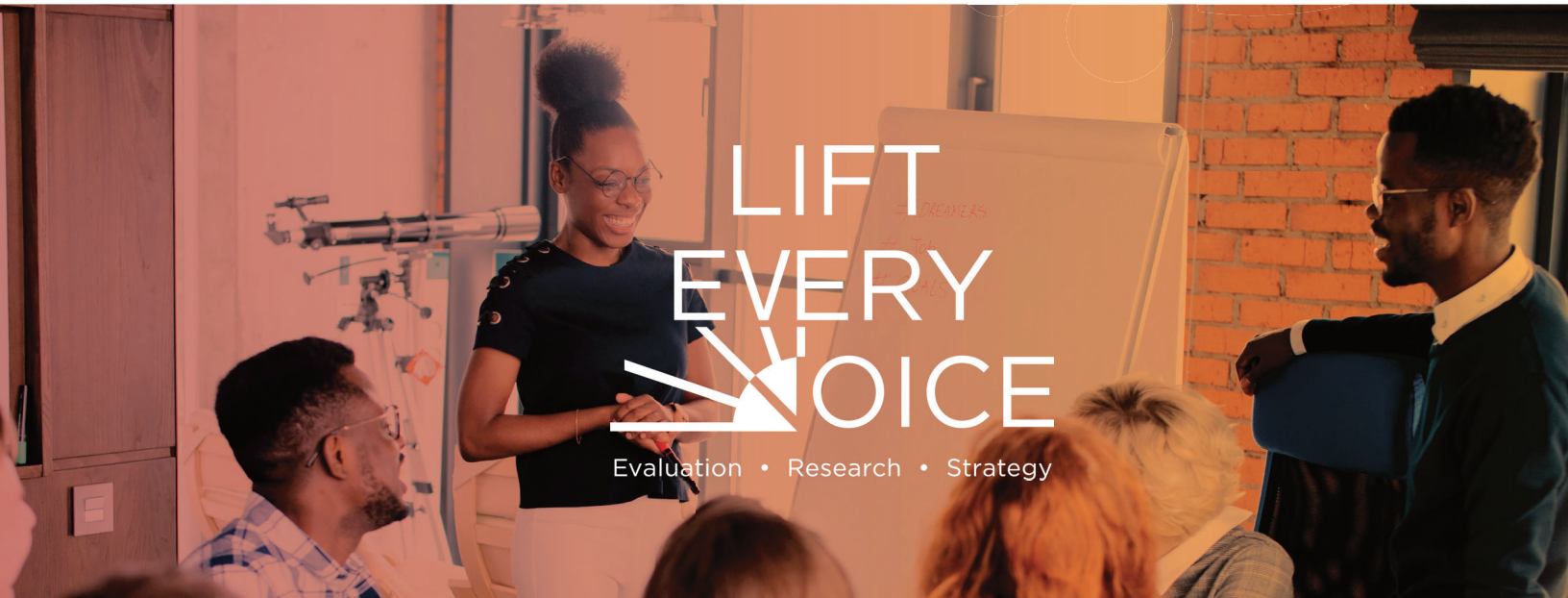
Limitless Possibilities

A Guide to Power Shifting Approaches in Philanthropy



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Executive Summary

When funders recognize, value, and elevate the power that communities and grant partners bring, their philanthropy can help ensure solutions have greater impact and lead to more sustainable social change – ultimately, advancing equity and justice globally. Across the world, organizations, groups, and communities working for social change hold power, particularly in the form of knowledge, skills, relationships, and access to community networks. This power positions them to lead the creation of solutions; address challenges facing humanity; and manifest visions of equitable, just, and flourishing communities and natural environments. To fully exercise this power, however, funders will have to shift their vision of it and how they apply it.

Shifting power means that funders change structures and processes within their organization that limit the power of grant partners and communities. Shifting power calls for a shift in mindset away from viewing power as vested only in institutions that provide resources, to the mindset that funders can create the conditions to exercise power with grant partners and communities. This "power with" notion exercises the power of funders, grant partners, and communities and emphasizes equitable partnerships. Funders, grant partners, and communities use their power together, in a more generative way, oriented toward mutuality and love for humanity and centered on building responsive relationships with groups and across partners (Just Associates, 2006; ORS Impact, 2022; Suarez, 2018). Shifting power is a global need and a global good that advances equity, justice, and impact for communities everywhere, especially Black, Indigenous, people of color, and other marginalized communities furthest from justice. To this end, this report is designed to equip leaders and staff in the philanthropic sector with information and resources that will help establish and strengthen shared practices for shifting power.

Funders just beginning or deepening a journey to shift power are not alone. They are part of a vibrant international movement across sectors — philanthropy, humanitarian aid, development, and government — that is building a critical mass of actors engaged in solutions-focused discourse and taking action to implement new ways of working to address power imbalances.

What the Report Contains

This report supports learning about power shifting approaches and efforts to ensure that learning feeds into strategy and grantmaking practices and other processes. The report aims are to better understand:

- The range of power shifting approaches, including key features, core practices, benefits, practice examples, and considerations for effective implementation.
- The changes in mindset, policies, processes, skills, and resources needed to use different power shifting approaches.
- The capacities needed to focus on equity, particularly racial equity, in the implementation of power shifting.

The report is informed by a scan of the literature and 25 interviews of foundations/donors, grant partners, and field experts[1]. Using data and information from the literature scan and interviews, we describe 24 power shifting approaches[2], present guidance on their implementation, and provide resources for further learning. Given that several power shifting approaches have similarities, to support usability, we have organized the approaches into three categories representing the main entry points for shifting power: Grantmaking, Power Building and Capacity Strengthening, and Strategy and Structural Shifts (see Table 1).

How to Start Shifting Power and Go Deeper: A Summary of Recommendations

At the beginning of the journey to embed power shifting approaches into their work, funders may want to implement power shifting approaches that require minimal structural changes. We recommend multiyear general operating support (MYGOS) that allows grant partners to make decisions about how to spend grant dollars, with the added benefit of consistent, reliable funding for two years or more. Oriented toward advancing justice and equity, a MYGOS grantmaking strategy plays a meaningful role in shifting power to communities (i.e., Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and groups that have been marginalized) that have been most impacted by systemic inequities globally. MYGOS grantmaking involves few grantmaking policy/practice shifts and less staff effort relative to other power shifting approaches. Funders who already offer MYGOS support can focus on expanding this approach across portfolios to go deeper in their journey to shift power. We recommend these components for embedding a MYGOS grantmaking strategy:

- Ensure practices and processes are in place to implement MYGOS across the foundation.
- Set a threshold for MYGOS grantmaking.
- Develop a public-facing commitment statement on MYGOS grantmaking.

Some power shifting approaches in this report involve more complex structural changes requiring more staff and monetary resources and flexibility in timelines, to allow for nonlinear planning processes and engaging people and groups in collaborative decision-making. Implementing an array of power shifting approaches also increases the complexity of a foundation's journey to shift power. Informed by the report findings, we recommend several core conditions be in place to facilitate shifting power when significant structural or process changes are necessary:

1 Additional information about the methods is provided in the Appendices.
2 This includes Trust-Based Philanthropy, Abundance Movement, and Decolonizing Aid movement, which may be viewed more as movements for power shifting than distinct approaches.

CONDITIONS RELATED TO MINDSET SHIFTS

- Ensuring leadership and staff training and capacity strengthening efforts around embedding diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice, incorporating power shifting topics and frames.
- Redefining what success means by allowing grant partners and communities to define success rather than the funder being the sole determiner of outcomes and impact metrics within specified (often unrealistic) timeframes.
- Having a culture open to experiencing failures, which involves redefining risk, incentivizing pilots, and not penalizing staff and grant partners when anticipated outcomes are not achieved.
- Emphasizing staff diversity and inclusion in the organization's culture and structural shift efforts.

CONDITIONS RELATED TO OPERATIONS

- Creating pathways for staff to invest more time to deepen connections and relationships and build trust with grant partners, other actors, and communities.
- Reviewing and modifying implementation timeframes to ensure timeframes are flexible and responsive to the needs of power shifting processes.
- Developing program budget policies and practices that enable a range of resources to support power shifting (e.g., technical assistance, convening spaces for peer exchange, and language interpretation services).

It is hoped that these recommendations support work that will bridge funders' commitment to shifting power and action that spurs new and sustainable practices.

TABLE 1:

Organization of the Eight Power Shifting Approaches Profiles

PROFILE NAME	POWER SHIFTING APPROACHES
GRANTMAKING APPROACHES	
Multiyear General Operating Support	• Multiyear general operating support • Multiyear support • Unrestricted support or core support • General operating support
Funding for Under-Resourced Organizations Most Proximate to Local Communities	• Funding and shifting power to intermediaries and grant partners that are proximate to and advised by local communities. • Prioritize funding organizations historically and currently experiencing barriers to equitable funding. • Fund consulting firms/organizations comprised of staff who reflect the communities served.
POWER BUILDING AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING APPROACHES	
Power Building	• Power Building
Evaluation Focused	• Culturally responsive evaluation • Culturally responsive and equitable evaluation • Participatory evaluation • Rural participatory appraisal
STRATEGY AND STRUCTURAL SHIFT APPROACHES	
Participatory Grantmaking	• Participatory grantmaking • Co-creation of strategies • Co-creation of outcomes
Trust-Based Philanthropy	• Trust-based philanthropy
Strategies for Using Foundation's Wealth and Influence to Shift Power	• Use influence and leadership to catalyze power sharing in the field • Use the foundation's financial capital to share power
Equitable Partnerships in the Global South	• Locally led, locally owned development and Localization • Decolonizing development, aid, and peace-building movement • Community philanthropy • Asset-based approach • People-centered development

How To Read This Report

This report is organized into four main parts:

1 INTRODUCTION

The Introduction provides information about why shifting power is important to creating solutions for social change. It offers an understanding of how shifting power is defined in this report and explains the background of the impetus for this report and the report aims.

2 POWER SHIFTING AND RACIAL EQUITY

The Power Shifting and Racial Equity section provides more in-depth information about the racial equity frame applied in the approaches in the profiles.

3 GUIDE TO POWER SHIFTING APPROACHES

The Guide to Power Shifting Approaches section describes the three main categories of power shifting approaches used in this report. It provides a content overview of the eight profiles.

Eight Power Shifting Approaches Profiles — Organized by profile name, the Eight Power Shifting Approaches Profiles section examines what it will take to embed these approaches, benefits, examples of practices, conditions to which the approaches are particularly well suited, and other considerations for embedding power shifting approaches. It offers key questions to guide practice and resources. For ease of navigability, each profile is hyperlinked in the Table of Contents and the corresponding table or figure.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations to funders for advancing power shifting in their organizations.

Definitions of the 24 power sharing approaches, resources, and the references for literature and materials can be found in the Appendices.

1 Introduction

Introduction

When funders recognize, value, and elevate the power that communities[1] and grant partners bring, their philanthropy can help ensure solutions have greater impact and lead to more sustainable social change – ultimately, advancing equity and justice globally. Across the world, organizations, groups, and communities working for social change hold power, particularly in the form of knowledge, skills, relationships, and access to community networks. This power positions them to lead the creation of solutions; address challenges facing humanity; and manifest visions of equitable, just, and flourishing communities and natural environments. To fully exercise this power, however, funders will have to shift their vision of it and how they apply it. Too many entities who receive resources from philanthropy experience funders exercising their power with a "power over" orientation, where funders use their wealth and power to "set the rules and control access to resources, information, social networks, and decision-making" (National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy [NCRP], 2018). They experience philanthropy as extractive because many funders have used their power to exploit community knowledge and gain access to grant partner and community relationships and networks to benefit the funder's influence. The resulting power imbalance diminishes and discounts the power of organizations and communities to bring their voice and agency to drive the solutions needed to realize visions for global social change (The Partnering Initiative [TPI], 2018). Importantly, this power imbalance yields missed opportunities for philanthropy worldwide to make its best contributions toward realizing visions for the future. This report provides guidance to philanthropy with limitless possibilities for disrupting power imbalances through shifting power.

What does it mean for a funder to shift power?

Shifting power means that funders change structures and processes within their organization to avoid limiting the power of grant partners and communities. The notion of grant partners and community members as holding power of their own differs from notions of power grounded in a western-colonial perspective that emphasizes the domination and control-over aspects of power. An example of a more expansive notion of power is natural collective power, particularly relevant to marginalized groups who are often labeled as in need of empowerment. In his speech "We Are Power" at the opening session of the Gathering in 1980, American Indian Movement co-founder John Trudell emphasized that Indigenous people possess power through their connection to the earth:

> We are a spiritual connection to the earth. As individuals we have power and, collectively, we have the same power as the earthquake, the tornado, and the hurricanes. We have that potential. We have that connection (Trudell, 1980).

1 Community refers to those places and people that are the intended beneficiaries of funding efforts. Community may be a specific geographical area at the sub-national level or a group that is impacted by a particular issue area that is not limited to a specific geographical area. Community is distinguished from grant partners because community members may be those served by the grantee organization. Community members may have a more direct connection with the funder based on the approaches used. We acknowledge this term may have limitations.

This notion of power emphasizes the inherent power people and communities have through the knowledge that comes from and their relationship with the land, their ancestors, and one another. When philanthropy uses its power differently, it trusts grant partners and communities as collaborators who can amplify the reach of resources to better apply and deploy them. This allows collaborators the opportunity to best utilize the power they already have.

It follows then that shifting power calls for a mindset shift away from viewing power as only vested in institutions that provide resources, toward a mindset that funders can create the conditions to exercise power with grant partners and communities who hold significant power of their own. The "power with" notion of exercising power centers the power of grant partners and communities and emphasizes equitable partnerships. Funders, grant partners, and communities use their power together, in a more generative way, oriented toward mutuality and love for humanity and centered on building responsive relationships with groups and across partners (Just Associates, 2006; ORS Impact, 2022; Suarez, 2018). Philanthropy's role in recognizing, valuing, and elevating the full spectrum of power that communities bring is key to shifting power in the sector to advance equity and justice for marginalized communities in the Global South[2], U.S., and other Global North countries. Shifting power is a global need and a global good that advances equity, justice, and impact for communities everywhere.

USE OF POWER SHIFTING APPROACHES IN PHILANTHROPY IS NOT NEW, BUT EXPANDING

Increasingly, funders are exploring and taking action to embed power shifting approaches within their organization and across funder collaboratives. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and a global racial reckoning in recent years, a highly visible discourse has emerged around changing funder practices to address longstanding inequities that have been created and sustained by power imbalances. However, power shifting approaches in philanthropy are not new, and today, funders can draw on a wide range of lessons learned, as highlighted in this report. For example, the Global Fund for Community Foundations has played a significant role in articulating what it means to shift power, particularly in the Global South development context and advancing discourse through #ShiftThePower. #ShiftThePower represents "people and organizations seeking to tip the balance of power in the development sector towards a fairer and more equitable people-centered development model" (ShiftThePower, 2023). #ShiftThePower has mobilized funders, activists, researchers, and other allies to contribute to thinking and action that recognizes the power grassroots and other local actors have. #ShiftThePower provides a platform to share new behaviors, mindsets, and ways of working that are relevant to work in marginalized communities in the Global South and the Global North.

One important contribution of this report is the inclusion of information and resources from both a U.S. and global context, bridging together information and insights that are often siloed. The important point to remember is that funders just beginning or deepening a journey to shift power are not alone. They are part of a vibrant international movement across sectors — philanthropy, humanitarian aid, development, and government — that is building a critical mass of actors engaged in solutions-focused discourse and taking action to implement new ways of working to address power imbalances.

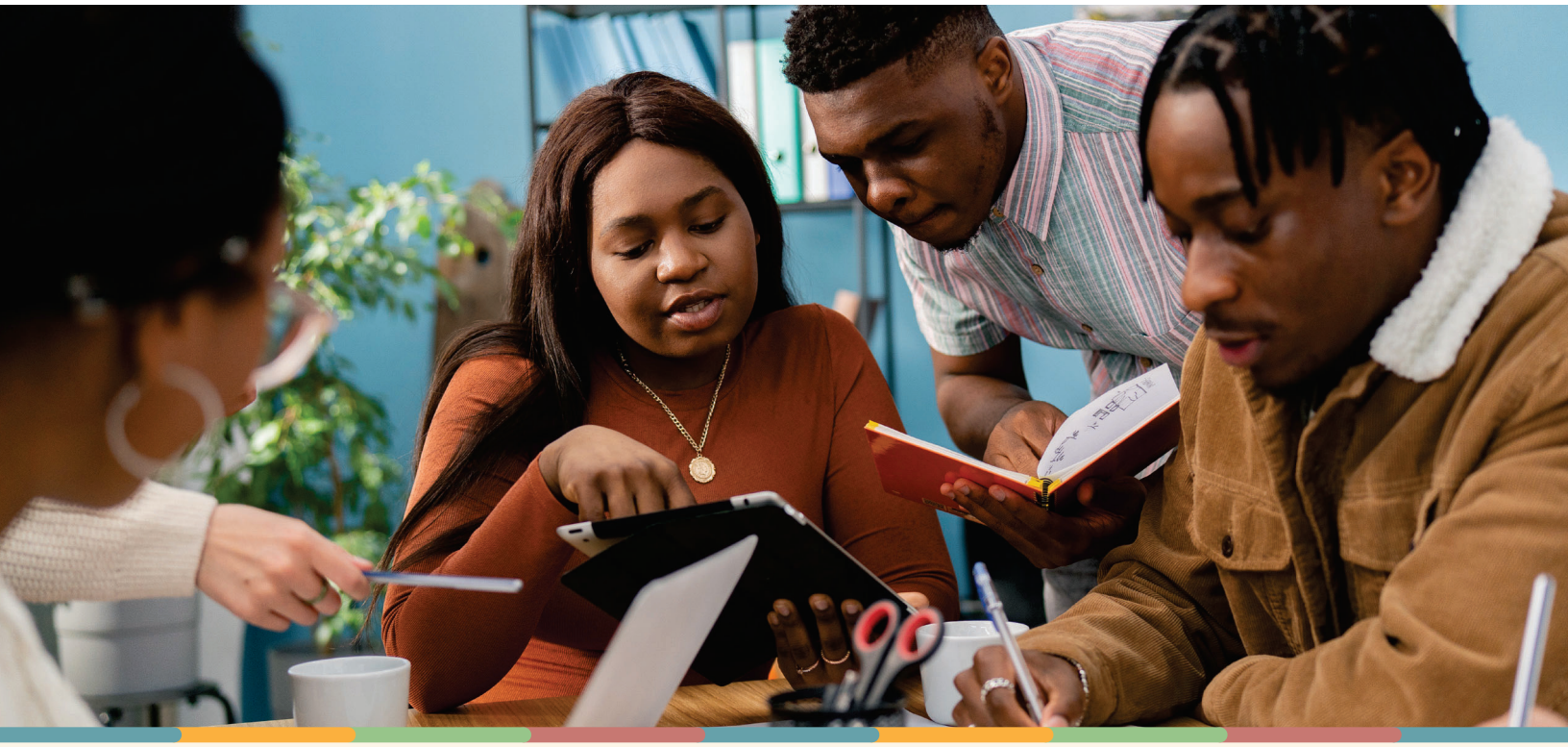
2 Refers to low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized countries, broadly in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. The phrase emphasizes geopolitical relationships of power from the legacies of colonialism and imperialism rather than development or cultural difference (Dados & Conwell, 2012; Royal Geography Society, n.d.).

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic and racial reckoning following the killing of George Floyd further exposed the deeply embedded systemic injustices and inequities in our society. These crises contributed to shifting attitudes toward philanthropy and intensified debates about the power imbalance between funders and grant partners, highlighting impacted communities and those who have historically been under-resourced and/or excluded.

In response, in June 2020, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Board of Trustees committed to advancing justice and equity through their work. Although Packard Foundation staff had been using power sharing approaches to some extent in their work, Trustees and staff acknowledged a need to better understand "power sharing" as a way to advance justice and equity. In spring 2022, the Foundation commissioned our team to unpack the concept of power sharing, identify the range of power sharing approaches used in philanthropy, and identify ways to deepen their practice. Insights were used to deepen the Foundation's collective understanding of power sharing and knowledge gaps and to inform the development of future shared grantmaking practices.

Early in the work with the Packard Foundation, several other funders expressed interest in learning about this topic, specifically how to operationalize power sharing, and interest in sharing findings with the philanthropic field more broadly. As such, in 2023, with funding from the Barr Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, we started working on a field facing report addressing power imbalances between funders and grant partners. Building on the original project commissioned by the Packard Foundation, the new work explicitly incorporated a racial equity lens and the voices of grant partners. We also broadened the spectrum of approaches for addressing power imbalances from power sharing to power shifting approaches. As a more all-encompassing term, power shifting helps represent the spectrum of practice orientations for addressing power imbalances.



Report Aims

This report supports learning about power shifting approaches and efforts to ensure that learning feeds into strategy and grantmaking practices. The report aims are to better understand:

- The range of power shifting approaches, including key features, core practices, benefits, practice examples, and considerations for effective implementation.
- The changes in mindset, policies, processes, skills, and resources needed to use different power shifting approaches.
- The capacities needed to focus on equity, particularly racial equity, in the implementation of power shifting.

