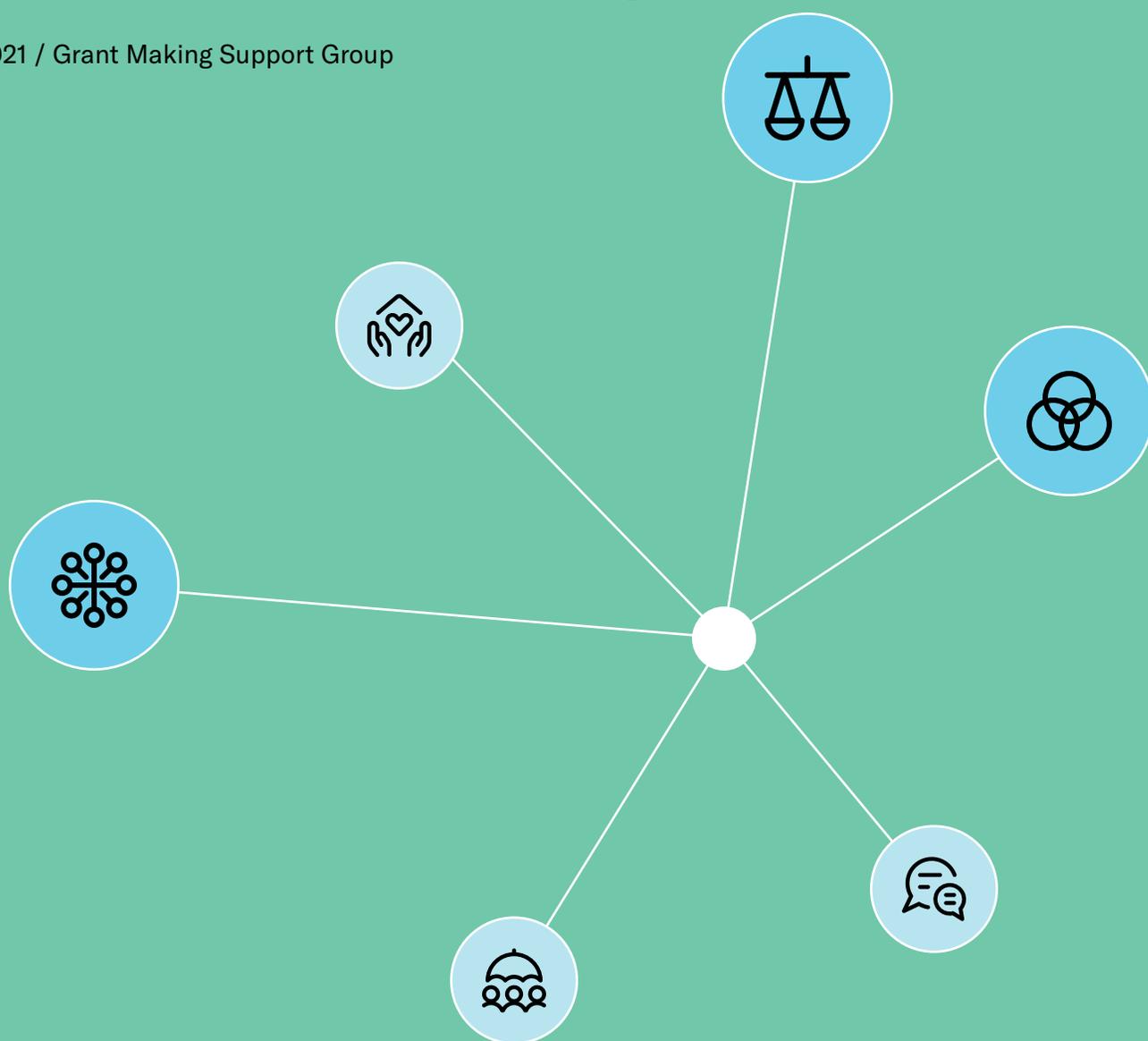


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# ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN GRANT MAKING

## A Guide for Reflection and Learning

May 2021 / Grant Making Support Group



**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**

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## **THE GRANT MAKING SUPPORT GROUP (GMSG)**

helps advance the Open Society Foundations' mission by supporting and advocating for the practice of effective, efficient, ethical, and strategic grant making across the Foundations. Since its creation in 2013, the GMSG has engaged with and provided grant-making resources and support to hundreds of Open Society staff across the world, through one-on-one consultations, trainings, and peer learning.

