

Listening, Learning, and Letting Go

History and Impact of Fund for Shared Insight, 2014-2026



Fund for Shared|Insight

Fund for Shared Insight gratefully acknowledges support from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation for the production of this publication.

This case study was written by Scott Westcott of Turn Two Communications, with editorial and research support from Fund for Shared Insight's communications team. It was designed by LeCause Design.

Suggested citation: Fund for Shared Insight. "Listening, Learning, and Letting Go: History and Impact of Fund for Shared Insight, 2014–2026." 2026.

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Foreword

Philanthropy could be more effective and make a bigger difference in the world if more funders and nonprofits did a better job of listening to the people they aim to serve.

That proposition was one of the animating ideas that led to the 2014 launch of the national funder collaborative Fund for Shared Insight.

What began as a series of informal conversations among a handful of funders about how they could work together to improve philanthropy eventually became a 12-year, \$78-million initiative involving more than 100 funders and hundreds of grantees, focused on shifting norms and practices around feedback and listening among nonprofits and funders.

While few leaders in the social sector would argue against the value of listening, ideas that seem straightforward in theory can be complex in implementation, especially when they challenge established systems and entrenched power dynamics in a field with relatively few incentives for change.

Still, Shared Insight has contributed to significant change. It has supported the development of scalable feedback tools, advanced research and learning, and elevated listening as a core component of effective philanthropy.

The ongoing work of the feedback capacity-building organization Listen4Good, which Shared Insight incubated and spun out in 2023, demonstrates strong demand among nonprofits and their funders for

support in building high-quality feedback practice. And Shared Insight's 2025 launch of Listen to Community, in partnership with six leading philanthropy infrastructure organizations, suggests a growing appetite among funders to rethink how they listen.

From its earliest days, Shared Insight made intentional organizational choices that shaped its trajectory. The collaborative was time-limited by design, prioritized learning alongside action, and was committed to building resources and knowledge that could live beyond the fund itself. A critical throughline has been consistency in its core goals, while also embracing experimentation and adaptation.

Now, as Shared Insight approaches its long-planned sunset, this case study examines the arc of its journey, lifting up key accomplishments while also taking an honest look at ambitions that proved more difficult to realize.

Through a series of in-depth interviews and informed by more than a decade of extensive documentation, this case study is intended to capture the origins and evolution of a national funder collaborative whose aim was to improve philanthropy. We hope it provides useful insights for others seeking lasting change in philanthropy and informs continued learning and innovation.

Fund for
Shared Insight

Origins and early work

The seeds for Fund for Shared Insight were planted

when Fay Twersky, then head of the effective philanthropy group at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, began considering new strategies to help philanthropy become more accountable and effective.

In 2013, that exploration led Twersky and her colleague Lindsay Louie to reach out to foundation leaders across the country to talk about how funders might strengthen philanthropy’s infrastructure, capacity, capabilities, and best practices.

A pivotal moment came during a meeting in New York with Darren Walker, then a vice president at

Early on, Shared Insight tapped Melinda Tuan (left) to provide staff support and Valerie Threlfall to conduct a landscape scan of nonprofit feedback practice.



the Ford Foundation and later its president. Walker expressed confidence that other funders would share their interest in investing collectively to improve the field of philanthropy.

Momentum built quickly. By mid-2014 seven funders — Ford and Hewlett, along with the Rita Allen, JPB, W.K. Kellogg, and David and Lucile Packard foundations, and Liquidnet for Good, the social impact arm of a financial company — had committed to creating a pooled fund, which they named Fund for Shared Insight. The philanthropic service organization Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors would serve as the collaborative’s fiscal sponsor and back office.

Each funder promised grants from \$250,000 to \$2 million annually for each of three years. The original seven funders were soon joined by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Over the years, seven additional core funders signed on or off for the multiyear commitments that formed the bulk of Shared Insight’s budget. See page 4 for a full list of core funders.

Additional “sidecar” funders provided smaller grants for shorter funding periods. Representatives from the core funders served on an advisory committee, which functioned as a governing body, and participated on specialized subcommittees. A team of consultants guided day-to-day work.

From the outset, the funders agreed that Shared Insight would not exist in perpetuity, and would make

one of its aims to build capacity within other organizations to carry the work forward. That decision fostered a culture of collective impact, learning, and urgency.

“This group has been exceptionally good at setting aside ego and focusing on essential questions about what the sector needed to do to shift,” says current Shared Insight co-chair Yvonne Belanger, director of learning and evaluation at the Barr Foundation. “The atmosphere was special — there were no turf battles or hidden agendas. People were open, welcoming, and focused on the work rather than personal credit.”

FROM FORMATION TO ACTION

To understand existing efforts to improve philanthropy and identify where targeted investment might add the most value, the new collaborative commissioned landscape scans across several potential focus areas, including beneficiary feedback and foundation openness.

The group reached early consensus on supporting efforts and tools to improve nonprofit feedback capacity. “I think the idea of listening to the people we aim to benefit intuitively made sense to everyone,” says Twersky, now president of the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. “Previously, feedback was often considered too weak or anecdotal to be taken seriously. But we saw the potential to be more systematic and rigorous — and ensure nonprofits and funders were being more



Shared Insight staff and core funders with artist Seward Johnson at his studio in Hamilton, New Jersey, as part of a November 2015 core funder meeting in Princeton. From left to right, front row: Nicky Conroy (Moore Foundation), Lindsay Louie (Hewlett Foundation), Seward Johnson, Elizabeth Christopherson (Rita Allen Foundation), Arelis Diaz (W.K. Kellogg Foundation); second row: Michelle Mengel, Kathy Reich (Packard Foundation), Fay Twersky (Hewlett Foundation), Betsy Krebs (JPB Foundation), Paula Rowland (ORS Impact), Melinda Tuan; third row: Sarah Stachowiak (ORS Impact), Chris Cardona (Ford Foundation), Brian Walsh (Liquidnet for Good).

sensitive to people’s experience with nonprofits and responsive to their ideas, insights, and preferences. There was real interest in exploring what was possible.”

A second area of interest, foundation openness, was, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps less clear. Openness was framed as foundations being open to listening and to sharing strategies, practices, and learnings with each other. Over the years, the definition and focus of Shared Insight’s work with grantmakers would evolve and sharpen into a singular and explicit focus on funder listening to shift power to the people and communities at the heart of their work.

EARLY GRANTS

Shared Insight’s first grants followed a largely traditional grantmaking path. It awarded funds to philanthropy infrastructure organizations that were working to increase foundation openness in service of effectiveness and for research around feedback loops. It also put out a national open call for proposals from nonprofits seeking support to improve their own feedback practices. More than 125 organizations applied — a strong

signal of interest, but a much larger number than the collaborative had funds to support.