The report is informed by a scan of the literature and 25 interviews of foundations/donors (11), grant partners (7), and field experts (7). Additional information about the methods is provided in the Appendices.

This new contribution to the field equips leaders and staff in the philanthropic sector with information and resources that will help establish and strengthen shared practices for power shifting. While this report is focused on the philanthropic audience, we hope that grant partners, community members, and other constituencies will also find the guidance in this report helpful for their efforts to amplify power shifting.

Limitations

There are a few points to keep in mind as you read this report:

- While we identified 24 power shifting approaches, we recognize that our list may not be exhaustive and inclusive of all approaches or the various frameworks and models that may fall under particular approaches. Exploring the various resources, we provide for additional learning that will help readers go deeper.
- While we incorporated the voice of grant partners, unfunded groups, community members, and other types of partners are not included. These are important voices, and we hope that future research on power shifting approaches will include these perspectives.
- The literature scan was completed in 2022. Though we have attempted to include more literature, when possible, more recent writing and materials may not be reflected.
- We only reviewed literature in English. The report does not capture literature published in other languages, particularly in languages predominantly spoken in the Global South.

2

Power Shifting and Racial Equity

Power Shifting and Racial Equity

We use a racial equity frame in this report to elevate the important role of shifting power for advancing racial equity: eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) people through the transformation of policy, practices, systems, and structures (Race Forward, 2023). Dismantling power imbalances and shifting power to grant partners and community members are essential to transforming racially inequitable policies, practices, systems, and structures.

Using a racial equity frame requires us to first acknowledge history and context to understand the crucial relationship between race, power, and philanthropy. Race is the basis of a socially constructed hierarchy that has served to privilege white people and marginalize, devalue, and disenfranchise BIPOC communities (W.K. Kellogg Foundation [WKKF], n.d.). Other identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, and ability, also inform the organization of this hierarchy. However, race has consistently been a driving force in the U.S., taking precedence in assigning status, allocating resources, and distributing power. Structural and systemic racism works to maintain social hierarchies based on race and ensure those at the top have the greatest ability to exercise and amass power (Cunningham et al., 2014). Too often, this ability has been used to dominate groups and create and maintain inequitable policies, systems, and structures. For example, reservations, Jim Crow laws, redlining, and the criminal justice system have served to marginalize BIPOC communities, perpetuate power imbalances, and further entrench inequities (powell, 2012).

In the global context, other identities, such as gender or religion, may drive socially constructed hierarchies and take precedence in assigning status, allocating resources, and distributing power. Yet, race remains salient because of the pervasiveness of racism in the fabric of systems and structures globally. Racist ideology was used to rationalize and fuel the activities of colonialism — dominating political and economic structures, taking indigenous land, and extracting human and natural resources — which required the construction of policies, practices, and institutions that maintained racial inequity. Racism and the construction of racially inequitable systems and structures have essentially served as blueprints for perpetuating and maintaining all forms of oppression. Similarly, our racial equity analysis in this report, though centered on race, is a framework for addressing all forms of oppression.

The philanthropic sector has benefited from and perpetuated racial inequities through its wealth accumulation and operational and grantmaking practices. Even the roots of philanthropic wealth can be traced back to the extraction and exploitation of Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities, resources, and land (Grantmakers for Effective Organizations [GEO], 2021; Justice Funders, 2019). Today, racial inequity continues to be evident in philanthropy through the people foundations hire, the entities they fund, and how their funding works. Almost all foundation CEOs or chief governance officers are white (86%), and 69% of full-time foundation staff identify as white (Council on Foundations, 2022). Furthermore, BIPOC-led, BIPOC-serving organizations traditionally receive less funding compared to white organizations. For example, Black-led organizations continue to be underfunded and subject to "philanthropic redlining," i.e., Black-led organizations have access to less funding, raise less money, and have smaller endowments compared to white-led organizations (Azenabor et al., 2023; Batten, 2016).

In the global context, the people donors hire, the entities they fund, and how their funding works has long been regarded as replicating colonial power dynamics that generally result in funding inequities and little agency for local actors and communities. The discourse on decolonizing development, aid, and peace building has focused on "the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies regarding the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches" (Cull et al., 2018) and discussions about the role of race and structural racism has generally been held in academic circles (Peace Direct, 2021). As the Black Lives Matter movement intensified globally, following the death of George Floyd in 2020, the movement to decolonize development and aid has accelerated, along with calls to focus on racism and structural racism as root causes and drivers of inequities in the current donor landscape. Efforts to advance anti-racism and dismantle structural racism are viewed as inextricably connected to addressing power imbalances.

In light of this history and context, it is clear that centering race and anti-racism are core to disrupting power imbalances between funders, grant partners, and communities served. This history and context help illuminate why advancing racial equity may not be the only goal, though it is a common goal among funders planning and implementing power shifting. We also acknowledge the expanding work in philanthropy that is explicitly focused on moving toward racial justice and liberation (e.g., reparative philanthropy, restorative economics). In these efforts, racial equity can be viewed as a crucial process with measurable outcomes on the path to realizing visions for racial justice and liberation (Race Forward, 2023). Power shifting using a racial equity lens can inform these efforts. In this report, we discuss racial equity as both an outcome of power shifting and a lens to guide the implementation of power shifting approaches.

Shifting Power in Our Language

In this report, we aim to use language that is strength based, non-stigmatizing, and bias free. We also aim to eliminate terms that replicate extractive and colonizing narratives. For example, we have avoided use of the term stakeholder, which is particularly problematic for Indigenous peoples in the North American context. Rather than stakeholders, Indigenous peoples in North America are rights and title owners (Indigenous Corporate Training, 2017). Also, the word stakeholder has a violent connotation for tribes and Indian organizations[1] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). We have replaced stakeholder with this language: "grant partners," "other partner organizations," and "the community." We also use the terms "those most impacted" or "those most affected." We use the term capacity strengthening instead of capacity building except when quoting interviewees or documenting a resource.

As recommended in the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's Power Moves guide, we have replaced "grantees" with "grant partner" as this term "challenges the top-down power dynamic that defines nonprofits primarily as recipients rather than as collaborators with their funders" (NCRP, 2018). "Grant partners" may be viewed as language that is more aspirational. Using this language may help change narratives and spur actions that will make the grant partner label a reality.

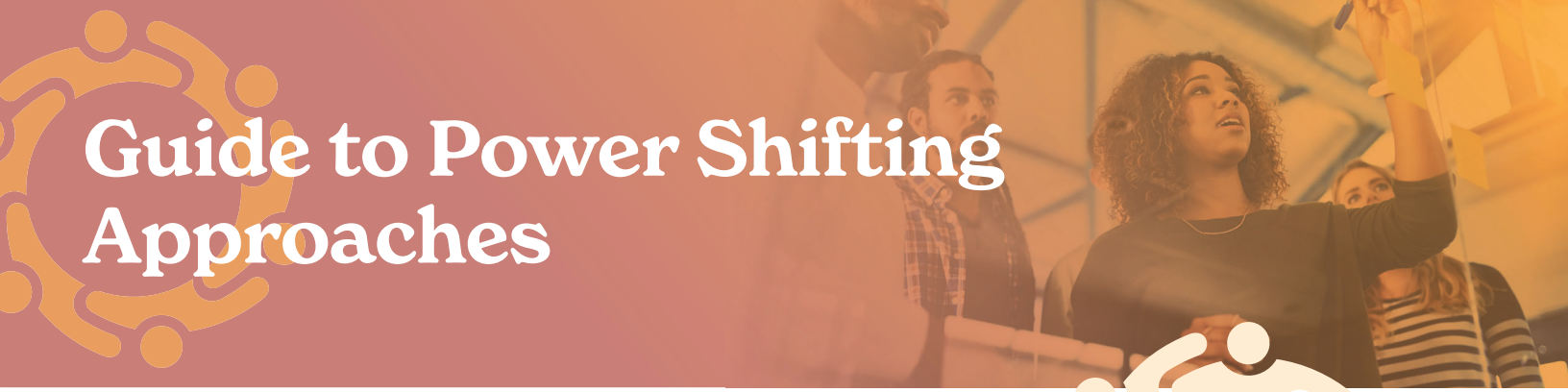
The term BIPOC refers to groups of people and organizations focused on, led by, and/or serving Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. While this term is helpful when describing experiences common across all BIPOC groups, its use may diminish the unique experiences of any one group. Some observations about power shifting approaches in the literature and the interviews are about a specific BIPOC group. Where possible, we lift up that specific BIPOC group to maintain the intention of the insight offered. We also indicate where the insight is applicable to other groups who have been marginalized.

1 White settlers' literal use of stakes to hold or lay claim to Indigenous land involved violent conflict and the loss of Indigenous land.

3

Guide to Power Shifting Approaches

Guide to Power Shifting Approaches



Overview

Using data and information from the literature scan and interviews, we describe 24 power shifting approaches.[1] Given that several power shifting approaches have similarities and to support usability, we have organized the approaches into three categories representing the main entry points for shifting power: grantmaking, power building and capacity strengthening, and strategy and structural shifts.

Grantmaking

These approaches offer funding flows that provide grant partners more agency in how they use funding. These approaches also focus on grantmaking operations, processes, and practices that move funding to intermediaries and grant partners most proximate to communities most impacted, with an orientation toward equitable engagement with all partners.

Power Building and Capacity Strengthening

These approaches advance the individual and collective ability of the communities most impacted to organize, elevate, and act on their priorities, influence decisions and decision-makers, lead and own the work, evaluate efforts with agency, and hold the people and institutions in power accountable.

Strategy and Structural Shifts

These approaches involve more expansive structural and process shifts. This includes leadership from and collaborative decision-making with grant partners, impacted communities, and other partners supporting the work in strategy design, implementation, and resource allocation. Some approaches involve ways philanthropy can be more accountable to the public more broadly.

Furthermore, the power shifting approaches that are more closely related are profiled together. This report includes eight profiles (as illustrated in the executive summary, Table 1). Each profile includes other information key to understanding how the field is defining and practicing power shifting. Table 2 shows the specific content included in the profiles. The profiles also include illustrative quotes from the interviews. A list of power shifting definitions and a complete listing of the resources are provided in the Appendices.

1 This includes trust-based philanthropy, Abundance Movement, and Decolonizing Aid movements, which may be viewed more as movements or frameworks for power shifting rather than distinct approaches.

TABLE 2:

Profile Contents

CONTENT AREA	DESCRIPTION
Definition	Defines the power shifting approach(es) included in the profile.
Foundational elements	Describes the key features of the power shifting approach that lay the foundation for practice.
What will it take to embed these approaches?	Details the core practices needed to implement the approach.
Benefits	Summarizes ways the power shifting approach(es) benefit the funder, the grant partners, the beneficiaries (e.g., frontline communities), the philanthropic sector, and/or society.
Examples of practice	Describes one or more examples of outcomes observed by peer funders.
Under what conditions do these approaches work best?	Explains the situations in which the power shifting approach may be best suited.
Other considerations	Outlines additional considerations for effective implementation.
Key questions	Provides key questions that can be used to guide practice.
Resources	Provides a list of hyperlinked resources to support implementation.

Multiyear General Operating Support

Definition

The multiyear general operating support profile represents these related approaches to shifting power:

- Multiyear general operating support.
- Multiyear support.
- Unrestricted or core support.
- General operating support.

These approaches include multiyear support, defined as a consistent contract or grant funding for 24 months or more. These approaches also include flexible support in the form of general operating support or unrestricted project support. General operating support provides grant partners the ability to cover administrative and operational costs that project-specific budgets rarely allow. Unrestricted or core support provides grant partners agency in determining how they will resource a specific project. Flexible support generally involves less programmatic and budget oversight from Program Officers and other staff.

> "When you have general operating support, you have a way of supporting people on the hierarchy of their needs so that you can get to the mission issues that you want to support...That's my experience with general operating support, it kind of takes the yoke off." — Hector Sanchez-Flores, National Compadres Network

Foundational elements

The combination of both multiyear and general operating support (MYGOS) comprehensively shifts power, as MYGOS provide grant partners with reliable funding and the autonomy to make their own decisions about how money should be spent in their organization. MYGOS are often combined with the use of other approaches to shift power. For example, MYGOS are used to increase more flexible, reliable support for power building organizations and/or as part of a strategy to reduce disparities in funding to under-resourced organizations. Historically, BIPOC-led organizations in the U.S. have received less MYGOS funding and other unrestricted assets (e.g., endowments) compared to their white-led counterparts (Azenabor et al., 2023). At the root of these funding gaps are biases that privilege white-led organizations and diminish the value of BIPOC-led organizations, even for those organizations focused on addressing problems in the communities they serve. Consequently, BIPOC-led organizations face more barriers to sustaining and growing their work, including the lack of resources for financial management and infrastructure for performance management and evaluation (GEO, 2022). These patterns exist for organizations led by people at the intersections of other marginalized identities globally. MYGOS funding that is focused on expanding resources to under-resourced organizations can be a core grantmaking strategy for funders with goals to advance racial equity, racial justice, inclusion, and anti-racism.

> "Some programmatic grants really don't make a lot of sense if you think about the ones that are very strict and very specific because you're going to have to change your program depending on the people that you're working with, depending on the time, like the current environment. There's just so many different things that are gonna have to change." —U.S. Nonprofit Leader

What will it take to embed these approaches?

Grantmaking using MYGOS may mean changes to application and reporting procedures, forms, and tools used to engage with and hear from grant partners. Though MYGOS funding does not require funders to make substantial structural shifts, funder mindset shifts oriented toward grant partner trust and dismantling biases against providing MYGOS funding for BIPOC-led and other traditionally under-resourced organizations are important. When providing MYGOS funding, funders can reduce grant partner burden by limiting the frequency and amount of reporting. This will provide grant partners more time to use toward achieving their mission.

Core practices include providing open and honest guidance to grant partners about what the funder can provide them, with clear and responsive communication. This includes being transparent about what the foundation will initially support and any changes that may arise in the process. This transparency cultivates trust between the funder and grant partners. This process may include developing positive and non-retaliatory feedback loops that can strengthen trust over time, which may increase the likelihood that the grant partner will receive MYGOS support in the future. Deepening relationships fosters open, candid conversations and reporting from grant partners and diminishes grant partners feeling pressured to align their reporting with grantmakers' learning needs (PEAK, 2020).

> "We weren't having the conversations that we normally do, like 'where are we on this scope of work?' It was much more organic. And we could be totally clear about what we didn't anticipate. Then we're pivoting and adding time from other people with the right skill sets because the resources are a little bit more flexible. That was much more liberating for the work we wanted to accomplish." — Hector Sanchez-Flores, National Compadres Network

The use of these practices primarily involves the grantmaking team; however, support from leadership strengthens efforts to embed MYGOS across the organization. As a whole, the foundation leaders use their influence internally to establish a durable infrastructure for providing multiyear operating support. Leadership buy-in and support help staff feel encouraged to use MYGOS and have the operational tools for execution (Buteau et al., 2020). The board and leadership lay the foundation for facilitating

shared practices through new supported policies—particularly budget policy—that can be ingrained into institutional decisions. The commitment to this process is a key capability that facilitates the ability of Program Officers to develop the relationships and processes needed to effectively award MYGOS grants. BIPOC nonprofit leaders we interviewed mentioned that Program Officers with lived experience in their community facilitated relationship building and trust in ways they had not experienced with other Program Officers. Leaders can champion and facilitate the development of hiring policies that embed diversity, inclusion, and belonging practices to support MYGOS grantmaking practices.

Grantmaking using MYGOS involves focusing on the organizational health of grant partner organizations. Funders can be more responsive to the organizational needs of grant partners by attending to how MYGOS are structured and integrating supports to complement MYGOS funding. For example, one nonprofit leader we interviewed shared the importance of MYGOS funding "baking in" cost-of-living and/or inflation adjustments instead of providing only flat funding over multiple years. Another nonprofit leader discussed the value of funders providing access to technical assistance, based on needs identified by the grant partner, and allowing the grant partner to select the technical assistance consultant.

> "Foundations know how much inflation is, and they're able to adjust their costs. I wish they would pass that consideration on to us." — Hector Sanchez-Flores, National Compadres Network

Benefits

Offering MYGOS support aids grant partners in making decisions that are best for their organization. Strengthening funded organizations can lead to positive outcomes for the community served. Other benefits include:

- **Increasing the opportunity to develop grant partner sustainability by allowing them to make mistakes and learn while still maintaining fiscal health** (TCC Group, 2017)**.** With MYGOS, grant partners find ways to improve and evolve with the breathing room of flexible funding. The MYGOS approach "creates space for innovation and risk-taking and allows nonprofits the time to develop, evaluate, and improve programs that address systemic and complex social issues" (Buteau et al., 2020).
- **Allowing grant partners to be nimble and responsive to community needs, especially when situations warrant an immediate response.** As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, communities benefit when organizations serving them can quickly respond to emergent community needs without the rigidity of traditional grantmaking approaches.
- **Support that is two years or more indicates to a community that philanthropies are looking to invest in them for the long term.** This is one way that multiyear funding and MYGOS acknowledge the expertise grant partners bring to the table while advancing the building of community trust and relationship development.

- **Giving grant partners the chance to prioritize the work over annual fund development.** The time nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) spend pursuing traditional funding opportunities takes away from the time they could spend concentrating on their issue areas and focus communities. MYGOS allows them space to make more investments internally and have a greater impact on their issue areas and affected communities.

> "[Multiyear general operating support] allowed us to really identify what we felt like were the most pressing needs for our community and things that just wouldn't be funded normally. It allowed us to explore that area more without feeling the pressure of will they be okay with this or is this something that they would consider funding in the future? And I think that really let us flourish a lot more because there was no pressure. There was no expectation about how this funding would be used because they knew we were part of the community and we were meeting with our community and we were trying to be as responsive as possible."
>
> — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

- **Improving recruitment, reducing burnout, and increasing retention with the availability of funds to invest in their staff.** MYGOS provides grant partners with more resources to increase employee benefits and support participation in professional development and training. The consistent funding also allows nonprofits to have a strong and reliable balance sheet, which helps them recruit top talent.

> "You're preventing burnout. You're supporting your values so that you're promoting from within. All of these things that require you to build a more leaderful culture have to be funded and that's the general operating support." — Mayra E. Alvarez, The Children's Partnership

Example of practice

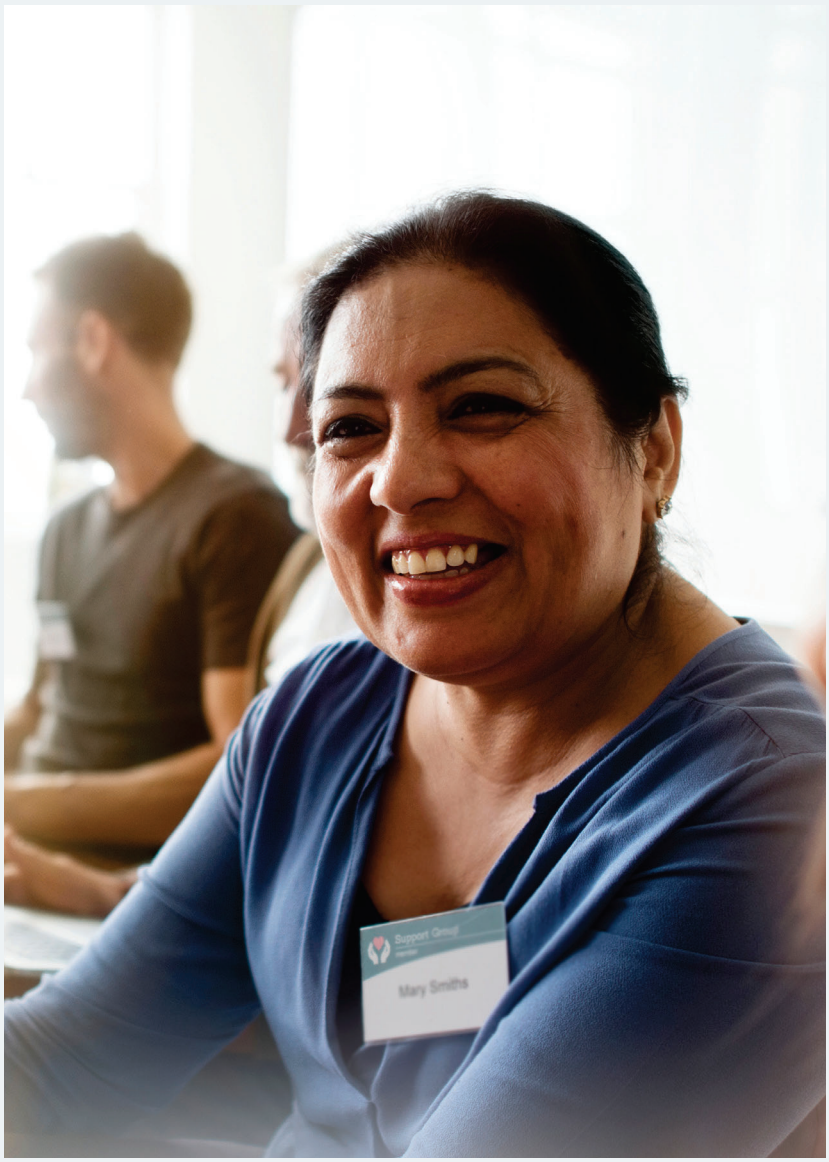
The Ford Foundation's BUILD initiative provides multiyear, flexible support to strengthen the long-term capacity and sustainability of social justice organizations around the world working to advance equality and justice. BUILD's developmental evaluation findings show that the provision of multi-year, unrestricted funding and other supports (e.g., convenings and technical assistance) led to improved programming and impact especially in the area of increased organizational and financial resilience. For example, 91% of BUILD grant partners indicated that BUILD's support for institutional strengthening contributed to their ability to achieve mission impact (Bisiaux et al., 2022).