## **WHAT WILL YOU FIND IN THIS DOCUMENT?**

This guide was originally developed to support grant makers at the Open Society Foundations seeking to actively incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their grant-making practice, including, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-xenophobic, and anti-ableist approaches, among many others. We hope that the suggestions and lessons included in this document can help other funders in their own efforts to disrupt structural discrimination and oppression directed at particular groups of people and cultures.

This guide offers practical suggestions from peer grant makers on how to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at different moments in the grant-making process, from developing a portfolio strategy, to building relationships with and understanding of organizations and individuals, soliciting concept notes and proposals, structuring grant support, learning throughout a grant, and ending a funding relationship. This guide asks grant makers to consider how to adjust their grant-making practice to best meet the demands of the current moment and act as proactive allies for activists fighting for change and open societies around the world.

Finally, the guide includes questions to facilitate conversations within teams and an index of additional learning resources from across the philanthropy sector. While this resource primarily deals with situations related to organizational grant making, we also spoke with a number of individual grant makers to inform this work and many of the principles can be applied to individual grant-making practices.

## THOUGHTS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS GUIDE?

The GMSG is constantly seeking to improve our guidance and knowledge products for grant makers. As we continue to build Open Society's capacity to provide support for grant-making colleagues, we also want to hear from other grant-making organizations. If you have experience and insights around how we can advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our grant making that would be useful for Open Society and other organizations, or specific feedback on this guide, please [email us](#).

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The readers and peer reviewers of this document and other informal advisors have also provided invaluable feedback. In particular, we would like to thank **Rachele Tardi** and **Zachary Turk** and **Kavita N. Ramdas**, for acting as generous thought partners to us and offering their own lessons and expertise on inclusive grant-making practices and social justice activism, to constructively challenge our thinking and strengthen our analysis. Finally, an enormous thank you to **Tebello Marumo**, **Will Kramer**, and **Laura Peres** for their thoughtful feedback and help to finalize, design, and publish this document.

# FOREWORD

When this document originally went to print in July 2020, there were anti-racist protests going on around the world, sparked by horrific examples of systemic racism, state sanctioned abuse of power, and chronic oppression. The global health pandemic (COVID-19) had forced a wave of “shelter in place” orders across the globe leading to women suffering increased instances of domestic abuse; people of Asian descent suffering xenophobic and racist attacks; and oppressed communities, such as Roma and Black people, again enduring the brunt of over-policing. Authoritarian governments were also using the moment to attack LGBTI people. Economic, racial, and other forms of intersectional inequality were leading to significantly worse health outcomes for oppressed groups everywhere the virus had spread. People with disabilities were at increased risk of being left to die when medical systems rationed care. The long-term growth of economic inequality is worsening, further harming people and groups who have long been excluded from meaningful participation in society. Months later, these problems persist and, in some cases, the situation has deteriorated further, eroding open societies around the globe.

An open society is one that is marked by the full and equal participation of all of its members. Even those societies that display important dimensions of democracy—elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary, for example—may not in fact be open for entire groups of people, especially those who have been systematically and structurally excluded from having voice, agency, and

power. Creating and strengthening an open society requires people and institutions to acknowledge and account for structural oppression and discrimination and legacies of injustice and inequality. And it requires that people who have been systematically denied their voice and agency are able to claim their power and participate fully in the societies where they live.

We aspire for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to be at the core of the Open Society Foundations’ mission and values, and we at the Grant Making Support Group (GMSG) see our role as supporting and encouraging grant making at the Open Society Foundations that advances diversity, equity, and inclusion, not only in terms of the *what* but also the *how* of grant making. This effort starts with recognizing our own power in philanthropy. Open Society and other grant-making organizations should consistently examine how the individual, program, and institutional levels of their work incorporate the values and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion not just in the ends, but the means. This awareness is crucial if we are to live these values and intentionally contribute to dismantling systems that perpetuate oppression and discrimination.

This guide, *Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Grant Making*, draws from focus group conversations and interviews with 93 Open Society organizational and individual grant makers in a range of roles across our global network: from 23 thematic and regional programs and 10 national and

regional foundations. It uses insights from a working group made up of grant-making colleagues, informal advisors across the Open Society network and counterparts from other foundations; and also has benefitted from the insights offered in *A Guide for Integrating Intersectional Gender Justice in Open Society Programs*, developed by the Women's Rights Program with participants in three global convenings on gender justice.\* Finally, we have benefited greatly and continue to learn from the extensive research, activism, and scholarship of social justice leaders who have been demanding more of funders and allies for so long.

