



# Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit

Solidarity, dignity, power, and abundance. These are just some of the benefits that can accrue to the people and communities most impacted by philanthropy's decisions when they have a role in the decision making. That's according to Ciciley Moore, senior program officer at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, who represented Fund for Shared Insight in a participatory grantmaking program. Shared Insight ran this one-time program (which focused on involving people affected by climate change in funding decisions around the issue) so we could learn together with other funders committed to listening, participation, and more effective and equitable grantmaking.

**Based on the experiences of the participants, consultants, and funders involved, we created this toolkit to inform and inspire philanthropy's journey toward more participatory practices.**

Participatory Philanthropy is a term that can include a wide spectrum of participatory practices within philanthropy, and includes Participatory Grantmaking as one approach. This initiative went beyond sharing decision making about grants and centered participation in the design phase of the work. Participants worked on design and grantmaking teams, defining the program's purpose, parameters, and, through a participatory decision-making approach, where and how \$2 million in grant money was disbursed. Participants were also involved with communicating grant decisions, developing knowledge products, and gathering in learning communities to deepen their connections and understand and share the impact of the initiative.

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## Our Perspectives

This toolkit was largely developed by the initiative's two consultants, Winifred Olliff and Katy Love.

We served as facilitators who designed and led the initiative, from the initial planning stages through its implementation and learning phases. Our experiences and perspectives were informed by our positions, identities, and circumstances, and this toolkit was written from our points of view.



## Glossary of Terms

**Consensus:** an approach to decision making where every member of a group of decision-makers must meaningfully agree to support a decision/outcome before moving forward.

**Consultative Grantmaking:** a structured process in philanthropy through which participant-stakeholders with lived expertise in a relevant issue area are consulted about grantmaking decisions, improving the knowledge of the grantmaker but without the funder ceding power.

**Participatory Grantmaking:** a structured process in philanthropy through which community members with lived expertise in a relevant issue area (non-funders) make decisions about grants. Participatory Grantmaking is an approach within Participatory Philanthropy, and Participatory Grantmaking refers specifically to participation in decisions about grants.

**Participatory Philanthropy:** a philanthropy practice that explicitly includes the participation of community members with lived expertise in a relevant issue area (non-funders) and shifts power from traditional foundation decision-makers to participants during any part of the philanthropy process and in the organization more generally, including strategy, planning, design, grantmaking, implementation, communications, fundraising, and/or evaluation. Participatory Philanthropy may include a variety of approaches to participation at different stages of the philanthropy cycle, and includes Participatory Grantmaking as one approach.

**Participatory Design:** in the context of Participatory Philanthropy, a structured process through which participant-stakeholders with lived expertise in a relevant issue area define or influence a funding program's design. Participatory Design is an approach within Participatory Philanthropy that is specific to decisions that are made prior to any grant decisions, about how a funding program will work.

**Spectrum of Participatory Decision Making:** refers to degrees of ceding power within a decision-making process, from autocratic decision making (not participatory) through well-executed participatory consensus-based decision making.

**Trust-based Philanthropy:** an approach to philanthropy that centers relationships, deprioritizes control and surveillance, and works from the assumption that funders and grantee partners are working together in good faith toward similar goals.



## SECTION 1

# Key Insights and Recommendations

In this section, we share key insights we gained through managing the participatory grantmaking initiative and the practices we recommend in response. *(See “How We Did It” details of our initiative in an accompanying document.)*

We hope this information will be useful to philanthropy organizations considering implementing participatory grantmaking practices or integrating elements of participation into other aspects of their work.

### **We have chosen to highlight nine key insights:**

1. Use Expansive Definitions and Approaches
2. Take a Holistic Approach to Funding
3. Be Open to Communities’ Definitions of Geographic Boundaries
4. Explore Trust-based Participatory Philanthropy
5. Aim for Radical Hospitality and Inclusion
6. Increase Participation in Each Phase of Work
7. Embrace Interconnectedness (Including Conflicts of Interest)
8. Identify and Shift Administrative Risks and Burdens
9. See Beyond the 501(c)(3)



## 1. Use Expansive Definitions and Approaches

### THE IDEA:

As funders engaging people outside of philanthropy who are more connected to issues and impacted communities, we should expect to be pushed outside of our comfort zone in many ways, beginning with how issues are defined and framed. If philanthropy continues to rely on rigid frameworks and definitions that are rooted in a false notion of objectivity, we risk failing to include people who are most impacted by the issues we are seeking to address; continuing to fund organizations that lack community backing and legitimacy; and remaining unaware of and unable to benefit from innovative knowledge that has sustained and advanced communities over many years.

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:

1. Solicit meaningful input and create opportunities for power sharing with communities, rather than relying on mainstream organizations to represent them.
2. Value traditional knowledge and lived expertise on equal footing with “technical knowledge,” and choose which “experts” to fund and rely on accordingly.
3. Use holistic definitions and approaches whenever setting funding priorities. Be aware of differences in language used by communities and funders.
4. Be familiar with and adopt existing definitions and frameworks that are relevant to communities. For example, activists in the environmental and economic justice movement created the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing.

### PRACTICE NOTES

In our Participatory Climate Initiative, a Design Team member created this definition, which we used to guide our work:

*Policy is a set of decisions that prioritizes what we think we need to live. Climate policy needs to state firmly the foundations, guidelines and boundaries that society must have to maintain a livable climate, but these must be determined by a true representation of the communities that have faced the worst consequences of environmental and energy policy.*

And the Design Team did not use the term “climate change” that the funders had picked for the initiative, instead choosing more expansive language. The purpose statement the team developed, for example, reads in part that the program would fund grassroots groups “that implement climate justice or environmental justice work in their communities that centers traditional and/or local ecological knowledge and connection with Mother Earth.”

## 2. Take a Holistic Approach to Funding

### THE IDEA:

While philanthropy organizations often separate funding programs based on technical expertise and conventionally defined issue areas, this approach often does not match the needs and solutions on the ground. Issues such as climate change mitigation, climate adaptation, climate justice, environmental racism, food systems change, the teaching of traditional knowledge, and land rights are not distinct and should not be siloed in funding. While there can be value in zeroing in on specific issues, funders often do this at the expense of more holistic and integrated approaches and thus opportunities for greater impact.

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:

1. Meet communities where they are by using language that resonates with them. For instance, ranchers in the Southwestern United States may have no interest in getting together to address climate change, but could be highly engaged in a discussion about water and agriculture. Another example is that some Native communities may not use the term “climate change,” and focus more on connection to land, language, and traditional ecological knowledge. If you don’t know what language resonates, ask!
2. Create cross- or multi-issue funds that reflect the complexity of the problem you seek to solve, and engage experts with traditional knowledge and grassroots organizing know-how along with technical experts.
3. Since communities and the many issues impacting them cannot be dissected or separated, provide flexible, unrestricted multi-year grants, taking a holistic approach that recognizes the reality that meaningful systems change takes decades and long-term investments.
4. Recognize the limits of traditional grantmaking, such as requests for proposal processes and funding in silos, and commit substantial funding to a wider range of innovative grassroots initiatives.



### 3. Be Open to Communities' Definitions of Geographic Boundaries

#### THE IDEA:

Funders that typically work in specific geographies or with a narrow geographic lens may find those conventions limiting in a participatory grantmaking effort. Geography can be an important way to understand how people are impacted by issues like climate change. For example, it can be a tool for focusing funding in areas like the Southeastern United States that have experienced systemic disinvestment and extensive extraction by industry. However, funders should not rely on political boundaries alone, but should be open to participants' exploring geographic focus areas based on their own stated priorities, such as ecosystem links and land sovereignty issues.

#### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:

1. When applying a geographic lens to funding programs, don't rely on conventional political definitions or boundaries. Consider cultural, historical, ecological, and thematic connections.
2. Be prepared for difficult and time-intensive discussions. Remain flexible, creative, and open to unconventional definitions and the many benefits they may bring.
3. Be mindful of the impact discussions about geography, or limiting the scope of your program in general, may have on participants who are working to build

solidarity across regions and movements. Act with sensitivity.

4. Be open and transparent with everyone involved about what definitions you are working from and how this may impact funding opportunities or other opportunities for involvement.

#### PRACTICE NOTES

**In our Participatory Climate Initiative, selecting a geography was a lengthy and somewhat painful process, particularly for grassroots activists working to build solidarity across regions. The Design Team ultimately selected two unique geographic focus areas:**

1. The Kōlea Region, which encompassed Alaska and Hawai'i and was named for a migrating bird representing the links between the ecosystems of the two distant states and the historic, cultural, and navigational connections among Native peoples in the Pacific.
2. The Southeastern United States, which was defined as including U.S. Territories, like Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, areas that have experienced longtime disinvestment and overburdened infrastructure while facing severe impacts of climate change.

## 4. Explore Trust-Based Participatory Philanthropy

### THE IDEA:

Some principles of trust-based philanthropy and participatory philanthropy may appear to be opposed or mutually exclusive, while others are complementary. Both approaches have value and each design decision you make will involve trade offs. While there is no roadmap for integrating these two approaches, we were able to refer back to the values participants identified as important when making tough decisions about these trade offs.



### PRACTICE NOTES

#### Examples of the tensions between participatory philanthropy and trust-based philanthropy from our Participatory Climate Initiative:\*

1. The Design Team had a strong preference for a very simple application process that would limit burdens on those who would receive the funding. At the same time, some of the same participants, when it came to decision making, lamented having less information than they would have liked in reviewing grant applications and making decisions.
2. Participants wanted time to get to know grantees and establish relationships with them, but did not want this process to be burdensome for grantees. And yet, due to the participatory nature of this work, arranging meetings among many participants and 35 grantees became a complex logistical puzzle, and not every meeting met all needs for the grantees and the Grantmaking Group members. Grantees invested time in preparing for and participating in those calls.
3. Groups being considered by the Grantmaking Group for funding were guaranteed a minimum grant of \$10,000. This was a requirement of the Design Team, and is good practice in philanthropy, but it also at least somewhat constrained the Grantmaking Group's options for how to allocate their \$2 million.

\* For more discussion about combining trust-based and participatory philanthropy principles, see the “Nuts & Bolts” webinar with links on page 48.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:**

1. Recognize that both trust-based philanthropy and participatory philanthropy have value and build your organization's understanding and practice in both approaches.
2. Seek the advice of people with experience with each of the approaches so you can define and refine the values that guide your work and effectively evaluate the trade-offs. Compensate those you consult for their time and expertise, and share back with them the results from your work. Consider how your work can add real value and be beneficial to those people.
3. Continue to experiment and innovate as you seek to balance both approaches. Be prepared for challenges and bumps in the road as you create new ways of working.





## 5. Aim for Radical Hospitality and Inclusion

### THE IDEA:

Since participatory philanthropy efforts will often (and sometimes by definition) include a diverse group of participants – across race, geography, language, culture, religion, expertise, age, disability, gender, and sexual orientation – significant effort and expertise must go into creating a truly inclusive and accessible experience. Everyone should bring their full selves to this work and build meaningful connections with one another. This includes funders, grantees, and the people facilitating the work.

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:

1. Devote adequate resources to facilitation. This may involve hiring experienced facilitators or building your capacity for facilitation in-house and ensuring staff are assigned to this work. Facilitators should have experience in areas that are relevant to the group like Racial Justice and Disability Justice.
2. Welcome participants as their full and authentic selves. Foster meaningful relationships with and among participants that go beyond their roles in the work, including opportunities for sharing their experiences, personalities, and cultures through activities like group discussions, paired conversations, and journaling.
3. Use different methods to share and receive information among participants, including written narratives, videos, audio files, illustrations, and more. Apply principles of Disability Justice and Language Justice, and consider how different methods of sharing and receiving information may or may not be accessible to all participants.
4. Design a schedule, time expectations, and a general pace and time commitments for activities for participant engagement. Share these requirements in advance to avoid asking more of participants than they originally committed to. Stick to these commitments.
5. Be intentional about navigating power dynamics within your group. Even when working outside of a traditional hierarchical structure, the roles and positionality of participants may influence outcomes and participant comfort. For example, be intentional about when you do or do not include funders in your space with participants.
6. Ask yourself who is not participating, and why.

PRACTICE NOTES

Facilitators of our Participatory Climate Initiative...

- Worked toward digital inclusion, offering participants resources to meet technology needs, including equipment and stipends for internet or data usage and reimbursement for mileage costs associated with traveling to access the internet. We also worked with participants individually, collecting their input through their preferred communication method like phone or text, instead of asking everyone to submit written input to us.
- Tracked who was speaking during group discussions. We then analyzed recordings to understand whether or not speaking time was shared equitably, making adjustments as needed, and actively seeking out the opinions of those who participated less.



## 6. Increase Participation in each Phase of Work

### THE IDEA:

Participatory philanthropy approaches should be applied to the continuum of the funding process so that not all parameters are set by funders. If participatory practices are used only at the point of decision making about grants, for example, participants don't have the chance to define the funding focus or criteria, or to continue to support and learn from grantees during the implementation and evaluation phases of the work.



### PRACTICE NOTES

As we planned the Participatory Climate Initiative, we considered how power was shared among different people during each phase of the project and how these shifts in power carried through and expanded each subsequent phase of work. This cascading approach had many benefits, since participants had an increasing voice in the design of the initiative, then in decision-making, and then in implementation and evaluation.

Here is an idea of how we thought about power sharing and participation within the context of this initiative during each phase:

1. **PLANNING PHASE:** decision-making power is held by traditional decision-makers (funders) in a collaborative space who establish the size of the portfolio and define a general focus of the fund; participants begin to inform the work immediately through consultation.
2. **DESIGN PHASE:** power is partially ceded to participants with some limits in place; participants hold influence and shape the plan for the next phase including the goal, eligibility criteria, geographic focus, and values of the fund.
3. **GRANTMAKING PHASE:** power is formally ceded to participants, who are responsible for making decisions about grants independently of funders.
4. **IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION:** responsibilities are shared among funders and participants.

Some participants noted that the extent to which power was able to shift systemically was limited by the scope of this initiative, since long-term work with significant resources would be required to shift power within the global philanthropy system. Significant power is also held by those who decide who is participating in each phase of work. By reaching out to many people during the early phases of this initiative, we were able to involve people with relevant expertise in making subsequent decisions about who was involved in each phase.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:**

1. Expand participatory philanthropy practices to include participation in multiple phases of your work beyond just making decisions about grants. Incorporate the process and the ethos of participation beyond your grantmaking.
2. Consider how participation or a lack of participation in each phase of your work will influence what happens in the next phase. Are you moving decision-making power to your stakeholders in meaningful ways? Are community participants benefiting from their participation? Are they compensated?
3. Conduct your power analysis accordingly so that you can be intentional about how much power each group of stakeholders holds during each phase and communicate this power analysis with participants so it's clear to them how much power they have in each phase.