Under what conditions do these approaches work best?

- When the grant partner has high mission and strategy alignment with the funder. Even though the grant partner has more autonomy in how the funds are used, the funder can still achieve its broader strategy goals. If there is low mission or strategy alignment, the funder may choose to provide a multiyear grant that is restricted. For example, the funder's strategy may have high alignment with the strategies of a particular team or contact from the organization but not with the organization's overarching strategy. In this case, a core support grant that flows unrestricted funds to a specific program area of the organization may ensure both spending autonomy and strategy alignment.
- When the strategy is known to be multiyear and funders can invest the time needed to build and deepen relationships.
- When budget-based payouts represent the foundation's budgeting structure. Budget-based payouts create more flexibility and opportunity to fund MYGOS and the related approaches (M. Blair Pearlman, personal communication, September 7, 2022).

Other considerations

- Building relationships is important, funders can exert intentional effort to be cognizant of who they may be privileging or leaving out of their networks. Intentional efforts are needed to ensure that under-resourced and overlooked groups are considered for MYGOS opportunities. BIPOC-led organizations, smaller organizations, and grassroot groups may be most in need of investment. Efforts can include reaching out to BIPOC networks and other practices outlined in the funding under-resourced organizations proximate to local communities profile.
- Even though MYGOS requires relatively low effort, best practices entail that funders adopt this practice when they can fully invest in the practices (e.g., time and effort to revise application forms and the development of thoughtful, open, and authentic relationships with grant partners).
- A funder's inability to follow through with multiyear commitments will erode grant partner trust and have negative effects on a grant partners' budget. MYGOS requires budget procedures that are calibrated for multiyear allocations, to ensure the annual payouts will generate necessary funding for potential commitments. Planning for cost-of-living and inflation increases will support the grant partner's organizational health.
- Funders help shape new dynamics of interaction that elevate the agency of grant partners. Not all funder requests are explicit, and Program Officers should examine their communications to ensure that grant partners have genuine autonomy with their MYGOS funding. Funders may shift their curiosity when checking in with grant partners, replacing questions about how money is used with questions such as these: What are you learning about in the work? What else is coming up for you?



Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RACIAL EQUITY/EQUITY IMPACT

- What is our current relationship with BIPOC-led organizations? Organizations led by other marginalized groups?
- Is there equity in who we award MYGOS? Are we privileging particular organizations? Are we identifying organizations who are in most need or would most benefit from MYGOS and how do we know?

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT PLANNING FOR MYGOS GRANTMAKING

- What are the goals that we want to accomplish with these funds? How will MYGOS or other flexible, reliable funding approaches support these goals?
- Do we have sustainable funding that allow us to guarantee additional years of funding?
- What practices are needed to start or expand MYGOS funding (e.g., ensuring adequate time and effort to revise application forms and build open, authentic relationships with grant partners)?

LEARN MORE

Capturing General Operating Support Effectiveness: An Evaluation Framework for Funders and Evaluators

This report provides general operating-support-related resources oriented to evaluation learning, foundation readiness, and decision-tree tools.

Trust-Based Philanthropy Project Resources

This page has general resources related to trust-based philanthropy, including MYGOS. Resources include Examples of unrestricted grant agreements.

Funding for Under-Resourced Organizations Proximate to Local Communities

Definition

Funding under-resourced organizations proximate to local communities represents three interrelated approaches to shifting power:

- Prioritize funding to BIPOC-led organizations and organizations led by other marginalized groups historically and/or currently experiencing barriers to equitable funding.
- Fund and shift power to grant partners and intermediaries that are proximate to and advised by local communities.
- Fund consulting firms/organizations comprised of staff who reflect the communities served.

Under-resourced organizations are organizations that experience inequitable funding relative to peer/other organizations with similar missions. Funding under-resourced organizations is about providing resources to organizations that have deep, durable relationships and shared lived experience with the communities they serve but endure systemic barriers to funding and other supports. Prioritizing funding and shifting practice to fund these organizations in a sustained way is key to dismantling these funding inequities (Lief, 2020).

Foundational elements

Under-resourced organizations rooted in the communities they serve experience structural inequities that restrict their access to equitable grant and contract funding. These structural inequities are evident in both the Global South and the U.S. context, commonly arising from deeply ingrained narratives shaped by the legacies of racism and colonialism. These narratives fuel bias at the individual and grantmaking process levels and diminish the value of culturally rooted solutions and BIPOC leadership, elevate white/Global North expertise, and privilege better networked and/or well-resourced organizations with the capacity to navigate complex application and reporting processes. When organizations are chronically under-resourced, their ability to access future funding and sustain their work becomes more challenging and stressful. Mindset shifts are fundamental to helping funders address their biases, including organizational culture change that facilitates respecting and valuing the strengths and assets that BIPOC-led organizations and other organizations led by marginalized groups bring. Prioritizing the funding of these organizations also means funders view them as able to carry out their work with the infusion of equitable funding and other supports.

> "Organizations, both at the community level or national level, are rarely given the license to candidly share the struggles that lead to failures with the opportunity to turn around and say, if we were to do this over again, these were the things that we would change. This is what we learned from our not just from success but from the struggle. In the predominantly white tech sector, failure is seen as a virtue. In marginalized communities, organizations run by people of color, it seems like failure can be a catastrophic problem... I wish that failure is allowed as it is in other sectors to allow for innovation and refinement.
> —Hector Sanchez-Flores, National Compadres Network

Sometimes funding intermediaries may be the best pathway to flowing funds to organizations and groups proximate to local communities. Shifting power may look different depending on the type of intermediary. It is important to treat intermediaries as full grant partners, with attention to their true costs and resourcing their organizational needs so they can be properly equipped to provide services to their local partners. It is vital that funders ensure that any racial equity or equity impact assessments include a landscape inclusive of intermediaries and groups without nonprofit status. Assessments are oriented to identifying the most equitable path to facilitating under-resourced organizations proximate to the local community obtaining more investment in their partnerships. This can mean the funder identifying or playing the role of fiscal sponsor. These approaches also include a focus on funding consulting firms/organizations comprised of staff who share lived experiences and relationships with members of local communities.

> "We were one of the first strategies to bring in an African consulting firm to advise on strategy. We made a very long comprehensive list of African stakeholders who were in the evaluation of our previous strategy and consulted for building the strategy. What I've heard as we've been disseminating the strategy [from these local partners] is 'I see myself in the strategy, I see myself in the work. This is what I said when I was consulted. And I see it in the strategy." — U.S. and International Funder

What will it take to embed these approaches?

Core practices include Program Officers and other staff making intentional efforts to create a larger pool of organizations proximate to local communities, including organizations with BIPOC leadership or led by other groups who have been marginalized. Funders may identify these organizations by engaging grant partners, thought leaders, community leaders, peer funders, and local/national philanthropic serving organizations who are familiar with the social sector landscape in the communities and areas of focus.

In addition, **grant application, contracting, and selection processes are reviewed to recognize any bias and procedures are restructured to root out conscious and unconscious bias** (Sweeney et al., 2020; Dorsey et al., 2020). For example,

identifying ways that white/Global North notions of expertise are privileged in grant/contract application and selection processes.

The funder's interactions with potential and existing grant partners are **opportunities to deepen existing relationships and build new relationships with these organizations in ways that amplify shifting power** (Corwin, 2018). It is through relationship building that funders can become aware of organizations outside their networks and best understand the most appropriate monetary and nonmonetary supports needed to meet grant partner needs. When funders establish rapport and build trust with grant partners, intermediaries, and consultants, these organizations are also better able to inform partnership expectations, strategy, and how success is defined. Staff may hold listening tours or community conversations as a way to learn about the needs and priorities of these organizations and the communities they serve. Funders can also convene joint meetings with intermediaries and their grant partners to collaboratively determine priorities and budgets (Hewlett Foundation, 2022).

A growing number of funders who support under-resourced organizations proximate to local communities engage in complementary practices to shift power, including granting multiyear general operating support, providing technical assistance, and structuring grants/contracts with intermediaries/large grant partners in ways that redistribute power to smaller, more proximate organizations. This combination of supports helps these organizations access a more holistic array of monetary and nonmonetary resources to ensure progress in achieving project goals and organization mission. Thought leaders have also suggested endowment gifts to Black-led nonprofits to provide sustainable resources for these historically under-resourced organizations (Foster & Isom, 2021).

In the global context, another complementary practice is resourcing partnerships between Global South collaborators. These partnerships are multi-partner, Global South-led development collaborations that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources between governments, organizations, and networks of nations in the Global South. These partnerships emphasize the importance of cooperation among nations with elements of shared history, characteristics, constraints, and challenges, without the hegemonic overtones that are often present in Global North-Global South partnerships. Funders may support these partnerships by connecting Global South organizations to one another, providing on-demand technical assistance and hosting convenings that facilitate networking and the exchange of information and new ideas/innovation.

Benefits

These power shifting approaches offer funders and grant partners:

- **A pathway to build power.** Funding organizations experiencing funding inequities and most proximate to local communities supports efforts to build power for these organizations and the communities they serve. For example, funding organizations that are BIPOC-led and serving BIPOC communities in the U.S., particularly in the context of movement work, is viewed as a power building approach.
- **Enhanced organizational resiliency.** Flowing more resources (monetary and nonmonetary) to these under-resourced organizations, allows them to have greater resiliency to improve the reach and impact of their work, enhance infrastructure, and support the professional growth and well-being of leadership and staff.

- **Better solutions.** Funding under-resourced organizations most proximate to local communities increases the likelihood that solutions are advised and driven by those with lived experience that allow them to best understand the challenges and solutions needed for equitable social change (Foster & Isom, 2022; Corwin, 2018).
- **Stronger local social sector ecosystem.** When funders invest in the professional development of consultant partners proximate to the local community, they help ensure the long-term availability of these consultants. This investment in the consultants also benefits the local social sector ecosystem because organizations can experience deep, enduring relationships with local consultants (GEO, 2021).

> "We began to actually center this in community-based organizations that are majority BIPOC-led that are going to sit down and tell you what this experience is, and actually bring in parents that are willing to share what that experience is, so that you make the connection." — Jon Paul Bianchi, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Examples of practice

Echoing Green shifted its funding practices to overcome barriers to funding more leaders of color in the organization's fellowship program for social impact leaders. Echoing Green implemented a range of grantmaking practices that addressed conscious and unconscious bias. These practices included blind reading of its application pool, implementing implicit bias training for fellowship interview panel judges, having alumni fellows serve as judges, and disaggregating the applicant pool by race at various points during the selection process to assess diversity. As a result of these efforts, Echoing Green reported in 2020 that 74% of its U.S.-based fellows self-identified as a person of color in the last five years (Dorsey et al., 2020).

Under what conditions do these approaches work best?

- Having a diverse team — racial, gender, staff with lived experience, etc. — combined with actions that will include diverse voices in internal planning can help provide insights and push the team's thinking when working with BIPOC and other marginalized communities.
- Program Officers need adequate time and flexibility to routinely engage in deep listening and other relationship building practices. Timelines from foundations often don't align with the surrounding community. Additional time is often needed to develop thoughtful and trusting relationships. Establishing new staff roles and positions centered on cultivating relationships may help support the effective implementation of these approaches.
- When the decision to use an intermediary is less funder driven and includes requests and input from grant partners/community.
- When the funder has the time and resources to conduct a rigorous assessment of the partnership, to ensure that the intermediary is already shifting or well positioned to shift power.

- In the context of U.S. racial justice, giving funds to robust infrastructures of intermediaries and other regranting organizations that are primarily accountable to movements in their communities and capable of redistributing funds (Groundswell Fund, 2021).

Other considerations

- Intentional efforts are needed to ensure that under-resourced organizations have access to funding opportunities. Efforts can include providing pathways to support groups in need of fiscal sponsorship and removing budget eligibility requirements while offering technical assistance to support organizational capacity.
- Build in structures and support, such as language interpretation services,[1] that minimize barriers to participation and engagement of BIPOC and other historically marginalized local grant partners and other groups.

> "We just didn't fund in the region. One solution was contracting and getting an interpretation firm in the region on retainer. So then whenever I have a meeting with partners, an intermediary can't say our partners can't participate because they don't speak English and they won't understand you. You won't understand them. I have an interpreter in place and we're going to provide this service so that everyone can participate now." — U.S. and International Funder

- Anticipate and mitigate resistance related to funding BIPOC or specific groups:
  - » If funders prioritize Black-led organizations, some board members, leadership, and staff may feel that other communities are being ignored (CEP, 2021) rather than viewing the entire ecosystem as strengthened.
  - » If funders prioritize BIPOC-led organizations or organizations led by people from other communities impacted by systemic oppression, it may exacerbate divisions in the nonprofit sector and continue to reinforce a scarcity mindset. Adopting the Abundance Movement's four commitments is an example of a risk mitigation strategy as it relates to Black-led efforts. The Abundance Movement recognizes "the richness of existing, Black-led efforts and the opportunity to support those efforts in a way that leads to freedom and joy for all" (Abundance Movement, 2022).
  - » Engage legal counsel to navigate evolving policy landscapes that may impact perceptions on legality of prioritizing funding to BIPOC-led organizations.
- When funding through an intermediary, questions to ask include the following: Is the intermediary currently sharing/shifting power? If yes, how? Is the degree of power being shifted appropriate given the context? How are practices impacting the balance of power in the ecosystem? In other words, are practices expanding the power of groups with power and privilege, such as academic elites, and perpetuating inequities in funding and who gets to determine outcomes? What level of funding and resources is necessary to allow the intermediary to be properly equipped to shift power?

1 Language interpretation services are part of the larger discussion of language justice, which is an intentional practice of interpretation and translation as means for empowerment.

- Ensure learning experiences and trainings are in place to disrupt mental models built on racist, colonial, and other forms of oppressive beliefs and promote strength-based, anti-racist, and anti-oppression frames. Funder's actions to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, and/or dignity include training and other organizational change activities to shift mindsets that function as barriers to increasing funding to these organizations.
- Participate in local or national funder learning communities (e.g., philanthropic serving organization hosted convenings) that provide a space for collective learning and self-reflection. Such spaces can help funders be accountable and poised for action. Offering these spaces and including communities of focus helps funders build relationships and trust with leaders who have been marginalized, particularly people of color leaders (Corwin, 2018).

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A LARGER POOL OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE BIPOC-LED AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS LED BY GROUPS WHO HAVE BEEN MARGINALIZED:

- Does a given method of identifying BIPOC-led organizations (e.g., scanning conference attendees, recommendations from peers and partners) align with funder values related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice?
- Have certain methods of identifying BIPOC-led organizations given rise to a more racially diverse pool than others?
- Are filters applied (e.g., budget size) that would disproportionately exclude organizations led by people of color?

QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE WHEN TO FUND THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY WITH A POWER SHIFTING FOCUS:

- Does the funder have values/mission alignment with the proposed intermediary?
- Is the impetus for funding an intermediary community driven or funder driven?
- Is the entity in deep relationship with the community of focus? (Is the intermediary in close enough proximity to the community to establish and maintain relationships? Are there indicators that the community of focus perceives deep relationship?)
- Does the intermediary seek collaboration with and/or share decision-making with local communities?

Adapted from Dorsey et al., 2020 and Schmitz, 2021.

LEARN MORE

Hewlett Good Funder Practices

This brief explores lessons learned promoting equitable partnerships and describes power-sharing practices to use in partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs). These practices are applicable to a range of contexts involving funding under-resourced organizations including intermediaries in ways that support equitable partnerships.

Reimagining Capacity Building

This report outlines principles that can help funders engage in capacity building with a racial equity lens, describes what racially equitable capacity building looks like in practice, and provides guidance on what funders and consultants can do to advance racial equity. The report features profiles of several funders around their lessons learned in using capacity building to advance racial equity.

Power Building

Definition

The power building approach involves investing in the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequities to organize and sustain a base of people to act together to drive systemic and policy changes. Power building efforts lift community priorities; influence decisions and decision-makers; and hold people and institutions in power accountable to their communities. Power building grantmaking may include grant funding that supports civic engagement, advocacy, and community organizing among marginalized groups. Power building grantmaking supports the long-term goals of an equitable and thriving community through policy and systems and is responsive to the immediate, material needs of a community (Fine & Hafid, 2020; NCRP, 2018; Pastor et al., 2020). For example, power building grantmaking can support economic power and basic services identified as priorities by the community, such as job creation, food security, language access, or social enterprises (Delgado et al., 2013).

Foundational elements

At its core, **power building is about supporting BIPOC and other marginalized communities to set and advance an agenda for policy and systems change while unleashing their individual and collective skills, leadership, and self-determination in the process. It is important to recognize that grant partners hold their own power and individual and collective agency, particularly in the form of knowledge, information, and access to community networks.** However, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color impacted by inequities have been denied access to institutionalized centers of power that have the authority to make decisions, access resources, and shape narratives (Farhang & Morales, 2012; Givens et al., 2018). In the U.S. context, the democratic system was built on structural racism in which laws have historically been inequitably applied to BIPOC communities and the power of those in control has been used to oppress these communities. Throughout U.S. history, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color were not afforded the same rights to vote, protest, or be treated as citizens equal to white citizens. Yet there is a rich history of Black, Indigenous, other marginalized communities, and their allies mobilizing, fighting for equal rights, and successfully securing legislative wins, unlocking their collective power and potential (Williams & Chopra, 2022).

Power building is a time-tested strategy to center communities most impacted by structural racism, dismantle power imbalances, and advance equitable solutions. To support power building efforts, funders can build relationships with and

support organizations already deeply rooted and trusted in communities. These organizations have been committed to building the ability and capacity of communities most impacted by systemic inequities to create equitable and sustainable communities. Partners from grassroots and community-based organizations that are from marginalized and BIPOC groups often serve as anchors and vehicles to engage community leaders, members, and other organizations to identify collective goals, reach consensus, and build the capacity of communities to engage and lead participatory processes to achieve goals (Delgado, 2013; Fine & Hafid, 2020).

> "Community power is the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain, and grow an organized base of people. who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public disclosure, influence who makes desicions and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance health equity" — Martha Davis, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

What will it take to embed this approach?

Funders can engage in several core practices when they support power building in communities experiencing inequities. **Funders will need to shift their mindset to trust the communities' ability and agency to identify important issues in their communities and generate sustainable solutions** (Fine & Hafid, 2020; Campbell, 2018; Sinclair, 2021). Operationalizing this trust means that funders take a step back and engage in deep listening practices (see Emily Kasriel's "**Deep Listening**") to understand grant partners' and communities' interests and mobilize resources toward a shared goal (Sinclair, 2021). To effectively mobilize resources, the funder's role becomes more that of an advisor, broker of relationships, and sounding board for grant partners to think through strategy (Bielak et al., 2021).

Another core practice is investing in nonprofit ecosystems rather than issue areas. Complex, systemic problems require intersectional strategies and multiple actors. Investing in nonprofit ecosystems means funding a diverse array of organizations that work on different issues and focus on a range of power building strategies, such as building political power (e.g., organizing and civic engagement), building economic power (e.g., entrepreneurship and job creation), responding to immediate community needs, or using a mix of these strategies. **BIPOC-led and other marginalized group-led organizations represent and serve communities most impacted by inequities (Lief, 2020), and funders ensure that these organizations are prominently represented in their funding portfolios**. Communities trust these organizations and their leaders to authentically engage community members in setting the agenda, implementing the strategies, and leading decision-making. It is critical that funders identify, build, and sustain relationships with BIPOC-led organizations already engaged in power building work (Racial Equity Tools, n.d.). Funders invest in and trust these organizations to center communities, focus on the power building issues that are most important to them, and develop community-driven processes and solutions (Bielak et al., 2021; Delgado, 2013).

Many power building grant partners have both a 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4) entity because they see their 501(c)(4) arm as essential to their power building work. When funders have the flexibility to fund either or both 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) entities,[1] funders should consider giving to 501(c)(4) organizations — social welfare organizations that can lobby for or against legislation and endorse candidates, thereby having more influence on elected officials. Through direct lobbying and political action, 501(c)(4) organizations can hold elected officials accountable, fight the root causes of racial inequities, and advance structural policy changes (Krehely, 2005; NCRP, 2020). Providing funding for 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations can allow organizations to develop community intervention and have political voice, which is especially important because many BIPOC communities are negatively impacted and left out of policy.