Through conversations with colleagues across the Open Society network, we know that any funder's ability to advance the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion is affected by the diverse geographic contexts and fields in which they work, as well as by the particularities of their own experiences of having or not having power in their societies, given their identities, including gender, race, citizenship status, and other factors. For example, we heard from colleagues that in Italy and Mexico the issues of intersectional gender justice are priorities. In Kenya, it is religious and generational discrimination that is of most concern for some. Similarly, anti-Black racism in the United States and Brazil, disability inclusion in China, or socioeconomic inequality in Jordan give us a sense of how different contexts and power inequalities define how much voice and agency certain groups of people have in different parts of the world.

At the Open Society Foundations, we know that everyone is learning, including us, when it comes to understanding and addressing historical legacies of oppression and discrimination. We have made a long-term commitment to building the capacity within our own foundation on these issues, and to learning with and from colleagues and experts leading this work. We aim to celebrate and lift up the deep expertise and thoughtful practices implemented by colleagues across and beyond our network, despite the range of challenges they have faced, including those related to our own foundation's internal culture, systems, and practices. We hope colleagues in the philanthropy field can use this guidance to build on these good practices as they consider and move toward grant-making practices and funding decisions that intentionally contribute to dismantling systems that perpetuate oppression, discrimination, inequality, and injustice. We are sharing this guide in hopes of contributing to the rich and ongoing dialogue in philanthropy from which we have learned immensely and which we hope to continue to learn from.

### **Tom Hilbink**

DIRECTOR, GRANT MAKING SUPPORT GROUP  
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

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\* [Guide available upon request from the Grant Making Support Group](#)

# 1. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN GRANT MAKING?

Structural oppression and discrimination play out in different ways across the globe. At the same time, there are important commonalities. Almost every society incorporates some form of patriarchy that devalues, diminishes, controls, and silences women and girls. Most also incorporate structural racism and systemic devaluing of people with darker skin. White supremacy has influenced much of the world via colonialism, which has meant that in societies around the globe, racism based on color and ethnicity has taken root as part of the ethos of many post-colonial societies. Indigenous people, no matter their skin color, have also been dehumanized or considered inferior by the white Europeans who stole their lands and exploited their natural resources. Far older systems of structural exclusion and silencing, such as casteism in India and Nepal, have been exacerbated in modern times by systems of global capitalism and exploitation. In almost all modern and pre-modern societies, poor people and working-class people have lacked power and voice and have been looked down upon by those who are more privileged. Similarly, people with disabilities have and continue to face increased vulnerability and discrimination across the world. For all these, and many other, complex reasons, we realize that there will be variation in how grant makers interpret and make real their efforts to do their work in ways that actively challenge systems of oppression and discrimination, power, and privilege.

This guide uses diversity, equity, and inclusion as a framework through which to consider, question, and challenge these different systems. It is important to understand the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion in a specific context to ground conversations with whomever you are engaging, whether a peer funder, grant seeker, or grantee.

## DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN GRANT MAKING

While recognizing that there is no universal definition of diversity, equity, or inclusion and that terms used vary considerably between contexts, the following understanding provides a framework:

- **Diversity:** The intentional variety within a specific collection of people that takes into account intersectional elements of human difference, identity, and lived experience. We suggest paying particular attention to groups that are often subjected to structural forms of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression across the globe, including but not limited to: the intersections of racial and ethnic groups, LGBTI populations, people with disabilities, women, religious groups, and people of low socio-economic status. A diverse group is not necessarily inclusive or equitable.
- **Equity:** The achievement and maintenance of just outcomes for all people within an organization or within a culture or society. Just outcomes are obtained when people address and dismantle imbalances in power dynamics (caused and upheld by structural systems of oppression and injustice) that are perpetuated in policies, processes, institutions, and the distribution of resources.
- **Inclusion:** A process that gives all people—especially communities that have been systematically excluded or prevented from having a say in the structures of power—full and meaningful participation in planning and decision making at all levels within a group, organization, movement, or society. While a truly inclusive group is necessarily diverse, a diverse group is not necessarily inclusive.

We invite you to reflect on how well these definitions—which were informed by our research across and beyond the Open Society network—may or may not apply to your own foundation’s work in different contexts, regions, and with different populations that are subjected to forms of structural exclusion and oppression. We also encourage you to have candid conversations with your colleagues about how you can do more as grant makers to challenge the status quo of power and privilege in your field and among your grantee partners.