## 7. Embrace Interconnectedness (Including Conflicts of Interest)

### THE IDEA:

Since one approach in participatory grantmaking is to get to the grassroots by working with people with the broadest and deepest ties in their communities, stakeholder groups tend to overlap. There may be little or no separation among the people and

organizations designing the program, nominating grantees, and receiving the funds. As long as potential conflicts of interest are acknowledged and addressed, this interconnectedness is a strength of the process and not a flaw.

### PRACTICE NOTES

In our Participatory Climate Initiative, some Grantmaking Group members deciding about grant funding were also participant partner-selectors, Design Team members setting the focus and criteria, grantee nominators, and/or grantees receiving funding. Many of the participants often shared ties among each other.

We recognized that participants came from different backgrounds and had different ideas about what constitutes conflicts of interest and how to navigate them. Many may have dealt with conflicts as part of their movement work and had negative experiences.

To mitigate these concerns, we sought to destigmatize the idea of conflicts and manage them by:

- Providing participants with good information about conflicts early in the process, explaining that conflicts were a normal and necessary part of doing participatory work, and that many strategies were available for addressing them.
- Giving participants time to prepare to disclose their conflicts and hands-on support and guidance throughout the process, including by providing a personalized set of recommendations to help them manage each conflict and consulting with them to make sure they were comfortable with the advice.
- Offering transparency to the full group about the mitigation measures we applied for each potential or real conflict of interest.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:**

1. Encourage participants to participate in overlapping roles at different stages of your funding process. For example, invite participants who are part of a participatory design phase or who serve as nominators to join the group of decision-makers. Proactively manage any potential conflicts of interest that might arise.
2. Seek out participants with lived expertise and extensive networks who are active in their communities. Consider these ties and connections assets rather than liabilities.
3. Early on in the process, provide all participants with good information about the nature of conflicts of interest and how to manage them with transparency. Work proactively with participants to manage conflicts of interest in ways that feel relevant to them. Have an organized process for managing conflicts that gives participants confidence and offer them ongoing support in this area throughout their engagement.
4. Be mindful that some participants may have had negative experiences in the past, and so work may need to be done to destigmatize the notion of conflicts of interest and increase the comfort of participants.



## 8. Identify and Shift Administrative Risks and Burdens

### THE IDEA:

When working with frontline, grassroots, or any type of nonconventional nonprofit or community organization, funders should take extra care to identify potential pain points in financial transactions. Grantees might not have the staff time, adequate technology, or experience with typical foundation payment systems and practices, leading to delays, or, worse, misunderstandings that could negatively impact the funder-grantee relationship. Work proactively with grantees from the start to anticipate and resolve administrative issues, listen to their feedback, and show them that you are taking action to improve. Wherever you can, shift the administrative burden away from grantees and community participants.



### PRACTICE NOTES

Despite the best intentions among ourselves and our fiscal sponsor, the process of distributing grants and honoraria in our Participatory Climate Initiative did not go smoothly for every grantee and participant. Not everyone offered an honorarium chose to receive it, and at least one participant declined to receive one, deeming the process too burdensome because of the amount of paperwork required and the number of steps needed to receive the money, which included having to set up a login and password through an online portal.

In some cases, administrative hurdles caused significant delays in distributing funding. Getting money to organizations without 501(c)(3) tax status as expenditure responsibility grants was the most complicated.

For those grantees that were not 501(c)(3) or equivalent, our fiscal sponsor required evidence of legal status, tax documentation, audited financial statements, and financial and narrative reports, as well as detailed budgets documenting how grant funds would be used for charitable purposes. While we did not otherwise have reporting requirements, groups receiving expenditure responsibility grants did have financial and narrative reporting requirements.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:**

1. Conduct ongoing impact risk analysis within your organization to determine where your administrative processes can and need to be more flexible, with the goal of shifting risk from grantees to your institution in the longer term.
2. Involve administrative staff with relevant expertise from the start of any initiative, to clarify and, if needed, adjust administrative requirements during the planning stages of your project. Discuss, agree, and document general procedures and ways of working.
3. Ensure your organization is equipped to give out grants of the type that your program requires in the way that your program requires. For instance, do not plan to give out flexible general support funding if your current administrative systems do not allow you to do this. If you are not equipped, you will need to improve your systems, seek help, or adjust your plans accordingly.
4. Create a process for documenting administrative delays and hurdles when they occur, so that you can refer to these experiences when you are in the early stages of designing your next initiative and better predict where difficulties may occur and plan how to mitigate them.
5. Do your best to set realistic expectations for grantees about what documentation may be required and the timeline for receiving funding. Be conservative in your estimates and be communicative, transparent and honest about any mistakes by the foundation.





## 9. See Beyond the 501(c)(3)

### THE IDEA:

Partnering with communities around grantmaking will mean – and should mean – being open to funding organizations that are not 501(c)(3)s, including informal groups and collectives, individuals, community development corporations, small businesses, farms, LLCs, tribes with various types of state and federal recognition, and unrecognized tribes/communities. If you currently fund only

501(c)(3)s, examine how grantmaking may be influencing how communities are resourcing and structuring their work. Are they having to develop cumbersome and unnecessary tax and financial and reporting structures simply to secure resources? To make sure your grantmaking strategies are sustainable for and beneficial to communities in the long term, consider looking beyond 501(c)(3)s.

### PRACTICE NOTES

In our Participatory Climate Initiative, as soon as we began to reach out to stakeholders, they urged us to design a program that would support both 501(c)(3)s and non-501(c)(3)s, and we quickly adopted the idea of including all kinds of organizations, including tribes, small businesses, and informal collectives.

Reaching out to groups who were not registered as 501(c)(3)s, we encountered both enthusiasm and skepticism. While some were excited about the opportunity because funding for these structures is rare, at least one group shared that they had structured themselves as an LLC precisely to move out of potentially problematic and extractive dynamics between nonprofits and philanthropy and they were hesitant to engage. Distributing money to a variety of types of groups was challenging and in some cases imposed significant administrative burdens on grantees. We did our best to mitigate them.

While we had been open to funding individuals, the Design Team chose not to do so because of concerns around whether they could ensure that such grantees would have significant enough accountability to and buy-in from the communities they worked with. The team also observed that when philanthropy elevates and supports individuals within communities, it can be problematic and do more harm than good.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:**

1. Do not limit yourself to funding only 501(c)(3)s. Develop administrative systems that will enable you to manage the risks associated with funding individuals, tribes, informal groups, and for-profit entities. Seek support and guidance—externally if needed—about what the risks actually are. Weigh these risks against the impact risk associated with *not* funding organizations that are doing excellent work with community support.
2. Consider the different needs that grantees with different structures might have as they engage in your grantmaking process. For example, consider how you can prepare to discuss your requirements for expenditure responsibility grants with small farmers before you embark on a plan to fund these groups.
3. When working with communities with limited experience with funders, don't assume shared language and understanding of financial and legal terminology. For instance, "expenditure responsibility" is not terminology most are familiar with. Be prepared to talk through options and trade-offs in lay language.





