support the holistic well-being of their participants. Together, they represented a rich diversity of focus areas, populations, geographies, and evaluation experience.

Structure

The PBM Incubator provided a highly customized support structure designed to build evaluation capacity and foster a collaborative learning environment.

Each participating organization engaged in a series of structured **activities**:

COACHING SESSIONS: Each team participated in three tailored virtual sessions focused on applying PBM strategies in their work and enhancing understanding of equitable and culturally responsive evaluation methodologies.

JAM SESSIONS: Teams came together for four virtual sessions that fostered shared learning and networking, including guest speakers and deep dives into specific evaluation practices.

SEED FUNDING: Each team received \$3,500 to support their evaluation. Teams determined how to allocate the funds to best serve their work (e.g., incentives for evaluation participants, supplies, compensation for team members' time)

REGULAR FEEDBACK TO EQ: Teams provided monthly feedback and participated in exit interviews, reflecting on their experiences, challenges, and successes.

Support across these activities fell into four **focus areas**, each tailored to participants' unique goals and needs:



RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING
Inspired by EQ's guiding value of Sawubona — the Zulu word for "I see you" — this foundation of relationship-building was essential.



CREATIVE DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES
Tailoring data collection to outcomes and audiences, exploring new methods.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
Support in identifying outcomes, developing logic models, and refining measurement tools.



SYSTEMS CHANGE
Strategizing on how evaluation can contribute to broader systemic change.

² Center for Evaluation Innovation, Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning, Dorothy A Johnson Center for Philanthropy, Luminaire Group. *Equitable Evaluation Framing Paper*. (Equitable Evaluation Initiative, 2017), www.equitableeval.org.

³ Stafford Hood, Rodney Hopson, and Karen Kirkhart, "Culturally responsive evaluation: Theory, practice, and future implications," in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Fourth Edition*, eds. K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015), 281-317.

INCUBATOR PARTICIPANTS

THE FOUR EVALUATION TEAMS that participated in the inaugural PBM Incubator represented a rich diversity of focus areas, populations, geographies, and evaluation experience.



BOYZ N THE WOOD

Big Bend National Park, TX
Boundary Waters, MN
Greater Boston Area, MA
North Cascades National Park, WA

DEVELOPING DESPITE DISTANCE

Detroit, MI

HEALTH COMMONS PROJECT

Renton, WA

QUE BLACKOUT

Detroit, MI

“We’re all over — in different places doing different missions, but the work is important and the resources we’re getting help. Plus I got to meet so many amazing people that I never would have met because I’m kind of here, doing my own thing. The Incubator broadens our horizon to want to work with others and do more.”

— QUE BLACKOUT

“In our coaching sessions, the support from Equivolve gave us the ability to push our individual organizations further. The Jam Sessions gave us **space and opportunity to grow together, as iron sharpens iron.**”

— BOYZ N THE WOOD

“I think it was really beneficial to have Jam Sessions where we can talk and reflect and have different ideas with the other partners. It allows us to **collaborate and share our ideas in a way that’s beneficial to others.**”

— HEALTH COMMONS PROJECT

BOYZ N THE WOOD

Boyz N The Wood creates immersive experiences for Black men using nature as their backdrop to build brotherhood, fortify mental wellbeing, and foster personal development. Their programming begins with 4-day, 3-night restorative outdoor retreats where participants embrace the outdoors as a space for personal transformation.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS



San Antonio, TX
Twin Cities, MN
Greater Boston Area, MA
Greater Seattle Area, WA

PARTICIPANTS



Black men, age 18-72

EVALUATION METHODS



Pre- and post-retreat surveys
Video interviews
Visual mapping

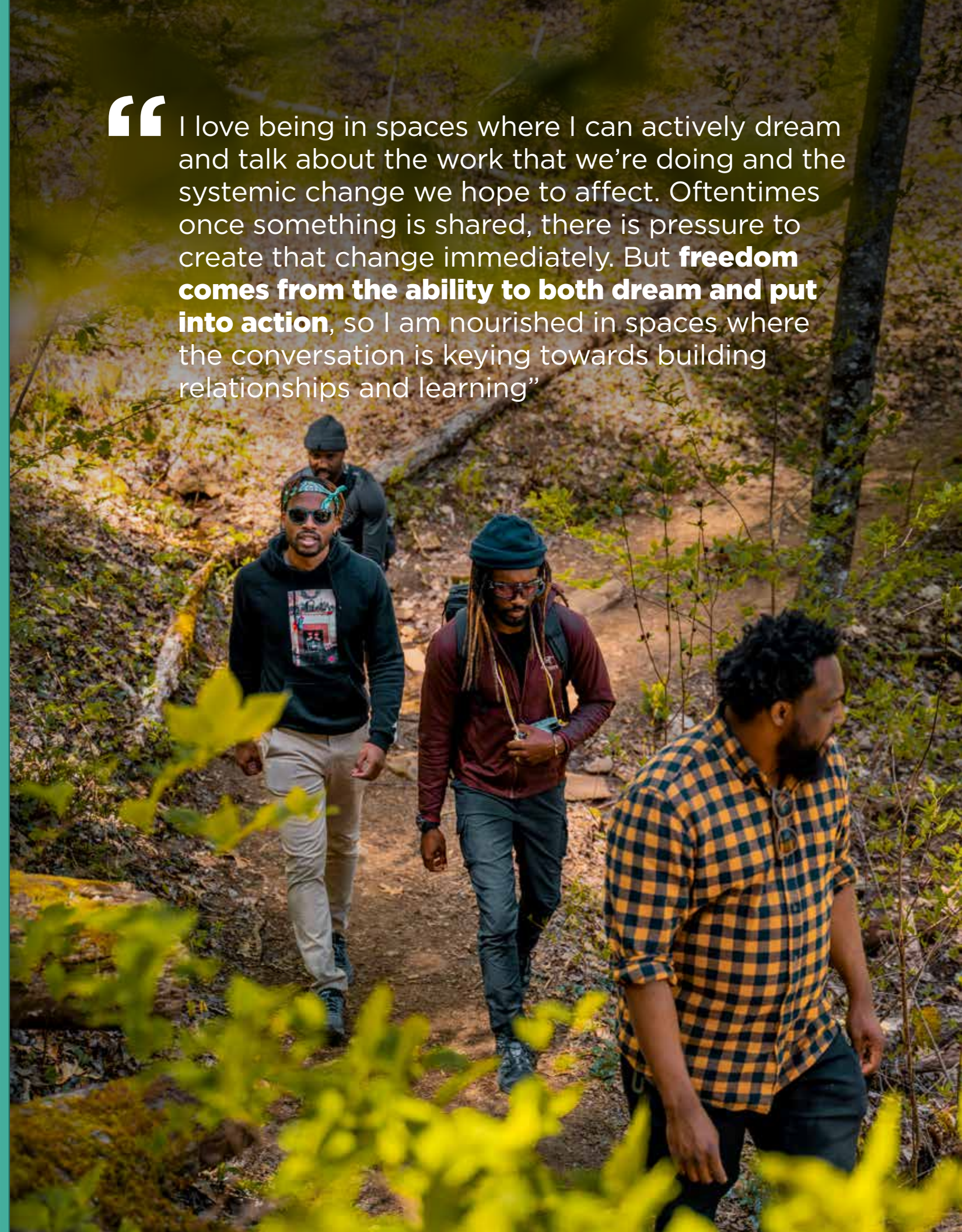
KEY INCUBATOR OUTCOMES

- Revised surveys to better align with program goals and incorporate strong survey methodology
- Identified potential strategies to increase survey response rates, including introducing alternative data collection methods
- Began developing a strategy for how evaluation can change narratives and systems related to Black men's mental health, health equity, and the healing potential of nature

For more information, visit <https://www.boyznthewood.org/>

“

I love being in spaces where I can actively dream and talk about the work that we're doing and the systemic change we hope to affect. Oftentimes once something is shared, there is pressure to create that change immediately. But **freedom comes from the ability to both dream and put into action**, so I am nourished in spaces where the conversation is keying towards building relationships and learning”



DEVELOPING DESPITE DISTANCE

Developing Despite Distance (3D) aims to inspire and support young Black men impacted by parental incarceration by creating safe spaces and a sense of community. Meeting weekly in Detroit, 3D focuses on healthy coping strategies, mentorship, mental health support, and workforce development.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS



Detroit, MI

PARTICIPANTS



Young men, ged 13-18,
with an incarcerated parent

EVALUATION METHODS



Interviews
Focus groups
Pre- and post-program
surveys

KEY INCUBATOR OUTCOMES

- Engaged new team members in the evaluation and design processes
- Developed a program logic model
- Identified short- and long-term program goals and data collection methods
- Refined program survey to integrate effective survey methodology and align with logic model

