SECTION 3

ELEVATING COMMUNITY VOICE

Many . . . have begun to raise the alarm that big data . . . will compound and exacerbate racial inequality . . . accompanied by calls for community involvement. But it is crucial that community engagement is not an add-on or window dressing for programs long in the making.

—MARIKA PFEFFERKORN, "DATA JUSTICE AND RISKS OF DATA SHARING."

Shaping questions, collecting and synthesizing information, and sharing results are critical parts of an equitable evidence-building journey. Each of these steps is made more relevant by gathering input and feedback from communities served, both practitioners and their participants, and elevating what they have to say, their "community voice." Moreover, inviting participation and sharing results with the people one seeks to serve also may infuse the process of building evidence with respect and dignity, critical to growing community trust.

The essays in this section feature Dan Cardinali, formerly with Independent Sector, who writes about building trust through listening to communities, and building evidence in service of what communities express as their own goals. Marika Pfefferkorn's subsequent chapter tells a story of data justice after the St. Paul, Minnesota, school and police districts broke

community trust through an ineffective process for getting sign-off for a data sharing agreement that could lead to racial profiling. In the face of public outrage, the districts pivoted to community consultation and, spurred by community leaders, found a better way. John Brothers of T. Rowe Price Foundation calls on philanthropy to "find evaluative approaches that help communities use their own data for their own self-determination," and to invest in the measurement systems of community-based organizations. And Rhett Mabry of The Duke Endowment writes about unintended consequences when philanthropy fails to listen to community.

Use cases that follow include The Duke Endowment's Summer Literacy Initiative, New York University's Criminal Justice Lab, and girls empowerment nonprofit Pace Center for Girls. All show how gathering input and feedback from program participants has advanced social missions and improved participants' experiences and results.

Questions tackled in this section include:

1. Where in the cycle of evidence building is it best to draw in community input and loop back to communities with findings?

2. What tools and processes are useful for doing so?

3. How do these practices strengthen decision making and implementation?