## SECTION 2

# Funder Readiness Assessment

In this section, we offer questions and discussion prompts to advance conversations about participatory philanthropy within your organization before deciding how you might implement new practices or programs.

### The topics we introduce are around:

1. Financial resources
2. Power
3. Capacity and time constraints
4. Practitioner skills

Not every foundation is ready to incorporate participatory practices into their institution. Foundations are moving towards participatory practices at different rates, and from different starting points and perspectives. Therefore, you should carefully consider the opportunities as well as the risks in your context before proceeding. Shifting power is not easy work and requires a strong internal commitment and continuous learning. Be clear on your foundation's reason for including participatory approaches in your work.



## 1. Financial Resources

Understanding what investment is required by your organization up-front can be an intimidating challenge for organizations that are new to participatory philanthropy. Use these questions to demystify this challenge.

### KEY QUESTION:

Does your organization have resources available to make participatory philanthropy happen?

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

1. Do you have sufficient resources to support an operating budget that will make your participatory philanthropy efforts successful? (See operating budget checklist on page 29.)
2. Do you have sufficient resources, like a substantial grant budget? It is important to have meaningful resources for the participants to decide about. What is meaningful will depend on the context.



### Tip:

*The costs of participatory philanthropy may seem intimidating at first, but will decrease as the programs and practices become a regular part of your organization's operating strategy. Many costs are one-time start-up costs and will not be required over time. If you are having difficulty making a case for its value with respect to cost, focus on the many benefits that go beyond making high-quality and impactful decisions, such as building long-term trust and credibility with the communities your organization works with.*

3. Do you have funds available to compensate participants? Payments to participants are another way you can resource and support communities and payments will make it possible for more people to participate. Compensating participants can make the process more equitable and less extractive, honoring the expertise, networks, reputations, and credibility you are asking participants to share. An appropriate hourly rate might be comparable to what your foundation pays other staff or consultants. Always disclose the details of these payments to participants to ensure they understand what payments will be taxable and must be reported to the IRS. Be mindful that payments may have tax implications for participants or affect their eligibility for public benefits.

4. Have you invested in building sufficient expertise in-house not only to initiate this program but also to carry the work forward? Remember that the skills required for successful participatory philanthropy may be very different from those required for a traditional grantmaking program. The role of the program team in participatory philanthropy tends to shift toward managing the process on the back end, engaging participants, and liaising with fund applicants. If you do not have this expertise in-house, consider how you can bring it into the process, build your expertise in the long term, and make plans that are realistic and achievable for your organization at this time.



## 2. Power

Sharing power is at the heart of participatory philanthropy, yet it is a challenge for many organizations to discuss power dynamics explicitly. While these discussions are not always comfortable, they are absolutely necessary. There is a substantial difference between inviting people's feedback or consulting them and ceding decision-making power. See Sherry Arnstein's [Ladder of Citizen Participation](#) to consider where you will fall on the spectrum of participatory decision making.

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### *Ladder of Citizen Participation*

*Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation describes how empowered public institutions and officials deny power to citizens, and how levels of citizen agency, control, and power can be increased.*

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When you invite people's input but you intend to make decisions, be explicit about that. When power sharing is overstated, you risk breaking trust with participants when the "real decision makers" do not follow through on their decisions or recommendations after a lengthy participatory process. And when the norms and practices of power are not made explicit, everyone operates from their own assumptions – and those with less formal power will bear the consequences of the resulting confusion.



### Tip:

*If you are still having difficulty securing the agreement of decision-makers, consider whether or not there are ways you can further limit the scope of your participatory philanthropy work in order to secure their commitment. For example, can you shift to a time-bound project or a smaller grant budget? If you need to make adjustments, apply the budget recommendations above to ensure results will still justify your investment. Evaluate whether or not your work can still be considered participatory if you are using that terminology. (See Glossary of Terms.)*



**KEY QUESTION:**

Where and how is your organization ready to cede power to participants in meaningful ways?

**DISCUSSION PROMPTS:**

1. Have you identified who the key decision-makers are in your organization or community who will need to commit to ceding power in order to move forward? They may be people in formal or informal positions of power within your organization or community, such as leadership like board members, directors, or community leaders.
2. Do decision-makers require training and/or support to fully understand what it means to cede power in this context? If this is not fully understood, any commitments they make may not be meaningful. It is critical for you to understand any concerns or barriers, and any requirements that decision-makers have established.
3. Are you able to secure wholehearted, firm, and specific commitments from decision-makers, preferably in writing or in a context that is public or recorded? It may feel easier to informally agree to the principles of sharing power, but you may want to create an agreement to refer back to during the process. Keeping decision-makers informed and involved will facilitate good communication and avoid difficulties.
4. Does the decision-makers' agreement clearly define and document the parameters, conditions, and limits of how power is being ceded to participants? Setting clear boundaries will help decision-makers feel confident and could even reveal opportunities to cede more power in the future as your practice grows. This allows you to communicate clearly with participants so that they do not lose trust in the process.
5. Participation benefits a foundation by ensuring grant decisions are more grounded in context, but ask yourself how will it benefit those who join in and participate? How can you be sure to cause no harm? How will you ensure people who become involved benefit from their experience?



### 3. Capacity and Time Constraints

People are often excited when starting their participatory philanthropy journeys, but planning overly ambitious or aggressive timelines for participatory work is a common pitfall that can lead to less-than-ideal results.

#### KEY QUESTION:

What requirements do you have for the timeline for your participatory philanthropy work, and do you truly have the capacity to implement your participatory philanthropy work within that timeline?



#### Tip:

*If your organization is simply not ready to proceed or if you need to learn more before building your organization's capacity in the long term, consider funding intermediaries (i.e. community foundations or regranters) that use participatory processes to direct resources and/or join a funder collaborative that practices participatory grantmaking.*

#### DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

1. Has your organization already built up a substantial foundation of knowledge and a substantial network in the issue area you would like to influence? If not, your planning and design phase should take at least several months to a year and will likely require significant resources, including staff and/or consultant time.
2. Is your organization committed to important principles such as Racial Justice, Disability Justice, Language Justice, Gender Justice, if they are relevant to your participatory work?





**DISCUSSION PROMPTS:**

3. What factors will influence the schedules and availability of potential stakeholders? These may be seasonal considerations, a need for some folks to plan far in advance, or availability at certain times that may not align with a traditional work day. Ask your potential stakeholders before you assume you understand all the barriers and needs.
4. Do the project sponsors and key staff/consultants already have sufficient skill, knowledge, and awareness to begin to carry this work forward? If not, plan time to build your team's capacity for this work before you move beyond the planning phase.
5. Are your estimates for how long it will take to complete work in each phase truly realistic? You will want to take into account the complexity of your field of stakeholders, limits on their availability that may make it difficult to schedule things in a timely way, how the pace of your work with participants impacts project outcomes, overlapping phases of work that could stretch capacity, and scheduling dependencies.



## 4. Practitioner Skills

Below you will find a list of skills that practitioners utilize to deliver high-quality participatory processes.

### KEY QUESTION:

Which are the areas where you might need to grow your team's capacity?

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

1. How much capacity is there on your staff team in areas such as facilitation and group decision-making processes?
2. Do staff members have the interest and time to build up capacity in the short and/or long-term?
3. In which areas might you be able to get external support or training?