In grantmaking practice, **funders may best meet the needs of their grant partners by providing general operating support.** General operating support gives grant partners the flexibility, infrastructure, and staff capacity needed to listen and be responsive to short-term community priorities and long-term policy and systems goals. Ongoing general operating support (e.g., multiyear general operating support) is also important to advocacy and grassroots organizations, beyond national election cycles, to sustain progress and momentum, so that communities can more quickly mobilize on political, social, and economic issues that may surface (Delgado et al., 2021; Sinclair, 2021).

In addition to general operating support, funders can provide professional services and technical assistance to enhance support to grant partners engaged in power building work. This includes legal counsel to help protect grant partners facing political resistance and support to enhance their organizational effectiveness (Bielak et al., 2020). Funding efforts to help grant partners build community power also includes creating platforms and convening spaces for working collectively toward shared goals. This reduces nonprofit competition and promotes collaboration and learning needed to reach policy and systems goals (Bielak et al., 2021).

> "Building power is seen as a necessary precondition to achieving our goals. And so, if we say our goal is to challenge public utilities to be better actors on climate, it is clear that you're going have to invest in building the power of those folks who can hold public utilities accountable" — U.S. and International Funder

Power building work is happening in newer and smaller BIPOC-led groups. These leaders may have unique demands and needs that funders can support, such as leader wellness, leadership development, and networking opportunities with other funders and peers. Funders often consider investing in BIPOC leaders as agents of change, moving beyond solely supporting their organizations (Bielak et al., 2021; Delgado, 2013).

1 501(c)(4) cannot receive tax-deductible charitable contributions, which makes it more challenging to raise funds. Private foundations have to follow an onerous grantmaking process, called expenditure responsibility, when providing grants to 501(c)(4)s, to ensure that charitable funds are used for charitable purposes rather than activities such as lobbying. For this reason, private foundations historically limit their funding to 501(c)(3) organizations (Bolder Advocacy, 2021). In addition, frequently many public foundations now have 501(c)(4) affiliates, such as the Open Society Policy Center, so that they have more leeway to give to 501(c)(4) entities (Petegorsky, 2019).

Benefits

Investing in power building has direct benefits to the engaged communities and the potential to affect policy and systems change, which is the impact funders and communities are often trying to make. Benefits manifest in several forms:

- **Trusted community partners who receive power building funding are best positioned to deploy resources.** Trusted community partners could include grassroots organizations or intermediaries who have authentic relationships with the community of focus. These organizations are best positioned to be responsive and know how to equitably deploy resources because they can answer these strategic questions: Where do we go? Whom do we engage? and What do they need? (Bielak et al., 2021; Delgado et al., 2021; Sinclair, 2021).
- **Greater sense of self and collective efficacy and ability to make a change.** When communities are engaged in power building efforts, they gain confidence, skills, and the network necessary to tackle policy and systems reforms (Delgado, 2013).
- **Equitable and sustainable community-driven solutions.** Communities closest to the issues have knowledge and expertise about the most pressing needs, an enduring commitment to their people, and community strengths that can be leveraged to solve problems (Bielak et al., 2021). Therefore, community-led and community-owned solutions have a greater chance of success and sustainability.

Examples of practice

- The Chorus Foundation shifted from funding grant partners under one focus area (climate change) to supporting an ecosystem of nonprofits connecting climate action to a host of other issues (e.g., economic, social, and health) that ensure an inclusive and fair process in creating a clean environment. The foundation funded two regional institutions in Kentucky to help advance the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner power. While Kentucky legislators from both parties did not support this shift, by supporting an ecosystem of nonprofits, grant partners created a campaign called Empower Kentucky with the capabilities to organize and activate (Lief, 2020).
- The Detroit People's Platform (DPP) is a group of long-term Detroit residents that have come together to identify shared challenges in Detroit and organize to identify solutions. With capacity strengthening support from the Building Movement Project, DPP organized the community and advocated for change. A power building approach supported DPP in successfully advocating for and getting a community benefits agreement ordinance passed and pushing for an income-based water affordability plan and a housing trust fund — all of which could result in durable and sustainable change for Detroit residents (Campbell, 2018).
- When youth leaders identified the zero-tolerance school discipline policy as an issue of equity, the California Endowment pivoted to work with leaders from state and local levels to rethink school discipline policies to include restorative justice practices. As a result of these efforts, the expulsion rate dropped by 75% over time (Sinclair, 2021).

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- Funders have an explicit commitment in their mission and vision to advancing racial equity and achieving systemic change (NCRP, 2018). When funders have this commitment, their grantmaking, operations, and programmatic work may be better oriented to align with power building as a strategy.
- Funders have examined partnerships to ensure the intermediary or regranting organization is truly building power by equitably distributing funds to respond to community needs and support power building efforts.
- Funders have the flexibility to allow communities to set the agenda, including co-creating or leading the development of strategy and a theory of change.

Other considerations

- When funding power building, it is important for grantmakers to have an orientation toward trust-based approaches with grant partners, to give grant partners the flexibility and capacity to be responsive to communities and engage in advocacy, civic engagement, and other power building efforts.
- Funders may need to review grant agreements to grant partners to ensure they are provided maximum legal latitude to engage in advocacy and nonpartisan voter engagement (NCRP, 2018).
- Power building investments require long-term investment because policy and systems change takes time.
- Funders may want to support partnerships and coalitions starting organically from existing partnerships and relationships in the community.
- Funders may want to be explicit in their theory of change (ideally, co-created or developed by the community) that building community power is an outcome in itself as well as an intermediate step to achieving any policy or systems change outcome intended by the foundation. This acknowledges that building the power of communities most affected by structural inequities is a necessary precondition to achieving systemic and structural change.
- Funders should develop the governance, institutional support, or mindset to institutionalize support for BIPOC-led and power building organizations while avoiding being reactive to critical moments (e.g., protests followings the murder of George Floyd).

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

- What partnerships do we already have that support power building?
- What new partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations and other organizations led by groups who have been marginalized do we need to cultivate to support power building?
- How can we better support partners in power building and the priorities of the communities they serve?
- Do we have shared understanding with our grant partners about power building and what it means to work toward equitable systems change?
- How can we assess our impact in building power, and how long will it take to see results?
- How do we build an internal institutional commitment to power building priorities?

Adapted from "How Philanthropy Support Organizations Understand & Advance Power Building" by Fine & Hafid, 2020, & "Power Moves" by NCRP, 2020

LEARN MORE

Power Moves, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

This toolkit explores three dimensions of power including building power. Funders can use this resource to assess where they are in building power and strategize on how to change their programs and operations to be more equitable.

Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-Led Change, Common Counsel Foundation & Native Americans in Philanthropy

This report summarizes a study that included 146 Native organizations to deepen public understanding of Native organizing and advocacy practices and challenges, as well as to call for greater philanthropic support for this work.

How Philanthropy Support Organizations Understand and Advance Community Power Building, TCC Group

This report features Philanthropy Support Organizations (PSOs) understanding of what it means to build community power, perceived strengths and challenges of supporting this work, and how they support their foundation members in advancing power building. The report also features relevant resources and tools that may be helpful to funders.

Evaluation Approaches to Shift Power

Definition

Several equity focused evaluation-focused approaches can be utilized to shift power to grant partners and communities. This profile describes common themes across these approaches. The specific approach definitions are provided in the Appendices:

- Culturally responsive evaluation (CRE)
- Culturally responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE)
- Participatory evaluation
- Participatory rural appraisal or participatory learning for action

All four approaches engage communities most impacted by the issues the evaluation or assessment seeks to address in the evaluation design, implementation, and/or dissemination. Traditional evaluation and assessment tend to perpetuate power imbalances between the funders, evaluators, and the community being evaluated. Global North/western or white actors and institutions historically generated knowledge and defined credible evidence with little to no input from communities, while extracting information and data from these communities (Allaham et al., 2021; Equitable Evaluation Initiative [EEI] & GEO, 2021; Smith, Robinson, & Connors, 2018).

Evaluation approaches that shift power acknowledge that community voice and inclusion can enhance all phases of the evaluation. Community members have the knowledge and expertise in their culture, context, lived experience, and relationships essential to generating valid and culturally relevant findings. These evaluations seek to identify and address the root causes of inequities and produce information that will drive systemic and structural change. Evaluation practices and products serve as tools to center communities, redefine knowledge and evidence, and advance equity (Chicago Beyond, 2019; Chopus & Cox, 2018; Newhouse, 2022; WKKF, 2021)

Foundational elements

Research and evaluation have too often brought harm and trauma to BIPOC communities. From the extractive research that fueled hierarchical typologies of humanity to advance colonialism (Amster, 2022; Said, 1978; PBS, 2003), to the unethical Tuskegee Syphilis experiment that intentionally caused harm to Black men and their communities (Brandt, 1978), research and evaluation practice and narratives contributed to systemic racism and racial inequity. Patterns of harm and extraction persist in evaluation today. The use of evaluation approaches often fails to be culturally responsive in BIPOC communities and excludes BIPOC communities from having a voice as collaborators or owners in the evaluation process (Caldwell & Bledsoe, 2019). Evaluation and the knowledge that is produced can be used to keep structural racism in place or dismantle it. Shifting power in evaluation-focused approaches advances equity by focusing on the lives, voices, and expertise of those most impacted by inequities in evaluation practices, outcomes, and knowledge production.

In power shifting evaluation-focused approaches, communities can be involved in one or more of the evaluation stages through a spectrum of engagement (e.g., see the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation and Organizing Engagement), from informing to leading and owning the work. Although the extent and depth of community engagement may vary, there are foundational elements inherent in power shifting evaluation practices. **Funders and evaluators are no longer seen as the sole authority, but rather, communities are seen as experts** who strengthen evaluation questions, evaluation processes, and the interpretation of results. BIPOC communities and community organizations provide culturally relevant context and nuanced feedback on what questions to explore, what data should be collected and how it should be collected, what the data means, and how findings should be shared — grounded in the context of the communities and systems they live in (Dahab et al., 2019; Newhouse, 2020).

What will it take to embed this approach?

Good and best practices in evaluation approaches to shifting power are emerging. One common theme is the importance of funders committing to continuous learning, with humility, from the communities most impacted by inequities, grant partners, peer funders, and evaluation partners as they collaborate on equity-centered evaluation.

Funders prioritize building relationships and rapport with grant partners and communities most impacted before engaging in evaluation (Dahab et al., 2019; Engage R+D, 2010). Without relationships and trust, evaluations become transactional when funders and evaluators seek to get as much information as possible with the least amount of interaction with grant partners and communities (EEI & GEO, 2021). Once trust is built and nurtured, funders, evaluators, and grant partners can work collaboratively to design an evaluation that meets the needs and expectations of all partners. Before embarking on participatory evaluation approaches, it is important to develop a collaboration framework and a shared decision-making process, whether that is a set of norms or a charter, to co-create with communities and grant partners (Engage R+D, 2021; Flores & Fierle-Hedrick, 2021). However, the funder may want to be explicit about and communicate the boundaries of the study, including what decisions can and can't be shared and why (Stern et al., 2019).

Funders need to choose evaluators who are equity oriented, values aligned, and willing to shift power to communities and grant partners (Dahab et al., 2019; Symonette et al., 2021). Communities and grant partners can help screen and select the right evaluators for the work. Finally, funders need to support the full cost of the evaluation for the time, effort, and resources it takes to meaningfully engage communities and grant partners in the evaluation and knowledge development (Chicago Beyond, 2019; Farrow & Morrison, 2019). This budget also includes equitable compensation for community members to engage in the evaluation planning and implementation.

> "The critical thing here is working in partnership or in ally-ship … as the decolonial scholars would say, does it have to be you doing it? Maybe there are others who are already deeply engaged that could run the evaluation process. But it's relational work and relational work is time intensive." — Marina Apgar, Institute of Development Studies

Evaluators who practice power shifting evaluation approaches bring personal awareness of culture, biases, assumptions, and power dynamics and reflect on how they may impact the evaluation, especially in culturally responsive and equitable evaluation approaches (Elam & Walker, 2021; Stickl Haugen & Chouinard, 2019). Funders can support evaluators' professional development and learning in these areas. Evaluators act as facilitators who create a safe space for participants, foster dialogue, and build consensus throughout the evaluation phases. Effective facilitation skills are key factors in the qualifications for an evaluation partner.

In addition, evaluators should prioritize strengthening the capacity of community members and grant partners to engage in evaluation activities (Stern et al., 2019; Farrow & Morrison, 2019), including collecting and interpreting data. It is also the evaluator's responsibility to share findings with funders and community members in the form of an accessible, relevant, and functional product through visualization, public presentations, and/or town halls (Impact Terms, n.d.). The funder's evaluation timeline and resources should reflect capacity strengthening activities and equitable compensation. Capacity strengthening activities should avoid imposing white-dominant norms of effectiveness (Littles, 2022). The Equitable Evaluation Framework™ provides guidance that can support funders working with their partners to interrogate how white-dominant norms of effectiveness, rigor, and validity show up in the work (EEI & GEO, 2021).

Community members and grant partners should know they have the right to participate in the evaluation, bring their goals for the evaluation, interview the evaluation partner, and ask funders and evaluators about the risks and costs of engaging in the evaluation study (Chicago Beyond, 2019). Funders could support community members and grant partners to engage in evaluation by being transparent and flexible and by inviting community members and grant partners to ask questions about the risks and benefits of the evaluation.

> "Evaluation and research is always prevention centered. What we are asked to do is prevent. What do we want to prevent from happpening? We have measures that have historically tried to measure prevention efforts. Soemtimes the community says, 'that's not actually what we need to measure'. In fact, it always seems like we're always looking at deficits of the community. When we try to learn why our are kids not succeeding at school, rarely do we say maybe the school isn't functioning. So when I think of participatory evaluation, it's an opportunity to shift the measures to indentify aspects we need to promote on the journey to prevention." — Hector Sanchez-Flores, National Compadres Network

Benefits

Power shifting evaluation-related approaches enhances evaluation and evaluation practice. These approaches:

- **Strengthen communities' capacity to use data and evaluation.** Communities and grant partners are empowered to analyze issues, identify solutions, and determine how their stories are told. Evaluators and funders also

strengthen communities' capacity to meaningfully engage throughout the evaluation stages. Communities get to learn and practice their evaluative thinking skills — the ability to ask thoughtful questions, reflect on the evidence and apply it to their context, and use data and evaluation to advocate for change (Allaham et al., 2021; Farrow & Morrison, 2019; JR McKenzie Trust, n.d., Newhouse, 2020; Notah Begay III [NB3] Foundation, 2020).

- **Generate valid and culturally relevant findings.** When community values, multiple perspectives, and realities are integrated into the evaluation, it improves the chances that communities and populations of focus will benefit from the evaluation (Cerna et al., 2021; Inouye et al., 2017; NB3 Foundation, 2020).
- **Increase buy-in for the evaluation from community members.** Community members are more likely to be invested in the evaluation, especially if they have ownership or agency in setting the agenda and determining what defines success. Community members may also be more likely to participate in evaluation processes that they want to be engaged such as data collection (Symonette, Miller, & Barela, 2021; Stern et al., 2019).
- **Redress inequities in the evaluation field.** Evaluation practices and outcomes advance equity. Power is shifted to communities most impacted by inequities by supporting their ownership of evaluation planning, process, and outcomes (Zapata et al., 2021).

Examples of practice

- An example of participants determining what progress looks like and collaborating on evaluation measures is in a prison-based fatherhood program titled "Fathers and Children Together" (Henson, 2018). Participants, program staff, and researchers engaged in dialogue to change what the study measured to reflect all partners' values and voice. For example, the revised measures focused on participants' assets and family bonds. The short-term measures were changed from depression and stress to pride and reconstruction of masculinity as a caregiver; the long-term measures included whether the father-child bond remained active and positive and not just recidivism (Chicago Beyond, 2019).
- Another example is a participatory evaluation design process funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The foundation commissioned Engage R+D to engage more than 50 people, including grant partners, researchers, other partners, and foundation staff and leadership, in collaboratively designing an evaluation of the foundation's largest K-12 investment, Networks for School Improvement. Ninety percent of participants felt that the collaborative design process was better than a typical request-for-proposal process, expressing that it resulted in a stronger evaluation design than what would have come out of a request for proposal (Engage R+D, 2019).

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- When in alignment with the foundation's equity and/or power shifting strategies. If equity and/or power shifting strategies are evaluated, foundations should consider a power shifting evaluation approach to align with and further the equity goals of the strategy.

- When the foundation is partnering on a collective impact strategy and will be in deep relationship and routine contact with grant partners over time. This condition is fertile ground for engaging with grant partners and the community for the practice requirements of power shifting evaluation approaches.
- If the timeline and investment for the evaluation are flexible, the foundation can provide more resources and flexibility to the evaluation team to cultivate relationships, implement participatory practices, and strengthen the capacity of communities and grant partners.
- When the foundation staff perceives a high level of expertise in evaluators and other actors engaged in power shifting, it may be easier for funders to let go of power and allow for more community-driven evaluation decision-making.
- When the foundation staff has existing relationships in the communities of focus or when working with evaluators with existing relationships.

Other considerations

- Power shifting evaluation approaches require resources and timelines to account for new ways of working and partnering among communities, grant partners, evaluators, and foundation staff.
- The foundation's use of power shifting approaches in grantmaking may lay the foundation for power shifting in evaluation and assessment approaches. The trust-based relationships, experiences, and capabilities built are transferable to the evaluation context.
- Requiring communities to participate in evaluation against their desires perpetuates power imbalances and is a harmful, extractive practice (Stickl Haugen & Chouinard, 2019).
- Without a deep understanding of the context, culture, and history in which frontline communities exist, there is a risk of causing harm when engaging in participatory evaluation practices. For example, excluding groups and community members with important perspectives.

> "A person who comes with all the right methodologies and all the right intentions into a context they don't understand and into power dynamics that they don't fully understand, can really make things much worse for people who are already marginalized." — Marina Apgar, Institute of Development Studies

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SELECTING AN EVALUATION PARTNER

- What experience do they bring about the specific community or context?
- What creativity or experience do they bring in community-led or participatory approaches? What examples of their work demonstrate this?
- What are the potential evaluation partner's limitations in the kinds of evaluation they can support and institutional pressures they may face?
- Will evaluation partners be expected to strengthen the capacity of community members and organizations? How will you set this expectation for partners?
- What costs to the organization and community will be generated by the research?

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND LEARN FROM POWER SHIFTING EVALUATION EFFORTS

- What were lessons on the process of funding evaluation with a power shifting orientation?
- How was accountability different?
- How were endpoints of the evaluation different than a traditional approach?
- Did the usefulness of the outputs to the communities and grant partners change?
- Was community and organizational capacity of grant partner increased?
- What could have been done better, and what worked well?
- What is the feedback from all the partners?
- How will the funder apply these lessons and share them with others?

Adapted from Why am I Always being Researched by Chicago Beyond, 2019

LEARN MORE

Why Am I Always Being Researched?

This resource from Chicago Beyond provides guidance on how to shift the power dynamics among the community organizations, researchers, and funders involved in research. It details "how" to conduct equity-oriented research from the viewpoint of each partner.

Doing Evaluation in Service of Racial Equity Guides

These guides intend to help evaluators integrate racial equity principles into evaluation practice. Guides include debunking myths about evaluation, diagnosing biases and systems, and deepening community engagement.

How to Embed a Racial and Ethnic Equity Perspective in Research Practical Guidance for the Research Process

This report aims to equip researchers with tools and resources to apply when developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings that consider racial and ethnic equity.

Participatory Grantmaking

Definition

Participatory grantmaking cedes or shares decision-making about funding by engaging community members, grant partners, and other partners (e.g., nonprofits not currently receiving a grant) in grantmaking decision-making processes, such as developing proposal review criteria, nominating reviewing grant proposals, and selecting grant partners for funding. Participatory grantmaking may also involve collaborative decision-making with community members and/or other partners in decision-making beyond grantmaking including strategy, values setting, and determining indicators and outcome metrics[1].

Foundational elements

Participatory grantmaking calls on funders to recognize the unequal power relationships inherent in philanthropy that have traditionally excluded public participation in foundation grantmaking and other organizational decisions (Raveneau & Kabia, 2021). The notion of public participation in foundation decision-making is aligned with calls for the democratization of philanthropy. For example, the U.S. tax code confers tax benefits to foundations, giving foundations wealth that otherwise would have been public tax revenue. Accordingly, some have argued that public participation in philanthropy, including foundation decision-making, should be a role for citizens in the U.S. democratic system. Yet public policy does not require or promote broad, representative public participation in governance or other kinds of decision-making. With relatively few exceptions, foundation founders and legacy leaders compose boards of directors with people from their professional and personal networks, including family members in the case of family foundations. The legacies of racism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression have worked to limit economic inclusion and diverse social networks across lines of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Consequently, the networks of foundation founders and leaders often do not reflect the communities they serve in terms of race, ethnicity, other intersecting identities, and lived experience.

1 These practices beyond decision-making about grants are also referred to as Participatory Philanthropy. We use participatory grantmaking throughout given this is the term frequently used in the literature and by interviewees to describe the breadth of participatory practices. There is a lack of consensus on what participatory grantmaking means.

