



ORSIMPACT

An Exploration of the Hellman Foundation's Community Listening Efforts

August 2025

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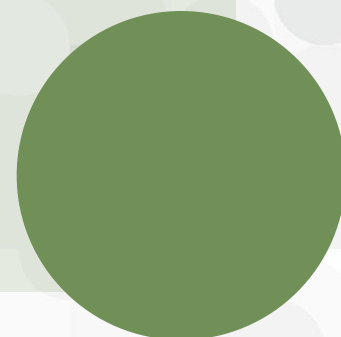
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Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the Hellman Foundation team members and Community Panelists who took the time to share their insights and experiences. We hope that the information in this report will be useful to them and to other foundations exploring ways to leverage community listening practices as a mechanism of shifting power to those most impacted by structural racism and systemic inequities.




Overview of the Hellman Foundation

The [Hellman Foundation](#) (the Foundation) is a place-based funder committed to “building equity and opportunity in the San Francisco Bay Area by investing in community-led initiatives.” To date, they’ve awarded over \$330 million to grantees focused across issue areas such as health, education, urban green spaces, and community needs. Since it was established in 2011, the Foundation’s approach has been based on the belief that problems, opportunities, and solutions are best understood by local communities. As such, the Foundation stays responsive to the evolving needs of their community partners through deep listening to identify where Foundation resources can be best mobilized.

“The DNA of the Foundation has always been to listen and ask questions and look to those who have different experiences that can help inform and be part of grantmaking.”

- Foundation team member

The Foundation, managed by [Third Plateau](#), incorporates community listening in numerous ways. One example is the [Hellman Collaborative Change Initiative \(HCCI\)](#). Since 2014, the goal of HCCI has been to achieve long-term social change in health, education, and economic opportunity by bringing diverse, cross-sector stakeholders together to roll up their sleeves and tackle tough local challenges. HCCI aims to seed, and scale proven, high-impact solutions that drive systems-level change, strengthen cross sector collaborations for long-term sustainability, and build engagement support across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to achieve ambitious outcomes. In 2022, HCCI began to explore shifting decision-making power from the Foundation to a [Community Panel](#) composed of local community leaders in Alameda and San Francisco counties. The Community Panel includes current grantee partners, as well as local non-profit, private sector, and public sector leaders who together make grantmaking decisions aligned with the arising needs of target communities. To date, HCCI has deployed \$15 million to cross-sector collaborations to tackle issues like education, food and reproductive justice, and public health crises such as Hepatitis C. See [here](#) for the full list of annual awardees since 2014.



This case study examines HCCI's use of a Community Panel to evaluate and recommend collaborations for funding and explores the initiative's outcomes. For instance, what is the extent to which both community members and Foundation team members believe that HCCI has shifted power to community, and what has been the experience of Community Panelists? This case study is an extension of a broader analysis of funder listening efforts across 11 foundations. That report provides a more expansive view of how this set of 11 funders approach listening practices, who they include in those initiatives, the extent to which they seek to shift power, and how these listening efforts have impacted their work, along with our observations about funder listening as a practice in the philanthropic sector.



Purpose and Methods

For more than a decade, Fund for Shared Insight (Shared Insight) has been working to support nonprofits and foundations in listening, responding, and shifting power to the people most directly impacted by their work. In the past, Shared Insight focused mostly on supporting nonprofits' ability to collect feedback from their clients, while more recently focusing on influencing foundations to listen and shift power. Shared Insight's theory of change identifies "more leaders and staff in foundations listening, responding and shifting power to those most impacted by structural racism and systemic intersectional inequities" as a core outcome to ensure that listening becomes standard practice in the sector. ORS Impact has partnered with Shared Insight to explore how funders are listening, responding, and shifting power, as well as how communities experience the listening work.

We use the term "listening" to refer to the range of practices that the Hellman Foundation employs to engage with and respond to community needs. In this report, we seek to illustrate *one* way that listening work can look in practice. Specifically, we focus on how listening can serve as a mechanism for shifting power to communities least consulted by philanthropy.

We selected the Hellman Foundation from among 25 other foundations based on its commitment to listening and responding to community needs. We conducted seven 60-minute interviews with four Foundation team members and three community members that participate in their listening efforts. We asked team members to provide an overview of the Foundation's listening methods, the goals of those practices, and the extent to which they seek to shift power to the communities most directly impacted but least consulted by philanthropy. Because we interviewed team members across many roles within the Foundation, we also inquired about how listening efforts specifically inform their work. For community member interviewees, we sought to understand how they perceived the purpose of the Foundation's listening practice and how they experienced the engagement. We asked community members to evaluate the power dynamics between community participants and Foundation team members, as well as their perception of the extent to which the listening effort shifted power and impacted their community. We then analyzed the information to draw insights. At the end of the case study, we relate the Foundation's listening practice to Shared Insight's framework on listening to shift power and assess the degree to which it aligns to this definition.