**A note on intersectionality:** Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that posits that multiple economic and social categories and identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) may intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro, social-structural level (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and heterosexism).<sup>1</sup> First defined by feminist thinkers globally, this term is most commonly associated with Kimberle Crenshaw’s academic work, which applied the term to legal challenges related to identity, and has since been adapted and applied to a range of contexts.\*

Different individuals and groups will experience exclusion, discrimination, and oppression differently based on their overlapping and intersecting identities. None of the twenty-first century challenges we face can adequately be understood using a single analysis, or by explaining a problem as a result of *one* form of exclusion. As American writer, feminist, and civil rights activist Audre Lorde reminded us, we cannot have single-issue movements because we do not live single-issue lives. Similarly, there are very few current social justice challenges that are exclusive to one identity. We urge grant makers to use an intersectional approach to their grant-making practices that reflects the complex realities of the highly inequitable distribution of power and privilege.

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1 Bowleg, Lisa. “The Problem With the Phrase Women and Minorities: Intersectionality—an Important Theoretical Framework for Public Health.” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 102, no. 7, 2012, pg. 1267-1273., doi:10.2105/ajph.2012.300750.

\* Open Society’s Women’s Rights Program has used intersectionality in a number of analyses, notably *A Guide for Integrating Intersectional Gender Justice in Open Society Programs* (available upon request from the Grant Making Support Group).

## 2. ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN GRANT MAKING

Grant makers can choose to intentionally advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in their practices, including anti-racist and anti-sexist approaches, among others, at every level of their work, from designing a grant-making strategy, to building relationships with grantees, and informing funding decisions. Below we identify six opportunities in the grant-making process where grant makers can make a difference, along with suggestions, and questions that invite funders to look critically at who they fund, how, and why:

- Developing a portfolio strategy
- Building relationships with organizations and understanding their health and effectiveness
- Scanning the field, conducting outreach, and soliciting concept notes and proposals
- Negotiating and reviewing a proposal and structuring grant support
- Learning throughout the life of a grant
- Ending a funding relationship

## 2.1 DEVELOPING A PORTFOLIO STRATEGY

At the Open Society Foundations, each grant-making program develops a programmatic strategy that lays out that program's vision for change and how it plans to get there. This strategy plays out in multiple portfolios of work that can focus on particular thematic priorities, geographic contexts or strategic methods, and help organize the program's work in pursuit of its goals. Philanthropy is in a moment of change across the world. In the current context of political turmoil and growing inequality, it is now more important than ever for funders to reflect on our grant-making strategies and consider how we can ensure that we design them to build power in communities that have long been excluded from resources.\*



### Questions for Reflection

1. Which communities experience structural discrimination and exclusion in the context where you are operating? How are they affected by the work of your portfolio or program?
2. How does your strategy attempt to shift power toward people and communities that are marginalized by these existing systems of structural oppression and discrimination in this field/geography? How might your strategy be (inadvertently) perpetuating these systems?
3. Have you consulted with people or organizations from those impacted communities in the development of your strategy? Does your own team actively represent those voices? If not, how can you seek out their participation, expertise, and feedback? How can you ensure these perspectives are reflected in the initiatives you are supporting?
4. Does your strategy consider a diverse range of partners? How will you attempt to partner with organizations led by or accountable to impacted communities? Are these partners missing from the field entirely? If so, how might your strategy consider “seeding” the field?

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\* The questions and recommendations included in this section are in line with the Open Society Women's Rights Program's *A Guide for Integrating Intersectional Gender Justice in Open Society Programs* (available upon request from the [Grant Making Support Group](#))



## Practical Advice

- **Bring an intersectional power and privilege analysis into your strategy discussions.** Understanding how systems of oppression and discrimination manifest in the context or field in which you work, and subsequently how these issues play out in the internal culture and external work of the organizations that you may choose to support, is critical to developing an effective strategy. This is true at both the program and portfolio levels, as portfolio strategies are ultimately informed by the broader program vision. In both cases, do not have these conversations separately, but rather embed them into your strategic thinking process.