Participatory grantmaking also counters the mindset that philanthropic organizations know best how to solve the problems of the communities and other constituencies their grant partners serve. Participatory grantmaking means valuing the knowledge, expertise, and other assets that community members and other partners bring. It calls on funders engaging in this approach to create the conditions necessary for authentic collaboration and collective decision-making processes that respect and honor what everyone brings to the table.

Shifting power through participatory grantmaking takes intentional mindset shifts to address biases and view community members and grant partners as experts who can engage in deep thought partnership, mutual learning, and decision-making with funders. The level of participation in participatory grantmaking can be limited to minor involvement in grantmaking decisions at the "inform" or "consult" end of the spectrum, to significant decision-making power, including co-deciding with grant partners or funders giving all decision-making power to the grant partners and other non-funders engaged in the process. New questions about what it looks like to be a participatory organization are also emerging in the field. How does a funder embed a participatory grantmaking ethos into its internal as well as external activities? Even as participatory grantmaking continues to grow and evolve, several core funder practices remain key: establishing rapport and trust with community members and other partners, opening communication and ongoing feedback, and utilizing an equity lens when developing policies and procedures to ensure both equitable participatory processes and outcomes (C. Gibson, personal communication, May 15, 2023; Gibson, 2018).

> "Participatory grantmaking has been so just transformational in the way that I think about funding because the experience that everybody brings and there's different ages of people. There's people who have been in the nonprofit space for years, people who have just started, people part of community driven foundations. I think learning from participatory grantmaking, the way we think about conflicts of interest, the way that we think about who is making the decisions and how in control they are, that's been really interesting to rethink." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

What will it take to embed this approach?

Cultivating strong relationships is the foundation of participatory grantmaking. Practices focused on strengthening relationships and building trust with community members and other partners engaged include deep listening, following the leadership of community members, resolving conflicts, providing a nurturing space for healing practices, and activating feedback loops (Gibson, 2018). One grant partner who participated in a participatory grantmaking committee discussed funder authenticity, accessibility, supportiveness, and shared ideology as key funder practices for building relationships and a sense of allyship. Good listening skills are important for funders to develop and bring to participatory grantmaking processes, yet listening begins before the participatory grantmaking process. Listening tours, where funders hold pivotal conversations with

frontline communities and engage in deep listening, are a method to strengthen trust-based relationships with communities. The following are some questions to ask during listening tours: What would a partnership ideally look like? What things can we be doing differently? What do they value that the funder should keep doing? To facilitate candid responses and create safe spaces for learning, some questions might be asked by a neutral party with the funder not in the room (e.g., What has been people's experience with the funder?). How funders proceed after listening is also important to give attention to in planning.

Implementing policy and operational changes within funder organizations is another essential practice for participatory grantmaking. This may involve bolstering the foundations' internal capacity and structures to support the engagement of community partners more effectively and thoughtfully (i.e., communication, public outreach), developing internal policies to help embed practices and clarify the foundations' parameters and values around engaging community members and other partners, ensuring staff have responsibilities and authority to engage in participatory grantmaking, and engaging the board in discussions about implementing participatory approaches to decision-making and deciding which approaches are most appropriate for the foundation (Gibson, 2017).

Creating governance structures such as committees, steering committees, and decision-making panels that place community members at the center of decision-making processes and shapes parameters about the decision-making level of the group is another participatory grantmaking practice used by funders. As a funder starts to create these structures, it is important to specify what the group will decide and prioritize the needs of the people who will join the group. Questions to ask grant partners and other people outside the foundation include: Why should anyone do this work? What will they get out of it? What do they want out of this experience? With an enhanced understanding of how the foundation can benefit from the guidance of people outside the foundation walls, funders can also articulate the ways they will avoid being extractive or doing harm in this work. Committee and panel members may be recruited through asking grant partners to select a representative from their organization or someone in the community who fit the eligibility requirements. Other examples of ways to recruit members includes open calls, community nominations and ads (Farewell & Handy, 2020). Having board members or foundation staff select members is not required; funders may invite individuals outside the foundation to make the selection. For example, the Borealis Foundation asked a group of grant partners to select members of its Communities Transforming Policing Fund participatory grantmaking committee and provided support to these grant partners during the process (Borealis Foundation, 2023). Budgeting for ongoing capacity strengthening, learning, and leadership development of selected community members (e.g., workshops, "philanthropy 101" training sessions, conferences) and equitable compensation for community members' time and efforts are key under this practice (Nordstrom et al., 2022).

Creating shared values and goals at the beginning of the process. Grant partners we interviewed discussed the importance of the grantmaking committee deciding on shared values and goals at the start of the process. The process of participatory grantmaking bodies making collaborative decisions is complex and nonlinear. In addition to working with experienced, culturally responsive facilitators and offering capacity strengthening opportunities, using participatory decision-making frameworks can facilitate fruitful group processes. For example, the global deliberative governance field provides guidance for how to effectively implement participatory practice. The Deliberative Democracy Consortium offers resources, learning opportunities, and a network of deliberative governance practitioners (C. Gibson, personal communication, May 15, 2023). It is important to ensure adequate

funds are allocated and timelines allow for new ways of working to engage staff and external partners without adding unnecessary burdens (Gibson, 2018). Participatory grantmaking does not necessarily mean that more time is needed compared to traditional grantmaking, however, for some funders the time commitment is a planning consideration.

> "It does take up a big chunk of the year. From the inception of reviewing the application questions with a subset of the community reviewers, finalizing those, putting them up on the website, making sure everything is clean and clear. We have to make sure all of our community reviewers understand the number of applications that we'll receive and the timeline for them to submit their responses to the applications. And then we have a two-hour facilitated discussion with them to go over their scores, what grants they want to approve, and the grant amount." — U.S. Funder

Addressing power dynamics and focus on building trust early in the work. Grant partners we interviewed shared the importance of providing safe spaces for committee participants to address power dynamics and discomforts before engaging in participatory grantmaking activities. Giving attention to power dynamics between funders and committee participants also helps to ensure full, meaningful participation. Grant partners interviewed also discussed having sufficient time for the group to develop relationships as a first step facilitates building some level of trust before engaging in participatory grantmaking activities. Participatory grantmaking with multiple funders involved can be implemented in ways that facilitate funders taking the back seat, allowing more community leadership and innovation in the process. However, it is important that funding partners address potential power dynamics between them that may create barriers to full participation for the community partners.

> "You begin to build community with each other so you can trust each other and you are not in a mode of feeling isolated or excluded and not wanting to share fully. We took some time to prepare to be able to work together. And a lot of times that's not valued. We felt that was very important to set up that getting to know each other and getting to know ourselves in relation to each other." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

Investing in practices that place more decision-making power in the hands of community members and other partners. Flow funding is considered a participatory model of giving where a funder identifies well-positioned social innovators and/or visionaries (i.e., a flow funder) to choose grant recipients and distribute money into communities. Community giving circles enable individuals to come together and collectively decide ways to give their money, time, and talent to causes they care about. According to Philanthropy Together, more than

2,500 giving circles in the U.S. engage over 150,000 people (Philanthropy Together, n.d.). WKKF's Catalyzing Community Giving initiative invested in a cohort of 30 grant partners in communities of color to support their efforts to engage donors, conduct research, and build organizational capacity (WKKF, 2023). Investing in the infrastructure and sustainability of Community Giving Circles with a race equity lens represents a way that funders can support participation at a system level, thus expanding public participation in philanthropy and helping society reap the benefits of having a more diverse cadre of people determining how to best support their community.

Benefits

Infusing participatory grantmaking offers numerous benefits to frontline communities and funders through a more democratic process that enhances community agency, equity, inclusion, and social justice. Participatory grantmaking:

- Increases transparency and strengthens trust and credibility between funders, community members, and other engaged partners, which can lead to better relationships. Participatory grantmaking also helps to build public confidence and mitigate concerns about corruption, cronyism, or bias.
- Contributes to better funding decisions and outcomes for those most affected by a problem. Through a shared understanding of the problem and collaborative approach toward addressing it, the work will reach those who are most in need while positively impacting their communities.
- Allows for more flexibility, innovation, creativity and risk taking in the ideas that are funded because community organizations and grassroots groups often lack networks and connections to philanthropy.
- Strengthens communities most affected by giving them agency to determine the priorities of their lives, serve their community, and have an impact. Provides community members and nonprofits an opportunity to receive professional development, compensation, networking opportunities, work across movement issues, and joy (Paterson, 2020; K. Love, personal communication, June 14, 2023).
- Diminishes information asymmetries between funders, grant partners, and the broader nonprofit ecosystem and communities.

> "Certainly, exciting that we have the opportunity to influence the very process that we experience, which is applying for a grant and wondering what it is that's gonna get you the grant. I'm happy to be in it because I'm looking at it through the lens of that person who is writing the grant, with most of the foundation people making these decisions have not had that experience in any shape or form. So they cannot relate to a grantee saying certain things and they just can't interpret in the context. I can close my eyes and I can listen to a video and I can say, yeah, I understand what that person is trying to say cuz I've been there." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

> "When you are able to work with grantee partners to co-create a shared analysis of what the barriers are, then philanthropy can much more effectively provide support for overcoming these obstacles in ways that allow the work to thrive." — Erin Rogers, HIVE Fund

Examples of practice

- The Global Greengrants Fund makes grassroots efforts around the world in support of environmental justice, human rights, and sustainability. Grantmaking priorities are determined by decentralized advisory boards comprising environmental and social movement leaders and experts from the region where the grants are made. Results from an evaluation of the organization's peer-led grantmaking at the 10-year mark showed that they were able to advance the environmental agenda more than some other funders because grants were used for strategies and needs the grant partners felt were best.
- The Brooklyn Community Foundation's Neighborhood Strength participatory grantmaking model started with a community visioning process where community members identified priority areas of concern and solutions. The foundation then formed a council of selected community leaders to review concerns and solutions and recommended five grants to support inclusive public and green spaces for community gatherings. Outcomes from the evaluation of this participatory grantmaking process revealed that the approach required time and infrastructure for thoughtful recruitment processes. Also, the process strengthened relationships among participants (Brooklyn Community Foundation, 2016 & 2018).
- In 2021, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative's (CZI) Community Fund initiated a participatory grantmaking process in order to build trust and allow community members with lived experience the power to influence the decisions that impacted their lives. Directly impacted community members were engaged in grant funding decision-making following a design process that included inclusive practices such as a language justice service. A case study of the first two participatory grant cycles indicated several successes (e.g., the process helped to forge strong relationships between CZI staff and the community; identify where reviewer bias emerged; and demonstrate the benefits of the language justice efforts). Preliminary findings also revealed that the approach increased representation of grassroots organizations that received funding and organizations with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or other people of color at the staff, leadership, and board levels (Yancy, 2023).

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- The best conditions may be in the context of funder's local place-based work or more long-term strategies, where the funder has established mature connections in the ecosystem. Because this approach can be used to build stronger ties and trust, an openness to increasing understanding of history, culture, and context though interactions with community members and organizations is key.
- When the funder and those engaged in the participatory grantmaking process have shared values that undergird the process.
- When a grantmaking portfolio budget is sufficient to support the resources needed for participatory grantmaking for the duration of the effort.

Other considerations

- Foundations need to make thoughtful consideration about how they ask to be part of their participatory groups. Without thoughtful consideration individuals on the panel may not be reflective of the community and lived experience they are looking to hear from.

> "Co-creation of strategy takes time and is nonlinear, and so there have been things that are difficult and that continue to be difficult ... We need to reorient how philanthropy thinks about how change happens. We're holding all of these different pieces, and it doesn't fit neatly into what traditional philanthropy wants to see, wants to hear, and how they want to get information." — U.S. Funder

- The deep, systemic change that participatory grantmaking requires at the foundation level is complicated, involving complex processes and timelines that align with new ways of working. It's important to balance the need to build relationships and keep building institutional memory while guarding against gatekeeping behaviors. Process timelines should include activities that allow for the participatory grant makers to get to know each other and lay the foundation for trusting relationships.
- Resources for additional staff training and skilled facilitators may be necessary to build rapport with and engage participatory grantmaking partners in ways that support their authentic and meaningful participation.
- Staff and leadership should be prepared for questions from external partners about how power dynamics within the foundation may show up in the work. For example, partners may want to know the likelihood of staff leading the work will experience punitive action if higher-ups are displeased with the results of the process. This may be a particular concern among partners working with a BIPOC foundation staff lead who may be perceived as being vulnerable to repercussions.

> "The original grantmaking advisory committee I was part of was only one-year and it didn't give enough time to actually get to know each other." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

- Starting with small pilots in one or two program areas is a way for both funders and the participatory grantmaking partners to use lessons learned from the pilot to inform refinements and potential expansion across the foundation.
- Participatory grantmaking may facilitate new organizations that apply for funding because the participatory grantmakers may have connections in networks the foundation has not reached. These organizations may be unfamiliar with the systems and grant selection processes of the funder organization (or philanthropy more broadly). Funders, with the collaboration and leadership of their grantmaking partners, can design more trust-based application processes (see Trust-Based Philanthropy section).
- Participatory grantmaking offers an opportunity to expand flexibility and enhance innovation in grant proposal submission requirements. The participatory grantmaking partners can inform this process. Video proposals are an example of nontraditional proposal formats.
- Process outcomes (e.g., participant satisfaction, meaningfulness of the experience) are equally if not more important than impact outcomes. Participatory grantmaking offers an enabling context for participatory evaluation. Community members and other grant partners can participate in co-creating the metrics as they are best suited to understand what success means.

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

- Who are the key decision-makers in your organization or community who will need to commit to shifting power to move forward?
- Do you have sufficient resources to support an operating budget that will make your participatory philanthropy efforts successful?
- How much capacity is there on your staff team in areas such as facilitation and group decision-making processes? In which areas might you be able to get external support or training?
- Are your estimates for how long it will take to complete work in each phase truly realistic?
- Who is your organization seeking to engage in the grantmaking process? How will you give attention to racial/ethnic and other forms of diversity without tokenizing participants?
- Where will grants be made? What will grant partners be able to do with the funds? How will decisions about grants be made? Who will make decisions about grants?
- How will you ensure transparency in every step of the process?

From the Participatory Grantmaking Toolkit, by Fund for Shared Insight, 2023

LEARN MORE

Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grantmaking

This report looks at why and how funders are engaging in participatory grantmaking and shifting decision making power to communities most impacted. Through examples and insights from a diverse range of participatory grantmakers, this report explores the benefits, challenges, and models of participatory grantmaking. This resource offers specific steps for implementing participatory grantmaking.

Participatory Grantmaking Toolkit

Developed by the Fund for Shared Insight, this toolkit provides resources to inform and inspire funder's journey toward more participatory practices. The toolkit includes a funder readiness assessment, tools for implementation (e.g., an operating budget check-list and sample project outline and scope, resources on roles), and an example of practice that details implementation of the Participatory Climate Initiative.

Trust-Based Philanthropy

Definition

According to the Trust-Based Philanthropy (TBP) Project, "Trust-Based Philanthropy is a values-based approach that addresses the inherent power imbalance between funders, nonprofits, and the communities they serve." TBP emphasizes moving away from transactional interactions between funders and grant partners and toward relationships characterized by ongoing dialogue, transparency, and mutual learning. TBP centers cultivating and building trust, with trust representing a catalytic process essential for shifting power in service to a "healthier and more equitable nonprofit system." Organizational culture change is the foundation that supports implementing the six core TBP practices, including multiyear unrestricted giving, streamlined applications and reporting, and enhanced transparency of grantmaking processes and information flows (TBP Project, 2021).

Foundational elements

TBP is a movement that responds to philanthropy's traditional top-down approach by inviting funders to redistribute power through a trust-based approach. The focus on trust in TBP underscores how conventional relationships in grantmaking — which de-emphasize mutuality and nonprofits' needs for respect and genuine connection — help shape power imbalances. BIPOC-led organizations and organizations led by other marginalized groups are often more likely to have fewer connections and relationships with funders compared to their white counterparts. Due to legacies of racism and other systems of oppression, such as class and racial segregation in housing and education, BIPOC communities often do not share or are on the margins of the social and professional networks of foundation staff. Even among funders serving BIPOC communities, foundation staff and leaders have historically been predominately white. Much work remains today to make foundation staff and leadership more racially and ethnically diverse.

To begin the journey into TBP, funders examine their own privilege and power. Funders examine their own values and identify pathways to integrate and articulate the values of TBP across the organization. These values include work for systemic equity, redistribute power, center relationships, partner in a spirit of service, be accountable, and embrace learning. With these cornerstones in place, leaders and staff collaborate to create a trust-oriented foundation culture that is rooted in humility and deep learning for all staff and leadership. Leadership and staff engage in a learning process to understand ways trust is and is not embodied in the organization. These organizational cultural shifts are a foundation to ensure that the mindsets, policies, and processes are in place to support engagement in the six trust-based grantmaking practices described below.

> "When there is space opened up for people to actually push back against power or to share a vulnerability within a power dynamic that isn't held against them, you can start a cycle of trust building where both parties – even though there's a power imbalance – start to see that more honest communication actually leads to benefit." — Erin Rogers, HIVE Fund

What will it take to embed this approach?

In addition to cultivating a trust-based organizational culture, funders who engage in trust-based grantmaking strive to be viewed by nonprofits as trustworthy. Funders should be intentional about cultivating relationships and creating the conditions for reciprocity, mutual benefit, and free-flowing, bidirectional feedback. Specific actions that can help create these conditions include "asking permission, listening, honoring what we hear, expressing gratitude, and being open to learning and transformation" (TBP Project, n.d.). Leaders and staff can also take the time to learn about context (e.g., history, culture, and strengths of the community and nonprofits' work) before coming to the table with nonprofits (TBP Project, n.d.). The grant partner and funder relationship is characterized by the funder stepping back from directing the work and what gets funded while being a support for grant partners. As described by the TBP Project, the six core TBP practices are as follows:

1. **Give multiyear unrestricted funding.** This grantmaking practice allows grant partners the flexibility to assess and determine where funds are most needed. This supports grant partner innovation and sustainability, and fosters trust between funders and grant partners. This practice can begin with assessing current portfolios and gathering data about what is needed to change. This practice may involve readjusting grantmaking criteria as well as working toward growing investments for the community and the long-term sustainability of grant partners (TBP Project, 2021; Milway et al., 2022).
2. **Get to know prospective grant partners.** The onus is on funders to do the research and get to know prospective grant partners instead of relying on traditional approaches that burden nonprofits. This practice may include revisiting grantmaking criteria to center those most impacted by the issues the funder seeks to address and diversifying funder networks to broaden the diversity of grant partners engaged. Throughout this process, funders need to examine their biases in learning about and selecting grant partners to create a more inclusive process.
3. **Simplify and streamline paperwork.** This practice includes reducing the grant partner burden by only asking questions that cannot be determined outside of reporting. It also involves reviewing reporting processes to identify and eliminate jargon that can confuse and alienate nonprofits, NGOs, and CSOs (e.g., theory of change, quantifiable metrics, and scalability; TBP Project, 2021; Milway et al., 2022).

> "Just maybe being a little bit more flexible with reporting requirements because not everything, especially depending on the grant size, needs to be tracked and reported because it is so hard to do that. Sometimes I don't even know if I have done it right. I didn't realize what I was doing was potentially inaccurate, and it still causes me stress just thinking about two years ago I didn't know about reporting. That type of stuff just puts a lot of unnecessary pressure." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

4. **Be transparent and responsive.** The foundation should be clear and upfront in every way possible. This includes being open about decision-making processes and timelines as well as the funder's place in its equity journey. The foundation should also provide quick decline decisions when an organization is not a good fit to avoid misleading and wasting an organization's time (TBP Project, 2021).

5. **Solicit and act on grant partner feedback.** This practice can include surveying current and past grant partners about your funder practices. It is essential for funders to listen to grant partners in as many settings as possible and integrate feedback as a part of every board meeting and board-staff retreat. It is also important to communicate to grant partners when and how their feedback was used to build trust and accountability (TBP Project, 2021; Milway et al., 2022.)

6. **Offer responsive, adaptive nonmonetary support.** Offer responsive support based on what grant partners express as needs, challenges, or opportunities. Examples of support can include providing mentorship, offering emotional support during tough transitions, supplying advisory committee service, hosting restorative retreats, offering meeting space, providing sabbatical grants and transitional support, giving access to professional services, writing letters of support, or sponsoring events (TBP Project, 2021).

> "The funder has been really receptive toward helping us think of other funding opportunities too. I felt like that was really unique because they offered that up as we know we're not your only funders and we want to help you think about where else you could be looking for funding." — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

Benefits

The benefits of TBP include the following:

- **Community partners that implement their own solutions produce a positive and responsive impact.** Community partners have deep relationships in the community and can respond effectively to needs with flexible funding, including during emergencies and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hirsch Philanthropy Partners, 2022).
- **The approach supports trusting and authentic relationships between funders and community organizations.** This facilitates collaboration between grant partners and funders and enhances decision- making that is responsive to community needs (Hirsch Philanthropy Partners, 2022).
- **The development of a cycle of trust allows for pushing back against power.** Even when there is a power imbalance between funders and grant partners, the ability of grant partners to push back without fear of negative consequences or retaliation is a positive aspect of TBP. This characterizes authentic relationship building and is an indicator of diminished power imbalance. The cycle of trust may also open the door for funder conversations with grant partners and other nonprofits that considers the use of other approaches to shifting power.