How the Hellman Foundation Listens to Community

The Foundation leverages a suite of community listening efforts to influence and inform its work through collaborative relationships with its community partners.


Aligned with their mission and values, the Foundation employs community listening practices in its various efforts. Foundation team members listen with curiosity and openness to what matters to the community, build relationships with community members/grassroots organizations, and provide thought partnership. A Foundation team member gives the following example, “When a nonprofit leader in Oakland is facing serious challenges, he can reach out to me directly—and we’ll figure out how to support. But getting to that level of trust didn’t happen overnight. It required intentional internal work to define what it truly means to be in an authentic relationship with the community.”

HCCI centers the perspectives and lived experiences of the communities that the Foundation seeks to serve.

HCCI is an adaptable, community-rooted, and community-driven program that relies on the expertise of communities to both identify community problems and make decisions about how grantmaking is allocated to those issues. The Initiative is intended to be a transparent, inclusive, and participatory process that leverages community insight on problems to allocate resources where it matters most. This Initiative provides unrestricted multi-year support and capacity-building resources to cross-sector collaborations seeking to scale community-driven solutions.

Through HCCI, the Foundation listens in the following ways:

- First, through an **open call grant application process** to identify problems that exist and the solutions to those issues. A team member describes, “We put out an open call that says, ‘tell us what problem you’re solving and tell us how you plan



to address it. We will fund that, and we will give you additional capacity-building resources to do it.'"

- Second, through a **Community Panel**, the Foundation actively listens to Community Panel members and entrusts them with decision-making authority to determine how resources should be allocated. Panel members develop and present their grantmaking recommendations to the Foundation board for final approval. A team member says,


"It's never been about the Foundation . . . so, when the message was that the best, most lasting impacts were going to happen when you put the resources in the hands of the people that understand things the best, [it became clear that] we should start doing that."

Foundation team members and Community Panelists describe the goals of this participatory grantmaking approach as the following:

1. To shift decision-making power over grantmaking to the Community Panel. Community Panelists are intended to represent the wider communities in Alameda and San Francisco counties and bring a diversity of stakeholder perspectives.
2. Strengthen trust and relationships between the Foundation and the communities it serves. The process is meant to be transparent and inclusive so that Community Panelists can show up authentically.
3. Build the skills, knowledge, and confidence of Community Panelists to ensure they can participate fully, authentically, and effectively in the grantmaking process.

The Foundation engages a group of Community Panelists who represent the communities and grantees in the Bay Area at the heart of the Foundation's work.

Community Panelists are selected through a closed invitation process every two years, come with a broad range of skills and expertise, and represent important perspectives of the communities they serve, which are often those least consulted by philanthropy. The selection process for the Community Panel began with the Foundation team collecting biographies and making initial introductions to help candidates understand the role, responsibilities, and time commitment of serving on the Community Panel. This was followed up by interviews to assess the candidates' experience and connection to



their community, seeking leaders with diverse perspectives and backgrounds who could provide insights from their experiences in health, education, community development, and collective impact work. The Foundation also looked for individuals familiar with the nonprofit landscape and different community issues across counties as well as individuals with legal, business, or other relevant backgrounds. Once Community Panelists were selected, they served in three-year cycles.


The Foundation team expressed a clear commitment to ensuring the Community Panel reflected both racial and ethnic diversity, the lived experiences and perspectives of organizational leaders who are deeply connected to the communities they serve, and the value of cross-sector collaboration. The Foundation prepares and builds the capacity of Community Panelists to authentically participate in collaborative grantmaking decisions.

An HCCI team member and an external facilitator with deep experience in bringing people together to make collective decisions facilitated HCCI Community Panel meetings. Community Panelists talked about the use of consensus-building tools, including the [Fist to Five model](#), and being facilitated through processes where they are able to “express differences and embrace variation.” Meetings are facilitated virtually and in-person in a welcoming space and guided by flexible agendas that give direction but reserve space to adapt.

Community Panelists' level of involvement in the panel has increased over time, and they now review a larger portion of applications and make grantmaking decisions that are presented to the board for approval. The panel most recently allocated \$2.64M to cross-sector collaborative partners.

Foundation team members intentionally seek to shift power through HCCI, and the Initiative has informed the Foundation's overall grantmaking approach and strategic priorities and strengthened several aspects of its work.