As Shared Insight whittled the list down to seven recipients, the downside of this kind of grantmaking in the face of the collaborative’s goal to catalyze systemic change emerged: “It became clear that simply giving grants to a small number of organizations wouldn’t be enough to scale the practice of beneficiary feedback,” says Valerie Threlfall, the consultant who led the landscape scan on feedback. “The core funders saw a need for a scaled intervention to reach more organizations.”

That realization and Shared Insight’s subsequent pivot reflect what management scholar Henry Mintzberg describes as “emergent strategy,” an approach in which direction becomes clear through patterns of action and learnings over time, rather than being fully defined at the outset. An orientation valuing exploration and adaptation would prove essential throughout the years as Shared Insight continued to pursue parallel but interrelated strands of work — developing feedback tools for nonprofits and encouraging funders themselves to adopt stronger listening practices.

FUND FOR SHARED INSIGHT TEAM

2014-2026

Melinda Tuan
May 2014 - 2026

Michelle Mengel
September 2014 - 2026

Debra Blum
January 2017 - 2026

Gita Gulati-Partee
February 2017 - 2026

Rick Moyers
August 2017 - 2026

Megan Brokenborough
May 2019 - April 2023

Penelope Huang
September 2019 - February 2025

Katy Love
February 2020 - 2026

Jonathan Brack
November 2021 - 2026

Kristen Batdorf
April 2023 - 2026

FUND FOR SHARED INSIGHT CORE FUNDERS, 2014-2026

Rita Allen Foundation (2014-2020)*
Barr Foundation (2017-2026)
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (2017-2023)
Einhorn Family Charitable Trust (2017-2020)*
Ford Foundation (2014-2023)*
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2020-2023)
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (2014-2026)
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (2020-2026)
The James Irvine Foundation (2017-2023)*
The JPB Foundation/Freedom Together Foundation (2014-2026)
W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2014-2026)
Liquidnet for Good (2014-2017)*
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (2014-2020)*
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (2014-2026)
Rockefeller Foundation (2017-2020)*

FUND FOR SHARED INSIGHT SIDECAR FUNDERS, 2014-2026

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Laudes Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Omidyar Network
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Sobrato Philanthropies
Target Foundation
Walton Family Foundation

**Seven core funders, as indicated by asterisks above, participated as sidecar funders prior to becoming core funders or continued as sidecar funders after having been core funders.*

FUND FOR SHARED INSIGHT CO-CHAIRS, 2014-2026

Phase I: 2014-2017

Fay Twersky, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Hilary Pennington, Ford Foundation

Phase II: 2017-2020

Fay Twersky, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Kathy Reich, Ford Foundation
Kelley Gulley, The James Irvine Foundation

Phase III: 2020-2023

Kelley Gulley, The James Irvine Foundation
Lissette Rodriguez, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Jehan Velji, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Phase IV: 2023-2026

Yvonne Belanger, Barr Foundation
Arelis Diaz, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

EARLY, FORMATIVE DECISIONS

During Fund for Shared Insight's formative stages, the collaborative made three key decisions that shaped its long-term success.

ENLIST SEASONED, EXPERIENCED STAFF

Some funder collaboratives are run by staff from participating foundations, but Shared Insight decided early on that dedicated staff would be needed to move the initiative forward. In 2014 it brought on Melinda Tuan, the co-founder and former managing director of REDF (formerly the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund), as managing director.

Engaging Tuan, a former board member of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations and someone who was well known in philanthropic circles, established several precedents: that Shared Insight would be staffed by contractors rather than full-time employees, and that fractional staff roles would be filled by professionals with specialized knowledge and established networks in the field.

"Enlisting seasoned professionals with expertise and existing relationships was definitely key to creating something powerful and strong as a collaborative," says Sarah Stachowiak of ORS Impact, Shared Insight's long-time evaluation partner. "Melinda is very savvy and strategic. She's really good at relationships and bringing everybody together, and finding the right people to fill the roles Shared Insight needed."



From left to right, Gita Gulati-Partee, Sarah Stachowiak (ORS Impact), Lindsay Louie (Hewlett Foundation), Melinda Tuan, Valerie Threlfall, Fay Twersky (Hewlett Foundation) and Jonathan Gruber (Einhorn Family Charitable Trust) at a planning meeting for the second three-year phase of Shared Insight.

The contractor structure provided flexibility to quickly expand or contract the team as projects were added or completed. Over Shared Insight's 12 years, the size of the staff ranged from three to 10 depending on the number of initiatives in progress.

EMBED EVALUATION

While formal evaluations of collaborative efforts are not uncommon, they are often conducted at arm's length or designed after the work is already in progress. Shared Insight took a different approach: it selected its evaluator, ORS Impact, in 2014 just as the collaborative was getting started and embedded the ORS team into its ongoing work.

ORS participated in every core funder meeting and provided 40 evaluation work products over the initiative's 12-year history. From the beginning, Stachowiak participated in the collaborative's management team meetings.

For Stachowiak, the opportunity to work so closely with the team offered a unique opportunity to witness — and assess — how the collaborative pursued its strategic goals through the years.

"It really evolved into trying to hold up a mirror to them and provide more information and insights for their future decisions about strategy and grantmaking," she says. "So there were times when we could say you're changing, your thinking is starting to change, and we can explore that."

INVEST IN COMMUNICATIONS

A third way in which Shared Insight differed from most funder collaboratives is the level of investment in communications across all 12 years, beginning with the rapid deployment of a website and brand identity in 2014.

The attention to communications grew out of an early commitment to transparency and openness, combined with a recognition that communications would be key to Shared Insight's role in advocating for changes in the way funders and nonprofits approached listening.

The commitment to communications translated into scores of blog posts, op-eds, and case studies published on Shared Insight's own site and placed in sector publications over the years, including in special issues of *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2018, and *The Foundation Review* in 2025.

What began as a communications strategy to raise awareness and spark engagement evolved into a concerted effort to document lessons and equip funders with tools and resources to transform their listening practices.

Even after Shared Insight's sunset, this extensive library of tools and written and video case studies will offer inspiration and practical advice. The collection also stands as a comprehensive record of how Shared Insight's thinking evolved over 12 years — ensuring that future innovators and field-builders won't start with a blank page.

Listen4Good: Listening at scale

Listen4Good, a national initiative launched in 2016, was Fund for Shared Insight's response to the question of feedback scalability.

Rather than continuing to fund nonprofits one by one, Shared Insight created Listen4Good to give the social sector a more systematic, turnkey way to gather, interpret, and act on client feedback. By operating at scale, the initiative aimed to catalyze sector-wide practice change. Designed as a capacity-building program, Listen4Good provided coaching and tools to help organizations create and embed feedback practices.