**Tip:**

*Use this inventory to help assess what skills your organization has and might need.*

**Practitioner Skills Inventory:**

- Knowledge of and comfort with exploring and navigating power dynamics*
- General facilitation expertise, including difficult conversations and inclusive methods*
- Facilitation expertise specific to online or in-person environments, if required*
- Competence in listening, paraphrasing, and holding multiple perspectives*
- Facility with a wide range of decision-making tools and techniques*
- Strong project management skills, including scheduling expertise*
- Facility with analyzing and synthesizing information from many sources*
- Ability to thrive in complex multi-stakeholder environments*
- Skill in leading through influence and by motivating others*
- Knowledge of trust-based philanthropy principles*
- Knowledge of participatory philanthropy principles*
- Commitment to a grantee-centered approach at every stage of the process*
- Comfort with making decisions that involve trade offs, guided by values*
- Understanding of ‘do no harm’ principle as it relates to working with stakeholders outside of the foundation*
- Careful use of language that honors the intentions of participants*
- Practice of radical hospitality and inclusion*
- Knowledge of care practices*
- Comfort navigating and destigmatizing conflicts of interest*
- Experience recognizing and mitigating bias in people and systems*
- Competence with disability accessibility, and inclusion*
- Skill navigating and managing multilingual environments*
- Cultural competency, as relevant*
- Multilingualism, as relevant*
- Network weaving*
- Willingness to experiment, innovate, fail, and learn*



## SECTION 3

# Tools for Implementing a Participatory Philanthropy Initiative

### Find:

1. Operating budget checklist
2. Sample project outline
3. Sample project scope
4. Resources on roles
  - a. Engagement levels
  - b. Sample role templates



## 1. Operating Budget Checklist

Each participatory philanthropy program is unique, but this checklist will give you a general idea of what to consider when planning your operating budget. Not all of these items are necessary for every participatory process, but it's important to secure adequate support for the things your organization will need to implement a participatory process. Many of these resources can be covered within your organization's existing structures and operating costs as well, so may not present as additional costs. Those costs particular to participatory philanthropy have an asterisk (\*) next to them.

### Staffing and management line items:

- Staff resources or consultant fees for planning, design, project management*
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion consultants or staff expertise in this area*
- Legal and/or HR consultants/staff to provide support and help manage risks*
- Finance/Operations consultants/staff (software tools, travel, payments, etc.)*
- Fundraising consultants/staff (raising funds, reporting to donors, etc.)*
- Designers and/or video editors for materials produced*
- Professional translation and/or interpretation*
- Communications resources (especially for reaching larger audiences)*
- Evaluation consultants/staff or an external evaluation firm*

### Participation line items

- Coaching for staff (e.g., on decision-making approaches and tools, facilitation)\**
- Accessibility costs and support (e.g., meeting accommodations or providing equipment or internet to participate)*
- Trainings for participants (e.g., philanthropy, decision-making, addressing bias)\**
- Honoraria/payments for stakeholders (consultation phase)\**
- Honoraria/payments for participants (designers or decision-makers)\**
- Care packages/support for participants (sickness, hardship, etc.) or gifts for participants\**

**Meetings and convenings line items:**

- *Professional facilitators (for meetings/convenings and asynchronous participation)\**
- *Celebration expenses (branded merchandise, convenings, gifts, etc.)*
- *Travel, food, accommodation and care expenses (for in-person and hybrid gatherings)*
- *Meeting expenses for in-person gatherings (venue, activities, equipment, insurance, etc.)\**
- *Hybrid meeting support and additional equipment rental fees (for hybrid gatherings)*
- *Graphic recorder (for in-person or virtual gatherings)*
- *Communications resources (especially for reaching larger audiences)*



## 2. Sample Participatory Project Outline

While we do not expect that funders will replicate the approach we took for our Participatory Climate Initiative in full, funders can incorporate participation into different phases in their organization and philanthropic cycle.

- A. Planning Phase (flexible timeline)
  - a. Secure consultants/staff to manage the project and/or train staff
  - b. Define the scope for the design phase, assign roles and consult project sponsors
  - c. Create a stakeholder map and conduct initial consultations
  - d. Create a project plan, schedule, and budget for the design phase
  
- B. Participatory Design Phase (several months)
  - a. Define roles, convene a participatory design team
  - b. Conduct participatory design process
  - c. Share results of participatory design process with all stakeholders
  - d. Create a project plan, schedule, and budget for the grantmaking phase
  
- C. Participatory Grantmaking Phase (several months)
  - a. Conduct a focused round of consultations with stakeholders
  - b. Define roles, convene a participatory grantmaking group
  - c. Conduct participatory decision-making process
  - d. Share results of participatory decision-making process with all stakeholders
  
- D. Evaluation & Learning Community (flexible timeline)
  - a. Conduct and share evaluation of design and grantmaking phases
  - b. Share learning with wider philanthropy community
  - c. Identify opportunities to platform design team and grantmaking group members by inviting them to convenings and conferences, publishing their ideas, and using resources to amplify their voices and contributions
  - d. Convene funders and participants for shared learning experiences

### 3. Sample Project Scope

Shared Insight developed this Project Scope for our Participatory Climate Initiative. Below are the initiative's learning goals, requirements, and recommendations – defined by the funders and passed along to our Design Team. Consider what are the required parameters of your funding before opening up decision making to those outside of the foundation.

#### Learning Goals:

*The project, focused on climate change, will **support funders to deepen their practices** in these two areas:*

- 1. Funding work that involves people in the policy decisions that impact them, with a focus on those least heard and most impacted by those policy decisions.*
- 2. Participatory grantmaking as a way to elevate beneficiary voices and share power, with a focus on those least heard and most impacted by funding decisions.*

#### Requirements for the project:

*Requirements are firm decisions that are made by Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Change Committee before the participatory design phase. The participatory design team must abide by these requirements.*

- 1. Grants will fund work in the broad area of **climate change policy**.*
- 2. Grants will fund work that **involves people in policy decisions** that impact them.*
- 3. The **grantmaking process** and the **design phase** will be **participatory**.*
- 4. The participatory design team will integrate **equity/diversity/inclusion lenses** from the beginning of the design phase, and be explicit about including the voices of people most impacted and least heard.*
- 5. No climate deniers will be involved **with the participatory design phase**.*
- 6. Grants will only fund **work happening in the US** (inclusive of all 50 states, territories, and Washington D.C.). (Note: We are discussing language that will also be inclusive of tribal nations and native communities that may not be adequately included in this definition.)*
- 7. Requirements around grantmaking will be defined by our fiscal sponsor. **Shared Insight will not add additional requirements** that narrow the parameters set by our fiscal sponsor.*



**Recommendations to design team about the project:**

*Recommendations will be considered by the design team, but they are not requirements. Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Change Committee will accept the decision of the design team in these areas, even if they diverge from recommendations.*

- 1. Design for **learning**. For example, a focus on a specific geographic area may enable us to more effectively trace results and learn from them.*
- 2. Consider integrating this work with **decision-making tables that already exist** and could benefit from more community involvement with policy decisions.*
- 3. **Align the geographic or thematic focus** with work that Shared Insight members are already involved in, to encourage interest in the results among funder institutions.*
- 4. Avoid the use of terms like "climate justice" in favor of a **"big tent" approach** that adopts inclusive language that will not alienate stakeholders.*
- 5. Consider focusing grants exclusively on native or indigenous communities, and take into account the historic exclusion of native or indigenous people from advocacy and philanthropy.*



## 4. Roles

### a. Engagement Levels

See “Teams” on our website.