Foundation team members and Community Panelists describe that an important aspect of HCCI has been to shift decision-making power over grantmaking to the Community Panel. To understand how HCCI has shifted power and what results those shifts have brought about, we anchor in **Shared Insight's definition of shifting power as the following: “a movement toward self-determination and ownership for communities**



most impacted by structural racism and systemic intersectional inequities.”¹ This definition also describes decentering the outsized power of funders by enabling community members to directly influence the decisions foundations make about their resources, strategies, and practices.

In our conversations with Foundation team members, all of them described an approach aligned to Shared Insight’s definition of power shifting. Foundation team members describe power shifting as a deliberate and evolving process for HCCI. While the goal for the Foundation has always been to center the voices of community members in grantmaking so that they can drive community outcomes (both in what gets surfaced by the community and what is ultimately funded), what this has looked like in practice within HCCI has evolved from more to less board involvement in the grant decision-making process.

Foundation team members also talked about being deliberate in addressing and managing power dynamics in the Community Panel. They discussed the importance of having a strong focus on building trust and relationships among Community Panelists to ensure that everyone feels heard and respected. One Foundation team member describes, “The [Foundation] team really goes out of its way to ensure that every voice is heard in a way that is important and respected.” Team members asked panelists to share their pronouns, created flexible agendas, and respected the authority of Community Panelists, if, for example, they wanted to edit the agenda. Team members also described the evolution of Community Panelist representatives over time. Increasingly, the panel has been composed of community-based leaders who represent the interests of their communities.

Engaging community leaders through the panel allowed the Foundation to make grantmaking decisions that were more aligned with community-identified needs and solutions. Through the Community Panel, Foundation team members also reported the following:

- Strengthening legitimacy and trust with the community in Alameda and San Francisco counties, where the program currently funds partners
- Greater comfort in letting the community decide where the Foundation spends the Initiative’s resources
- Gaining a deeper understanding of community needs, challenges, and assets

¹ Tuan, M. (2024) What is funder listening to shift power? [Fund for Shared Insight](#).

- Enhancing their feedback mechanisms and responsiveness to community needs
- Strengthening their commitment to engage with the community in the long term through three-year appointments of panel members
- Becoming more inclusive and transparent in how they engage community

HCCI program model has also informed the Foundation's strategic priorities and approach. A Foundation team member states,

"HCCI has shaped a lot of the way that the rest of the Foundation thinks about stepping into new communities and community-based work."

Community engagement literature, like Facilitating Power's *Spectrum of Community Engagement*² and Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation,"³ explain the different ways in which community members engage with actors who traditionally make decisions that impact their communities, whether it is philanthropy, business, or government (Figure 1). Based on respondents' descriptions of HCCI, listening practices align with the "4-collaborate" and "5-defer to" categories (see Figure 1), and over time, the Foundation has shifted more decision-making power to the Community Panel. Initially, Foundation team members were more actively involved in the Community Panel process to promote transparency between the Foundation and the community and to help ensure that panelists felt supported and prepared to make informed grantmaking decisions. Over time, the role of the Community Panel has evolved to hold greater decision-making authority, with the Foundation Board increasingly deferring to and affirming the panel's grantmaking decisions. A Foundation team member describes, "The Community Panel put forward a set of recommendations that were presented to the board that barring something major, the board was looking forward to approving. That shift reflects just how far the process—and trust—has come."

² González, R. (2019). *Spectrum of community engagement to ownership*. Facilitating Power. www.facilitatingpower.com/spectrum_of_community_engagement_to_ownership_for_health_equity

³ Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224.

Figure 1 | Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership⁴



The Community Panel's Perspective

Community Panelists reflected positively on their experience serving on the Community Panel.

All Community Panelists shared they felt empowered in their decision-making role to review, vet, and select grantees for HCCI. They appreciated their role and felt that their contributions were valued and respected. They described their experience as deeply meaningful and said that their participation in this panel made them better listeners, developed Community Panelists' leadership skills by learning from other organizational leaders, and helped them grow in their understanding of different concepts like racial equity, consensus, and governance. Community Panelists also valued the collaborative

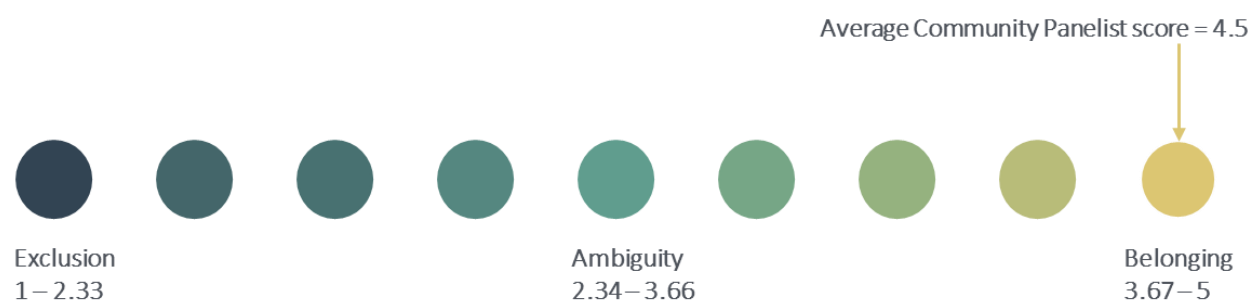
⁴ Graphic can be found on Facilitating Power's website:

https://www.facilitatingpower.com/spectrum_of_community_engagement_to_ownership

environment and relationships built, and they enjoyed the social aspects of meetings, including food and connection. The non-competitive environment fostered trust and respect and contributed to the general positive experience.


All Community Panelists felt a sense of belonging in the Community Panel. Figure 2 shows a spectrum of belonging from the Belonging Barometer, a report created by Over Zero and the Center for Inclusion at the American Immigration Council that introduces a measure to calculate an individual's level of belonging within a group. This score was calculated by asking Community Panelists to rate ten statements using an agreement scale from 1 being *strongly disagree* to 5 being *strongly agree*. The average rating for each Community Panelist was at least a 4.4, and the average of all four Community Panelists was 4.5. Full methodology can be found in Appendix.

Figure 2 | Belonging Barometer Spectrum of Belonging⁵



Community Panelists' experiences match the listening goals of the Foundation. As previously noted, the Foundation approaches their listening work through the Community Panel with transparency, open communication, and ongoing adaptation. They seek to build relationships among the Community Panelists and between the Community Panelists and the Foundation to elicit deep engagement and effective decision-making. Panelists expressed experiencing the Community Panel in the same way; they talk about being heard and respected, both by each other, the Foundation, and board. They noted the Foundation's openness, humility, responsiveness, and transparency around the decision-making process of grantmaking as well as collaborating on the goals and purpose of the Community Panel. One Community

⁵ Over Zero and The American Immigration Council. (2024). The Belonging Barometer: The State of Belonging in America. Revised ed. <https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications/belongingbarometer>




Panelist says, “I really appreciate that they're trusting community but also [open] to tweak[ing] the process along the way and to be clear about where we're . . . building the airplane while we're flying it.”

Community Panelists also noted other ways that participating in the Community Panel has influenced them, including the following:

- **Provided professional development and skills enhancement.** Community Panelists talked about checking their assumptions and thinking about things from different perspectives. It helped Community Panelists feel comfortable speaking up in a peer group, practice consensus-building work, and gave them insight into the grantmaking process to strengthen their grant-writing work. One Community Panelist talked about applying the work that they've learned through this process to their work back home, indicating a transfer of skills. One Community Panelist said, “I think [it has] increased my capacity as a leader within my organization, but also how I think about reaching out to other leaders to build support.”
- **Gained deeper appreciation and understanding of the grantmaking process and the Foundation.** Community Panelists reflected on the grant review process, including how much time it takes to review and make decisions on proposals. One Community Panelist said, “It gave me some insight for my own future grant applications about perhaps what's going on the other side.”
- **Expanded their professional networks.** Community Panelists talked about widening their networks with connections made through the Community Panel and making connections with leaders in new sectors. One Community Panelist said, “It's nice to be able to have people to be thought partners or collaborators [and say] ‘I know somebody over there. I can give them a call.’”

Community Panelists confirmed that the Foundation has shifted power through HCCI but identified opportunities to move beyond what they see as valuable first steps toward self-determination and ownership by communities most impacted by inequities.

Community Panelists describe an intentional decision-making power shift from the Foundation to them, where they are directly involved in vetting and selecting organizations to receive funding. They discussed feeling equipped to make decisions and that this group is the place where power is held. Community Panelists mentioned the importance of transparency and building trust between them and the Foundation.



For example, Community Panelists talked about the Foundation bringing them up to speed on how the Community Panel has evolved to get everyone on the same page about the purpose and goals of this group. When it came to their interactions with the board, Community Panelists described a similar dynamic. One Community Panelist said, “[The board’s] line of questioning was more to clarify, to make sure they understood something or why do we make this decision versus the other.”


Community Panelists also talked about ways in which Foundation team members navigated power dynamics in the group. In meetings, they talked about explicit efforts to name racial and other biases and power when these came up. They also talked about building relationships and trust early on so that everyone understood who was in the room, including their differently held intersectional identities and their tenure on the Community Panel. Community Panelists also talked about building trust with Foundation team members, which strengthened the process. One Community Panelist described how they gained trust in the Foundation: “It’s helpful to have [HCCI team members] who also have marginalized backgrounds, because they can hold alongside you the complexities of navigating these spaces of great wealth where you are often the only one.”