- **TBP systematically cuts down on reporting and other requirements.** TBP calls on funders to decrease substantial amounts of reporting, reducing the burden on grant partners.

> "Much of this time reporting has been taken up to learn things that are really unnecessary to the mission and the actual programs."
>
> — U.S. Nonprofit Leader

Example of practice

Using a trust-based funding framework, the Hellman Collaborative Change Initiative granted $10.7 million in multiyear funding and an additional $1 million in capacity strengthening resources for cross-sector collaborations to address systemic issues in San Francisco and Alameda counties. One of the Initiative partners, Food As Medicine, reported positive outcomes, including scaling the clinic model from one pilot to 16 clinics. Further, 92% of participants reported healthier eating, and nearly one-half of clinic patients improved on key indicators for hypertension and diabetes risk (Hirsch Philanthropy Partners, 2022).

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- When the foundation does not have a specific set of community- or participant-level outcomes it seeks to achieve through grantmaking. TBP is best oriented to supporting outcomes aligned with the grant partner's priorities which may include organization-level outcomes.
- In times of crises and emergencies such as the COVID-19 global pandemic when quick turnaround for moving funds to existing and new grant partners is paramount.

Other considerations

- Program Officers need skills in "inclusiveness — a responsive, service orientation; a focus on the flow of grants to under-served communities and their leaders; and networking ability to help grant partners grow their ecosystem of collaborators" (Milway, 2022).
- It is vital for funders to acknowledge their place and power within the current funding ecosystem. Shifting practice toward TBP means that funders recognize that they may not always have the best answers or be the right entity to address the issue.
- If leadership support for adopting TBP is lacking, it can be difficult to embed the organizational change to advance and sustain this practice. Using TBP without broader, long-term institutional commitment could ultimately harm relationships with grant partners who may be negatively impacted by the sunsetting of TBP practices. The foundation may experience reputational risks if it appears the motives for using TBP appear

to not be centered on the needs of the grant partners (Whitfeild, n.d.).

- Investing in culture change, grant process adjustments, relationship cultivation, and building feedback loops can be time intensive. Engaging with TBP requires planning for the time and resources to make the necessary organizational and operational changes.

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

- What values do we want to exemplify by integrating Trust-Based Philanthropy into our work?
- Do we have verbal/written support from our board? Is there sufficient budget resources to support the changes that accompany this approach?
- Are there any internal (or external) structures that are barriers for us to make Trust-Based Philanthropy organizational culture and practice changes?

LEARN MORE

Roadmap to Trust-Based Transformation

This one pager provides "common milestones" to help guide organizations through the implementation of Trust-Based Philanthropy.

Strategic Focal Points for Trust-Based Boards

This resource provides objectives, guiding questions, and activities to help the board orient around Trust-Based Philanthropy.

Strategies for Using Foundations' Wealth and Influence to Shift Power

Definition

These approaches to shifting power focus on ways that foundations can use their wealth and influence to redistribute power to the foundation's direct beneficiaries and beyond:

- Use the foundation's financial capital to shift power.
- Use influence and leadership to catalyze shifting power in the field.

The foundation uses its wealth and clout to influence other funders and actors in the ecosystems, regions, and countries (e.g., policymakers, government officials, bilateral/multilateral organizations, corporations) with whom they work. These approaches also underscore the influence and liberty foundation boards and leadership have to interrogate how the foundation accumulates additional wealth and determine new ways to grow and use the endowment. This may include spending down the endowment, the act of "intentionally spending money faster than that money is being replenished" (Indie Philanthropy Initiative, n.d.).

Foundational elements

Similar to other power shifting approaches, leveraging wealth and influence orients the foundation to being more accountable to grant partners, other nonprofits in the social sector ecosystem, and communities. Many foundations start this journey in recognition of the direct connection between philanthropic wealth accumulation and the wealth generated through extractive economic systems with roots in settler colonialism, slavery, and other systems of oppression. Philanthropy often supports work to ameliorate conditions created by the very extractive economic systems that generated philanthropic wealth and systems that continue to perpetuate inequities. This is particularly relevant to donors and foundations supporting work in BIPOC and other marginalized communities furthest from equity and justice. A foundation's financial capital is a space for significant power imbalance that disproportionately impacts BIPOC and other marginalized communities with less power.

> "I'll be honest, power sharing is really, as Audre Lorde put it, tools of the master, acknowledging that yes there's power, and that power deeply sits with certain individuals, institutions and really lies in capital, right? It lies in money as a form of capital. It lies in social power in the form of alumni networks, linguistic abilities, invisible abilities, proximities to power and wealth. I think for me, when we're talking about power sharing, it really is performative. It really does not negate and address the structural issues that come from the exploitation and extraction of labor and mineral resources of the majority world." — Dumiso Gatsha, Success Capital Africa

The approach of using the foundation's financial capital to shift power emphasizes non-grant investments primarily generating financial returns and social benefits to the communities the funder serves. Though not new, for many funders this approach is yet to be explored, and action would break new ground in their institutions. Newly forming foundations and funds have an opportunity to develop financial capital use practices with the expressed purpose of shifting power.

These approaches also extend the foundation's role to influencing other ecosystem actors to be more accountable to partners and communities by shifting power. These approaches are a departure from traditional notions of the role and functions of philanthropy largely centered on grantmaking.

What will it take to embed this approach?

Using the funder's financial capital to shift power is an internally facing way to leverage the funder's wealth and influence. This approach involves a reimagining of the purpose of the endowment and reframing notions of risk. Exploration of this approach may begin with the board and leadership level setting around the inequities associated with wealth accumulation in philanthropy, including the historical roots of philanthropy and parallels with extractive economic systems that have perpetuated structural oppression and racism. Surfacing and acknowledging the source of the foundation's wealth may be useful in identifying power shifting strategies directly relevant to the communities most impacted historically.

The board and leadership can engage in discussions to explore ways to use the foundation's financial capital that are consistent with its values and strategies around shifting power. This may involve identifying endowment investment opportunities that bring more social benefit to the communities the foundation serves or establishing a portfolio of social impact investments focused on the communities it serves. Other investment opportunities include land and real estate projects that are led and owned by BIPOC communities; community-controlled loan funds and other financial infrastructure; and products and services created by and for frontline BIPOC communities. These investments are highlighted in Shifting Capital and Power to Building the Regernative Economy which explores the Justice Funders' Just Transition investment framework. Just Transition investements focus on building a regenerative economy, one that redistributes wealth, democratizes power and shifts economic control to BIPOC and other marginazlied communities. In addition to minset shifts, effective implementation of Just Transition investments means prioritzing community needs and self-determination over the financial gains of the investor; providing non-extractive investment terms co-created with investees; assuming financial risks that would harm communities; and utilizing an intergrated capitable approach that pairs investments with grants and other non-financial resources (e.g., financial technical assistance; Justice Funders, 2023).

Another practice to shift power using financial capital is assessing and revising the spending policy to increase the endowment payout, including using funds to amplify power shifting strategies. Moreover, these discussions might lead to an exploration of whether spending down the endowment provides the most social benefit to the communities the foundation serves. If a plan is created, it should include being clear about goals, adjusting payout schedules and timelines, developing a communications strategy, and reviewing charters and other legal documents. Engaging diverse management teams is a practice that aligns with commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Belk, 2018; Justice Funders, 2022; Nonprofit Quarterly, 2020).

In addition to the foundation's financial capital power, foundations also wield power using the clout they have within a given ecosystem, field, or sector (NCRP, 2018). Using their influence, funders can use their platform to influence other funders to think and act differently with regard to shifting power. One practice is publicly sharing information about the power shifting efforts in which the foundation is engaged and the rationale. Communicating with peer funders and other actors outside the foundation includes media such as press releases, blog posts, articles in the field, conference presentations, and informal conversations. The content may focus on the funder's commitments to do their work differently and describe why. Following up to share what actions were taken to shift power, lessons learned in the process, and results helps other funders learn what it takes to do the work and what to expect.

Boundaries of authority and role may limit the ways staff across the foundation wield power. At the same time, staff should recognize and understand their sphere of influence and strategically find spaces to influence others. Communications staff, managers, and other leaders can support staff in identifying appropriate ways to use their leadership to promote shifting power. Nonetheless, given their position in their institution and their broader sphere of influence, they will have more visible platforms. Courage is an operative practice and skill when speaking and writing about shifting power, particularly when explicitly connecting it to the benefits of advancing inclusion, equity, social justice, anti-oppression, and anti-racism (Oliphant, 2018).

Inviting funders to collaborate in efforts involving power shifting is another way to exert influence and lead on power shifting. For example, staff may create opportunities to work together with other funders to co-invest in a cohort of grant partners or lead the formation of a funder collaborative to advance a specific power shifting strategy. Intermediaries may be engaged as implementation partners, but this approach underscores the role of funders in influencing their peers to join in the work. Useful practices include embedding a learning component that engages both the collaborating funders and the grant partners. Learning questions include those about the ways partnership power dynamics are playing out in the work as well those that explore the outcomes related to power shifting. Maintaining a robust network of peer funders who fund the same program areas and/or fund in the same geographical areas facilitates this approach. Active participation in conferences, communities of practice, and affinity groups is another way to build networks and learn about the work of other funders.

Benefits

Benefits of leveraging the foundation's wealth and influence to shift power include the following:

- **Grow innovation in the philanthropy.** Though not new, these approaches may be viewed as more vanguard or outside the box as they more directly dismantle systemic and institutional power imbalances. Funders engaged in these approaches may help to contribute to new ideas and paradigms that can expand innovation in the philanthropic sector.
- **Enhance accountability.** Engaging other funders as collaborative partners in power shifting facilitates funders making each other accountable for power shifting. Funders can benefit from learning from one another and helping to push thinking and action.

- **Create opportunities for democratization of wealth.** Using the endowment to shift power could potentially create a pathway to democratizing wealth of the foundation if community inclusion, voice, and/or co-creation of strategy is pursued.

Examples of practice

The Kataly Foundation's Restorative Economies Fund (REF) is an integrated capital fund which views capital as a tool for liberation enabling BIPOC communities to lead and govern the work in their community. REF combines grants with non-extractive investments such as loans, loan guarantees, and lines of credit and non-financial support (e.g., strategic advice). The Kataly Foundation is also spending down its endowment. Lessons learned include clearly communicating to grant partners that Kataly is a spend down foundation and renewals of multi-year support may not always be guaranteed (Kataly Foundation, n.d.).

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- If using the foundation's platform to influence the field, this approach may work best when the stance being voiced can be supported by compelling examples of outcomes experienced in the shifting power work.
- If using influence to lead the creation of a funder collaboration, this approach may work best when strategies align and all the partners are able to commit to give the time and resources necessary to advance the work.

Other considerations

- Using the foundation's financial capital to shift power creates an opportunity to involve staff, grant partners, and others impacted in a consultative capacity or as co-creators of strategy. This engagement may be most effective in foundations with deep experience in consulting and co-creating strategy with those outside the organization, where a strong degree of mutual trust exists.
- Downsides of spending down include reduced funding options for grant partners, loss of institutional influence, and the need to transition staff to new career opportunities. Funders need to weigh the costs and benefits.
- Practices like increasing the payout may gain more board support when the endowment investments are performing well.
- Using the foundation's voice to influence the field may present some reputational risks. It is plausible that some in the sector may disagree with a particular stance about power shifting, which can affect relationships with other funders and opportunities for collaboration. Regranting funders may risk losing funding opportunities.
- When influencing other funders to join collaborative efforts to shift power, it is important to ensure alignment of values, readiness of partners to shift power, and the time, effort, and resources necessary for the duration of the work.

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

- How might we challenge our current assumptions on the role of capital (grants and investments) and wealth in advancing collective well-being?
- What are our assumptions on perpetuity and risk? How do we challenge these assumptions given what the current political, economic, and climate conditions ask of us in this moment?
- What is the role of the endowment? Is it to ensure that this philanthropic institution can exist forever or to ensure that it makes an impact in society?
- How can we ensure that our non-grant investments share and prioritize financial returns and social benefits to the communities we aim to support?
- How can we shift our perception of risk from something to tolerate or avoid to something that those with wealth and power have the privilege to take?
- For those charged with carrying out a donor's intent through their philanthropy, what is the balance between the literal intent and the spirit of the intent?
- How can we build and share leadership within our institution and the larger field of philanthropy?

From Justice Funders Resonance Framework, 2022

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Resonance: A Framework for Philanthropic Transformation

This framework describes practices funders can use to redistribute wealth, democratize power, and shift economic control to communities. The Spectrum of Extractive to Restorative to Regenerative Philanthropy includes dimensions of philanthropic practice relevant to leveraging influence and wealth (e.g., operations and endowment).

Power Moves, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

This toolkit explores three dimensions of power including power wielding. Funders can use this resource to assess where they are in wielding power and strategize on how to change their programs and operations to be more equitable.

Spending Down, Indie Philanthropy

This information page provides guidance, stories, and other resources about Spending Down funding strategies.

Equitable Partnerships in the Global South

Definition

In the international context, power shifting is critical to addressing racial and other forms of inequities created and perpetuated by the history of colonialism. Other forms of inequities based on gender, religion, and ethnolinguistic differences are more salient in the Global South compared to the Global North, where structural racism is at the forefront. Although all the power shifting approaches presented in the report can be applied to international contexts, this section summarizes power shifting approaches, lessons, and language commonly used in the international development, humanitarian aid, and peace-building sectors. These power shifting approaches are:

- **Locally led, locally owned development and Localization.** Localization engages local actors by putting decision-making power and funding directly in the hands of the community and other local actors, including local capacity strengthening practices for individuals and organizations. Locally led, locally owned development refers to initiatives led and owned by local actors who set their own priorities and lead decision-making on strategy, program design, implementation, and evaluation. See the Additional Learning section of the Appendices to learn more about the similarities and differences between these two approaches.
- **Decolonizing development, aid, and peace-building movement.** Explicitly addresses structural racism in the aid system and promotes using an understanding of the role of structural racism to shift power and resources more equitably from Global North to Global South actors and center Global South actors to lead.
- **Community philanthropy.** Strengthens community capacity, assets, and voice while elevating local communities as decision-makers and co-investors with philanthropy rather than traditional beneficiaries.
- **Asset-based approach.** Identifies, mobilizes, and builds on the assets that local communities already possess in order to make changes.
- **People-centered development.** Focuses on communities' holistic well-being, beyond their economic needs, by promoting self-reliance, sustainability, participatory methods, inclusivity, and social justice.

Despite their different definitions, historical contexts of emergence, and operational specifics, these approaches are connected by their shared focus on the quest within the philanthropic and development sectors for advancing equitable and sustainable impact. Specifically, these approaches seek to recognize and, more importantly, unlock and unblock the power of historically marginalized populations, including Indigenous peoples, the poor in the Global South, and minoritized Black, Indigenous, and People of Color individuals, especially in the U.S. **These approaches disrupt power imbalances because the practices they espouse focus on the efforts to shift away from expert-centric, Global-North-originated activities toward impact-proximate, community-based, and grassroots activities in which the lived and living experiences of the marginalized global majority are valued. These approaches recognize local peoples as rich sources of knowledge and insights that, when centered and supported, can lead to equitable and sustainable program actions and interventions.**

Another common thread of these approaches is that they seek to identify and address the ways in which colonial power structures continue to produce contemporary inequalities and shape the global development narrative and agenda.

In recent years, several efforts to shift power and resources from Global North to Global South actors, or Black, Indigenous, and other oppressed groups in the U.S., are underway in grassroots, civil society, International Nongovernmental Organizations [INGOs], and even governmental circles. To name a few:

- The Grand Bargain Agreement made during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, where the largest donors and humanitarian aid organizations agreed to shift resources to local actors, setting a target to increase funding to local actors by 25% (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, n.d.)
- #ShiftThePower, a call to new mindsets and actions to advance locally owned development and shift power to local actors (Global Fund for Community Foundations, n.d.)
- Reparative philanthropy to reckon with and acknowledge structural racism, redistribute wealth to Black and Indigenous communities, and repair relationships (Decolonizing Wealth Project, n.d.; Florant & Williams, 2022)

In the next sections of this profile, we describe common themes across power shifting approaches commonly used in the international context with regard to foundational elements, what it will take to embed these approaches, benefits, and examples of practice. Operational specifics vary across these approaches; thus, we provide additional information about the Decolonizing development, humanitarian aid, and peace-building movement in the Deep Dive box. This international approach has high relevance to the current day context and information based on the literature and interviews.

Foundational elements

These approaches focus on addressing the power that resides in narratives that shape how economically oppressed and minoritized people of the global majority have been viewed, and consequently, how they have been treated by philanthropic actors and international development practitioners. In other words, power is recognized as the narratives, models, and approaches that position funders and practitioners as having knowledge, legitimacy, and authority in diagnosing and defining the problems faced by the global majority; defining what counts as knowledge; and determining the frameworks, tools, and interventions that will be implemented. Therefore, power shifting according to these approaches recognizes and invests in new narratives, tools, and approaches that position local actors to lead with their ideas, framing of issues/problems, and crafted solutions that will achieve the outcomes they define and tell the stories they want to tell. In addition, funders recognize that power will come not only from a change in the process of how local actors are engaged but from the more equitable and sustainable change that will be achieved through the processes crafted, owned, and led by local actors.

What will it take to embed this approach?

Funders who embrace any of these power shifting approaches should recognize that the process starts with shaping and using a new narrative for how they speak about partnership with those most impacted in local ecosystems, including their grant partners and local actors. At the core of the new narrative change is a mindset shift from a deficit- to an asset-based approach with local actors. The asset-based approach reflects the value

that is being placed on what local actors bring to the partnership. Beyond changing the narrative, funders must also be ready to accept that the authentic embrace of local actors as assets may require longer timelines for any engagement. The intentional creation of more opportunities for local actors to engage most likely will mean increased costs for overall engagement. It is important that funders can prioritize organizational mechanisms to embed the new practices in all phases of their partnerships with local actors, from concept generation to how they transition out of relationships. Core practices include:

- **Plan for, support, and invest in continuous participation and community engagement.** Participation, negotiation, and consensus building are time, labor, and resource intensive. Therefore, flexible funding modalities that can be responsive to dynamic local context and priorities and used for activities like relationship building, which may not have immediate or easily measured/attributable results, are critical success factors. It is important to set these expectations early and to secure investment to compensate participants financially and/or through other psychosocial supports, hire skilled facilitators to support participation and consensus building, and build capacity both internally and in beneficiary communities. Particular attention should be paid to removing accessibility barriers and enabling the participation of all local groups, especially those whose voices are often left out.
- **Embrace a portfolio approach that focuses on impact beyond a single grant and is designed to enable programs to incorporate feedback iteratively throughout their life cycle.** This approach facilitates greater opportunities for involving communities in the conceptualization, prioritization, reporting, and oversight stages. It also adds depth and nuance to the institutional understanding of the local context and balances the inherent unpredictability of this approach with the need for accountability, budget predictability, and cross-program learning (Cole et al., 2016). Capacity strengthening, partnerships, and solutions are designed to strengthen the community, organizations, and local ecosystem rather than to deliver easily measurable results on big grants with fixed outcomes (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). Programs that take an iterative pilot and knowledge building approach require space for continuous reflection and learning, tolerate failure, and support learning from mistakes and new information (Cole et al., 2016).

> "It's just unfortunate that funders are scared of failure, particularly sharing what failure looks like. People are scared of being in the journey to shift power because they're assuming that you can only share the win and the success when you've reached the destination. — Dumiso Gatsha, Success Capital Africa

- **Ensure internal buy-in and capacity across all levels of the organization.** Internal buy-in and sufficient organizational capacity are crucial because the work of power shifting requires a high level of effort and skill from staff within funding organizations as well as shifts in the organizational norms and mindsets. This can start with practices like preferentially hiring from the communities and movements served, building diversity and meaningful inclusion among the board and staff, and placing greater advisory power in the hands of local leaders. Staff should be supported in building a self-awareness of their biases, positions of power, and privilege

in relationship to the partner communities. Funders can strengthen capacity for power shifting by supporting the attentiveness of staff to note who is not present or engaged when decisions are being influenced or made with grant partners. Important internal skills include identifying opportunities where centering and participation can happen and knowing how to bring in the right local actors within the community ecosystem of a grant partner.