While we don’t anticipate that all elements of our approach would be fully adopted by another funder, below are the roles, phases of involvement, and engagement levels of our initiative.

- **Very light engagement:** less than an average of 2 hours/month during the active phases identified
- **Light engagement:** less than an average of 3 hours/week during the active phases identified
- **Medium engagement:** less than an average of 15 hours/week during the active phases identified
- **Significant engagement:** more than an average of 15 hours/week during the active phases identified



## FUNDERS

Role	Description	Phases Involved	Engagement
<b>Funders</b>	Contributed to the initiative budget and overall governance of the donor collaborative that housed the initiative; reviewed and approved plans and budgets and each phase of the initiative; participated in learning activities related to the initiative several times throughout the year.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Very light
<b>Committee Members</b>	Funders who sat on Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Committee that initiated this work; played an active role during the planning phase; participated in learning activities related to the initiative about every other month; responsible for bringing learning back to their home organizations.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Very light
<b>Committee Co-Chairs</b>	Members of Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Committee who were more active and involved with planning this work; met regularly with the project sponsor and project managers throughout the initiative to offer feedback and guidance.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Light
<b>Funder Representatives</b>	One funder representative joined the Design Team as liaison with Shared Insight's funder committee; two funder representatives joined the Grantmaking Group. The funder representatives participated as observers and were charged with bringing their observations and learning back to the funder committee and beyond.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking	Medium

## PROJECT MANAGERS AND SUPPORT AND SUPPORT TEAM

Role	Description	Phases Involved	Engagement
<b>Project Sponsor</b>	The managing director of Fund for Shared Insight was responsible for hiring the Consultants and supervising the project under the direction of the Advocacy/Policy Committee.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Medium
<b>Support Team</b>	Support from Fund for Shared Insight and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors' team of staff and contractors included grants administration, disbursing payments, communications, design, equity/diversity/inclusion support, logistics, and more.	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Medium
<b>Facilitators &amp; Project Managers</b>	The project managers planned and implemented each phase of the initiative under the direction of the project sponsor. Consultants with expertise in participatory philanthropy and group work served as facilitators and project managers. They were responsible for supporting the Design Team, Grantmaking Group, and Learning Community meetings and asynchronous collaboration. (These roles could be separated.)	Planning; Design; Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Significant

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

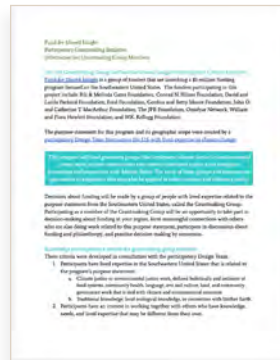
Role	Description	Phases Involved	Engagement
<b>Stakeholders Consulted</b>	Stakeholders participated in 30-to-60-minute phone/video calls during the Planning and Design Phases. Stakeholders had experience with issues on climate and environment, philanthropic funding flows locally, and community leadership efforts.	Planning; Design	Very light
<b>Partner Selectors</b>	12 partner organizations deeply embedded in regional work at the intersection of climate/environment and advocacy/policy were invited to select someone from their community to join the Design Team.	Design	Light
<b>Design Team Members</b>	12 Design Team members with strong connections to their region and climate/environment issues considered key design questions and created a purpose statement for the fund; 11 members continued their engagement during the Grantmaking Phase; several joined the Grantmaking Group.	Design; Grantmaking	Medium
<b>Nominators</b>	Stakeholders with specific expertise were invited to nominate groups for funding that met the criteria created by the Design Team.	Grantmaking	Very light
<b>Grantmaking Group Members</b>	14 Grantmaking Group Members (seven from each region) made decisions about how \$1 million would be distributed in each region; they also communicated funding decisions; some joined the Learning Community.	Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Medium
<b>Grantees</b>	35 groups/organizations participated in the application process and received grants; some joined the Learning Community	Grantmaking; Implementation & Learning	Light
<b>Learning Community</b>	Mix of Design Team, Grantmaking Group members, and funders who are interested in exploring the productive tensions in philanthropy; convened once a quarter or so to discuss these issues with an optional in-person gathering.	Learning	Light

## b. Sample Role Templates

These documents may be useful to you as you design your own initiative.



Design Team



Grantmaking Group

*Example for  
US Southeast region*



Grantee Nominators

*Example in  
Kōlea region*



Grantee





## How We Did It: A Step-by-Step Look at Shared Insight's Participatory Climate Initiative

This section provides a close look at our Participatory Climate Initiative, a one-time program to explore a participatory approach to grantmaking. Here, we describe in detail the what, when, and how of the initiative, laying the groundwork for learning, growing, and sharing knowledge and best practices towards the goal of shifting power in philanthropy.

### Phases of our initiative:

The Participatory Climate Initiative took place in four phases from its inception, beginning in earnest in 2020, and continuing through implementation in 2022 and beyond:

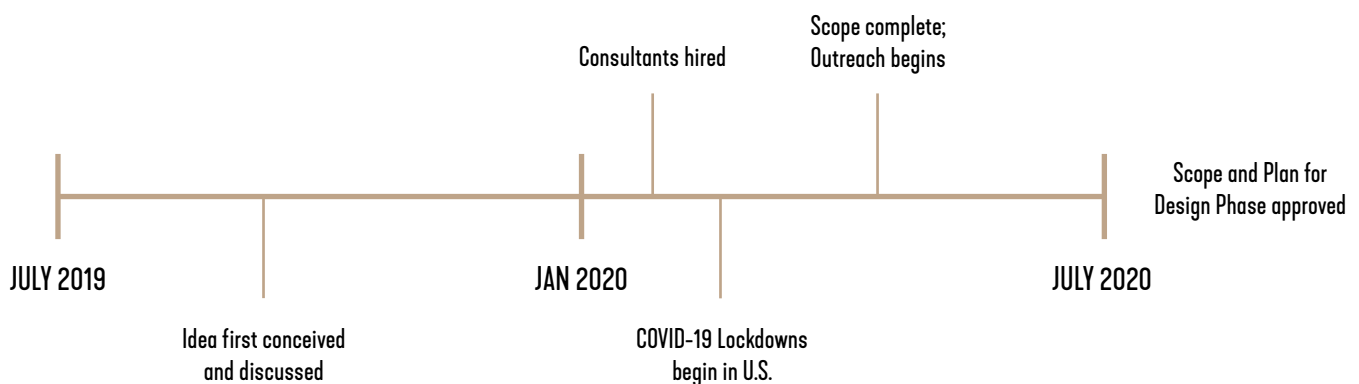
1. **Planning Phase:** Fund for Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Committee defined the scope of the initiative, engaged consultants, and set goals and requirements; outreach began.
2. **Design Phase:** 12 participants from communities impacted by climate change across the United States and Territories along with one funder representative collaborated to define the initiative's purpose and share their ideas for how the Grantmaking Phase should work.
3. **Grantmaking Phase:** 14 participants from communities impacted by climate change in each focus region made decisions by consensus about how to allocate \$2 million in grants. They were joined by two non-voting funder representatives.
4. **Implementation Phase:** 35 grantees in the Southeastern United States and in the Kōlea Region (which includes Alaska and Hawai'i) received funding for their advocacy work (expansively defined) around climate change (holistically defined); a "learning community" for participants was established.