However, Community Panelists also identified opportunities to build on these valuable first steps. One Community Panelist talked about the shift in decision-making power to the Community Panel to be important but only the first step. They asked,

“What does it look like to redistribute the wealth appropriately and in alignment with who was the most harmed by the accumulation of the wealth in the first place? So, decision sharing is an important first step, but it’s just a first step. There’s so much more healing and reparative work that philanthropy as a sector needs to do to really be doing authentic community work.”

“While there is a lot of diversity on the Community Panel right now, most of us, from a class perspective, are pretty comfortable because most of the people on that panel are generally in some kind of position of leadership in their organization. And it’s a different prospect when you bring in people who are really living [across socio-economic status].”

This Community Panelist followed up by suggesting that future Community Panel iterations include participants from the most marginalized groups served by HCCI collaborative partners to bring those perspectives to the table in a more meaningful




way. To help manage power dynamics and strengthen their influence in the decision-making process, these participants could speak last during decision-making discussions. This opportunity aligns with the Foundation's teams' intention to diversify the Community Panel with participants from a range of sectors, identities, and abilities, while also pointing to tangible opportunities to further include representatives of communities most impacted by the issues the Foundation seeks to address through HCCI.

Lessons Learned

Foundation team members named different enabling factors that allowed them to listen well to the Community Panel, along with challenges they experienced.

One team member talked about their early work to build the board's understanding about the positive impacts of shifting decision-making power toward the Community Panel. One step that allowed for this shift was moving all Foundation team members off the panel to its current format, which only includes community leaders and HCCI grantee partners as panelists. Team members talked about the Foundation's initial openness to community input—evidenced by the Foundation's community-led approach and values—and having a structured listening practice through the Community Panel. One team member also talked about the importance of asking the Community Panel why they made certain decisions from a place of curiosity and deep understanding rather than a place of challenging a decision that had been made. One team member describes, “We’re showing up as allies – with curiosity rather than control – which is a meaningful shift from the traditional power dynamics philanthropy has sometimes exhibited.”

Both Foundation team members and Community Panelists also talked about the importance of having a skilled facilitator, who is well versed in participatory philanthropic practices, to guide the Community Panel. Both groups praised the panel's current facilitator for their effectiveness in supporting the group in challenging decision-making and bringing in consensus-building tools like the Fist to Five model. Foundation team members noted that a key factor in the success of these meetings was the facilitation team, comprised of an external consultant with expertise in participatory grantmaking, and a Foundation team member, with deep knowledge of the Foundation's board and the program's history. This combination “created a thoughtful and grounded experience that centered the wisdom of the Community



Panel and fostered a safe, trusting space where panelists could make big decisions together."


Foundation team members also reflected on lessons for other funders contemplating similar listening structures. Team members advised others to trust the process, holding the urgency of centering community perspectives while allowing for the listening process and time it needs to advance meaningful impact. One individual describes, "If what this is really about is the impact and the outcomes, then you have to listen and you have to go at the pace of the communities that you're partnering with."

Foundation team members and Community Panelists also named some challenges experienced during this listening effort. Team members mentioned navigating conflicts of interest when Community Panelists also applied for grants they were deciding on. They talked about needing to rely on adaptable systems to manage these kinds of situations and the continuous need for transparency between Community Panelists and Foundation team members. Community Panelists named some additional challenges related to logistics and procedures of their work. They mentioned the time-consuming nature of reviewing lengthy grant applications and ensuring equity in their decision-making. Some talked about navigating challenging interactions during panel discussions, such as when people disagree on a decision, and addressing bias when it arises. For the most part, however, Community Panelists described their experience as positive and rewarding.

Assessing Efforts to Shift Power Through Community Listening

Overall, the Hellman Foundation is successfully listening to community, but there are opportunities to strengthen its practices to enable listening that shifts power in HCCI.

In its efforts to use listening to shift power, an expected practice throughout the philanthropic sector, Shared Insight has developed a detailed understanding of what it means to listen to shift power. By offering this definition and supporting tools to the



sector, Shared Insight hopes to support funders in strengthening their practices to work in increasing solidarity and proximity with the communities they support. In this section, we apply Shared Insight's definition to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improving the Hellman Foundation's listening practices through HCCI.

Fund for Shared Insight's definition of *power shifting*, in relation to this work, means decentering the outsized power of funders by enabling community members to directly influence the decisions foundations make about their resources, strategies, and practices. As Shared Insight explains,

"Listening to shift power embraces the concept of power with, where philanthropy engages in reciprocal relationships with the communities it exists to benefit. This requires funders to de-center themselves as the primary source of solutions and to acknowledge the knowledge and power that also reside in people and communities. As a result, funders engage in partnership with and provide resources to support people and communities to achieve their self-defined interests and aspirations."

