TIME’S UP Foundation’s recent report, *Nevertheless, It Persists: The Vicious Cycle of Institutionalized Sexism*, lays out a high-level analysis for how institutional sexism results in persistent gender and racialized gender inequities. The philanthropic community has a crucial role to play in upending these harmful and deeply rooted structural oppressions.

As grantmakers use the five-point gender equity framework laid out in the paper to leverage resources and address institutionalized sexism and racism, they have the opportunity to scale change and move us closer to a more just and equal world.

**Using an institutional sexism analysis to improve impact**

*Grantmakers have the unique opportunity to leverage resources for a portfolio of projects that collectively address institutional sexism and racism. Below, we propose a series of guiding questions and considerations meant to help equip grantmakers with questions they may want to ask grantee partners to ensure that their broader portfolio is taking into account the institutionalized nature of sexism.*

**Interrogate existing hierarchies.** Institutionalized sexism means that those who have historically held power designed a system that devalues women. The result is that the laws and policies lead to women of color and all women holding less wealth and less access to
formal positions of power and influence, which in turn hold women back from being able to acquire resources and influence, which are necessary to combat institutional sexism. Gender equity requires disrupting this cycle. To affect change in sexist and racist systems, interventions must be targeted to disrupt existing structures.

- Does the grantee challenge sex and race-based hierarchies in their approach, or work within existing systems of power?
- Who has more power and resources in the issues being addressed? Is the grantee acknowledging and addressing those power imbalances in their diagnosis and the solutions that they are generating?
- How does the grantee help rebalance positions of influence and resources?
- How does the grantee support new models of power?

Bring an intersectional approach to grantmaking. Disrupting this vicious cycle requires decision makers to recognize how structural racism and other forms of discrimination have been built into our society, and how such intersecting oppressions entrench gendered and racialized hierarchies. When we talk about centering women of color or marginalized people, that means starting policy making from the needs of those who have been most oppressed and building from there. After all, exclusionary frameworks like racism, ableism, nativism, xenophobia, homophobia, or transphobia interact with sexism to shape women’s experiences in our society.

- Is the grantee considering multiple oppressions (e.g. race, class, gender, etc.) and how they intersect to perpetuate inequity?
- Is the grantee centering or prioritizing historically disenfranchised groups to ensure that they are not disproportionately harmed?
- Is the grantee taking into account unintended effects that an intervention might have on marginalized populations not explicitly named in the approach?

Interrogate the way problems are framed. Those who have the power to define the problems, decide what data is collected and collect it, report on what it says, create the cultural narratives, and establish cultural expectations and norms have outsized influence on the types of policy solutions that are considered, developed, and enacted. That means we must interrogate the way problems are framed and the data used as evidence to ensure we are looking at it from all angles.

- Are there cultural assumptions that reinforce gender (and racialized gender) disparities baked into the way a grantee approaches a topic or issue?
- How is the grantee challenging cultural assumptions and norms? How will the grantee know if those norms have been upended?
• What are the common narratives or explanations for why the problem being addressed exists? Are those narratives/explanations correct? If not, does the grantee challenge those narratives throughout their work?
• What data do we need that we don’t have? Is there a gendered or racialized reason that those data don’t exist?
• Are there cultural assumptions baked into the definitions or methodologies of existing data that perpetuate disparities or that ignore issues of identity?

End the myth of neutrality. As a result of historic power imbalances and the accepted norms, whether intentional or not, policies that seem neutral on their face often actually favor the powerful. The most pernicious form of this framing uses neutrality as a justification for policies that maintain the status quo. Decision makers need to stay on alert for policies that seem neutral on their face but in reality have deeply gendered and racialized roots and implications.

• Are the solutions the grantee is putting forth gender-neutral? Race-neutral? Do the solutions ignore issues of identity? How will that affect the outcomes?
• Is the grantee considering the most marginalized population in their approach? Do they center the challenges of that group in the diagnosis and proposed solutions?
• What would it look like if the grantee started their diagnosis by looking at the people with the least power and fewest resources? What solutions would they come up with and how could they make them more universal?

Change systems, not symptoms. Collective problems require systemic, not individual solutions. Equity requires asking whether we are blaming individuals for systemic problems and creating solutions that require systems to change, not individuals.

• How is the grantee defining problems? Are they looking at it through an institutional lens or an individual one?
• How much emphasis is the grantee’s work placing on individuals to solve institutional problems?
• How can the grantee help shift the paradigms in which the issues are situated so that women of color – and women more broadly – gain access to more power?

Funders and grantees who adopt this framework will be able to quickly see how it improves their analysis of public challenges and development of solutions—particularly in public policy and philanthropy.