

1) What efforts have you made to promote inclusion and representation for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color at your organization?

The Conservation Alliance board and staff met in November 2019 to create a strategic plan that would guide our organization for the coming years. In January 2020, we adopted a plan that includes a goal to make changes to our grant program using a JEDI lens. We signed the CEO Diversity Pledge in June, and in July we created a task force to lead us through the process of determining how to do this important work. Together, the task force identified steps that The Conservation Alliance needs to take in the short and long term to incorporate JEDI values while staying true to our mission.

The first major step we took as an organization was to identify a partner to help us with this work. We are currently working with [Marcelo Bonta of J.E.D.I. Heart](#) to facilitate individual, organizational, and systemic JEDI change processes. Marcelo has been doing this work for two decades, and he specializes in working with foundations and environmental organizations.

Marcelo coached us through the process of articulating why JEDI work is important to us as individuals, and as an organization. Being clear about why we're doing this work will inform how we move forward. With this in mind, we are prioritizing four foundational aspects of our JEDI work. Here is what we plan to accomplish in the coming months:

1. Finalize our JEDI vision and statement
2. Evaluate and make changes to our grant-making process and programs
3. Create a JEDI plan with goals and benchmarks
4. Diversify our Board of Directors

Grant-making is a logical starting point for our JEDI work because it is at the core of what we do. We got to work right away to make immediate changes to our grant program for the Winter 2021 grant cycle. We are also planning a full assessment of our grant making process in 2021 where we will identify barriers for groups seeking funding, evaluate our decision making processes, and look at how we measure success.

We did not change our fundamental funding criteria in this grant cycle. We are looking for projects that meet the following four criteria:

- The project should seek to secure lasting and quantifiable protection of a specific wild land or waterway.
- The campaign should engage grassroots citizen action in support of the conservation effort.
- All projects must have a clear recreational benefit.

- The project should have a good chance of final success within four years.

New for the Winter 2021 grant cycle, we expanded the list of qualities that we are looking for in projects we fund:

- Landscape-scale projects that have a clear benefit for habitat.
- NEW: Indigenous led conservation initiatives.
- NEW: Projects that benefit Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and/or underserved communities, and organizations that work directly with these communities.
- NEW: Projects that measurably mitigate the impacts of climate change.

For the first time, in the Winter 2021 grant cycle we have asked applicants to submit a letter of support from one of their BIPOC partners, if applicable. This is a small step in the direction of broadening our awareness of BIPOC organizations working in conservation. It is our hope that we will begin to forge our own relationships with many of these organizations. We are also asking applicants to describe their journey to address justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, and how the organization has changed because of it.

We have other changes in the works for our grant program related to JEDI that we are not quite ready to announce yet.

2) What has proved successful? How do you know?

Our initial changes to our RFP process has resulted in a significant shift in emphasis on JEDI in the grant proposals we received in this last round. The result of our request to applicants for letters from BIPOC partners in support of their project has given us valuable insights into the types of organizations and communities our grantees are partnering with.

Historically less than 1% of the applications we review are from organizations with BIPOC leaders. While it is incremental, in this grant cycle, we received four nominations and three applications from organizations led by people of color, 6% of the total.

We have 12 hours of JEDI training scheduled for our staff and board in February. While we can't say how successful this will be yet, there is unanimous support within the organization to dedicate time to this essential process.

3) What is still challenging for you? Why? What support do you still need?

We still have a lot of work to do to diversify our board and staff, and to cultivate and fund BIPOC environmental organizations. We will continue our work within the staff, board and with our consultant in 2021.