Shared Insight [offers four guiding principles](#) that can help foundations assess their listening efforts and identify opportunities to improve how they shift power to community. Table 1 defines these principles and summarizes the Hellman Foundation's practices through HCCI, identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement for the Initiative.

Table 1 | Mapping HCCI to Shared Insight's Definition of Listening to Shift Power

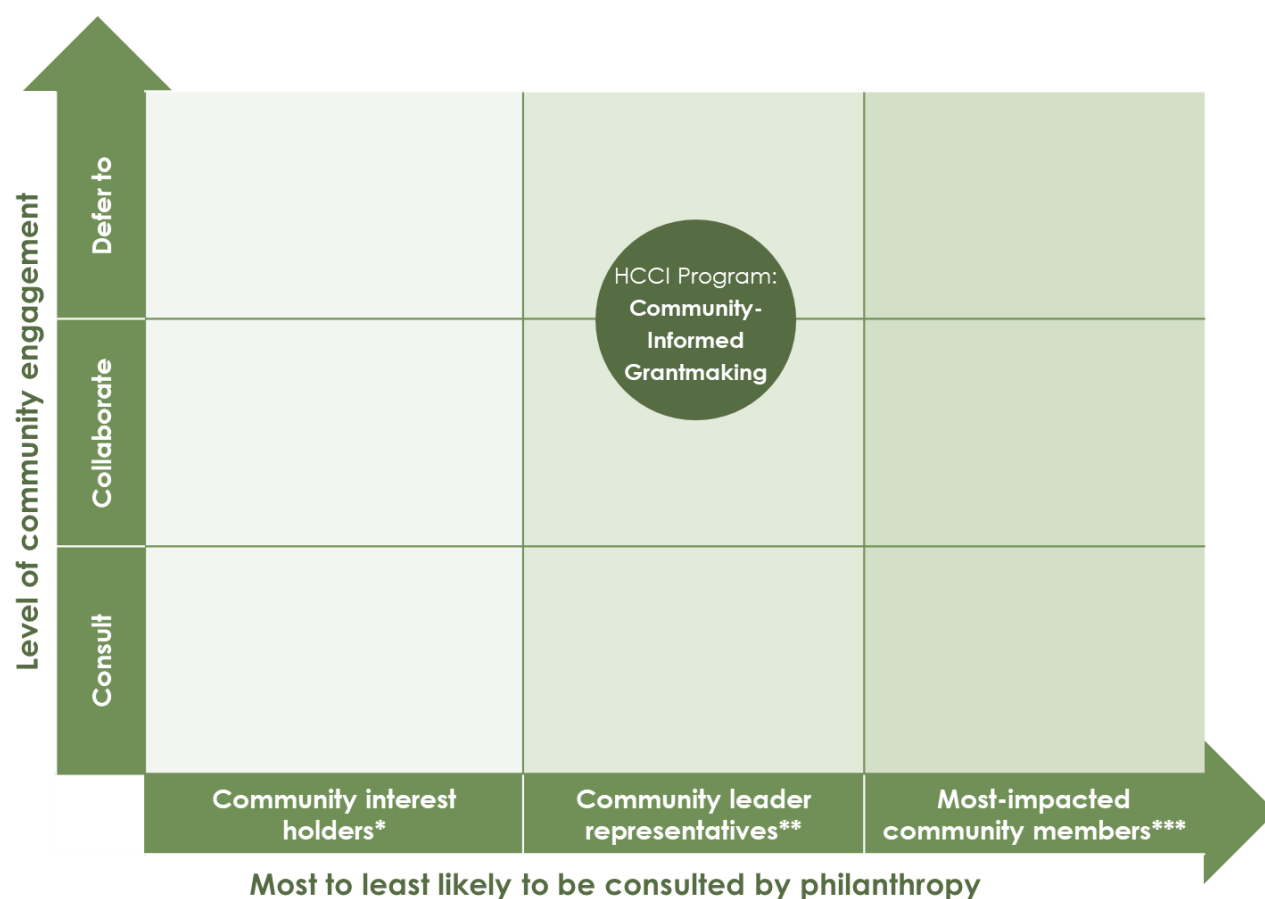
Listening to Shift Power Principles	Summary of Hellman Foundation's HCCI Practices
<p>Ongoing practice: Listening should not be a one-time activity or exercise but an ongoing process reflecting a commitment to the five steps of a high-quality feedback loop, which includes closing the loop—circling back to those who shared their perspectives to let them know what you heard and how you are planning to respond.</p>	<p>HCCI began in 2014 and has engaged in community listening through the Community Panel since 2022. In its current iteration, Community Panelists meet several times throughout a given year, thus operating as an “ongoing practice” for community listening. As part of its commitment to learning and continuous improvement, the Foundation conducted evaluations with the Community Panel after each of the last two grantmaking cycles. Panelists were invited to reflect on what worked well and identify opportunities to strengthen the process moving forward. Foundation team members have also gathered feedback from finalist applicants to gain additional perspective. Assessment findings have been shared with the Community Panel to promote transparency and improvement.</p>
<p>Relationship-based: Listening processes that are most effective at advancing equity and shifting power involve being in relationship and partnership throughout the process—from framing the initial conversations, to making meaning from what is heard, to figuring out how to respond. These relationships are built on open channels of communication, mutual accountability, and authentic partnership, such as through shared decision-making.</p>	<p>HCCI Community Panelists reflected that during the process of determining recipients of grants, they worked in deep partnership with each other; they reviewed and discussed grant proposals and collectively decided which collaborations should receive funding. The relationships between panelists and the Foundation follow the same trend. Foundation team members talked about investing early and often into the group's culture, they center the</p>