When conducting field analysis, ask yourself who has power and who does not. When working in fields where issues of identity are less discussed or partners you work with might be more homogenous, question which groups have power and why, who is missing, and how your strategy might shift this reality. Engage in discussions with those groups that do not have power and listen to their perspectives on how systems of oppression and discrimination are operating. Keep in mind the intersectional nature of power, and that simply working on issues that support specifically marginalized communities or identities, such as anti-discrimination or women's rights, does not mean that those fields are necessarily diverse, inclusive, and/or equitable. Similarly, how organizations approach their work, including those groups that serve a "general population," will affect different communities differently, and it is equally critical to ask these questions in those instances as well.

- **Collaborate with colleagues and engage the field to deepen your understanding of context and strengthen your analysis.** Work with colleagues with different lived experiences or expertise than you in order to better understand how systems of oppression and discrimination manifest in the context or field in which you are working.

“If you have a portfolio where you think diversity, equity, and inclusion are not relevant, I encourage you to think twice. Look at the field you work in with inclusion in mind; try to go beyond the surface. You will see there are groups of people you missed.”



**Ali Khan**

SENIOR PORTFOLIO ANALYST,  
OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR EUROPE

“Look more closely at how your strategy is defined: Does it delve into issues and then just add: ‘with a special focus on women, people with disabilities, migrants, and LGBTQ communities’ at the end? Or does it really reflect a strategic approach to shifting power dynamics, voice, and agency of people and communities that are rarely considered the focus of the work?”



**Kavita N. Ramdas**

DIRECTOR, OPEN SOCIETY  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROGRAM

Consult with actors from the community or communities you seek to support as you develop your strategy to ensure your approaches reflect the field's most pressing needs. These actors could include previous or current grantees or other advisors you have identified through your work or networks. When appropriate, it is good practice to compensate individuals or groups that contribute to your thinking for their time. For example, depending on the extent of their support, payment through an honorarium may be appropriate.

“ In 2018, my team and I embarked on a process of strategic reflection that centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion. An audit of our work helped us realize that most organizations we were funding were led by white people, predominantly men. We are now working on incorporating an intersectional approach in our grant making; in order to shift power we have to make a shift in who we are working with, through our grant making and convening power.”



**Kayum Ahmed**  
DIVISION DIRECTOR, OPEN SOCIETY  
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

- **Include explicit intersectional power and privilege analysis, goals, and objectives in your strategy.** Having explicit conversations with program colleagues and field actors about power and privilege to inform strategy discussions is a great first step. Follow up by including your analysis and explicit goals and objectives of how your strategy will work to address existing structures and systems of oppression and discrimination. Be intentional and explicit in your language depending on context. For example, when you say racism, do you mean anti-Black racism and white supremacy? When addressing issues affecting “people of color,” do you really mean Black people? When you say “people with disabilities,” who within this group is particularly vulnerable or especially important to your strategy? Clarity and specificity are important. This will help you hold yourself accountable as well as provide a framework to analyze progress at opportune moments, such as portfolio reviews.
- **Commit to the long term.** Social change is often complex and takes a long time. When working to build the power and resilience of communities that have been historically excluded from access to resources, it is important to develop strategies that reflect this reality by committing to long-term support of a field, concept, or specific group, depending on your goals, whenever possible.

## 2.2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING THEIR HEALTH AND EFFECTIVENESS

At Open Society, we define “organization” to mean any undertaking (formal, informal, highly structured or loosely organized) where two or more people come together to advance change. Formal, registered organizations as well as transitory and informal entities play important roles in fighting for and sustaining change

We aim to develop a clear-eyed and contextualized understanding of the health, effectiveness, strengths, and challenges of organizations, in order to make better decisions about how to support them. We seek to develop this understanding before discussing a specific project or a potential grant, and recognize that our insights will deepen over time.

This process offers us a chance to learn from and with our grantee partners about how they understand and are trying to transform traditional relations of power and privilege, both within their organizations and in their fields.



### Questions for Reflection

1. What do you understand about how the organization’s approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion manifests internally? For example, how committed is the organization to an explicitly anti-racist and anti-sexist frame of analysis? How does that play out in their policies, processes, culture, and staffing?
2. What steps has the organization taken to ensure it can recruit, retain, and support a diverse staff? If the organization faces challenges in this area, why is this the case and how are they planning to address them?
3. How is the organization’s governance and leadership structure representative of the populations most impacted by its work? What is the actual level of influence and power that people from these communities have in shaping the organization’s work?