Since its inception, Listen4Good has supported more than 1,250 organizations, engaged nearly 150 funders, and amplified more than 260,000 client voices via its feedback approach and platform. It was Shared Insight's first signature initiative, represented a majority of Shared Insight's budget and activity for a handful of years, and remains a point of pride for how it has changed the way many nonprofits listen.

Across the country, the program produced concrete results. Through Listen4Good surveys, Nurse-Family Partnership identified ways to better address the social isolation many new moms face. At Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB), Listen4Good surveys uncovered insight into how it could better support and retain young people in its internship program.

What's more, when CCNB shared the findings with REDF, the funder that had backed its participation in Listen4Good, REDF created a new grant program that made funds available to CCNB and five other nonprofits to implement needed interventions.

"My experience with Listen4Good has affirmed what I've always believed: when we truly center community voice, trust deepens, relationships grow stronger, and outcomes improve," Ashley Johnson, an education program officer at the Kresge Foundation (which sponsored grantees to participate in Listen4Good), wrote on the foundation's blog. "I've also seen it in the work of Kresge grantees ... these organizations are not simply collecting feedback; they're inviting students and community members to co-design solutions, rethink practices and shape the programs

meant to serve them. This type of listening is both an act of humility and a strategic imperative — and that's work we're proud to champion."

TESTING AND REFINING

Shared Insight turned to Valerie Threlfall, the consultant who had conducted its 2014 landscape scan of nonprofit feedback tools, to lead the development of Listen4Good. In 2008, Threlfall had co-founded YouthTruth, a student feedback program housed at the Center for Effective Philanthropy. YouthTruth was created based on what was then a radical idea: that to best serve students, schools should listen to their input and perspectives.

Threlfall's scan had revealed significant room across the social sector to continue to develop and improve the tools nonprofits and funders need to gather feedback. Given Shared Insight's identity as an organization that prioritized listening, evaluation, and continuous improvement, the findings suggested a place where it might make a distinctive contribution. It could do so by building the commitment and capacity of nonprofits to listen in a systematic, ongoing way, and act on what they hear.

In designing Listen4Good, early strategic decisions included partnering with SurveyMonkey, a survey platform that many nonprofits were already using, and grounding the standardized Listen4Good client survey questionnaire on the Net Promoter System® (NPS).

NPS is a methodology and framework developed by Bain & Company in the early 2000s to measure customer loyalty and satisfaction. It is widely used by businesses, and instantly familiar to anyone who has received a customer survey that begins with the question "How likely are you, on a scale of 0–10, to recommend this product, program, or service?"

Those early design decisions lowered barriers to adoption and leveraged a proven feedback tool already in use by thousands of businesses. But many initial questions remained unanswered, including whether nonprofits would be interested in using Listen4Good's services, how much support they would need to successfully implement



Two participants at New Door Ventures, a youth employment organization, share their experience with feedback as part of a 2018 Shared Insight core funder meeting in San Francisco.

feedback loops, whether funders beyond Shared Insight would see the value, and whether feedback would lead to real changes that benefited organizations and the people they served.

To answer those questions, Shared Insight and Listen4Good embarked on a cycle of experimentation, evaluation, analysis, and adaptation that was unusual in both scope and rigor — testing everything from funding levels and support models to the validity of using NPS in nonprofit settings.

To incentivize participation and build support and engagement among a wider network of funders, organizations were initially offered a grant to implement Listen4Good. The model required organizations to identify a sponsoring funder to contribute \$20,000, which Shared Insight matched 2:1, for a total grant to participating nonprofits of \$60,000.

Over time, Shared Insight reduced these amounts to test how much financial incentive was actually needed to maintain interest. Even as grant levels decreased, demand remained strong — suggesting that organizations were finding genuine value in the feedback work itself, not just participating for the funding.

Simultaneously, Listen4Good tested different levels of coaching and other support for nonprofits to find the

optimal balance between impact and scalability. The initial model provided intensive, high-touch coaching.

Listen4Good eventually developed an online web app that was integrated with SurveyMonkey. The app included self-service resources, allowing Listen4Good to test whether a more self-directed model could supplement or even replace one-on-one coaching. The results were positive, and Listen4Good settled on a model that leveraged online resources while maintaining slightly reduced levels of individualized coaching.

EVALUATING AND ADAPTING

A series of evaluations conducted by Shared Insight's evaluator ORS Impact between 2017 and 2021 showed that Listen4Good was making a significant difference.

Eighty-one percent of participating organizations made concrete programmatic or operational changes in response to client feedback, and 85% reported gaining significant insights about client needs, experiences, and service gaps. A significant majority, 70% of organizations, sustained their feedback practices beyond the grant period. And client experience research confirmed that clients found the process meaningful and valued having their voices heard.

By 2020, the matching grant model had demonstrated

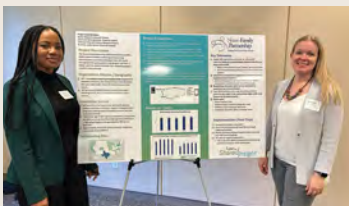
BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR FEEDBACK

When Fund for Shared Insight got its start in 2014, momentum was already building around the idea that listening in philanthropy is morally right and operationally feasible. Shared Insight understood the need to build an evidence base that listening is also the smart thing to do.

In 2020, Shared Insight funded a cohort of six organizations — Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, Center for Employment Opportunities, Nurse-Family Partnership, Pace Center for Girls, REDE, and YouthTruth — to conduct rigorous research into the relationship between feedback and client outcomes. Each organization partnered with an independent research consultant and designed a methodology suited to its own programs and populations.

The results, published in 2023, were striking in both their consistency and their specificity. Across six organizations with different missions and serving different populations, gathering and responding to feedback correlated with measurably better outcomes — from academic performance and school attendance to employment, earnings, and self-efficacy. In one particularly notable finding, participants at the Center for Employment Opportunities who responded to feedback requests were five to 10 percentage points more likely to be employed 90 or 180 days later — regardless of whether their feedback was positive or negative.

The research helped establish what Shared Insight and its partners had long argued: that listening and acting on feedback leads to better outcomes. And it has contributed to an infrastructure that will continue to support a robust feedback field and encourage philanthropy's shift toward more and better listening.



Staff from Nurse-Family Partnership share a poster describing their feedback research project at a convening of Shared Insight's feedback research grantees.

ongoing funder and nonprofit interest in feedback, and a series of evaluations provided convincing evidence that Listen4Good worked. However, both Shared Insight core funders and the Listen4Good team recognized that the initiative needed a revenue model that did not require indefinite subsidy from Shared Insight to cover operating costs.