For more information, visit <https://www.developingdespitedistance.org/>



“

Sometimes you're so in the trenches where you can't see, until you can apply it and actually think about it. What I liked about the Incubator is that it was an **intentional time for me to think about this evaluation.**”

HEALTH COMMONS PROJECT

Health Commons Project aims to accelerate equitable access to health and social care. Their Renton Referral Hub pilot program matches student behavioral health needs with community providers and tracks students through the process to ensure every child's needs are met.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS



Renton, WA

PARTICIPANTS



Adolescents and teenagers under 18 years old in the Renton School District

EVALUATION METHODS



Surveys and interviews with students, parents, school staff, and service providers

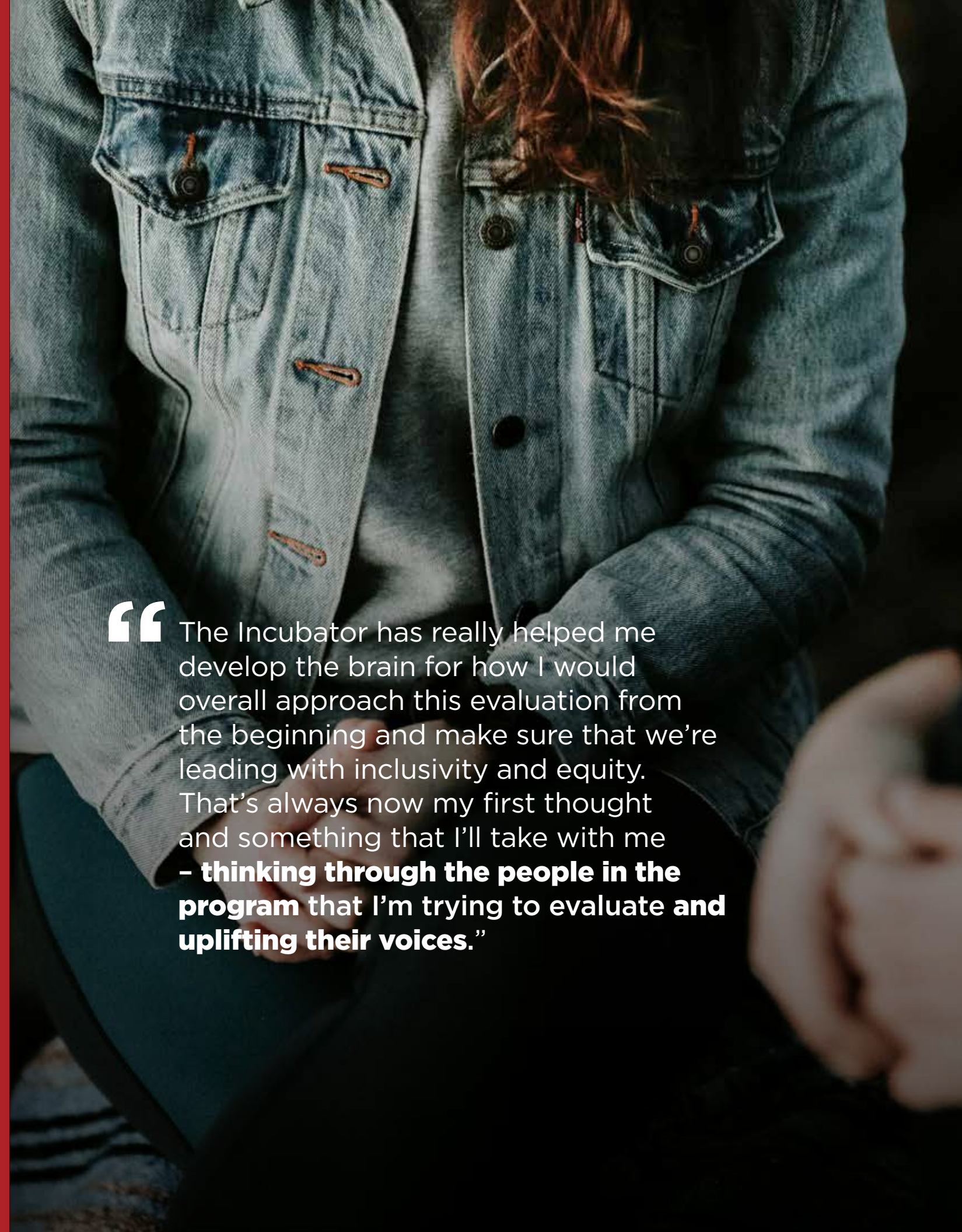
KEY INCUBATOR OUTCOMES

- Refined existing evaluation plan with an equity lens, including strategies for identifying participants, incentivizing recruitment, and data collection
- Developed surveys and interview protocols that aligned with program goals, centered participants' experiences, and incorporated strong methodological techniques