- **Reshape grantmaking norms and practices to give more agency to local partners.** Barriers to meaningful local participation in the grantmaking process, like restrictive grant eligibility, selection, and reporting requirements and complex application processes, should be removed (Shuayb, 2022). The selection process should involve local voices and give preference to local organizations that are deeply rooted in the community as well as marginalized communities. Utilization of practices such as participatory grantmaking and similar models require not only equity-focused procedures but shifts in mindsets such that the knowledge, lived expertise, and meaningful participation of local partners is valued. Moreover, opportunities should be sought to elevate local Global South organizations as lead partners and to partner with smaller local grantmakers, particularly where local funds are already mobilized in the movement (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). Funders should consider changes to grant structure in addition to the grant process, including increasing the use of general support grants and overhead support to enable local partners to be flexible and exercise their own discretion.
- **Elevate and protect the local voices in civic spaces.** Local activists and other local actors engaged in efforts to strengthen civic organizations and institutions play an important role in identifying and mobilizing local solutions. Funders can support their efforts by supporting initiatives that elevate their voices and free them to use their collective expertise and wisdom to develop new ideas and structures for shifting power.

  Equally important, to protect and expand democracies and shift power internationally, funders must play a role in protecting civic space — the ability for individuals and groups to freely organize, dialogue, dissent, and jointly express views (Tiwana, 2023; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.). Civic spaces and civil society actors are increasingly under attack with the expansion of repressive laws justified as counterterrorism efforts and new technologies used by the government to track and restrict media freedoms (Tiwana, 2023; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.). The issue's gravity, scope, and urgency require funders to collaborate with peer funders to support the immediate needs of local resistance, such as providing emergency funds for persecuted activists and organizations and flexible, multiyear grants to local actors. Civic space funders also need to support long-term systems change, such as building new coalitions and partnerships to jointly tackle threats to civic spaces, share lessons and resources, and build movements for a fair and inclusive society (Brechenmacher & Carothers, 2019).

> "In the habit of everydayness one has to always be attentive to, is this a decision that I should be making, or should I be calling on other folks? And that is an awareness and a muscle that will be built." — Sandile Ndelu, FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund

Benefits

Treating local actors as assets and creating mechanisms and opportunities for engaging them as equal partners throughout the full life cycle of any project or program is viewed as hugely beneficial to funders and local actors alike. The specific benefits include:

- **The input and guidance from local actors that are grounded in their lived/living experiences will increase the likelihood that any solutions developed will be more likely to have their support and buy-in.** This buy-in and commitment will make local resistance to solutions as an external imposition less likely.
- **Local knowledge and experience will better position solutions for maximum impact, especially where those are based on understanding how to overcome long-standing local barriers to any proposed solutions** (Cole et al., 2016).
- **When funders invest in strengthening the capacity to have local voices recognized and represented, this capacity will have long-term collateral benefits to the community and the future work of the funders.** Essentially, funders can build on and leverage the partnerships and processes for engaging local actors.

Examples of practice

- The Poverty Action Fund made the flow of debt cancellation money transparent to the people of Uganda. In spending areas like education, communities' ability to scrutinize, hold accountable, and, as a result, own global deal flows led to increased enrollment and literacy (Drummond, 2022).
- East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative's participatory grantmaking approach involves a peer review committee made up of 13 East African sex workers and queer activists who decide which proposals are funded (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). Intermediate process outcomes, like increased community participation in funding decisions, are valuable because they allow those in the movement to directly support the most impactful work and reinforce community members' value as contributors and sources of knowledge.

Under what conditions does this approach work best?

- When funders have organizational buy-in for power shifting practices and can make use of flexible funding modalities and timelines.
- When the funding organization has the skills to support participatory methods and sufficient local, contextual understanding of the communities being served.
- When definitions of quality and success are not rigid and Global North-centric with predetermined reporting and evaluation requirements focused on notions of "impact" that are incompatible with the local communities' vision for progress.

> "Many donors in my country are coming with values of efficiency and productivity and return on investment and not values of justice and equity and inclusion. And so you end up with this techno managerial kind of mindset rather than a justice and equity mindset." — International Technical Assistance Provider

DEEP DIVE:

Decolonizing Development, Humanitarian Aid, and Peace-Building Movement

WHAT IS IT?

Decolonizing development, humanitarian aid, and peace-building is a movement that explicitly addresses structural racism in the aid system and promotes using an understanding of the role of structural racism to shift power and resources more equitably from Global North to Global South actors and center Global South actors to lead. This movement, commonly referred to as decolonizing aid, calls on donors, INGOs, NNGOs, policymakers, and local actors to transform the sector through a process that leads with acknowledging and examining the colonial and racist history and structures of the international aid system. This process allows for context-specific root cause analysis that helps to surface how structural racism has shaped institutions and structures and contributes to unequal power relationships. Local ownership and leadership of this process and the solutions developed are essential to decolonizing aid (Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, 2021; Peace Direct, 2021).

> "The international aid/development sector hasn't been asking the big elephant in the room question, which is actually, is the system fit for purpose, and are we part of the problem? Because there's a problem of structural racism which has barely been acknowledged by most people in the sector. The current neo-colonial attitudes of most people in the Global North leads them to believe that local actors can't be trusted and they lack capacity. At the core is a problem of structural racism." — Dylan Matthews, Peace Direct

The murder of George Floyd and racial justice movements in the Summer of 2020 have accelerated the current discourse on decolonizing aid, moving it from largely academic circles to more mainstream platforms. In 2021, Peace Direct published Time to Decolonise Aid, the first report of its kind, which describes decolonizing aid and provides a series of recommendations and call to action for funders and other ecosystem actors. This work has now been extended to explore Decolonized and Equitable Partnerships which will be featured in a forthcoming report by Peace Direct.

One important hallmark of the current decolonizing discourse is that it has elevated the perspectives of Global South civil society activists and other local leaders who are on the frontlines of offering solutions for a decolonizing agenda. For example, the recommendations in Time to Decolonise Aid are directly informed by the perspectives and analysis of 158 local activists across 49 countries. The last decade has seen a groundswell of Global South local actors mobilized to dismantle power imbalances and lead in the creation of transformed structures and systems. Decolonizing aid shares this commitment and collective approach with #ShiftThePower and similar efforts that have cultivated spaces for collective thinking and solutions led by local activists, local CSOs, and other proximate organizations and allies.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO EMBED THESE APPROACHES?

Understanding structural racism and using an analysis based on structural racism to dismantle power imbalances is the DNA of decolonizing aid. Though not exhaustive, the practices summarized here are those commonly mentioned across the small number of sources on decolonizing aid and that center structural racism in the solutions offered.

- **Mindset shifts.** Mindset shifts include acknowledging that structural racism exists in every facet of the international development and aid systems and assessing funders' assumptions, practices, and policies for biases and racism. It takes unlearning colonial and racist beliefs and attitudes that local communities lack capacity and skills and local actors cannot be trusted to manage funds. Funders instead learn to respect local people's capacities, strengths, knowledge, and ways of working. Mindset shifts and language also go hand in hand, each influencing the other. Funders can assess the language they use for colonial roots such as "beneficiaries" and "capacity building" and invite local organizations to rename these terms (Peace Direct, 2021).
- **Transforming relationships.** Transforming relationships with grant partners and local groups starts with funders listening deeply to their perspectives on and experiences with power imbalance and structural racism, as well as strategies for change. In Peace Direct's forthcoming report on building Decolonized and Equitable Partnerships, the four values most cited by participants from the Global South that should underpin partnerships are respect, trust, humility, and mutuality. Funders can invite grant partners and local groups to critique funders' power and practices, for example, through an anonymous survey. Funders can also create spaces in which local groups and grant partners can collaborate and even challenge funders' power and practices together (Hewlett Foundation, 2022; Peace Direct, 2021).
- **Organization culture changes.** Within a funders' organization, decolonizing aid fosters a culture that actively opposes racist and discriminatory policies and practices and creates safe spaces for staff to provide criticism (Bond, 2021; Peace Direct, 2021). Funders can also prioritize filling positions with local in-country staff rather than seeking expatriate staff (Petersen & Lentfer, 2017; Peace Direct, 2021).
- **Transformative funding.** As advocated by Arbie Baguios of Aid Re-Imagined, funders should also "fund courageously," practicing flexible funding approaches while accepting a level of risk and relinquishing control over how the money is used (Bagois, 2019). "Funding courageously" may look like funding local organizations directly, setting targets for providing unrestricted funding for local organizations, and adapting due diligence requirements for local organizations. Finally, funders can provide transformative funding to support equitable monitoring, evaluation, and accountability as defined by the community. Funders can invest in Indigenous knowledge and local researchers to center Indigenous values, methods, and culture (Hewlett Foundation; Peace Direct, 2021).

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

Decolonizing aid explicitly calls out and addresses structural racism, getting to the root cause of power imbalances and deeply entrenched injustices of the international aid system. Therefore, many CSOs in the Global North and South believe this movement has the greatest potential to transform the international aid sector. Another perceived benefit of the decolonizing aid movement is that it is locally led by grassroots actors and CSOs. This includes robust discourse and collaboration in virtual/on-line technology platforms to engage local actors and form new coalitions to drive change with their voices and perspectives (Bond, 2021).

When international aid work was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, INGOs heavily relied on local actors to deliver aid and respond to the pandemic. Local actors played a key role as first responders who understood the context and were responsive to the needs of local communities, without the on-the-ground presence of INGO staff. This suggests that local actors are in the best position to deliver humanitarian aid and deep involvement of INGOs may not be necessary (Barbelet et al., 2020; Peace Direct, 2021).

We have found no studies on decolonizing aid outcomes, which is not surprising because decolonizing aid has only gained broad attention in the last few years. Moreover, evidence or impact as narrowly defined by Western-centric research tradition would go against the spirit of decolonization. The future of evidence-building for decolonizing aid is poised to elevate new and existing but lesser-known evaluation frameworks/approaches that privilege Indigenous and locally rooted frameworks and ways of knowing and assessing change.

Questions to Ask to Guide Practice

- Who are the local actors who will be impacted by the funder's investments?
- What lived/living experiences are critical to understanding the problem, issues, shaping actions, and interventions?
- What are we (funders) willing to change in response to the input of the local actors? Is anything nonnegotiable? How are those nonnegotiable items in alignment with our equity commitments?
- In the old business processes, what are the barriers to authentic engagement of local actors as equals?
- Do we have the right people who can be credible and skilled in authentic engagement of local actors?
- Are we allowing sufficient time and resources for true engagement of local actors?
- What investments are needed to ensure authentic and continuous participation of local actors?

LEARN MORE

Power Awareness Tool

A tool for analyzing power in partnerships which is designed to make power imbalances more visible in order to enable partners to analyze and reflect on power relations.

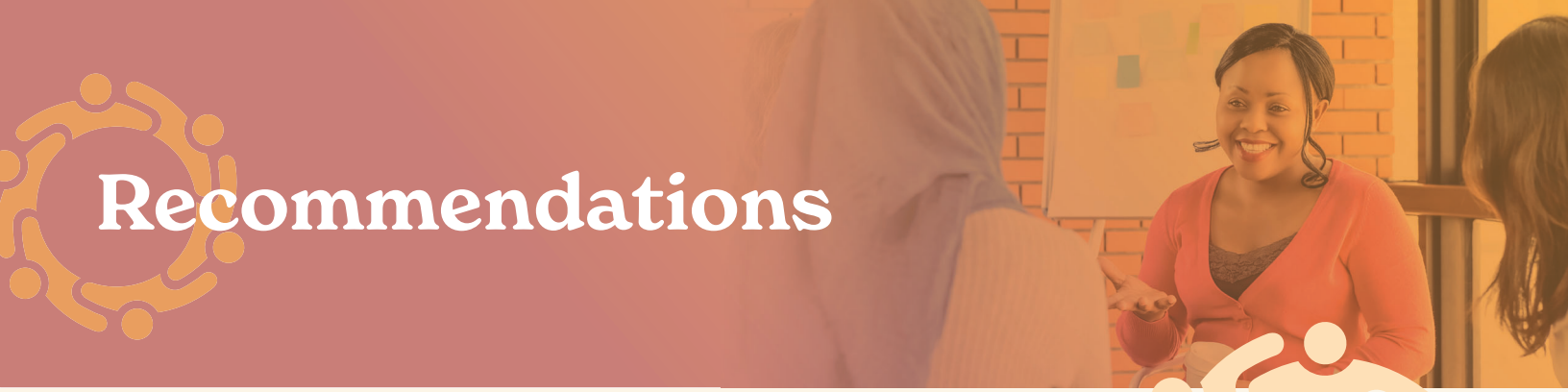
Ethical Storytelling Handbook

This handbook discusses practical recommendations for ethical storytelling in the context of development work in Africa.

Anti-Racist and Decolonial Framework

A framework to help aid organizations understand and address the many ways in which racism and colonialism can impact their work.

4 Recommendations



Recommendations

This section presents recommendations to funders for advancing power shifting in their organizations. The most common benefit observed across the approaches is that shifting power aligns and amplifies funders' efforts to advance equity and justice in the places and communities on which their work focuses. To reap this benefit, thoughtful and intentional planning for using power shifting approaches is critical. Although there is still much to learn about what is needed to effectively shift power, it is clear that a wide range of factors should guide the selection and implementation of power shifting approaches, including funders' readiness.

Some power shifting approaches do not require major structural changes. Others — particularly the strategy and structural shifts power shifting approaches — require more complex structural changes to usher in more sweeping structural pivots, such as more resources, longer or more flexible timelines, or design and planning. Implementing an array of power shifting approaches in a systemic or amplified way also increases the complexity of a foundation's journey to shift power. We developed the recommendations in this section with these guideposts in mind.

Recommendation 1:

PROVIDE AND EXPAND MYGOS

Funders at the beginning of their journey to embed power shifting approaches in their work may want to implement power shifting approaches that require minimal structural changes. We recommend MYGOS, which allows grant partners to make decisions about how to spend grant dollars with the added benefit of consistent, reliable funding for two years or more. Orienting on advancing justice and equity, a MYGOS grantmaking strategy plays a meaningful role in shifting power to the very communities (i.e., Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and groups that have been marginalized) that have been most impacted by systemic inequities globally.

In implementing MYGOS grantmaking, funders affirm their grant partners best understand what their organization needs and trust them to accomplish their missions with more flexible giving. MYGOS also supports the receiving organization's resilience by strengthening its overall operations and infrastructure. Although the ability to significantly scale MYGOS grantmaking may vary by foundation size, scale, and other factors, we recommend the following components:

- **Develop a public-facing commitment statement on MYGOS grantmaking.** The foundation publicly articulates its' rationale for granting MYGOS at a larger scale, including MYGOS as a strategy for power shifting and advancing racial equity and other equity goals.
- **Set a pilot threshold for MYGOS grantmaking.** Foundations of $25 million or more in assets should consider having at least 30% MYGOS grant awards. When doing so, make certain that all programmatic units are actively

engaged in contributing to achieving the threshold.[1] Review the threshold annually and modify as necessary to expand MYGOS grantmaking. When doing so, make sure that all programmatic units are actively engaged in contributing to achieving the threshold. Review the threshold annually and modify as necessary to expand MYGOS grantmaking.

- **Ensure practices and processes are in place to implement MYGOS across the foundation.** With the support of the foundation's top leadership, ensure that each unit has the policies, procedures, and associated materials to implement MYGOS grantmaking most effectively (e.g., when necessary, customized forms that speak to context of unit or strategy). Create and/or revise the requisite forms and on-line fields with a goal of decreasing grant partner burden. Assess current budget processes and refine as needed to facilitate MYGOS grantmaking (e.g., ensure the availability of funding levels necessary for starting or scaling MYGOS and ensure availability of consistent funding levels for multiple years).

Some funders may also find it useful to adjust their budget policy in ways that facilitate the initial implementation of MYGOS grantmaking or scaling up of existing MYGOS grantmaking. For instance, payout-based budgeting can facilitate the ability of Program Officers to provide MYGOS. It is also important to provide capacity strengthening supports to leadership and staff around understanding the importance of relationship cultivation with potential and current MYGOS grant partners.

With an orientation to advancing racial equity, a MYGOS grantmaking strategy plays a meaningful role in redistributing power to the very communities (i.e., Black people, people of color, and groups that have been marginalized) that have been most impacted by systemic inequities. In addition, starting or expanding MYGOS grantmaking strategies may help lay the foundation for embedding other power shifting approaches across the foundation. MYGOS may also be implemented in combination with other power shifting approaches, such as funding under-resourced organizations proximate to local communities and power building grantmaking.

Recommendation 2:

UNDERSTAND THE CORE CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO EMBED POWER SHIFTING APPROACHES THAT REQUIRE MORE PRACTICE OR STRUCTURAL SHIFTS

Compared to MYGOS, other power shifting approaches, such as power building and participatory grantmaking, require more practice and structural shifts. As a foundation explores those power shifting approaches, several core conditions are necessary to embed them. First and foremost is the continual cultivation of mindset shifts. Facilitate mindset shifts by developing deeper and more authentic relationships with grant partners and communities and encouraging individual reflection and intentional capacity strengthening efforts involving the board, leadership, and staff.

1 According to Candid U.S. Social Sector Dashboard 2019, there are over 5,000 U.S. foundations with assets of $25 million or greater.

Mindset Shifts Conditions

- **Ensure leadership and staff training and capacity strengthening efforts around embedding diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice incorporate power shifting topics and frames.** As a foundation starts or continues its ongoing journey to manifest equity and justice internally and externally, use learning opportunities in this space to elevate power shifting topics and frameworks. For example, ground staff training and reflection spaces in the root causes of power imbalances in the philanthropic sector including the tensions that exist (i.e., the economic system that created extreme wealth is inherently tied to the problem of inequity philanthropy seeks to address now). This could also include more practice-oriented topics, such as understanding one's positionality, how to conduct a power analysis, and strategies to avoid gatekeeping behaviors that create new pockets of power and maintain power imbalances in new forms.
- **Redefine what success means.** In power shifting approaches, success means prioritizing accountability to grant partners and communities served, rather than a sole focus on accountability to the foundation board and leadership (Beer, Patrizi, & Coffman, 2021). Current notions of what it means for funders to achieve success are based in domination-oriented mental models grounded in the legacies of colonialism and structural racism. As a foundation continues its journey to advance equity and justice, success can also be redefined to be viewed as progress toward equity by shifting power rather than solely traditional metrics focused on grant partners outcomes and impacts within specified (often unrealistic) time frames that align with the funder's governance processes (e.g., cadence of board meetings).
- **Cultivate a culture open to experiencing failures.** Equity-oriented definitions of success in power shifting means seeking opportunities to responsibly pilot and experiment with power shifting approaches and being open to failure. Openness to failure practically involves redefining risk, incentivizing pilots, and not penalizing staff and grant partners when anticipated outcomes are not achieved. It means staying the course with power shifting goals by using data and learning conversations with grant partners, other partners, and communities to refine the approach or try new ideas (NCRP, 2018).
- **Emphasize staff diversity in the organization's culture and structural shift efforts.** A focused strategy on diversity and inclusion for board, leadership, and staff is an important ingredient for building relationships with partners and community members. This should be grounded in mental models that affirm the benefits of diversity and inclusion to strengthening the work.

Operational Conditions

Power shifting approaches that require significant practice and structural shifts need more time and resources relative to MYGOS. The importance of investments in time and resources cannot be underestimated.

- **Review and modify implementation time frames.** Ensure time frames are flexible and responsive to the needs of power shifting processes. Building in flexibility for nonlinear and less predictable processes is important. This is particularly relevant to the power shifting approaches that engage grant partners and community members in participatory collaboration and decision-making. For example, a culturally responsive and equitable evaluation approach may require more flexibility and longer timelines than a traditional evaluation approach.
- **Develop program budget policies and practices that enable a range of resources to support power shifting.** Ensure budgets allow for resources beyond the grant, such as interpretation services, technical assistance, and convening spaces for peer exchange, collaboration, and learning. When grant partners and community members are invited to participate in collaboration and decision-making, such as in participatory evaluation, ensure resources are available to foster meaningful, active, and authentic participation. Resources include equitable compensation for participating partners, skilled facilitators, and training and other capacity strengthening opportunities for both partners and foundation staff.
- **Create pathways for staff to invest more time to deepen connections and relationships to build trust with grant partners, other actors, and communities.** For example, ensure adequate time and resources for staff to maintain high-quality feedback loops and cultivate authentic relationships (e.g., participate in listening tours or spend time building rapport with community members as part of an evaluation advisory group). Relationship building is core to power shifting being more of a relational process than one that is technocratic or centered on embedding practices detached from the work of viewing and treating partners in a transformational way.

We also recommend that philanthropic funders develop frameworks for deeper analysis that are customized for a foundation's context and the strategies in which its teams are engaged. This could include leveraging evaluation for customized learning for both the foundation and community, engaging evaluators with an equity-focused orientation and skill-set to ensure that learning is nurtured to amplify on-going efforts to shift power.

We hope these recommendations support work to bridge funders' commitments to shifting power and action that spurs new and sustained practice using one or more power shifting approaches. This report and appendices include resources that can further support funders' aims to manifest equity and justice in their work.

Appendices

Appendices

Definitions of Power Shifting Approaches

GRANTMAKING APPROACHES

These power shifting approaches offer funding flows that provide grant partners more agency in how they use funding. These approaches also include efforts to ensure grant funding and funding practices shift power to intermediaries and grant partners most proximate to focus communities with an orientation to equitable engagement with all partners.