Listen4Good began working with the nonprofit consulting firm The Bridgespan Group to assess the marketplace for capacity-building programs and to better understand who would be willing to pay for the kind of services that Listen4Good offered. Bridgespan's conclusions were positive but cautious: Listen4Good had already demonstrated that a market existed, but nonprofits had limited ability or willingness to pay, and funder-paid capacity-building services was a crowded and competitive field.

This business planning concluded in 2020 — as organizations and funders were reeling from the impact of a global pandemic and re-assessing priorities in response to the racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd.

In response to that moment — when listening was arguably even more critical — Listen4Good accelerated its plans to offer fee-for-service programs by creating Listen4Good Online+, a streamlined offering priced at \$1,000, which provided access to the web app and tools. More than 40 organizations signed up.

Although that price point came nowhere near covering the costs of the program, for the first time Listen4Good had evidence that customers were willing to buy the service without the incentive of a grant, even during a particularly challenging moment in the social sector.

Over the next three years, Listen4Good validated the nascent market demand that the Online+ pilot had suggested. To maintain robust coaching as a component of the program, foundations were reintroduced as sponsors for Listen4Good, subsidizing access for grantees.

Revenue grew nearly 400 percent between 2021 and 2023, reaching over \$1.3 million annually, with more than 350 organizations participating. In partnership with Shared Insight, the program successfully raised \$3.7 million to support the business model transition, including a significant contribution from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

By 2023, Listen4Good was ready to stand on its own, and in May of that year, it spun out of Shared Insight as an independent project.

ONE FUNDER'S LISTEN4GOOD STORY

For some philanthropy professionals like Elaina Mulé, director of grants and services at the Community Development Group at Charles Schwab Bank, involvement with Listen4Good has changed the way they value and



Nonprofit leaders and program staff share their experience with Listen4Good at a 2019 convening at The James Irvine Foundation in San Francisco.

incorporate listening and feedback into their approach to creating impact.

Mulé previously served in nonprofit leadership roles with United Way in Western New York and in Southern Nevada, where her team was one of the first to pilot text-delivered surveys with Listen4Good. She was energized by how gathering and responding to feedback from clients and other key stakeholders helped her organizations better fulfill their missions.

Mulé carried that mindset to Schwab Bank, taking action to build a culture of feedback in both communities of funders and nonprofits in Dallas and Las Vegas. Mulé says that Listen4Good has helped stakeholders place a higher value on listening and the pursuit of business processes around it.

Charles Schwab Bank invited other grantmakers to co-fund cohorts of Listen4Good participants and sponsored many local organizations. More recently, they established a nomination process where nonprofits would recommend the work to their peers. This helped attract organizations genuinely interested in embedding feedback into their culture.

“We had the opportunity to change the way that philanthropy was done and to shift traditional power dynamics,” Mulé says. “Having the backing of Fund for Shared Insight and the legitimacy of its funders also helped our message resonate.”

Mulé says she believes establishing feedback as standard practice makes funders and nonprofits more accountable to their communities and constituents, similar to how for-profit businesses adapt based on customer feedback. And she believes that integrating feedback expectations into grantmaking helps both funders and nonprofits develop a strong narrative for making positive change.

“The stories we hear from participating nonprofits are the most powerful part,” Mulé says. “The stories make the work tangible for people who don’t get it at first. I have

seen a range of impacts, from minor tweaks to entirely new programs.”

One Schwab Bank grantee, an affordable housing organization, discovered through feedback surveys that many residents trusted the maintenance staff more than caseworkers. In response, the organization trained maintenance staff to make referrals, which led to more residents accessing services.

Another organization, a domestic violence shelter, revised its intake process based on client feedback. Previously, clients were interviewed while still carrying their belongings.

“Now, they are allowed to put their things down and see their living space before the intake, which has made them feel more respected,” Mulé says. “It may seem like a small change, but it has made a big difference to those going through that experience.”

THE WORK CONTINUES

As an independent organization, Listen4Good continues to pursue learning, growth, and innovation. It has expanded to include advanced programs focused on making feedback an integral part of organizational culture, and structured learning communities that allow funders to learn alongside grantees.

Listen4Good has offered 20 learning communities nationwide, and has also explored opportunities to aggregate and customize data. Listen4Good’s Community Trend Reports, for example, summarize client feedback across grantee groups, regions, or issue areas. Threlfall describes the reports as a “different altitude” of information that can inform advocacy and strategy.

These developments reflect Listen4Good’s evolution into a broader platform for shared learning and field influence. Its work over time has demonstrated that a structured model for collecting feedback, combined with capacity-building support, could help nonprofits strengthen programs, deepen accountability, and center the perspectives of those they serve. And it has affirmed the value of feedback and shown that many funders were willing to partner with grantees to build that capacity.

At the same time, the launch and evolution of Listen4Good surfaced questions for Shared Insight about whose voices were most likely to be heard, how feedback was interpreted and acted upon, and what institutions were prepared to change as a result. These questions emerged in the context of unresolved differences of opinion among core funders about Shared Insight’s stance on equity — and racial equity in particular — and whether feedback alone was sufficient to advance the field changes Shared Insight was advocating for.

An equity journey

From the outset, Fund for Shared Insight brought together funders who shared a commitment to promoting listening and feedback, but not necessarily a shared understanding of how race and equity fit into that work.

Some believed that listening itself was inherently inclusive, grounded in dignity and respect for “voices least heard.” Others argued that listening could not be credible or effective without explicitly acknowledging the power imbalances inherent to systems shaped by centuries of structural racism.

Those differences were present early on, and Shared Insight did not attempt to resolve them at launch. Core funders came to the equity conversation from different starting points, and conversations were sometimes difficult.

“There were times early on when I felt like I was the only one lifting up the importance of racial equity in a clear and explicit way,” says Arelis Diaz, an early core funder representative for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and later a Shared Insight co-chair. “Some foundations couldn’t even really say the words because it made them uncomfortable. But for us, naming racial equity was essential. It’s not something you can imply; it has to be intentional and visible.”

Despite some early discomfort and tension, by 2016 the group had agreed that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) warranted more focused attention.

Core funders, who met in person at least quarterly in the collaborative’s early years, began participating in regular conversations informed by readings, speakers, and shared experiences designed to connect feedback practice and funder listening to broader histories of exclusion and inequality.

In 2017, Shared Insight engaged equity consultant Gita Gulati-Partee to provide focus and structure for that work, marking a shift to more intentional learning and action. Shared Insight established a subcommittee to explore how EDI intersected with every aspect of Shared Insight’s work.

A TURNING POINT

The learning crystallized in November 2018, when core funders gathered in Montgomery, Alabama, for an extended meeting that included a tour of the Legacy Museum, which traces the throughline from slavery to mass incarceration in the U.S. They also spent time at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, which memorializes thousands of Black people who were murdered in racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950.

