

Introducing the Toolkit

We created this resource to offer insights, recommendations, and the nuts and bolts of design and implementation to inform and inspire your own journey toward more participatory practices.

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Participatory Philanthropy Primer

For funders committed to shifting power to, and sharing power with, those most impacted by their work, participation is key. Participatory approaches in philanthropy center the leadership, wisdom, and voices of communities. They shift power from philanthropy's traditional power centers (i.e., the donors and institutions that control the money) to the people and communities directly affected by the issues being addressed.

Done right — authentically, with an open mind, and with a commitment to equity — participatory approaches allow funders to truly listen, respond to what they hear, and shift power to meet the needs and aspirations of the communities they aim to serve. Participatory approaches leverage the invaluable knowledge and insights that can be gleaned only from firsthand experiences, and cultivate partnerships that enable individuals to play an active role in shaping their own destinies. **Participation can mitigate power imbalances; surface the most-effective solutions; promote trust, accountability, and transparency; and lead to more equitable philanthropy.**

Participatory philanthropy is a broad approach that calls for participation not only in grantmaking, but across the entirety of a foundation's functions, including governance, grants administration, and evaluation. Participatory grantmaking is an approach under the participatory umbrella that cedes decision making around grants.

Funders across the country are moving toward participatory practices at different rates and from different starting points and perspectives. Shifting power is not easy work and requires a strong internal commitment and continuous learning. It's best to be clear on your organization's motivations, capabilities, and goals when considering including participatory approaches in your work.

A Look at Shared Insight's Participatory Philanthropy Project



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How to use the toolkit video

Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit
Learn how to integrate participatory practices that shift power, trust, and decision making.

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Explore the toolkit to learn how to design and implement participatory grantmaking programs.

When high-quality listening opens up opportunities for more participatory practices, you can be ready. Here you will find discussion guides about launching a participatory philanthropy process, concrete tools to help you design or improve your grantmaking, and reflections on how power shifts can happen in your philanthropy.

[Watch video online](#)

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.

Our Appreciation

Fund for Shared Insight is grateful to all who participated in, supported, and contributed to our Participatory Climate Initiative, on which this toolkit is based. Please see online the list of organizations and individuals who participated as Design Team members, Grantmaking Group members, participant or grantee nominators, grantees, funders, fiscal sponsors, evaluation partners, or toolkit reviewers. We deeply appreciate everyone who participated and the contributions they made.

[See our appreciations online](#)

**Have questions about the toolkit?
Or want to learn more?**

Please reach out to Katy Love (katy@fundforsharedinsight.org), the toolkit's co-author with Winifred Olliff, both consultants with experience and expertise in participatory grantmaking.



[Contact Katy](#)