## 1. Planning Phase

The Participatory Climate Initiative was first conceived by Fund for Shared Insight’s Advocacy/Policy Committee (‘the Committee’) in 2019, in response to a [landscape scan](#) by the Aspen Institute, which identified participatory grantmaking as a key strategy to better inform policy and advocacy decisions. The Committee decided on an exploratory initiative focused at the intersection of participation, climate change, and policy/advocacy work, engaging two consultants with expertise in participatory philanthropy in February, 2020: Katy Love and Winifred Olliff (‘the Consultants’). COVID-19 lockdowns pushed the decision to make the initiative an entirely virtual process.

The Consultants spoke with about 40 people from across the U.S. and Territories who were connected with communities impacted by climate change and often excluded from traditional philanthropy spaces, with an emphasis on including Black and Indigenous people and other people of color. These conversations informed the plan in significant ways (e.g., leading to rejecting an open application process and using language other than “climate change.”) and led to a stakeholder map that included potential participants.

The Committee convened to collaboratively design a scope for the initiative, approve a plan for the Design Phase, and define the broad parameters of the initiative.



### Outcomes from the Planning Phase:

1. Consultants engaged
2. Scope created (including Learning Goals and Requirements & Recommendations)
3. Detailed plan for the design phase approved, with stakeholder feedback included
4. Stakeholder map created and expanded to include future participants and partners



## 2. Design Phase

### DESIGN TEAM FORMATION

The Committee and the Consultants invited 12 partner organizations (intermediary funders and climate policy/advocacy groups) to select Design Team members. Although they were provided with some guidance, partner organizations had the autonomy to select members without the input of the Consultants and were compensated. Partner organizations were invited based on the recommendations of people who were consulted in the planning phase, and with an eye to ensuring that a diversity of races, geographies, ages, genders, and other identities and perspectives were present on the Design Team. They selected 12 Design Team members who hailed from communities across the U.S. and Territories. Design Team members were compensated and were joined by one funder (a representative from Shared Insight's Advocacy/Policy Committee), who was not compensated.

### PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

The Design Team met virtually over 10 weeks between October 2020 and January 2021. Members were asked to commit 30 hours to activities like joining virtual meetings, responding to prompts, reviewing materials, and engaging in learning and reflection activities. The Consultants worked to carefully manage the process to ensure that experiences matched expectations.

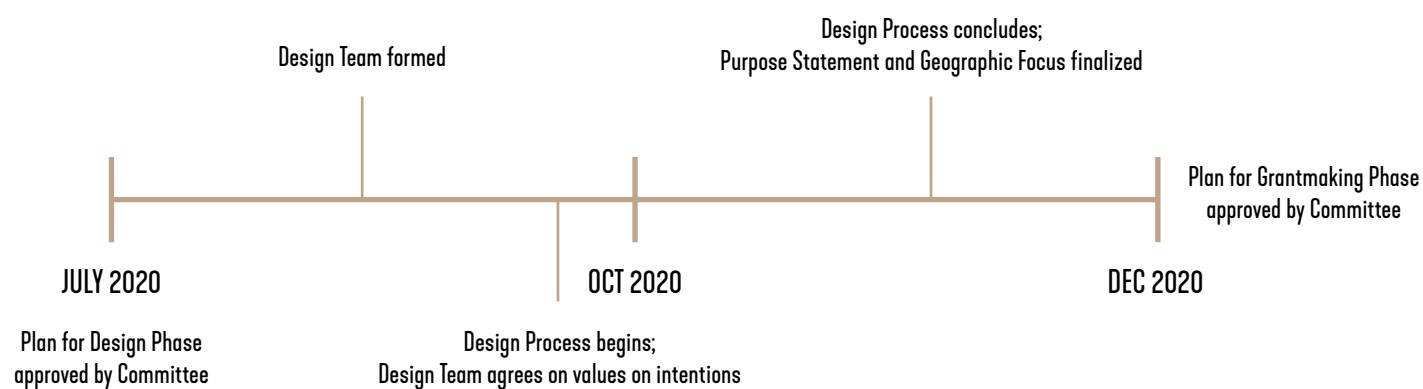
The Design Team did not make any funding decisions. They considered questions like:

1. Where will grants be made?
2. What will grantees be able to do with the funds?
3. How will decisions about grants be made?
4. Who will make decisions about grants?

The Design Team's recommendations were shared in November 2020, and a plan for the Grantmaking Phase was approved by the Committee in early 2021. Two of the Team's key contributions were the creation of a Purpose Statement for the grantmaking fund and the selection of two geographic focus areas. The Design Team also made important recommendations, including taking a holistic approach to climate change, using an expansive definition of policy/advocacy, and being guided by a set of values rooted in grassroots organizing and trust-based practices.

Nearly all of the Design Team members chose to continue their involvement with the initiative during a bridge phase before the Grantmaking Phase began to offer their insights and provide accountability as their ideas were implemented.

## SECTION 4 | HOW WE DID IT



### Outcomes from the Planning Phase:

- 1. Selected values and outlined design principles rooted in grassroots organizing and trust-based practices*
- 2. Made recommendations including taking a holistic approach to climate issues and an expansive view of policy/advocacy*
- 3. Wrote purpose statement and established geographic focus for the fund*

### Purpose Statement

*This program will fund grassroots groups that implement climate justice or environmental justice work in their communities that centers traditional and/or local ecological knowledge and connection with Mother Earth. The work of these groups will demonstrate approaches to adaptation that may also be applied in other contexts and influence policy.*

### Geographic Focus

*The fund's work will be focused in the Southeastern U.S. and Territories and in the Kōlea Region, which includes Alaska and Hawai'i.*

### Values Selected by the Design Team

- 1. Trust people with lived experience to make decisions that affect them and to identify their own needs and priorities. Trust in the knowledge of people with lived experience and in their ability to steward their own resources.*
- 2. Center communities that are directly impacted by climate policy in funding decisions rather than centering the needs and perspectives of those in power.*
- 3. Solidarity around shared interests, not hierarchy, builds collective power without creating structures that empower specific individuals over others: “No emperors, no masters, no prison guards!”<sup>1</sup> Where possible, consider alternative structures that are less hierarchical and that focus on building shared power.*
- 4. Challenge power by centering the perspectives of people most impacted by climate change and least heard, even when these perspectives are critical of the people and institutions that currently hold power, including funders. Embrace the potential of participatory approaches to shift power, and resource those programs substantially and meaningfully.*

<sup>1</sup> This phrase was adapted by the Grantmaking Group to align to the context of the Hawaiian monarchy.



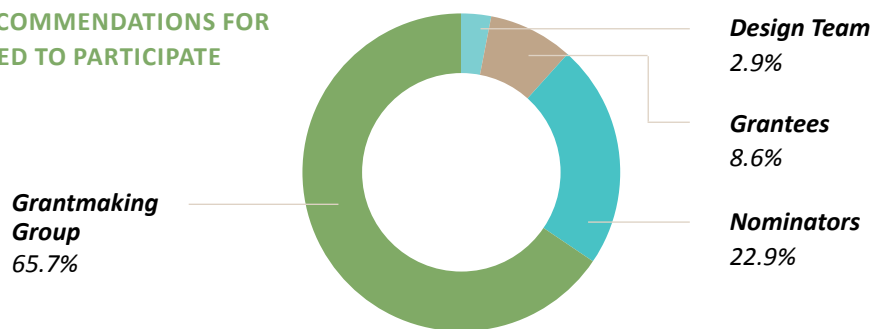
### 3. Grantmaking Phase

#### GRANTMAKING PORTFOLIO CREATION

The Consultants launched the Grantmaking Phase with a new round of regionally focused outreach to gather feedback with a regional lens and to identify potential grantees, nominators, and decision-makers (Grantmaking Group members). Participants in this phase of outreach were offered compensation for sharing their time and expertise. In this way, thousands of dollars were distributed directly to frontline communities, illustrating how money can be moved quickly to communities beyond the grants process.