4. What do you understand about how the organization’s approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion manifests externally? For example, how do the organization’s strategic priorities and the groups and the communities it supports work toward correcting imbalances in power dynamics (caused by structural systems of oppression and injustice)?
5. How have historical systems of discrimination and oppression in the operating environment impacted the organization’s resilience, for example its ability to fundraise? How is the organization seeking to mitigate the impact of these challenges?



### Practical Advice

Discussing these issues can be difficult and uncomfortable. Consider the following approaches when carrying out conversations with grantees or grant seekers on challenging structural systems of oppression and inequality:

- **Explain why challenging structures of power and privilege is critical to your foundation and be transparent about your own journey.** A primary entry point can be your foundation’s own mission and values. This can be helpful to dispel misconceptions from grantees that these issues are the grant maker’s own agenda or something tangential to the relationship, but rather are a priority for all of the foundation’s work.

When engaging with grantees, be humble, honest, and transparent that funders, like all institutions that operate in a place where a particular group (racial, religious, etc.) is the majority of those who have power, have a long way to go to transform their own grant-making culture so they can live their values, and that you are aware that change requires continuous openness and is often marked by incremental progress. You are not expecting grantee partners to have this “figured out,” but rather you are looking to both learn with them and from them.

“Sharing the challenges Open Society is facing related to our own organization’s culture and practices has helped me build trust with grantee partners to have meaningful conversations about their own DEI challenges. It has allowed me to ask them some tougher questions. For example, how are they thinking about creating more open space for women in their organization, especially women from backgrounds of less privilege?”



#### Roxanne Nazir

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROGRAM

- **Avoid coded language and shorthand.** Diversity, equity, and inclusion frequently mean different things to different people in different contexts. Decode language when speaking with grantees to say what you actually mean. Frame questions that get at the essence of what you need to understand and provide examples of good practice to discuss specific issues. This may mean educating yourself on terms that are used in a particular context or field or, in turn, ask grantees to define what these mean to them and use this as the basis for the conversation.

Use local context to ground your conversations and open a dialogue about discrimination and power. For example, one grant maker working in Mexico where the #MeToo movement was a prominent issue of discussion among civil society groups was able to open conversations more naturally by asking about the impact the movement was having in the organization's field and how they viewed this issue or were responding to it.

- **Build trust and ask questions with empathy and respect.** Building trust with grantees is critical to ensure that conversations develop into meaningful reflections about systems of power and oppression and an organization's role in addressing them in its internal and external work. Building this trust can take time. It can also take time for you as a grant maker to feel comfortable and become accustomed to raising these issues.

Conversations about power and privilege may be uncomfortable, but it is important to ask direct, specific, and sometimes difficult questions in order to gain understanding and encourage meaningful progress. This might be particularly true in the context of organizations with long-standing internal issues related to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. In many cases these organizations have either failed to address these issues or unsuccessfully attempted to do so, with little progress to show for it. That said, grantees will often be happy to have the space to talk through these issues with a thought partner and grant makers have found it rare that a grantee will flatly deny that they are facing challenges when that is the case. Often, a grantee's

“ Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not terms that necessarily translate across contexts. We need to be clear and descriptive when we are asking grantees questions. We need to ask grantees what these concepts mean to them to better understand how they inform their work and our support.”



**Stephanie Boarden**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, LEARNING  
AND GRANT MAKING, OPEN SOCIETY  
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

reactions to the issue may be an indication of where the organization is, and how willing they are to implement meaningful changes.

- **Tailor your approach considering dynamics in the field.** Calibrate conversations based on your relationship with the organization and your analysis of the systems of oppression and discrimination operating in the field. For example, how you engage in conversations with a large, global, anchor grantee based in a high-income country will be different from a conversation with a small, local grassroots organization in a low- or middle-income country receiving their first grant. In practice, this might mean tailoring the questions you ask and when and how often you ask them, and calibrating your expectation of the kind of change you hope to see and when. When working with groups led by people in positions of power, it is especially important to discuss the grantee's role in addressing (or perpetuating) these systems, their responsibility to empower other voices, and how internal challenges to diverse, inclusive, and equitable work spaces could be reflective of or perpetuating wider social inequalities.

“Who we are, how we are raised, our life experience: This is what we bring to the workplace, and that is who we are as grant makers.”



