#### LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION

# Black Queer Equity Index

## WHAT IS THE BQEI?

Lighthouse Foundation's flagship program is the Black Queer Equity Index (BQEI), a Black LGBTQ+ community-led participatory action research project to evaluate nonprofit cultures for Black LGBTQ+ staff and board members. The BQEI will improve organizational inequity through publishing an annual report card and offering actionable interventions. Lighthouse Foundation contends that when Black LGBTQ+ employees and board members are centered and empowered in their organizations, those organizations are best positioned to serve communities.

### WHY IS THE BOEI NEEDED?

As we saw with COVID-19 and mpox, health disparities between Black communities and their white counterparts are widening. Over 25 billion dollars in federal funding goes to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and related direct services in the United States. According to the CDC, the percentage of Black gay and bisexual men who represent new HIV cases doubled from 26% in 2018 to 53% in 2020. Against this backdrop, nonprofits must improve how they support, develop and promote Black LGBTQ+leadership because communities most impacted have the insights to develop solutions we need.

#### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

We launched the BQEI by evaluating the workplace culture of five of Chicago's largest nonprofits addressing LGBTQ+ health – AIDS Foundation Chicago, Center on Halsted, Chicago House, Equality Illinois, and Howard Brown Health. These nonprofits work on HIV, an issue area with well-documented, pervasive, and persistent racial disparities. Actively striving to be anti-racist, they committed to working closely with us. We analyzed human resources data, surveys, interviews and focus groups to publish a BQEI White Paper in 2021. 100% of Black LGBTQ+ board members and employees reported experiencing marginalization. Frustrated by initiatives that prioritize optical diversity over the "real work" of anti-racism, they recommended many practices and policies that organizations could change. Five key themes emerged: resource allocation, giving voice and power, professional development, systemic action, and data collection.

#### Five key themes emerged:

**Resource Allocation** 

**Giving Voice and Power** 

**Professional Development** 

Systemic Action

**Data Collection** 



# WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

01

**Develop Professionals** 

BQEI respondents emphatically stressed the need for culturally-relevant professional development opportunities to help offset the marginality they experience even after securing a job. In 2023, we're piloting our inaugural Workforce Development Conference, an event to convene Black LGBTQ+ nonprofit staff and unemployed people for interactive workshops, resume development, interview prep, networking events, headshot services, and an award-winning keynote speaker.

02

Make the Grade

We are working with a steering committee of activists, academics, and nonprofit leaders to create a grading scale for each of the 12 Emerging Racial Equity Indicators. Then, we will publish our inagural Black Queer Equity Report Card. This tool will create a standard that will hone in on problem areas, measure progress over time, and create a social incentive for organizations to change racist practices.

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Scale the Impact

We will continue working with participating nonprofits, offering a grade each year that reflects how effectively they work towards Black LGBTQ+ equity. By the end of 2023, we will begin collaborating with a national partner to adapt BQEI processes and methodologies with the ultimate goal of engaging nonprofits nationally by 2027.