Of the 35 grantees ultimately selected, eight came into the process through nominators (who were part of the regional feedback outreach), three through other grantees, and 24 through Design Team or Grantmaking Group members.

#### SOURCE OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUPS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE



The portfolio of potential grantees was reviewed by participants before they were formally invited to join the process. Groups invited to participate were guaranteed a \$10,000 minimum grant for completing a questionnaire with three short-answer questions and participating in a phone call. Of 38 groups invited to participate, 35 chose to engage in the process.

**Beyond essential information (such as names, contact information, and legal structure), the three questions included on the questionnaire were:**

1. How is your group's work related to the purpose statement?
2. How is your group led, managed, and supported by people from the communities you work in?
3. Tell us about your group's long-term vision, or what your group would like to achieve in the long term.

### PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PROCESS

Grantmaking Group selection was finalized in September 2021. This group included seven members from the Southeastern U.S. and seven from the Kōlea Region, which includes Alaska & Hawai'i. Grantmaking Group members brought strong ties and in-depth knowledge and networks in the region. In the Kōlea region, the group was composed of Native and Indigenous people and those with close ties to these communities, as climate change has a disproportionate impact on Native communities, including those in Alaska and Hawai'i. This group included people from different islands in Hawai'i and various areas of Alaska, which was very important in the context of these regions since it is often the case that communities on smaller islands in Hawai'i or in more remote areas of Alaska are not included. In the Southeast, the Grantmaking Group was majority Black, Indigenous, and people of color, whose communities have also been disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. Both regions included a funder representative from Fund for Shared Insight, who participated as a learner and observer, but did not decide about the grants. Of 16 Grantmaking Group members, seven members had also served on the Design Team previously, ensuring plenty of continuity between these two phases of participation.

The purpose of the Grantmaking Group was to work together to make decisions by consensus about how \$1 million (ultimately doubled to \$2 million) will be allocated across a portfolio of about 20 grantees (ultimately 35 grantees) in Alaska and Hawai'i. This meant that all Grantmaking Group Members had to reach unanimous agreement in how to move forward with grant decisions, through an intensive deliberative process. Grantmaking Group Members were asked to commit approximately 30 hours of engagement between September and November 2021, and were offered compensation that was on par with the fees Shared Insight pays consultants. Grantmaking Group members in each region met together virtually and worked asynchronously over 10 weeks.

The Grantmaking Group reached decisions by consensus in both regions after weeks of extensive discussion and deliberation. Facilitators used a tool called the Gradients of Agreement<sup>2</sup> that allows for a nuanced discussion around each group member's precise level of support for a particular outcome along a spectrum. The Group ultimately awarded 17 grants in the Southeastern U.S. and 18 grants in the Kōlea Region, for a total of \$2 million dollars across both regions. The total allocation was doubled from the original \$1-million fund based on a request from the Grantmaking Group to support more efforts. The groups receiving funding were all community-led grassroots groups, largely led by Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color. The Grantmaking Group also shared observations and insights with funders and set intentions for the next phase.

<sup>2</sup> The Gradients of Agreement was developed by Sam Kaner, Duane Berger, and Community at Work.

## SECTION 4 | HOW WE DID IT



### Outcomes from the Grantmaking Phase:

- 1. Geographically and thematically diverse portfolio of 35 grantees is selected.*
- 2. Decisions about distributing \$2 million of grants across 35 organizations are made by consensus by people with lived expertise from each region.*
- 3. Recommendations are submitted to funders about a learning community for grantees and participants.*

## 4. Implementation Phase: Next Steps and Learning Community

Grantmaking Group members directly notified the 35 grantees of their grant awards during November and December, 2021; in many cases, calling them to deliver news on the phone. All the grantees accepted the funding and many began implementing their grants in January 2022. Following the grant awards, and based on the recommendations of participants, Fund for Shared Insight created a Learning Community of participants that met virtually three times and then gathered for an in-person meeting in January (Kōlea region) and April (Southeast region) in 2023. The in-person gatherings were designed by the goals of participants. Shared Insight is also sharing what we learned from the initiative with the philanthropy sector and the wider world.

### **Outcomes from the Implementation Phase:**

- 1. \$2 million grant funding is distributed to and put to use by 35 organizations*
- 2. Tools are developed to share our learning with the wider philanthropy community*
- 3. Participants connect to share learning and deepen insights*





SECTION 5

# More Resources

## 1. Reflections on Power



## 2. Nuts & Bolts of the Participatory Climate Initiative



Part I: Nuts and Bolts of Participatory Design



Part II: Participatory Climate Initiative, Learnings and Reflections



# Our Appreciation

*Fund for Shared Insight would like to express our deep gratitude to all who participated in, supported, and contributed to this initiative. We especially thank:*

## DESIGN TEAM MEMBERS

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Soledad Gaztambide Arandes

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Jayeesha Dutta  
Katia R. Avilés Vázquez  
Kilia Purdy-Avelino  
Melinda Tuan  
Miwa Tamanaha  
Reverend Leo Woodberry

## GROUPS RECEIVING FUNDING

### **Kōlea region (Alaska and Hawai'i)**

Aimalama  
Bering Sea Elders  
Chickaloon Native Village  
Hui Maka'ainana o Makana  
ICC Alaska  
Kamiloloa One Ali'i Homestead Association  
Kawerak  
KUA  
Laulima Kuha'O  
Maui Nui Makai Network  
Organized Village of Kake  
Organized Village of Savoonga  
Organized Village of Shaktoolik  
Punana O Kaiona  
Roots Program (Kōkua Kalihi Valley)  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Village of Port Heiden  
Waimea Homestead

### **Southeastern United States**

Alliance of Native Seedkeepers  
Another Gulf is Possible/Otro Golfo es Posible  
Colmena Cimarrona  
Cosmic Poetry Sanctuary  
Ekvn-Yefolecv  
Hijra House  
IDEBAJO  
ISER Caribe  
Living Hope Wheelchair Association  
New Alpha CDC  
North Carolina Climate Justice Collective  
Nottoway Tribe of Virginia  
Sejah Farm, St. Croix  
SouthCentral Louisiana CDC  
Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON)  
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards  
Stay Together Appalachian Youth Project  
Waimea Homestead

## **PARTNERS, INCLUDING TEAM AND GRANTEE NOMINATORS:**

Alaska Venture Fund  
Another Gulf is Possible  
Appalachian Community Fund  
Climate Justice Alliance  
Dogwood Alliance  
Filantropía Puerto Rico  
First Nations Development Institute  
Foundation for Louisiana  
Hawaii Community Foundation  
Headwaters Foundation  
Kua'aina Ulu 'Auamo  
Native Americans in Philanthropy  
Quivira Coalition  
Spruce Root

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Rev. Leo Woodberry  
Liana Lopez  
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Osvaldo Capmany  
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Rory Neuner  
Sydney Underwood  
Taysha DeVaughan  
Whitney Jaye  
Yvonne Belanger

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