“The Montgomery visit marked a turning point in deepening the group’s commitment to racial equity and recognizing that racial healing must be a part of the work alongside structural change,” says Diaz. “It moved us from thinking about listening as something funders do to recognizing that real change happens when communities are shaping the work with us. That’s when listening becomes partnership and partnership becomes a pathway to shifting power.”

“That visit transformed our understanding and deepened our commitment to racial equity from conceptual to full-bodied,” says Melinda Tuan, Shared Insight’s managing director. “After Montgomery, it was clear among the core funders and

“Real change happens when communities are shaping the work with us. That’s when listening becomes partnership and partnership becomes a pathway to shifting power.”

Arelis Diaz, Shared Insight co-chair

staff that racial equity had to be the central, driving force for our work.”

While many core funders saw Montgomery as a turning point, that meeting was neither the beginning nor the end of Shared Insight’s equity journey. For some core funder representatives, Shared Insight represented an additional place for them to express deeply held commitments around equity. For others, the collaborative became a safe space to learn with trusted peers, allowing them to carry that learning back to their own institutions.

Shared Insight’s EDI commitment solidified after Montgomery, but for some it still felt “bolted on” to existing work, requiring constant vigilance to keep it from receding. The events of 2020 — the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd — laid bare longstanding and intersecting inequities and accelerated the process of integrating a racial equity commitment into every part of Shared Insight’s work.

In 2021, the collaborative updated its public-facing language, including the articulation of goals in its theory of change, to acknowledge the impact of structural racism and to formalize a commitment to equity. A set of equity principles, also released that year, declared that high-quality feedback, by definition, must include a commitment to advancing equity and an acknowledgment of the systems and structures that have caused some voices to be least heard.

Listen4Good, which by 2021 was operating as a freestanding program within Shared Insight, engaged in a parallel process of integrating equity into its model for feedback practice and its approach to capacity building.

A 2021 report from ORS Impact made explicit what Listen4Good was learning through its work with nonprofits: feedback won’t naturally advance equity without intentional effort, and design choices determine whether listening reinforces or disrupts existing power imbalances. Insights from this report prompted additional evolution in Shared Insight’s thinking about what it means for funders to listen well.

RAISING THE BAR

By 2023, in adopting its final theory of change, Shared Insight redefined its target outcome to make it clear that the goal was listening, responding, and shifting power — all with a race-explicit, intersectional equity lens. This change, which both Tuan and ORS Impact describe as “raising the bar,” reflected years of learning and discussion about the relationship between equity and listening, and marked a significant shift.

Shared Insight had come to believe that listening alone was not inherently virtuous. Listening without a commitment to equity, absent a willingness to shift power, amounts to little more than just checking another box.

While both Shared Insight and Listen4Good made meaningful progress in clarifying and embedding an equity-centered approach to listening, translating those commitments into changes in funder behavior remained a persistent challenge — a challenge that became more apparent once the bar was raised and shifting power was named as the end goal of listening.



Former Shared Insight co-chair Kelley Gulley views an exhibit on the known sites of lynchings at the Equal Justice Initiative office in Montgomery, Alabama.



Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, which created the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, spoke at Shared Insight’s 2018 gathering in Houston.

PART FOUR

Getting funders to listen

The ongoing success of Listen4Good demonstrated to participating funders the value of nonprofits listening to their communities. However, many of those same funders showed little inclination to advance their own listening efforts, even as shifting that norm across philanthropy remained one of Fund for Shared Insight's main goals.

Early on, the collaborative made a strategic decision to focus 80 percent of its resources on nonprofit listening, while making a much smaller number of grants focused on foundation openness — a broad frame that included listening. While these efforts generated interest and valuable conversations, they did not produce sustained momentum or widespread changes in foundation practice.

“There has been less traction and progress around changes for foundations,” ORS Impact wrote in 2017. As with early feedback grants before the emergence of Listen4Good, the openness grants were limited to single organizations and small groups of funders, and it was difficult to imagine how those isolated and episodic efforts could add up to broader field-level impact.

In its second three years, Shared Insight increasingly looked to the funder collaborative itself as a lever for change. Core funder meetings, learning trips, peer exchanges, and “light-touch” engagement with funders connected to Listen4Good were intended to influence practice through shared learning and exposure. Over time, however, it became clear that these types of activities did not consistently translate into observable changes in practice, even among funders at the Shared Insight table.

Shared Insight's equity journey also put the challenge of funder listening into sharper focus. The collaborative increasingly viewed funder listening as more than seeking community input or consulting with grantees. A growing number of core funder representatives saw listening as a way to directly address longstanding power imbalances in the field. This would lead Shared Insight's advocacy and policy committee to propose a hands-on, exploratory initiative around participatory grantmaking.

THE PARTICIPATORY CLIMATE INITIATIVE

Recognizing Listen4Good's success in helping direct-service nonprofits listen, the advocacy and policy committee initially set out to better understand how



Participants in the Participatory Climate Initiative from Alaska and Hawai'i convened on Oahu in January 2025.

advocacy organizations listen — and how that listening might be strengthened.

The group commissioned an Aspen Institute landscape scan to examine whether and how U.S. funders and nonprofits build meaningful connections with the people and communities their advocacy and policy work is intended to benefit. The findings both deepened Shared Insight's thinking and contributed to the broader field's understanding about what it means for advocacy to be grounded in authentic relationship with community.

“In advocacy and policy contexts, the definition of ‘meaningfully connecting’ becomes entwined with goals like social, racial, and economic justice, and even societal transformation,” the Aspen report read. “For many who are engaged in advocacy and policy work, building community voice and power, and putting decision-making in the hands of those who are most affected by those decisions, is both the definition of connecting and an embodiment of those goals.”

For Shared Insight, the report reinforced and sharpened an interest, already emerging through its evolving funder listening and equity work, in challenging philanthropy norms and experimenting with different ways of sharing power. The advocacy and policy subcommittee identified

LISTENING ACROSS THE GLOBE

“Our foundation wanted to get involved because we believe people know what they need. It is rooted in our values of dignity and respect.”

Rachel Huguet, Hilton Foundation

participatory decision-making processes as an area to explore.

A proposed initiative was discussed at a core funder meeting in Boston that also included a conversation with ecological activist Rev. Mariama White-Hammond about the Grassroots Fund, an intermediary pooled fund engaged in participatory grantmaking. This convergence of interest and inspiration eventually led Shared Insight to launch a one-time participatory grantmaking project, the Participatory Climate Initiative.

The initiative, which began in 2020 and awarded grants in December 2021, sought to involve people impacted by climate change in the funding decisions that affect them. Participants on the frontlines of the issue worked on design and grantmaking teams, ultimately deciding where and how \$2 million in grants were disbursed.