APPROACH	DEFINITION
1. Multi-year general operating support (MYGOS)	Provides guaranteed grant support beyond the originating year of funding for general operating or unrestricted support purposes. MYGOS typically includes one application and approval process. This is one practice of trust-based philanthropy (TBP).
2. General operating support	Focuses on funding the organization's mission rather than a specific project. This practice allows for funding to be at the grant partner's discretion and supports daily operations costs.
3. Multi-year support	Provides guaranteed grant support beyond one originating year of funding.
4. Unrestricted project support (or core support)	Allows grant partners to use funds in flexible ways to support their mission.
5. Funding and shifting power to intermediaries and grant partners that are proximate to and advised by local communities*[1]	Prioritizes providing grant support to intermediaries and grant partners most proximate to the focus communities/issues. This acknowledges the expertise and thoughtfulness these actors have about the communities/issues they are proximate to and how they can be addressed. It involves directly funding Global South-based organizations.[2] This approach may also include structuring grants/contracts with intermediaries/large grant partner organizations in ways that redistribute power to smaller, often local organizations more proximate to the focus community/issue. Practices include the funder providing clear expectations about the proportion of funding that should be directed to grant partners more proximate to the local issues and providing clear expectations about flexible funding options (e.g., funding MYGOS or establishing partnership guidelines that encourage intermediaries to enhance transparency around their budgets and staff).

1 The * next to the power shifting approach denotes that it is particularly relevant to the Global South context.

2 Local and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations located in the Global South — low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized countries broadly in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania — that support social, political, and economic development in their own region (Kajimbwa, 2006).

APPROACH	DEFINITION
6. Prioritize funding organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized groups that have historically experienced or currently are experiencing barriers to equitable funding	Prioritizes funding to organizations and communities experiencing historical and current marginalization and underfunding based on an equity analysis of current and historical systems of oppression in a given context. This approach is also used in recognition that organizations led by and serving under-resourced and/or BIPOC communities are uniquely equipped to develop and implement community-informed solutions. In the U.S. context, this approach addresses historical inequities that have given white-led nonprofits more access, privilege, and power in obtaining grant funding. In the global context, this approach addresses context-specific inequities that have given oppressed and marginalized groups less access, privilege, and power in obtaining grant funding.
7. Engage consulting firms comprised of staff who reflect the communities served	Develops relationships with leadership and staff representative of the focus communities and provides funding opportunities for technical assistance, strategy development, and other consultancies. This approach requires articulation of how the work benefits from the lived experience, assets, and expertise of the consultation team and other strategies to avoid tokenization.

POWER BUILDING AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING APPROACHES

These power shifting approaches ensure grant funding for community and grantee capacity strengthening and power building. These approaches involve investing in the ability of communities to make change by elevating community agency and providing supports that build on community assets.

APPROACH	DEFINITION
8. Power building grantmaking approaches	Invests in the ability of local communities to make change through building their power. Grant partners and the communities they are accountable to are co-strategists and/or owners of their own agenda and strategies. Funding supports organizations' work to organize or otherwise center local communities and others most impacted. It may also include grant funding that supports power building policy and advocacy.
9. Culturally responsive evaluation (CRE)	"Recognizes that the demographic, sociopolitical, and contextual dimensions, locations, perspectives, and characteristics of culture matter fundamentally in evaluation" (Hopson, 2009). Evaluation is a tool to improve the lives of marginalized communities in service to social justice and may include participatory processes. Emphasis is given to ensuring inclusion of community members and others most impacted (Hood et al., 2015).
10. Culturally responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE)	Incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the evaluation stages — from evaluation planning to the dissemination of results. Attention is also given to cultural, structural, and contextual factors (e.g., history, social, economic, racial, ethnicity, gender, linguistic). CREE, at a minimum, includes community voices and others most impacted throughout one or more of the evaluation stages. Expanding beyond CRE, CREE is not just one method but it can be applied as a framework to all evaluation methods (Expanding the Bench® Team and Advisory Team, 2019).

APPROACH	DEFINITION
11. Participatory Evaluation	Involves engaging grantee/communities as contributors and decision-makers in one or more phases of evaluation (i.e., design, data collection, data analysis/interpretation, reporting, and dissemination). Emphasis is given to ensuring the inclusion and voice of community members and others most impacted. Participatory evaluation methods can be applied in the context of CRE or CREE.
12. Participatory Rural Appraisal or (Participatory Learning and Action)*	Focuses on giving communities power through having the community participate in defining issues, creating the solution, and monitoring implementation success.

STRATEGY AND STRUCTURAL SHIFTS APPROACHES

These power shifting approaches require structural shifts and a focus on community and grantee inclusion/centering, voice, and in some cases, collaborative decision-making with the funder and other partners. Some of these power shifting approaches may be oriented to laying the foundation for significant power shifting, while others directly involve significant power shifting.

APPROACH	DEFINITION
13. Participatory grantmaking	Enables local communities, grant partners, and other partners to make decisions on one or more aspects of the grantmaking process through models such as flow funding. Participatory grantmaking often occurs through committees, steering committees, and decision-making panels.
14. Co-creation of strategy	Involves local communities, grant partners, and other partners in strategic decision-making with the funder, including developing theories of change, determining how success will be defined, and selecting outcomes and measurement approaches.
15. Co-creating outcomes with grant partners	Provides flexibility in determining grant outcomes that will be tracked, centering grantee inclusion and voice. It may include the grantee and the funder co-developing outcomes, indicators, and metrics within a broader framework shaped by the culture, language, and systems of the funder.
16. Use foundation's influence and leadership to catalyze power shifting in the field	Focuses on the foundation using its wealth and clout to influence other funders and actors in the ecosystems, regions, and countries in which they work (e.g., policymakers, government officials, bilaterals/multilaterals, corporations.).
17. Use the foundation's financial capital to share power	Has the foundation use its financial capital to redistribute power using non-grant investments that offer financial returns and social benefits to the communities the funder serves. This approach may include spending down the endowment, the act of "intentionally spending money faster than that money is being replenished" (Indie Philanthropy Initiative, n.d.).

APPROACH	DEFINITION
18. Locally led, locally owned development and Localization*	Localization engages local actors by putting decision-making power and funding directly in the hands of the community and other local actors, including local capacity strengthening practices for individuals and organizations. Locally led, locally owned development refers to initiatives led and owned by local actors who set their own priorities and lead decision-making on strategy, program design, implementation, and evaluation.
19. Asset-Based Approach*	Identifies, mobilizes, and builds on the assets (individual, association, institutional, physical, and relational) that local communities already possess to make sustainable, community-driven change.
20. People-Centered Development*	Focuses on communities' holistic well-being beyond their economic needs by promoting self-reliance, sustainability, participatory methods, inclusivity, and social justice.
21. Community Philanthropy"	Strengthens community capacity, assets, and voice while building trust and tapping into and building on local resources. It emphasizes giving local communities greater control over their own destinies and transforms traditional beneficiaries into co-investors.

POWER SHIFTING MOVEMENTS

These approaches offer a lens or framework that can be applied to many other power shifting approaches.

APPROACH	DEFINITION
22. Trust-Based Philanthropy (TBP)	This movement addresses the inherent power imbalance between funders, nonprofits, and the communities they serve. TBP is about redistributing power—systemically, organizationally, and interpersonally—in service of a healthier and more equitable nonprofit ecosystem. Trust-based grantmaking includes multiyear unrestricted giving, streamlined applications and reporting, and enhancing transparency of grantmaking processes and information flows. TBP is most effective when implementation is driven by a commitment to TBP values and building relationships based on transparency, dialogue, and mutual learning (TBP Project, 2021).
23. The Abundance Movement	This movement acknowledges the richness of existing, Black-led efforts. Abundance frees philanthropic resources, mindsets, and policies and practices to address anti-Blackness and equitably fund Black-led work. It is intended to lead to freedom and joy for all, as a scarcity mindset is jettisoned. This includes commitments from funders to set a goal to significantly raise payout to Black-led organizations and to examine culture, policies, and practices to address barriers black-led organizations face in building relationships with and securing funding from philanthropy (Abundance Movement, 2021).
24. Decolonizing Development, Humanitarian Aid, and Peace-Building Movement*	This movement addresses the ways in which structural racism and colonial power structures continue to produce contemporary inequalities and shape the global development narrative and agenda, and identifies solutions rooted in locally led and owned priorities.

Resources

Capturing General Operating Support Effectiveness: An Evaluation Framework for Funders and Evaluators

This briefing paper from TCC Group provides general operating support-related resources oriented to evaluation learning, including foundation readiness and decision tree tools.

Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking

This report from GrantCraft looks at why and how funders are engaging in participatory grantmaking and shifting decision-making power to communities most impacted. Through examples and insight from a diverse range of participatory grantmakers, this report explores the benefits, challenges, and models of participatory grantmaking. It offers specific steps for implementing participatory grantmaking.

Doing Evaluation in Service of Racial Equity

These guides from W.K. Kellogg Foundation are intended to help evaluators integrate racial equity principles into evaluation practice. Guides include debunking myths about evaluation, diagnosing biases and systems, and deepening community engagement.

Good Funder Practices: Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations

This brief from Hewlett Foundation explores lessons learned promoting equitable partnerships and describes power shifting practices to use in partnerships with civil society organizations. These practices are applicable to a range of contexts involving funding under-resourced organizations, including intermediaries in ways that support equitable partnerships.

How to Embed a Racial and Ethnic Equity Perspective in Research: Practical Guidance for the Research Process, Child Trends

This working paper from Child Trends aims to equip researchers with tools and resources to apply when developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings that consider racial and ethnic equity.

How Philanthropy Support Organizations Understand and Advance Community Power Building

This report from TCC Group features philanthropy support organizations' understanding of what it means to build community power, perceived strengths and challenges of supporting this work, and how they support their foundation members in advancing power building. The report also features relevant resources and tools that may be helpful to funders.

Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-Led Change, Common Counsel Foundation & Native Americans in Philanthropy

This report from Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philosophy summarizes a study that included 146 Native organizations to deepen public understanding of Native organizing and advocacy practices and challenges, as well as to call for greater philanthropic support for this work.

Participatory Grantmaking: Has Its Time Come

This report commissioned by the Ford Foundation offers perspective on what is driving the call for participatory approaches and provides examples of models and frameworks being tried in and outside of philanthropy. This piece also offers a starter framework for implementing participatory grantmaking.

Participatory Grantmaking Toolkit

Developed by the Fund for Shared Insight, this toolkit provides resources to inform and inspire funder's journey toward more participatory practices. The toolkit includes a funder readiness assessment, tools for implementation (e.g., an operating budget check-list and sample project outline and scope, resources on roles), and an example of practice that details implementation of the Participatory Climate Initiative.

Power Moves

This toolkit from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy explores three dimensions of power including building power. Funders can use this resource to assess where they are in building power and strategize on how to change your programs and operations to be more equitable.

Reimagining Capacity Building

This report from GEO outlines principles that can help funders engage in capacity building with a racial equity lens, describes what racially equitable capacity building looks like in practice, and provides guidance on what funders and consultants can do to advance racial equity. The report features profiles of several funders around their lessons learned in using capacity building to advance racial equity.

Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and Lessons From a Global Consultation, Peace Direct

This report from Peace Direct describes how structural racism manifests in the aid system, presents guidance on ways to decolonize aid, and provides recommendations for donors, INGOs, and policymakers on a pathway to shifting power.

Trust-Based Philanthropy Project Resources

This webpage provides general resources related to trust-based philanthropy, including MYGOS practices. Examples of resources include:

Examples of Unrestricted Grant Agreements:
https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/resources-articles/2020/6/9/unrestricted-grant-agreements

Grantmaking Practices
https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/resources-articles/grantmaking-practices

Why Am I Always Being Researched, Chicago Beyond

This guidebook from Chicago Beyond provides guidance on how to shift the power dynamics among the community organizations, researchers, and funders involved in research. It details "how" to conduct equity-oriented research from the viewpoint of each partner.

Additional Learning

LOCALLY LED, LOCALLY OWNED DEVELOPMENT

What is it?

Locally led, locally owned development refers to initiatives led and owned by local actors who set their own priorities and lead decision-making on strategy, program design, implementation, and evaluation (Bond, 2021; Peace Direct, 2021; USAID, 2022) in the humanitarian aid, development, and peace-building sector. The origins of international aid/development trace back to colonialism, colorism, and anti-Black racism — the root causes of power imbalances between Global North and Global South actors and structural racism in the sector. Generally, the terms localization and locally led development are used to describe approaches to address power and resource imbalances in the aid system resulting from the extraction of resources, oppression of people from the Global South, and notions of Western superiority that continue to prevail in the system. Both terms have been defined and operationalized in wide-ranging ways and are often used interchangeably. While there is no shared consensus on what these terms mean, the framing we apply here — locally led, locally owned development — strongly aligns with the notion of shifting more power and decision-making agency to local people and organizations with roots in their communities/countries. Moreover, the inclusion of "locally owned" acknowledges that local ownership (including country ownership) has historically been part of the discourse on transforming unequal power relationships and underscores that leadership and ownership are interrelated but distinct (Movement for Community Led Development, 2022).

We distinguish locally led, locally owned development in several ways. Locally led, locally owned development focuses on "local" in terms of giving more power and agency to local actors, avoiding an operationalization that views "local" predominately or solely in terms of the locus of funding flows. For example, lack of clarity around what localization means has incentivized some INGOs to develop in-country offices and establish themselves as a "local" organization to be more competitive for funding (Peace Direct, 2022). A focus on locally led, locally owned development also gives attention to disrupting inequitable partnership structures. It is common for Global South actors participating in localization to be engaged in existing international aid structures led by Global North actors, rather than transforming structures to center Global South actors. Rather than importing international initiatives and programs to be locally implemented, an orientation to locally led, locally owned development more intentionally catalyzes and supports local people and groups to envision, lead, and own their initiatives and programs. At the same time, locally led, locally owned development addresses neocolonial and paternalistic mindsets and practices that center the perspectives of international practitioners and essentially make their agendas "local." Localization practice has not consistently interrogated mindsets rooted in colonialism and notions of Western superiority that perpetuate biases that hinder shifting or ceding power to local actors. Despite the shortcomings of localization practice, more recent discourse does point out ways that localization can be implemented to emphasize local leadership. For this reason, this section does include sources that refer to localization, locally led development, and local ownership.

What will it take to embed these approaches?

Though not exhaustive, the practices outlined below reflect some of the commonly mentioned practices to advance locally led, locally owned initiatives. Practices are implemented on the foundation of mindset shifts that respect and value the knowledge and agency of local actors to lead and own the work while confronting biases and eliminating norms rooted in colonialism that ignore or undermine local power.

- **Equitable partnerships.** Funders cultivate and invest in partnerships that center local actors as the decision-makers and implementers of a locally led, locally owned agenda. Funders support partnership development in ways that elevate equality, mutuality, and transparency to build relationships and trust among local actors, international organizations, and donors (Pellowska, 2023; USAID, 2022b). When it is necessary to use intermediaries, funders incentivize and hold intermediaries accountable to ensure equitable partnership practices (e.g., genuinely locally led, locally owned agenda, streamlined application forms in local language(s), oral reporting options; Hewlett Foundation, 2022). Ideally, the partnership develops strategies to flow funds and resources directly to those local people and groups most impacted over time.
- **Local leadership building and capacity strengthening.** Funders start from a place where they value and appreciate the capacities that local actors already possess (USAID, 2022b). Funders invest in locally relevant capacity strengthening of local and national organizations based on local partner priorities rather than project-specific training (Brabant & Patel, 2018; Robillard, Atim, & Maxwell, 2021). It includes investing in the capacity of local leaders and providing them with mentorship, leadership development, and confidence building (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2022; Gubwe et al., 2022). Before providing long-term support, funders may want to invest in the capacity of local actors' internal systems and infrastructure to receive funding and implement a locally led agenda (Oxfam America & Save the Children Federation, 2016). When local actors and intermediaries are working together, funders can dedicate a budget line item for capacity sharing and reporting on mutually defined measures of capacity sharing (Barbelet et al., 2021).
- **Mutual accountability mechanisms.** Mutual accountability is about funders, INGOs, local people, and local organizations taking responsibility for their commitments to each other. Mutual accountability can be practiced by funders partnering with local actors for monitoring, learning, and evaluating. Together, funders and local actors can create theories of change, select measures, interpret the data, and take action that reflects a locally led agenda (USAID, 2022b). Furthermore, funders can invest in evaluation approaches oriented to community leadership and ownership, such as participatory learning and action and participatory evaluation.
- **Long-term, flexible funding.** Providing long-term, flexible funding directly to local actors allows them to focus on local priorities, cover overhead costs, and increase the sustainability of their organizations and efforts (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2022; Gubwe et al., 2022; Vij, 2023). When funding local actors is not possible due to funder requirements, legal restrictions, or other barriers, funders can require intermediaries to pass on multiyear, increased overhead, and flexible funding to local actors (Lees et al., 2021). To move toward funding local actors directly, funders can reduce onerous proposal and reporting requirements and assess whether their policies and processes are reinforcing structural racism (e.g., assessing whether they are funding groups led by and serving marginalized communities such as women, youth, LGBTQIA+, and ethnic and religious minorities; Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2022).
- **Providing long-term, flexible funding is key given that locally led, locally owned development involves a "financial paradigm pivot" along with technical and operational transformations** (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2022)**.** However, funders must ensure that funds are flowing to work that is genuinely locally led and owned by people and groups in their own context.

Benefits and outcomes

The perceived benefits of locally led, locally owned development include:

- Local actors' understanding of local history, context, and culture facilitates the creation of culturally responsive and relevant solutions (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2022; IRC, 2019).
- Strengthening local capacity leverages existing assets, capacities, and knowledge (USAID, 2022b).
- Locally led development strengthens local actors and communities' sense of ownership of development efforts and their outcomes, and they are more likely to think about sustainability (Mathews, 2021).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that involving local actors strengthens responses due to local actors' contextual knowledge, relationships, and accountability to the communities (Barbelet et al., 2021; Robillard, Howe & Rosenstock, 2020). Case studies exploring the process and results of locally led initiatives suggest that the flow of funding to local organizations facilitates more local engagement (Oxfam America & Save the Children Federation, 2016). One report found that transferring aid directly to local organizations enabled them to exercise more decision-making power over the project. Engaging stakeholders early in the project cycle, such as in developing priorities and design, led to the highest stakeholder engagement (Oxfam America & Save the Children Federation, 2016). Localized responses have also led to faster aid delivery in humanitarian emergencies in a few contexts due to preexisting relationships (IRC, 2019). Furthermore, local actors engaged are continuously active in their communities and have a long-term perspective to better integrate humanitarian, development, and peace-building programs and increase the sustainability of efforts (Barbelet et al., 2021). The evidence base will expand in the coming years as several evaluations are underway to examine the process and results of locally led, locally owned initiatives such as USAID's locally led development research agenda (USAID, n.d.).

Methods

The report is informed by a scan of the literature, 25 interviews of peer donors/foundations (11), grant partners (7), and field experts in the areas of strategy, technical assistance, and research and evaluation (7). Eight research advisors provided guidance throughout the project. The research protocols were developed to address the following research questions:

1. **What is the range of power shifting approaches?**
    a. What is meant by power? What is meant by power shifting?
    b. What are the core practices, benefits, and outcomes?
2. **What is the relevance of power shifting approaches to racial history?**
3. **What capabilities (e.g., mindsets, shared practices, skills, tools, training, accountability mechanisms, and spaces for reflection/learning) and resources are needed to shift power effectively, authentically, and to embrace a consistent practice?**
4. **What policy, procedural, or process changes are needed to implement power shifting approaches?**
5. **What are the capacities needed to focus on equity, particularly racial equity, in the implementation of power shifting?**

Literature Scan: We reviewed over 120 articles, reports, and other materials in the literature scan We developed a set of relevant search terms with input from the advisors and our funding partners. We conducted database searches in Google, Google Scholar, and organizational websites to identify peer-reviewed literature and gray literature (e.g., reports and tools). We restricted our search to the past five years to identify the most recent relevant articles. Team members used the names of power shifting approaches as terms for the literature scan (e.g., participatory grantmaking, trust-based philanthropy, general multiyear general operating support, power building grantmaking) and search terms that represented specific models of an approach (e.g., for participatory grantmaking/participatory philanthropy: flow funding, committee model, stakeholder steering committees, decision making panels, stakeholder led grantmaking, and strategy co-creation). We then reviewed titles, summaries, and abstracts to determine if articles, reports, and other materials met the inclusion/exclusion criteria. We summarized and synthesized findings from literature that met the inclusion criteria in an information collection tool aligned with the research questions.

Interviews: We developed a semi-structured interview guide that mapped to our research questions and tailored the questions for funder and non-funder interviewees. Interviewees were also asked to complete a pre-interview survey that asked about the interviewee's organization and the power shifting approaches they've encountered or implemented. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using deductive coding in Dedoose software. We conducted a thematic analysis to generate findings for the research questions and describe the 24 power shifting approaches featured in this report.

Using data and information from the literature scan and interviews, we developed a report to describe 24 power shifting approaches, present guidance on their implementation, and provide resources for further learning. Five reviewers and the research advisors provided feedback that was integrated into the final report.

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