**Alice D. Kanengoni**

SENIOR MANAGER: STRATEGY,  
ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING,  
OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

- **Be humble and aware of your identity, positionality, and privilege.** Reflect on how your own identity and that of your colleagues (visible, assumed or otherwise) might affect engagements with partners in a context of already existing power dynamics within the funder-grant seeker relationship. Challenge your own assumptions and lack of comfort in undertaking this dialogue, and engage with organizations as meaningfully as possible at a given moment in time. If you feel that you have said the wrong thing or shown a lack of awareness, acknowledge it. Rather than shy away, be honest and share your commitment to learning and improving.
- **Draw on multiple sources of information, including insights from both quantitative and qualitative data.** There are a number of sources you can use to understand the challenges and progress within an organization. In addition to conversations with grantees, use observations through site visits, conversations with other colleagues, target communities, and stakeholders from the field,

formal and informal gatherings, and sometimes even public articles and reports. These sources can give you a more complete picture of the commitment of an organization to be more inclusive, equitable, and diverse.

Both qualitative and quantitative data can be important for informing your understanding. To this end, demographic data is one very important source of information but it should not be the only one. Understanding the demographic diversity of the grantee organizations supported is a sensitive issue that is best approached in conversation rather than through forms and templates.

If your foundation is considering or already collecting demographic data about your grantees, consider reflecting on the following questions:

- What type of data are you planning to collect and how is it relevant to your work? What questions are you hoping to answer by analyzing the data?
- Do grantees already collect this data regularly or would you be asking them for data they do not have?
- How do you plan to address the sensitivity and/or legality of asking for specific information in a particular context?
- How do you plan to securely store the data?
- How are you planning to share what you learn with the grantees?

- **Be mindful of power dynamics, consider context, and think long term when addressing donor dependency issues.** In instances where organizations face challenges related to financial dependency on a donor, consider how context, including the systems of structural oppression and discrimination present in the field or geography, may influence or exacerbate these issues. Many grantees facing donor dependency issues operate in geographies and fields with long-term structural challenges that may seem insurmountable relative to the capacity of such organizations. Steps taken by an organization to build a more stable funding base or to responsibly address

“ To be inclusive, we need to really invest ourselves in getting to know organizations in different ways; spending time with them, their boards, other people in the field who know their work... Without this level of engagement, organizations may not be comfortable sharing the challenges that they are going through.”



**Sarah Nkuchia Kyalo**

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
INITIATIVE FOR EASTERN AFRICA

dependency issues may take a number of years. Instead of surrendering hope, grant makers should address dependency issues by approaching these situations from the portfolio and strategy level, with a view toward long-term change.

At the same time, remain mindful that the power dynamics inherent in any funder-grantee relationship become particularly intensified when dependency is acute. This is potentially even more of a risk for groups or movements that have been historically oppressed, when the historical power imbalance is mirrored, and reinforced, in the funding relationship.<sup>2</sup> Grant makers can mitigate this reality by asking their grantees how they plan to address their dependency challenges, and what they need from grant makers as funders to do so. Use these insights to develop grants that support these plans.

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2 Francis, Megan Ming. “The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture.” *Law & Society Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2019, pp. 275–309.

## 2.3 SCANNING THE FIELD, CONDUCTING OUTREACH, AND SOLICITING CONCEPT NOTES AND PROPOSALS

Grant makers receive and develop proposals with potential grantees in a number of ways. In some instances, they solicit proposals through an open request for proposals. They can also proactively request a concept note or proposal from organizations they are familiar with or which they have identified through field scanning.

Funders can choose to put more time, effort, and grant-making resources toward working with grantees who meaningfully engage the communities they aim to serve. This is because without involvement of the people directly impacted by the work, an organization's effectiveness, legitimacy, and mission can suffer or even be undermined. Furthermore, as funders, you may be unconsciously perpetuating or exacerbating existing inequitable resource allocation and systems of oppression and discrimination.\*



### Questions for Reflection

1. Who are the groups or populations most impacted by the issues you are working on? How have you been able to reach these groups in the past? What did you find challenging?
2. How do you scan the field for new partners? Have you noted that you are drawn to certain types of groups over others? Why? When you are unfamiliar with the geography or context, what has been useful for building your understanding and identifying different groups?
3. How does your program typically collect proposals? Is it through targeted solicitation? Have you experimented with calls for proposals?
4. Are there technical, language or communication barriers that a potential grantee may find difficult to overcome in order to submit their proposal? How will these influence the kinds of organizations that will complete the process?

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\* This section builds on the Open Society Youth Exchange's guide: *The Time is Now: Funding Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Fellowships*

What alternative channels or support can you offer to help overcome these challenges? For example, have you considered including translation costs in your internal budgets to ensure proposals can be submitted in languages other than English?