“The idea behind this initiative was that funders should cede some or all decision-making power to people who have first-hand experience with severe effects of climate change,” says Claire Poelking, a former program officer at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and one of the funders involved in the initiative. “In the case of one participant, that meant having watched their neighbors’ homes literally float away due to unprecedented flooding.”

The advocacy and policy committee made the intentional decision to staff the initiative based on expertise in participatory philanthropy — not necessarily in climate change — and following a request for proposals, picked Katy Love and Winifred Olliff,

While Shared Insight was focused primarily on improving philanthropy in the U.S., many of its core funders worked globally and were interested in exploring feedback and listening in international contexts.

In 2017, several funders created a global engagement committee that commissioned landscape scans of feedback and listening practices among funders in six different countries and funded Feedback Labs, an organization dedicated to growing and strengthening the feedback field, to create a Feedback Tools Accelerator for organizations working in the Global South.

These explorations advanced learning and supported feedback resources outside the U.S., but did not suggest a clear path forward for how to effect more significant change in how funders listened.

In early 2021, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation — an international funder with a strong emphasis on centering the voices of people with lived experience — joined Shared Insight as a core funder. The decision was driven in part by the foundation’s desire to address philanthropy’s tendency to pursue global development work without meaningfully engaging local community members to understand their actual and pressing needs.

“That can lead to projects that don’t serve the community’s needs,

such as building a school when a hospital is what’s really needed,” says Rachel Huguet, senior officer, partnerships at the Hilton Foundation and a Shared Insight core funder representative. “Our foundation wanted to get involved because we believe people know what they need. It is rooted in our values of dignity and respect.”

With leadership from Huguet and her Hilton Foundation colleague Shaheen Kassim-Lakha, the global development committee shifted its focus to funder behavior and the growing movement for locally-led development in philanthropy and international aid. Locally-led development looks to the power, voice, and resources of local actors to set agendas, provide leadership, and develop and work towards community-led solutions.

In 2023, at the committee’s recommendation, Shared Insight made three-year general operating support grants to four organizations working to promote locally-led development around the world. And in 2025, the collaborative made a \$200,000 unrestricted grant to support the Movement for Community-led Development, a network of 3,000 local and community-based groups across more than 40 countries that aims to make development more inclusive and community-led.

well-known consultants in the emerging community of participatory grantmakers.

Love and Olliff say they were drawn to the project because of its potential for deep learning and change among the funders involved, and it was a unique opportunity to bring the philosophy behind the disability rights movement's mantra, "Nothing about us without us," into another new space.

"We appreciated Shared Insight's interest in pushing themselves, their participating foundations, and the field to go beyond just supporting grantees to holding the mirror up close to think about their own power," Love says.

Love and Olliff began by speaking with dozens of people from across the U.S. and Territories who were connected to communities impacted by climate change. Many were involved in policy advocacy or working at the grassroots level and therefore often excluded from traditional philanthropy spaces.

Even if power did not fully shift, the project opened the door to new ways of thinking about funder roles, relationships, and accountability.

Their conversations informed the plan in significant ways, including a shift away from an initial focus on public policy advocacy. They also set the stage to convene participants who would make important decisions about the parameters of the initiative. Together, participants created a purpose statement, selected values to center, chose a geographic focus, identified grantee candidates, and reached consensus on the grant awards.

All the groups that received funding were community-led grassroots organizations, most of them led by Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color. Some of the grant recipients, such as Native tribes and villages in Alaska, had never received funding from institutional philanthropy before. "Some of the funders said that they would never have thought to fund these groups — or even found them — through more traditional grantmaking processes," says Love.

"Over the initiative's three years, I had the opportunity to watch a process unfold with trust as a guiding value and ultimate outcome," Poelking says. "And listen to a variety of perspectives with the goal of understanding the challenges

of climate change at a local level and how funding could better respond to the need."

Evaluations of the initiative by ORS Impact found that the participants had overwhelmingly positive experiences, including reporting that they felt empowered within the specific parameters established by the initiative.

At the same time, though, they said they did not perceive that power had shifted significantly from Shared Insight to the people and communities with lived expertise in climate change. As for the funders involved, while some were "moved and impressed" by the participatory process, it wasn't clear they were committed to making lasting systemic changes to their own grantmaking practices.

"It's really, really hard to shift power," Love notes. "People who serve in philanthropic leadership roles often feel a strong sense of financial responsibility and are nervous about letting others make decisions about the funds they steward."

The Participatory Climate Initiative offered a real, immersive taste of what participatory philanthropy processes can look and feel like in practice. Even if power did not fully shift, the project opened the door to new ways of thinking about funder roles, relationships, and accountability. And it allowed a group of funders to experiment together in a way that may have felt too risky to do alone, and with an emphasis on sharing their learnings.

To extend the learning beyond the initiative itself, the facilitators developed the Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit. Drawing on the experience of the foundations, consultants, and community members involved, and offering discussion guides and tools for funders ready to implement their own participatory approaches, the toolkit has become a go-to resource for the field and has been viewed and downloaded thousands of times.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PHILANTHROPY INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANIZATIONS

At around the same time Shared Insight was launching and designing the Participatory Climate Initiative, it was exploring other ways to advance its goal of making listening to shift power a standard practice in philanthropy, a shift that would require significant changes in funder behavior beyond the collaborative itself.

In launching Listen4Good and promoting feedback for nonprofits, Shared Insight had successfully leveraged the agenda-setting power of philanthropy to signal interest and offer resources to nonprofits that wanted to build their listening capacity.

But how best to influence behavior change among funders remained an open question. "Philanthropy is notoriously difficult to change," says Tuan. "Foundations can't usually be incentivized by grants, and many funders



The seven Listen to Community partner organizations gathered at West Creek Ranch in Montana in September, 2024 to plan the initiative's 2025 launch.

see themselves as primarily accountable to their donors and boards, who are often not advocating for systemic change.”

Research commissioned by the Hewlett Foundation suggested that funders rely primarily on trusted peers for learning around effective practices, and Shared Insight turned to philanthropy infrastructure organizations (PIOs) as key networks that facilitate peer interaction and regularly disseminate ideas about innovation and effective practices. “By 2020, we were also sensing a change in our conversations,” says Tuan, “from ‘Why should funders listen to community?’ to ‘How should we listen to community?’”

To address the need for more actionable guides, and to build on growing expertise emerging across the field, Shared Insight in 2020 invited a group of PIOs to submit proposals to create new resources for funders around equity-centered listening to community. The result: grants totaling \$1.25 million to eight organizations to develop and disseminate equity-focused toolkits and guides to help foundation decision makers build their feedback and listening practices.