	perspectives of panelists, and they create opportunities for meeting agendas to pivot if they need to. The Foundation also brings in an external facilitator to partner with a Foundation team member to guide the group in the decision-making process and foster feelings of comradery, mutual understanding, and trust among panelists.
Engages an explicit power analysis: Funders have historically exercised outsized power, and that dynamic, if not taken into account and addressed, can result in funder listening that is extractive, transactional, or just reinforcing what funders want to hear. Funders should approach listening with a clear understanding of how power currently operates and with specific attention to engaging people and communities most impacted but not typically consulted by philanthropy and nonprofits.	Though the Foundation seeks to shift power to community members by proxy of HCCI Community Panel, the Foundation does not engage the <i>most</i> directly impacted community members who are traditionally the least consulted by philanthropy. All Community Panelists hold positions of leadership in their organizations, and one panelist describes them as belonging to a similar socio-economic class.
Advances equity: This kind of listening offers an opportunity for funders to hear from—and work shoulder-to-shoulder with—diverse communities and people who are experts in their own lives and have myriad assets and capabilities. It engages multiple forms of listening, such as systematic feedback loops, participatory processes, and community-driven practices, to make lasting systemic change.	Through HCCI, the Hellman Foundation seeks to shift decision-making power to Community Panelists who represent the interest and needs of diverse communities. The Foundation listens and centers the perspectives of their community partners enabling a participatory and collaborative process for making grantmaking decisions. The Community Panel is facilitated by an external facilitator and a Foundation team member and driven by the panelists who can influence meeting agendas and drive conversations where necessary so that the group can arrive to consensus.

Overall, we found that HCCI meets most of Shared Insight's principles. However, there are opportunities to strengthen the practice when considering principle three, which specifies the community members that the Foundations listens to. While the Foundation mostly defers to Community Panelists to make grantmaking decisions, current Community Panelists act as representatives though—as they mentioned—they are not all community members who are most directly impacted by the issues being addressed by HCCI grantee partners. Figure 3 shows where HCCI sits in this spectrum currently, based on this analysis.

Figure 3 | Mapping HCCI to Shared Insight's Definition of Listening to Shift Power



*Includes members of the private sector, government officials, donors/peer funders

**Includes foundation team members with lived experience, community consultants, grantees, nonprofit/local leaders, and general members of the community

***Includes community members specifically identified as most impacted by systemic racism and other structural inequities but least consulted by philanthropy



Conclusion

This case study provides an example of what community listening can look like in practice for foundations. Through HCCI, the Hellman Foundation centers the perspectives of the community by engaging a group of local leaders and HCCI grantee partners as part of its Community Panel model. This model shifts decision-making power to those who understand and represent the needs of the communities they seek to serve.

The Hellman Foundation's experience offers examples, lessons, and questions for funders as they consider and develop approaches to community listening and shifting power. What, if anything, is holding us back from shifting decision-making power to communities? What are the barriers to identifying and engaging people who are the most impacted by issues? What does it take to shift power effectively?

