

Commitment to Diversity Spring 2023

In the last update, we shared reflections and planning for the coming year—the first full year of programming since the impact of the Covid crisis. We are seeing that the work to provide more inclusive access to CRI programs has gained some traction, our efforts to advance equity in our community (e.g., rowers and staff) are progressing with positive momentum, and we are operating at a sustainable and healthy pace.

At the coming June meeting of the board of directors, we will discuss the measurement and metrics project that board members Christina Wood Baker, Kiz Sayed, and Fiona Walsh began last fall in collaboration with Executive Director Ted Benford. Over the winter, the group reviewed the four pillars of [CRI's Strategic Plan](#) and outlined ongoing and new measures to ensure we are meeting our intended impact. The group came up with a broad range of measures that incorporate operational metrics as well as intermediate and long-term outcomes. As information becomes more refined, it will be shared here more broadly. This information will help in the reporting of our impact, found [here](#).

In the meantime, we are seeing the initial impact of the revision of our programmatic focus—recall that in 2022, CRI provided our community free snacks for anyone coming to the boathouse, free transportation, and free programming in over 35 public schools and at the Harry Parker Boathouse for youth in the city of Boston. Included in this was the successful return of YETI to the Track at New Balance—over 1,200 BPS students from over 25 of our 35 partner schools attended—in short it was a [LOUD, fun and impressive event](#).

New for 2023, we've tracked every youth who has participated in a BPS middle school program and who has registered for spring or summer programs (all youth registrants now share their school name as part of program registrations). To date over 35 families have or will benefit from "Let's Row Scholarships" for on-water programs for middle school youth who participated in the Let's Row program in schools. Gathering both the school information that these young people attend along with contact information for the families will provide CRI the opportunity to provide

them the support to keep their kids rowing as they wish as well as deepen our connection with particularly active schools. Beyond programming in schools and at CRI, the work to overcome structural bias and cultural challenges among people who would not otherwise have the “background, experience, or ability” to row requires continuous inquiry and learning from those who are engaged by this opportunity. We are thrilled to see these families engaging with CRI and we look forward to learning how we can refine how we function, keep supporting diversity at CRI and hopefully embracing more youth and families into the CRI community.

We are pleased to share that CRI, Cambridge Boat Club, and Cambridge Public Schools have agreed to begin the Let’s Row Cambridge Middle School rowing program in 2023. This is a very exciting opportunity to bring the Let’s Row program to a community that is already engaged with both CRI and CBC. The program will function the same as the Let’s Row Middle School program—indoor school programs in middle school PE classes (free to the school), a trip to the Charles River either at CRI or CBC, and free participation in YETI. Below is an outline of the demographics of the youth we intend to serve through this program.

Cambridge Public Middle Schools demographics (as shared by the CPS website):

- 61.7% non-white
- 40.1% low-income/economically disadvantaged
- 31.4% first language non-english
- 24% have disabilities (the Let’s Row Cambridge program serves youth with disabilities, if schools wish)
- 55.3% have high needs

As of the timing of this update, 12% of the over 400+ young rowers registered for Summer Learn to Row and Summer Skills are youth from Cambridge. So, formalizing a program to teach rowing to youth from Cambridge Public Schools and offer them access to not one but two (!) rowing organizations to gain access to the sport and its benefits is very exciting.

On a different note, CRI was successful in sponsoring an O-1 visa for a Ukrainian refugee and his family. Anton Prodan was the president of the Kiev Rowing Federation, coach of multiple Olympians, and successfully served the sport of rowing for over 30 years when the current war broke out. For the past year, we have been working with Anton to bring him to CRI and are thrilled to have him here now as a full-time member of our coaching staff.

With regard to our spring update, as seen through a different lens, a way to look at our investment in the equity and inclusion initiatives is that CRI is a \$5m “rowing club” that has committed over \$1.2m in service to our community. In 2023, grant funded programs will account for approximately \$800K in cost for the [Let’s Row Middle School Programs](#), [RowBoston High School Program](#), [Para Programs](#), and [Military programs](#); CRI will provide our community \$200K in reduced cost or free programs (financial aid for non-grant funded programs); in addition to the CRI Fueling Station and transportation programming. **No other rowing club or rowing nonprofit we are aware of does work of this scope and scale in the world.**

The math is simple, the work is hard—the only means by which we maintain a balanced budget while implementing this approach to service to our community is through generous support from our community and funders. There is more we can do but we won’t advance programs without them meeting the fourth pillar of our strategic plan—financial sustainability. To speak with someone at CRI about our equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts, please feel free to reach [Ted Benford](#), Executive Director, or [Shawn Cote](#), Director of Development.