Seeing an opportunity to amplify the work, Shared Insight brought the organizations together as the Funder Listening Community of Practice (FLCP), creating space for shared learning and coordination. One tool that emerged from this effort was ProInspire’s “HERE to Listen: Listening for Racial Equity Impact,” a workshop and

facilitation card deck that guides foundation staff through equity-centered listening practices.

In 2022, a second phase of the FLCP expanded the number of organizations involved from eight to 12, and shifted the focus to how participating groups might embed promotion of funder listening into their ongoing work. This strategy reflected a belief that lasting change would depend on institutions ready to continue to shape norms and practice beyond Shared Insight’s own involvement.

As this work unfolded, Shared Insight came to see both the promise and the limits of advancing funder listening through shared learning and loose coordination. The FLCP created valuable space for relationship-building and alignment across organizations working with different segments of philanthropy. At the same time, the experience surfaced the need for a more clear, explicit, and public case for funder listening, as well as stronger coordination and alignment among the PIOs most actively promoting it.

LISTEN TO COMMUNITY

As the FLCP wrapped up its second and final phase in 2024 — and with Shared Insight’s 2026 sunset on the horizon — the collaborative continued conversations with PIO partners about how to translate shared concepts into funder behavior change.



Core funder representatives Andrew Brower (W.K. Kellogg Foundation), Kathy Reich (then with the Ford Foundation), and Lissette Rodriguez (Edna McConnell Clark Foundation) at a 2018 core funder meeting.

Drawing on research about the diffusion of innovation — which explains how new ideas and practices take hold — Shared Insight noted that messages about listening to shift power had already reached innovators and early adopters, and that a different approach would be needed to engage funders beyond that group.

Getting more funders to listen to shift power to community would require clarity about audience, focused messages, compelling evidence, and social reinforcement. Listen to Community, an initiative that Shared Insight launched in October 2025 with six PIO partners, emerged from that assessment.

Listen to Community core strategy partners include Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, Feedback Labs, Fund for Shared Insight, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, National Center for Family Philanthropy, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, and Native Americans in Philanthropy.

Positioned as a resource and engagement hub, Listen to Community is a branded initiative with a goal of getting

more leaders and staff in foundations to engage in listening practices that shift power to impacted communities.

To the founding partners, the initiative was also a timely response to growing headwinds facing philanthropy and the social sector more broadly — including heightened scrutiny and questions of legitimacy — offering funders a way to build trust and accountability while addressing the expressed needs and aspirations of the people at the heart of their work.

Listen to Community is focused on staffed, place-based funders that the partners believe are best positioned and most likely to change their approach to listening.

For Shared Insight, Listen to Community represented both a culmination and a handoff. It carried forward Shared Insight's core goals while signaling a readiness to let others take the lead, placing a clearer, more disciplined argument for funder listening, plus the supporting tools and resources, in the hands of organizations that can continue the work.

FUND FOR SHARED INSIGHT TIMELINE

July 2014: Shared Insight launches with eight founding funders to improve philanthropy through increased openness, learning, and feedback from impacted communities.

November 2014: Shared Insight makes first grants: \$5.26M to 14 organizations for foundation openness, feedback practice, and feedback research.

May 2015: Listen4Good (L4G) launches. First L4G grants made in February 2016.

July 2016: Shared Insight core funders embark on first racial equity learning journey in Battle Creek, Michigan.

October 2016: Shared Insight co-hosts a White House conference on client-focused feedback loops; first Shared Insight Gathering draws 140 participants to Washington, D.C.

2017: L4G grows significantly. Harder+Company analysis provides early evidence that the Net Promoter System® is effective in the nonprofit context.

May 2018: The second Shared Insight gathering, in Houston, brings together 350+ funders, grantees, and field-building partners.

October 2018: *Stanford Social Innovation Review* launches “The Power of Feedback” campaign, supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Fall 2018 magazine features Shared Insight and L4G.

November 2018: Shared Insight core funders gather in Montgomery, Alabama — visiting the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice — marking a turning point in the collaborative’s commitment to racial equity.

2019: Shared Insight awards nearly \$1M to five feedback research grantees studying the link between feedback and client outcomes.

2020: Shared Insight launches the Participatory Climate Initiative and the Funder Listening Community of Practice.

2021: Shared Insight adopts equity principles to guide all aspects of its work, the Funder Listening Action Menu debuts, and Shared Insight receives a gift from MacKenzie Scott recognizing its role in “empowering voices the world needs to hear.”

2022: \$2M awarded to 35 organizations selected through the Participatory Climate Initiative. ORS Impact report, “Some Lessons from Participatory Grantmaking and Meditations on Power for the Field,” is released. Feedback research grantees present at the American Evaluation Association conference.

April 2023: L4G transitions to an independent project.

May 2023: The Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit is released.

July 2023: Shared Insight enters its final three-year phase, sharpening focus on making funder listening, responding, and shifting power expected standard practice in philanthropy.

2024: The number of L4G participating organizations exceeds 1,000, supported by more than 130 funders, and listening to more than 200,000 individual voices to date.

August 2025: A special issue of *The Foundation Review*, “The Power of Listening to Communities,” focuses on funder listening.

October 2025: In partnership with six philanthropy infrastructure organizations, Shared Insight launches Listen to Community, a resource and engagement hub with a goal of getting more leaders and staff in foundations to engage in listening practices that shift power to impacted communities.

June 2026: Fund for Shared Insight reaches its planned sunset.

BY THE NUMBERS: 2014-2026 \$41.2M in grants | 583 grantees | 160+ funders involved

Impact and legacy

As Shared Insight approached its sunset, long-time learning and evaluation partner ORS Impact stepped back to assess its summative impact from 2014 through 2024.

ORS concluded that Shared Insight’s impact is best understood as catalytic and field-building rather than tied to any specific program or intervention. The evaluation found that Shared Insight helped legitimize feedback as a core nonprofit practice; seeded and strengthened key elements of field infrastructure; and influenced the language, norms, and expectations surrounding listening and accountability in philanthropy.

At the same time, ORS offered a clear-eyed assessment of the limits of this progress. Its report said that while nonprofits demonstrated meaningful improvements in the rigor and quality of their feedback practices, changes in funder behavior, particularly those requiring shifts in power, proved slower and more uneven.

The mixed picture highlights the difficulty of measuring both practice change across the field and the work that remains to be done. A 2025 research report from the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP), produced with support from Shared Insight, illustrates that challenge.

The CEP report revealed that almost all nonprofits report using information provided by the communities they serve to guide their work. Yet self-reported feedback and listening practices have not changed significantly over the past decade.

