



equitable outcomes, as well as mutual accountability. By embracing a broader view of power beyond just money, funders may gain an appreciation of how grantees also have sources of power through their social capital, networks, influence, knowledge, experience and expertise.

Funders, particularly foundations, should also commit to both internal and external reflection on issues that may be inhibiting how their organisation practices trust and power shifting. Internally, founders, Board members, and leadership teams should analyse their own privileges, levels of influence and perceptions of the world around them. By becoming more aware of these internal realities, they will be better able to address organisational culture (see Principle 6) before looking externally. More widely, funders are also invited to reflect on issues of inequity, particularly when serving marginalised communities and reflecting on the context in which they operate, regardless of geographic location. We should always remember the key role that local PSOs and ‘intermediaries’ play in localising philanthropy and shifting power. Investing in these actors can be a powerful strategy for international grantmakers to help generate more and better local resources for bottom-up and sustainable change (see Principle 7).

Fundamentally, building a trusting relationship between funders, grantees and the communities being served involves deep respect, integrity, humility, and supporting others’ agency and freedom to live in a world where they can create the change that is needed.

Recommended practices for implementation:

How to get started:

- ✓ Engage in deep listening and learning with the communities you already serve, by regularly seeking input and feedback from local leaders and organisations, to ensure that your funding priorities align with community needs.
 - Recruit and equip staff with the interpersonal skills to listen to and work with community members.
 - Conduct meetings, surveys, and other data collection to learn about community priorities, ensuring this is not an extractive or burdensome exercise.
- ✓ Invest in building genuine, respectful relationships with grantees and community partners and address internal shifts that must happen within your organisation.
 - Focus on building trust over time, through longer-term commitments, rather than simply providing one-off or annual funding before moving on.
 - Include timely sunset clauses when a partnership is coming to an end, to ensure a successful transition.
- ✓ Simplify and streamline paperwork and processes, including ensuring simplicity and clarity, to reduce the administrative burden on grant applications and subsequent reporting for both foundations and grantees.



- Conduct regular evaluations of your feedback and reporting processes – including members from the communities your organisation serves – to improve debilitating administrative burdens.
- ✓ Consult grantees and community partners in ideation, programme design, and decision-making processes.
 - Provide opportunities for communities to lead and shape the work.
- ✓ Commit to learning and inclusive evaluation to continuously improve your work.
- ✓ When possible, work with local ‘intermediaries’ – such as socio-environmental or women’s funds – that have both deep knowledge of communities and capacity to support local groups, while ensuring compliance and professional grant management.
- ✓ Support your local partners in becoming more financially sustainable by investing in resource mobilisation and helping them develop community philanthropy models, where relevant.

To go beyond:

- ✓ Provide funding that is flexible and enables grantees to use the resources in ways that make the most sense for their organisations, and communities.
 - Avoid overly prescriptive funding requirements that may not align with the community’s needs.
- ✓ Consider engaging community members as advisers or co-designers of funding programmes, and involve them in determining funding priorities, strategies, criteria and distribution.
- ✓ Work with grantees and community partners to develop shared goals and strategies for driving impact.
 - This ensures that everyone is working towards a common vision and can help increase collaboration and coordination.
- ✓ Beyond financial support, strengthen partnership through practices such as creating reciprocal structures and mechanisms for technical assistance, mentorship, and training opportunities.
- ✓ Commit to having at least one leader from your stakeholder communities represented at the organisation’s Board or governance level.
 - This goes beyond co-design and co-creation of programmes and directly gives local communities a seat at the funder’s table, allowing real power in allocating funds directly or indirectly.
- ✓ Invest in advocacy and policy change efforts by supporting and applying self-assessment tools developed by grantees and partners to determine if your organisation is delivering on distributing power, providing resources to support community organising, and working to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ✓ Share learnings and challenges, and collaborate with other funders to promote knowledge-sharing and collective action towards common goals, thereby increasing the impact and sustainability of this model over the long-term.



Potential obstacles



Suggested solutions



Shifting power within foundations can often mean that those in prominent governance or decision-making positions must give up some of their current influence or, at least, dilute it by making room for a wider and more equitable variety of voices. It may further mean that staff and leadership within organisations require specialised training on how to recognise their own contributions to power imbalances.



In situations where shifting power internally within your organisation is difficult or political, be sure to build a compelling case by mapping out all potential benefits that a more diverse, equitable governing structure and intersectionally aware staff will bring. This includes more impactful programming, improved reputation within the sector, and opportunities for wider visibility and greater collaboration.



Building confidence and co-designing/co-creating programmes with local stakeholders may lead to difficult realisations about your organisation's past role in delivering underperforming programmes or subpar impact.



It is crucial that philanthropic funders move away from the idea that all support is good support, and building long-term trust and equitable partnerships with local stakeholders is key to that process. As an organisation, acknowledge that concerns about programming may arise as part of an honest trust-building process, and see this as a rare and exciting opportunity to develop stronger, more resilient funding models going forward.



Misconceptions around trust-based philanthropy persist in the foundation sector, particularly among organisations concerned that unrestricted funding and long-term equitable partnerships might mean a more diminished role for their foundation. They may criticise trust-based philanthropy by creating a false binary with evidence-based philanthropy.



A growing discourse on the benefits of trust-based philanthropy can support any internal efforts at your organisation. It is also important to combat the notion that trust-based philanthropy is somehow not based in evidence or abandons the need for evidence. Rather, building trust and long-term power shifts may facilitate new forms of data and evidence, and require foundations to look beyond traditional metrics that have historically led to inequities and power imbalances.



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