

The Five Markers, Explained

Following a period of considerable reflection, we have chosen to refine how we make funding decisions. Our approach now takes deeper consideration of our partners' orientation within the communities they reach. We arrived here by studying our shared history.

Our study surfaced 5 markers that have characterized our partners' stories and informed our decisions. We have adopted them as our guideposts.

Successful applicants to the Bissell Foundation manifest **at least four of the five** markers described below.

MARKER 1

Core work that confronts the root causes of systemic inequities and effects change

What this looks like:

- Work that changes the status quo and establishes new systems
- Creativity that makes visible what must be brought to light in order to realize change
- Actions that amplify the voices, stories, and/or artistic expressions of historically underrepresented communities

MARKER 2

Leaders who are uniquely close to the issues the organization's work centers

What this looks like:

- Leaders with lived experiences relevant to your work
- Alignment in ethnicity, gender expression, disability et al. between the communities you reach and your leadership as represented by staff and boards.
- Other facets of your team's diversity and vital closeness to the issues on which you work

MARKER 3

Organizations that have designed access and spaces that communicate belonging to all members of the community

What this looks like:

- Making your spaces, performances, offerings, and programming accessible distinctly to people with physical disabilities; to neurodiverse communities; to individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf; to those who are blind or who have vision impairment; and to people of all sizes and weights
- Providing trauma-informed and mental-health-informed services
- Working with individuals whose first language is not English
- Embracing and accommodating community members' sexual orientation and gender expression

MARKER 4

Staff and volunteers who bear the consequences of their organization's stand

What this looks like:

- Becoming the object of others' political attacks or sensationalized rhetoric
- Facing threats or acts of violence
- Experiencing microaggressions from the communities you are designed to reach
- Intentionally limiting public knowledge of offerings or performances
- Directing resources to counteract forces that interrupt your work

MARKER 5

Budgets that depict small and community-based size

What this looks like:

- **Revenue in the most recently completed fiscal year was less than \$2 million**
- Investing in the people creating and doing the work, even with limited resources
- Relying on small foundation partners to evolve and grow
- Limited or no capacity to call on a large donor
- Being new to the arena of foundation and institutional funding