

# Serving the Next Generation of Grantmakers

## Promoting Diversity Through Mentoring

**W**hen we recently conducted a search to fill a senior position,” said William McCalpin, executive vice president and chief operating officer at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund ([www.rbf.org](http://www.rbf.org)), “finding a diverse pool of candidates was a real challenge.” So McCalpin was pleased to learn that NYRAG’s Increasing & Diversifying Philanthropy special committee is helping to promote the mentoring program run by New York City Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) ([www.epip.org](http://www.epip.org)).

While EPIP’s mentoring program is open to mentors and mentees from all races and ethnic backgrounds, it can be particularly useful in retaining and advancing people of color, who are generally underrepresented on grant-making staffs and boards. With this in mind, the New York Community Trust has provided support to expand the program, with a particular eye for nurturing diversity.

The national EPIP network was founded to support and strengthen the next generation of grantmakers, in order to advance effective social justice philanthropy. With its headquarters in Manhattan, the national group found core support from the New York City philanthropic community when, in 2002, the Ford Foundation provided start-up funds to launch EPIP as a project housed at New World Foundation. The New York City chapter, begun that same year, soon became a NYRAG Peer Network.

“One thing we heard repeatedly from our membership was the desire for us to foster relationships that provide support and connect inter-generational practitioners in philanthropy,” explains Rohit Burman, program officer at JPMorgan Private Bank, Philanthropic Services, and member of the national board of advisors of EPIP. Burman helped found the local EPIP mentoring program in 2003.

Mentors and mentees are asked to commit to communicating with each other at least once a month for six months, beginning with a face-to-face meeting. They set two mutual goals to be achieved by the end of this period. They must agree to keep all communication confidential and not to seek assistance with job placement or fundraising. Through these one-on-one relationships, mentors have the opportunity to apply their expertise in new settings while gaining access to fresh and creative thinking. Mentees broaden their professional networks while receiving career advice about navigating a field that lacks standardized pathways for advancement.

This self-guided, straightforward structure allows for substantive but flexible experiences for participants. As

**At NYRAG, we aspire to have a workforce that is reflective of the communities our members serve. The more diverse your staff and board, the more new voices and new ideas you bring to bear to enrich your work. Ultimately, this will make your organization more successful.**

– NYRAG president Michael Seltzer

Sharon B. King, president of F. B. Heron notes, sometimes efforts to become more inclusive are most effective when they are more informal than formal. “People need a safe space to talk about what’s working for them and what’s not,” she says. (Also see [Colleagues’ Forum](#).)

And the program provides value to mentors and mentees alike. “The EPIP mentees I have had have taught me as much as I’ve taught them,” says Mike Pratt, program officer and treasurer of The Scherman Foundation. “We talked a lot about how a career in philanthropy unfolds. I had the fascinating pleasure of getting to know two very bright young people entering the world of philanthropy. Since they both work at larger organizations than I do, it was interesting for me to hear and think about larger institutional dynamics.”

“My relationship with my mentor allowed me to test my thoughts and ideas in a confidential environment,” says Megan Watkins, a program officer at JPMorgan Private Bank, Philanthropic Services. “He also provided meaningful perspective on the field of philanthropy and advice on specific grantmaking strategies.” Their relationship has continued even after the six-month period ended. They recently met for lunch to discuss opportunities for professional development, including attending various annual conferences and serving on NYRAG committees. Because of her positive experience as a program participant, Watkins recently joined NYC EPIP’s mentoring committee.

If you would like to help young professionals in the field by sharing your expertise and experiences, or if you would like to have a mentor, you can read more and download simple application forms at [www.epip.org/nycmentoring.php](http://www.epip.org/nycmentoring.php), or contact NYC EPIP Organizer Elizabeth Cuccaro at 212-497-7547 or [elizabeth@epip.org](mailto:elizabeth@epip.org). ■