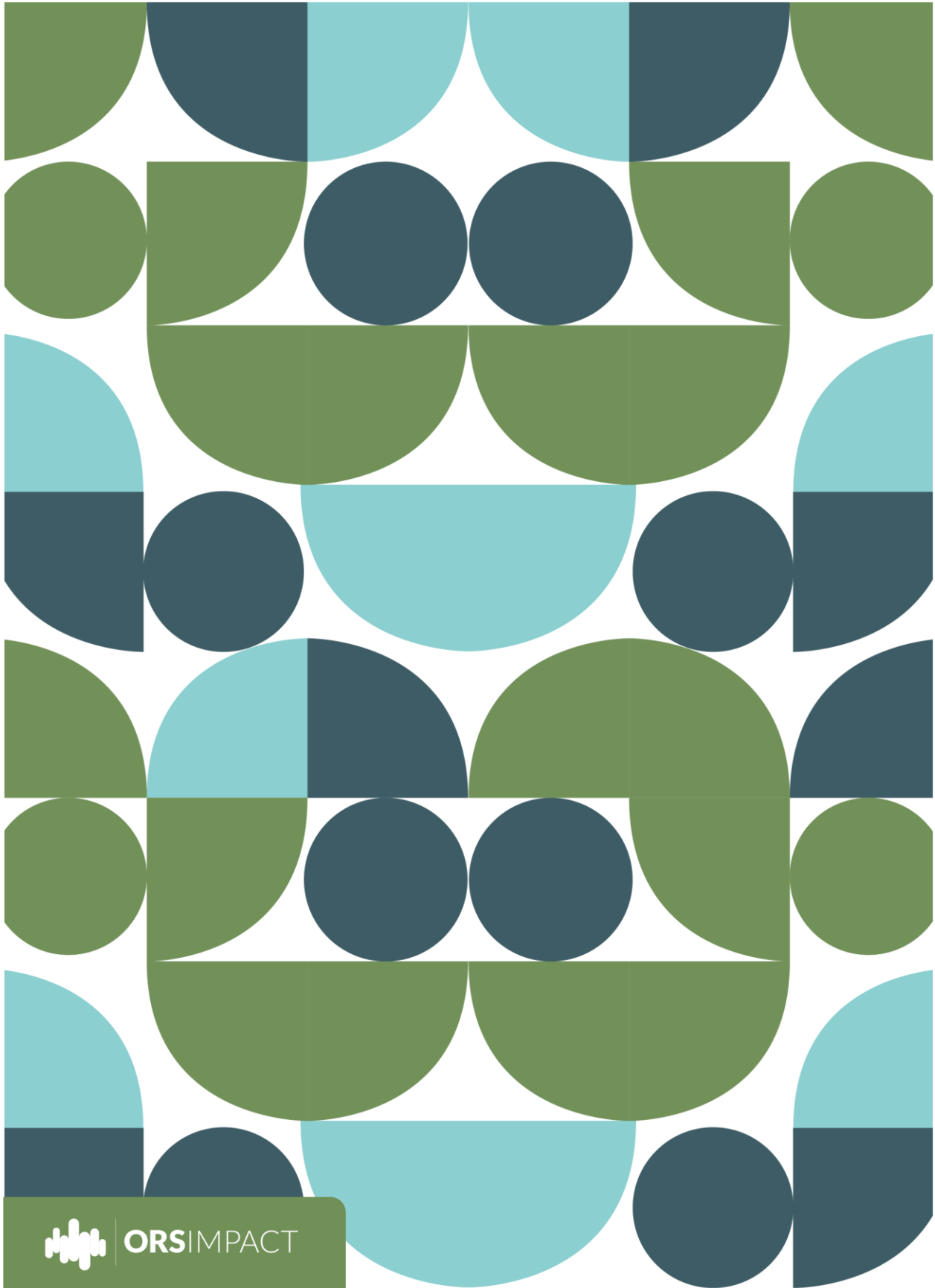
We encourage funders to embrace this complexity and explore what community listening could look like in their own practices, with the goal of shifting power to those most affected by the issues being addressed.

Appendix: Methodology

The Belonging Score was calculated by taking the average of scores for each belonging indicator statement (some of which are written in the positive and some in the negative, and the weight is adjusted depending on orientation) for each Community Panelist. We then took the average of those scores to arrive at the composite score of 4.5 as shown in Table 1.

Table A. Overview of Belonging Scores.

	Panelist 1	Panelist 2	Panelist 3	Panelist 4	Average
I feel emotionally connected to the Foundation and its work.	4	4	4	4	
Foundation staff welcome and include me in relevant activities.	5	5	5	5	
I feel unable to influence collective decisions at the Foundation.	5	5	4	4	
I feel unable to be my whole and authentic self with Foundation team members.	5	4	5	5	
The Foundation values me and my contributions.	5	5	5	5	
My relationship with the Foundation is as satisfying as I want it to be.	4	5	4	5	
I feel like an “insider” who understands how the Foundation works.	3	3	4	2.5	
I am comfortable expressing my opinions to the Foundation.	5	4	5	5	
I feel like I am treated as “less than” other community members participating in this engagement.	4	5	5	5	
When I’m with my fellow community advisory members, I feel like I truly belong.	4	4	5	5	
Composite BB score	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.5



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