For more information, visit <https://healthcommonsproject.org/>



The Incubator has really helped me develop the brain for how I would overall approach this evaluation from the beginning and make sure that we're leading with inclusivity and equity. That's always now my first thought and something that I'll take with me - **thinking through the people in the program that I'm trying to evaluate and uplifting their voices.**"



QUE BLACKOUT

Que Blackout is dedicated to youth performance, media arts, and broadcasting. The program focuses on disciplines ranging from performing arts to content creation.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS



Detroit, MI

PARTICIPANTS



Metro Detroit youth
ages 10-22

EVALUATION METHODS



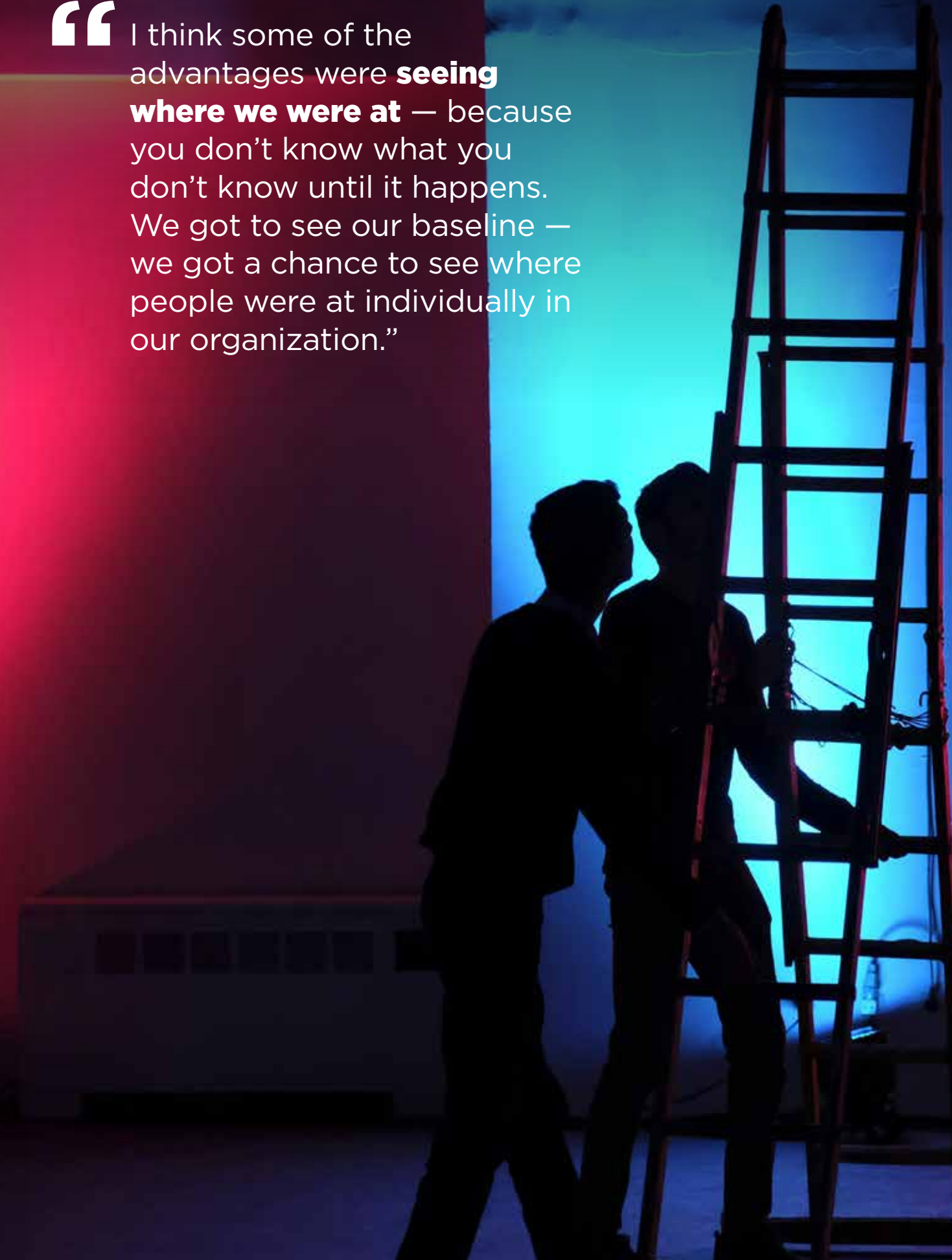
Pre- and post-program
surveys

KEY INCUBATOR OUTCOMES

- Engaged new team members in the evaluation and fostered team alignment on organizational goals
- Developed new logic model, with input from all team members
- Identified short- and long-term program goals and data collection methods