“We weren’t surprised by these results,” says Tuan. “When asked, most funders and nonprofits say they listen. The question is whether they understand what it means to listen well, and whether that listening leads to change or shifts power.”

For CEP President Phil Buchanan, the work of Listen4Good has had a significant positive impact, no matter where the needle lands. While nonprofit feedback collection practices may appear unchanged, he says, those organizations that have used Listen4Good have benefited from improved ease, effectiveness, and quality of feedback.

“Even if what they have done is simply to replace what organizations were doing on their own with something more rigorous and high-quality, that’s a huge accomplishment,” Buchanan says. “So while the data doesn’t show more organizations are gathering feedback, the more important measure is how people are doing it and with Listen4Good they have a new, more effective tool that didn’t exist before.”

LASTING INFLUENCE

Now operating as an independent organization, Listen4Good is Shared Insight’s most visible and lasting contribution. Alongside Listen4Good, Shared Insight helped seed and strengthen a broader ecosystem of organizations focused on feedback and listening, including YouthTruth and Feedback Labs.

Shared Insight’s deeper contribution to the field may have been to the meaning of the work, not just its scale. In Listen4Good’s early years, as executive director Valerie Threlfall has written, feedback sought to amplify voices least heard — but largely



Shared Insight core funder representatives at a November 2017 meeting at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in Palo Alto, California. First row: Trevor Pollack (Barr Foundation), Meredith Blair Pearlman (Packard Foundation), Lissette Rodriguez and Jehan Velji (both Edna McConnell Clark Foundation), Fay Twersky (Hewlett Foundation), Kathy Reich (Packard Foundation), Arelis Diaz (W.K. Kellogg Foundation), Jenn Hoos Rothberg (Einhorn Family Charitable Trust), Kelley Gulley (Irvine Foundation). Second row: Kate Belyi (Rita Allen Foundation), Kim Ammann Howard (Irvine Foundation), Laura Tomasko (Gates Foundation), Jonathan Gruber (Einhorn Family Charitable Trust), Lindsay Louie (Hewlett Foundation), Linda Baker (Packard Foundation), Elizabeth Christopherson (Rita Allen Foundation), Nicky Conroy (Moore Foundation).

without questioning the underlying power structures.

Over time, influenced by Shared Insight’s equity journey, that changed. Listen4Good updated its definition of high-quality feedback to center equity. Feedback Labs and other field organizations adopted a set of core principles that begin with power analysis.

Shared Insight also invested heavily in creating durable, open-access content for the field. This included research on feedback and listening, practical tools for funders, a library of videos and written case studies, 40 evaluations, and extensive documentation of its work. And, through the FLCP and Listen to Community, it has woven funder listening to shift power into the tools, publications, and programs of PIOs across the field.

Tuan views the integration into organizations such as Grantmakers for Effective Organizations and the National Center for Family Philanthropy as an important sign that Shared Insight’s work has taken root. The field now understands listening and feedback as practices that are only high quality if they shift power — a claim that was neither obvious nor uncontested when Shared Insight began.

‘A FITTING END’

A celebration. That’s Fay Twersky’s take on how the sunsetting of Fund for Shared Insight should be viewed.

“We set out to accomplish specific goals, and we did,” Twersky says. “We brought together a diverse community of funders and nonprofits and helped seed this version of the feedback movement. A lot of collaboratives get started

and never end, so it’s a testament to the fund’s success that we are bringing it to a fitting end. We are leaving room for the next set of great ideas to come, and we can take pride in the tangible legacy we’ve created.”

Others who have worked closely with Shared Insight through the years express a similar view, seeing Shared Insight’s sunset not as an ending, but as a transition. Britt Lake, CEO of Feedback Labs, describes it as a “natural evolution” that creates space for other organizations to carry the work forward.

“So much has changed for the better over the past decade for the feedback and listening field,” Lake says. “Now, we are thinking about what gaps we might need to fill, particularly in the philanthropic space, to make sure the progress achieved continues and grows.”

For Tuan and others, one of the clearest markers of Shared Insight’s legacy is a substantial shift in how funders talk about and approach listening.

“When I entered the philanthropic sector 20 years ago, nobody was talking about listening,” says Aaron Dorfman, CEO of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, a Listen to Community partner. “And I think today, 90 percent of foundations would agree that yeah, it’s important that we listen to our community. Fund for Shared Insight has played a key role in changing that conversation.”

And that conversation has evolved into real progress. “Funders are changing how they operate,” Tuan says. “They are embedding listening into their work, and doing it in ways that shift power and build community ownership. That speaks volumes about the impact we’ve made.”

LEARN MORE AND TAKE ACTION

The work of changing norms and practices around feedback and listening in the social sector, shifting power to impacted communities, and changing funder behavior is far from complete. For those who want to learn more and take action to be a part of this change, Fund for Shared Insight recommends the following resources.

Shared Insight's website (fundforsharedinsight.org) will remain available for at least three years after June 2026. It includes an extensive library of evaluations, case studies, blog posts, videos, and practical tools, including the Funder Listening Action Menu, the Participatory Philanthropy Toolkit, the Funder Listening Assessment, and Community Listening Sessions: A Funder Guide. While some tools and resources may move to new locations over time, the website will remain a central hub for finding and accessing them and an archive of Shared Insight's 12 years of work.

This work will continue through organizations and initiatives supported by Shared Insight, including **Listen4Good** (listen4good.org), **Feedback Labs** (feedbacklabs.org), and **YouthTruth** (youthtruth.org). **Listen to Community** (listentocommunity.org), launched in October 2025 as a partnership among seven leading philanthropy infrastructure organizations (including Shared Insight), will continue to release new content and provide capacity-building support to help funders transform how they work by building authentic relationships grounded in listening so that people and communities have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect them.

In addition, here's how to find specific resources and publications mentioned in this report:

- ORS Impact. *Sharing Insights: Evaluating a Decade of Listening in the Social Sector*. ORS Impact, 2026. orsimpact.com/directory/Sharing-Insights.htm
- Grundhoefer, Seara, Ellie Buteau, and Elisha Smith Arrillaga. *Voices That Matter: How Nonprofits and Foundations Engage With the Communities They Support*. Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2025. cep.org/report/voices-that-matter-how-nonprofits-and-foundations-engage-with-the-communities-they-support/
- *The Power of Listening to Communities*. *The Foundation Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2025. scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr/vol17/iss2/

Over the past 12 years, the conversation about listening and feedback has changed. Shared Insight is proud of the catalytic role it has played in legitimizing feedback as a core nonprofit practice, building field infrastructure, and changing the language, norms, and expectations around listening, accountability, and shifting power in philanthropy. While that work is not complete, the community of funders, nonprofits, evaluators, and field-builders committed to it is larger, better equipped, and more connected than ever. We hope you will join that community.

