



Recommended practices for implementation:

How to get started:

- ✓ Define a clear and compelling vision and mission to guide your systems change efforts.
 - Develop a theory of change that articulates how your actions will contribute toward your organisation's desired outcomes, and the broader change you seek to create.
- ✓ Through working with partners closest to the issues (see Principle 3), identify a specific problem or opportunity in your system that your organisation can address with present resources and expertise.
 - This could be an issue in your local community or thematic area based on your expertise.
- ✓ Engage with diverse stakeholders who are affected by or can influence your system, and build trust and collaboration with them.
- ✓ Pay greater attention to connections and interdependence – foundations should recognise that systems change requires collaboration with other actors who have different perspectives, roles, and interests.
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate your impact, focusing on your progress towards end goals rather than simple outputs and deliverables, and learn from feedback and data.
- ✓ Analyse key trends and momentum in your system and consider how to align your strategies with them.
 - Seek collaborations and pool resources to amplify impact.

To go beyond:

- ✓ Leverage your scale and scope to influence multiple levels of your system, such as policies, norms, behaviours, or structures.
- ✓ Support cross-sector, multi-stakeholder collaborations (see Principle 4) that can amplify your longer-term engagement and impact, and further create synergies among different actors.
- ✓ Fund research and evaluation that can generate new insights and evidence for systems change.
- ✓ Map and invest in platforms or networks for learning and dissemination of best practices across different contexts.
- ✓ Where there are gaps, work with leaders in the relevant communities or locations to create new networks.
- ✓ Be humble and reflective about your role and impact in systems change, acknowledge your assumptions and biases, seek feedback from diverse stakeholders, learn from both failures and successes, and share your insights with others.



- ✓ Be systematic about measuring systems change.
- ✓ Use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to capture changes at different levels of the system, such as policies, behaviours, norms, and power structures.
- ✓ 'Be the change' by building internal adaptive capacity.
- ✓ Reflect on how your internal culture, structure, processes and practices affect the organisation's ability to foster systems change (see Principle 6).





Potential obstacles



Suggested solutions



Given the large and long-term scope of systems change efforts, foundations may find it easier to deal with treating symptoms of social challenges rather than tackling broader root causes.



Tackling large, multi-faceted issues nearly always begins with small steps. Start by identifying which programmes in your organisation's existing portfolio are exclusively addressing challenges with a short-term mindset, and have conversations with key internal and external stakeholders on how those programmes can become better aligned with longer-term commitments. Even small, progressive adjustments to existing programmes can facilitate larger shifts in the future.



The short-term solutions provided by an organisation in some cases may hinder longer-term aspirations towards systems change, particularly at local levels. There also could be other stakeholders involved in a project that are partial to short-term outputs/outcomes.



Particularly for initiatives that have been running for longer periods of time in a specific way, external stakeholders may be averse to immediate change, even if it will likely mean a more sustainable, systemic long-term solution. Rather than overhauling quick-wins focused programmes, your organisation can begin by discussing how best to diplomatically make adjustments to shift interventions towards better addressing underlying issues.



Building systems change approaches can be challenging for those operating in geopolitical infrastructures where criticising or advocating beyond the existing status quo is inadvisable.



Philanthropic foundations often play a pseudo-diplomatic role in society and, in many cases, must avoid 'rocking the boat' with governments and policymakers. In cases where those actors are averse to broader approaches, foundations should use their influence to build multi-stakeholder partnerships (see Principle 4) with other actors across sectors. Where possible, loop relevant members of local or regional government into joint initiatives to demonstrate the value of systemic efforts and build mutual goodwill. Where more freedom is allowed, foundations may consider challenging political boundaries imposed on philanthropic activity.



Resources

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