For more information, visit <https://www.queblackout.org/>

“ I think some of the advantages were **seeing where we were at** — because you don’t know what you don’t know until it happens. We got to see our baseline — we got a chance to see where people were at individually in our organization.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR EVALUATORS

EQ offers the following recommendations for evaluators, especially those who are conducting internal evaluations of their own programs:

1. ENSURE THAT EVALUATION DESIGN REFLECTS PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Too often, evaluations are constrained by (real and perceived) expectations about how evaluation must be done - for example, that they must focus only on outcomes that are of interest to funders or must collect data in particular ways. Begin the evaluation process by reflecting on the true outcomes and impact of your program, then plan accordingly for measurement and reporting. Center participants and community in this reflection process.

2. CLARIFY THE PURPOSES AND AUDIENCES FOR YOUR EVALUATION

Evaluations often serve multiple purposes and audiences. For example, they can inform and inspire current and prospective funders, support staff learning and future programming, and facilitate power- and movement-building with participants and communities. Consider your audiences and purposes when planning data, reporting, and dissemination strategies.

3. ENGAGE INDIVIDUALS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Involve team members from multiple roles to deepen the alignment of goals, programming, and evaluation strategies. Broad engagement supports organization-

wide learning and increases the likelihood that the evaluation will be truly integrated and useful.

4. COMPENSATE EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

Participants and community members who share their time and perspectives must be compensated. Prioritize allocation of funding for participants in the evaluation process (e.g., paid planning roles for community members, incentives for data collection).

5. CONNECT WITH OTHER EVALUATORS

Engage with peers, local community-based organizations, and cultural brokers to build relationships, share resources, and improve the quality of evaluation. Collaborative, relationship-oriented learning can bring healing and new perspectives for individuals who may have had harmful, extractive experiences with evaluation in the past.

6. CONTINUOUSLY REFLECT AND ADAPT

Regularly assess whether evaluation methods remain equitable and culturally responsive, incorporating feedback loops to ensure the evaluation process aligns with evolving goals. Engage participants in this reflection, as in all parts of the evaluation, to ensure that all stages of the process and products reflect and support their experiences.

FOR FUNDERS

EQ offers the following recommendations for funders:

1. SUPPORT CAPACITY-BUILDING BEYOND THE GRANTOR-GRANTEE RELATIONSHIP

In internal evaluations, the learning needs of funders sometimes take precedence over the learning needs of programs, and capacity-building support provided by funders can inadvertently exacerbate this issue. Support capacity-building programs that exist outside of the grantor-grantee relationship in order to allow evaluators the freedom to be vulnerable, creative, and design evaluations that truly reflect the learning goals, outcomes, and unique identities of their programs.

2. FOSTER COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING FOR COMMUNITY-BASED EVALUATORS

Fund programs that enable community-based and BIPOC-serving organizations to engage in collaborative, skill-building evaluation work.

3. DESIGNATE FUNDING FOR EVALUATION

Allocate a portion of grant funding specifically for evaluation, to underscore the importance of evaluation and avoid situations in which organizations must fund evaluation at the expense of program work. Consider funding evaluation positions within grassroots organizations to bridge expertise and capacity gaps.

4. PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND POWER-BUILDING IN FUNDING

Reshape funding priorities to normalize strengths-based, asset-focused evaluation, enhancing buy-in from BIPOC-led organizations.

5. REWARD INNOVATIVE AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT APPROACHES

Focus on rewarding grantees who challenge traditional evaluation norms and honor community-based ways of knowing, ensuring funding decisions are guided by a deep understanding of culturally based methodologies.

“ I really like that we were compensated for being a part of the cohort. That investment in our organization – of course you all’s time and coaching, but also the dollars – was helpful and allowed us to really be able to lean into implementing.”

