

Grantmaking

This area covers the grantmaking programs of the foundation, including grant strategy and grant decisions, who makes those decisions and how they are made, and who is receiving the funding. It also explores relationships between the foundation and its grantees and whether and how the relationship goes beyond grant support.

Grant strategy & grant decisions

Who determines the strategy, goals, and parameters of grantmaking?

Little or no participation:

- Grant strategy, goals, and parameters are determined by foundation governance, with no input from staff or community.

Some participation:

- Foundation governance seeks feedback from an advisory body as well as staff when finalizing or revising grant strategy, goals, and parameters. Foundation has final say, and there is no feedback provided.

Substantial participation:

- Staff and community work together to develop grant strategy, goals, and parameters.

Full participation:

- Community makes all decisions about grant strategy, goals, and parameters. Equity and inclusion principles are embedded throughout the grantmaking program.

Who makes grant decisions?

Little or no participation:

- Grant decisions are made by governance; no input is sought before, during, or after those decisions are made.

Some participation:

- A community advisory body may review a small portion of applications and provide thoughts to staff. Foundation makes all final decisions.

Substantial participation:

- Most grant decisions are made by a community body, which has substantial formal authority. This may be a group of people with lived experience, or eligible grant applicants, or a broader community group. Decisions are made through scoring, voting, deliberations, and/or consensus. Issues of equity and inclusion are prioritized, and power dynamics in group are addressed.

Full participation:

- Foundation does not select decision-makers directly; others nominate or select decision-makers, with priority given to people closest to grant issues and with most marginalized or vulnerable people holding most power. Careful consideration is given to ensure a diversity of voices, and there is commitment to regularly invite new voices to this group, with rotating membership.

Who receives benefits for their work?

Little or no participation:

- No one outside of foundation receives any compensation or benefits.

Some participation:

- Advisory body members may or may not be compensated for their time and expertise, and how they will benefit from participation is not.

Substantial participation:

- Community is offered compensation for their time. Foundation asks how they want to benefit and be appreciated and strives to prioritize this.

Full participation:

- Community sets compensation and appreciation practices for those involved in foundation work. Needs of community participants are fully realized.

Additional support

Who determines any support provided beyond grantmaking?

Little or no participation:

- Foundation offers no additional support, such as technical assistance or capacity support, to grantees. Foundation does not consider playing any role to support community; e.g., through convening to support learning or build advocacy campaigns.

Some participation:

- Staff offer some capacity support to grantees to become “efficient” or “effective,” as defined by foundation. This support is offered to mitigate foundation’s risks. Support is focused on improvements to individual grantees rather than on movement building, systemic change, or advocacy to support community.

Substantial participation:

- Foundation works with community to define initiatives staff can carry out to benefit community; e.g., capacity support, technical assistance, advocacy, or learning. Community is involved in determining what additional support is needed, type of support to be provided, and desired outcomes. Community is considered experts, alongside technical assistance experts, and plays a (paid) role in providing support to grantee community.

Full participation:

- Community determines what additional support is needed, type of support to be provided, who will provide it, and desired outcomes. Foundation provides all resources for this support and its delivery. This assistance is also available to governments, foundations, networks, etc., that are key to changing systems of oppression as a strategy to build movements.

Feedback loops

How does the foundation solicit and respond to feedback?

Little or no participation:

- Feedback from external individuals or groups is neither welcomed nor solicited.

Some participation:

- Grantees are routinely asked for feedback about foundation, including application, reporting, or measurement processes. However, staff determine what is done with that input and any action taken is often not shared.

Substantial participation:

- Foundation regularly solicits feedback from grantees and grant applicants on their experiences with foundation, and summaries and actions taken are transparently reported back to stakeholders. Foundation holds a genuine desire to learn and improve. Applicants – including those that don't receive funding – receive information about decision rationale.

Full participation:

- A culture of transparency, learning, and accountability permeates community-led foundation. Feedback loops are owned by grantees and community, and information about any aspect of foundation is welcomed. This information, as well as how foundation will address findings, is shared publicly.

Why did you select the statements you did?

Additional questions to consider:

- Is the foundation's grantmaking understood as a part of redressing historical injustice and harms (e.g., as reparations), or as charity from wise and generous donors?
- Does the foundation compensate non-staff and governance in appreciation for their time, expertise, and contributions?
- Does the foundation make grants to intermediary participatory grantmakers (or public foundations, often with strong ties to communities)? If incorporating participation is not possible or desired, this can be an important option.
- How would grantees describe the foundation as a partner?

Resource :

- **Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grantmaking**, by Cynthia Gibson and Jen Bokoff
- **Equitable Grantmaking Continuum**, by NonprofitAF.com and RVCSeattle.org
- **Feminist Funding Principles**, by Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- **Human Rights Grantmaking Principles**, by Ariadne-European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights, Human Rights Funders Network, and Gender Funders CoLab
- **I4DM (Definitional Matrix)**, by The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (2022)
- **Participatory Strategy**, by Transparency and Accountability Initiative
- **The Power of Participatory Grantmaking to Advance Racial Equity**, by The Giving Practice at Philanthropy Northwest
- **2023 Reciprocity Report**, by Right Relations Collaborative
- **Step Up, Step Back: Reimagining Non-Competitive Grantmaking in Community**, by Equality Fund
- **Trust-Based Philanthropy Self-Reflection Tool**, by Trust-Based Philanthropy Project
- **Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit**, by Fund for Shared Insight
- **Uncovering Unconscious Bias in Philanthropy**, by PEAK Grantmaking