DEVELOPING DESPITE DISTANCE

INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS

THE PBM INCUBATOR EXPERIENCE reinforced the importance of centering communities of color at all stages of evaluation projects. It highlighted the need to promote community power- and capacity-building, incorporate diverse research approaches, and focus on how evaluation work can drive systems-level change. The Incubator extended these PBM strategies, emphasizing the importance of holistic evaluation approaches that include perspectives from participants, their families, program staff, and community members.

Investing in personnel for evaluation work emerged as a critical need, with many grassroots community organizations describing their struggles to find time to dedicate to evaluation. The Incubator underscored the importance of providing compensation and time for personnel within community organizations to focus on evaluation, allowing them to develop plans that truly fit their programs.

The Incubator also highlighted the necessity of framing inquiry as strength-based rather than deficit-based. Evaluators must ensure their measurement strategies and reporting align with their true program outcomes, rejecting deficit-oriented perspectives and emphasizing the strengths of participants and communities of color.

Building community is essential for driving systems-level change. Connections across organizations, sectors, locations, and expertise create communities of learning and build capacity for evaluation and program implementation. Mobilizing coalitions is key to pushing toward broader systemic change. The experiences of Incubator participants demonstrated the potential power of communities of learning and practice.

A key insight from this pilot program was the recognition that extending the duration of the Incubator experience would significantly enhance teams' progress towards their evaluation goals and allow for a deeper exploration of the PBM research agenda strategies. Both participants and coaches consistently expressed a desire for additional time together, more guest presentations, and opportunities for in-person gatherings. An extended timeframe would foster stronger relationships, facilitate richer knowledge exchange, and provide a more robust foundation for implementing and sustaining impactful evaluation practices.

CONCLUSION

THE PBM INCUBATOR EXPERIENCE has underscored the vital importance of the strategies articulated in the PBM Research Agenda, while also adding nuance and depth to these approaches. By centering communities of color at all stages of evaluation, promoting power and capacity-building, and incorporating diverse research methodologies, we can drive meaningful systems-level change.

The insights gained from the Incubator highlight the transformative potential of thoughtful, inclusive, and strengths-based evaluation practices. When funders and evaluators invest in the capacity of grassroots organizations, engage broad communities in evaluation efforts, and prioritize culturally relevant methodologies, they not only enhance the effectiveness of individual programs but also contribute to broader systemic change.

We call on funders, evaluators, and community organizations to continue this vital work. By sustaining and expanding efforts like the PBM Incubator, we can build the capacity of organizations serving communities of color and drive lasting change in the systems that affect their lives. Together, we can create a future where equitable and culturally responsive evaluation is the norm, and where the strengths and voices of all communities are recognized and amplified. This collective effort is essential for fostering vibrant, dynamic communities. This is the world we envision; this is the world that ought to be.

SAWUBONA!

“Engaging program staff in culturally responsive evaluation is critical, as for many communities evaluation has been weaponized as simply “monitoring” their use of funds rather than a tool to assess needs and maximize learning and positive program impact. The PBM Incubator gives space to heal the wounds of past harmful evaluative actions, while also building a community of folks who can share in the practice knowledge together.”

HOWARD WALTERS, W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

EQ TEAM/AUTHORS

- Glenn Love
- Stephanie Moore
- Casey Nguyen
- Teja Vemuganti

PHOTO CREDITS

Front Cover: Hudson Hintze on Unsplash; page 2: Mike Haupt on Unsplash; page 5, top row to bottom row and left to right: Rui Silvestre on Unsplash, Dani on Unsplash, Prince Akachi on Unsplash, Albert Dera on Unsplash, Leon ELLDOT on Unsplash, Dorrell Tibbs on Unsplash, Zach Wear on Unsplash, Nickolas Nikolic on Unsplash, Mubarak Showole on Unsplash; page 13: Priacilla Du Preez on Unsplash; page 15: Sam Moghadam Khamseh on Unsplash; pages 16 & 17: Arifur Rahman on Unsplash.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The PBM Incubator was proudly supported by The California Endowment.



We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our external reviewers, whose thoughtful insights and feedback have been instrumental in enhancing our work. We are especially grateful to Howard Walters of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Jeff Poirier and Kimberly Spring of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Yvonne Mejias of the Youth Development Resource Center for their invaluable contributions.

A special note of appreciation goes to Martena Reed and Hanh Cao Yu, whose exceptional insight and unwavering support were pivotal in the development of the incubator concept. Your expertise and dedication have been a driving force behind this initiative.