## **Practical Advice**

“ I recognize that I need to proactively learn more about structural racism, and how it underlies all of the issues I care about. It takes effort to search for resources focusing on the European context. However, as an organization that fights for racial justice, we should make sure we create spaces for these discussions, especially because of their absence in the European philanthropic space.”



**Renata Cuk**

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
INITIATIVE FOR EUROPE

- **Ask yourself questions to reflect on and to challenge your implicit biases.** Even if you embrace fairness and anti-discrimination at a conscious level (including, but not limited to, adopting anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist beliefs), implicit bias influences how people interpret people and situations, ultimately affecting how you make decisions. As funders, this may mean that even when you say you want to fund diverse groups and individuals, you may unconsciously disqualify them or have limited interest in their work if it does not conform to theories of change you are familiar and comfortable with. When looking for new partners, ask yourself questions about who you already fund, which types of groups you are drawn to over others, which groups you feel less comfortable engaging with, why that might be, and who you might be missing as a result. This can be difficult and uncomfortable, but addressing this discomfort and engaging in mindful, deliberate contemplation is a step toward mitigating biases. If you are able to recognize a pattern or one has been brought to your attention by others, avoid being defensive, acknowledge it, and seek out guidance from colleagues or resources to educate yourself.
- **Tap into colleagues' expertise and networks.** Working with colleagues from other organizations or local groups (such as NGOs or private and public foundations), can be helpful to better understand a new context and identify new partners. At the same time, be mindful that your colleagues may face similar challenges as you do in terms of their limited or privileged networks in these spaces. To this end, it can be useful to collaborate with local consultants, and specifically consultants who are deeply rooted in the community, to conduct mappings of the field and find new opportunities to engage.

- **Develop and communicate funding criteria that reflect the needs of your target community.** Funding criteria will determine who can apply, ultimately influencing who receives support. Criteria for organizations and individuals should be rooted in the needs of the target community and reduce barriers for these groups to ensure accessibility whenever possible. For example, if you hope to support activists who have had limited access to conventional education, you might choose to remove educational requirements. This specific example is especially pertinent when making grants to individuals.

Before asking grant seekers to submit anything in writing, engage in conversations to elicit ideas and build mutual understanding. Then accept initial submissions in the form of shorter concept notes before asking for a full proposal, or accept proposals prepared for other funders. These measures will minimize the time taken away from critical work, but are also more inclusive for organizations with, for example, limited resources for dedicated development of staff or less experience writing proposals, especially in English, for large philanthropic institutions.

- **Promote language justice.** Language and communication style act as barriers to funding for potential grantees if funders are not flexible and do not value that information can be shared in diverse ways. Language justice refers to the right of every individual to communicate in the language they find most comfortable and in the method or style that makes them most comfortable for presenting themselves and their work. It is about making an intentional decision to set up spaces and processes that recognize, value, and allow everyone's voice to be heard, disrupting systems of oppression that have traditionally disenfranchised groups based on their language or communication style.

Favoring the funding of groups with strong English language and documentation and writing skills will exclude those that are not conversant in the dominant language and communication style. One way you can advance language justice during your solicitation and outreach is to translate or interpret calls for proposals and outreach materials into the language spoken by the target community. Some

“ Sometimes we say we can't fund a small organization, for example, because we doubt they can 'absorb' the funds. We have to be careful not to perpetuate inequitable resource allocation simply because we *think* we should look for certain kinds of groups.”



**Joy Chia**  
TEAM MANAGER, OPEN SOCIETY  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROGRAM

funders may also accept initial proposals in different languages and forms (e.g., audio, video, etc.).

Translation and interpretation can be costly, so you will need to budget accordingly, and these services may not always be feasible. Work closely with your grants and legal officers as early as possible to avoid unnecessary delays and to ensure these measures are in line with relevant policies and compliance restrictions.

Language justice is also critical at a number of other compliance-related moments in grant making. For example, reporting or understanding technical details, such as tax law, can be challenging, especially for groups that are less familiar with philanthropy. Whenever possible, take the time at the outset to explain what is required, provide the necessary translation or interpretation of materials, and make yourself available for follow up questions.

“As a program officer, you need to ask yourself and really interrogate yourself: ‘Have I done everything I can to streamline our processes for our partners?’”



**Pamela Pratt**

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
INITIATIVE FOR WEST AFRICA

- **Tailor your outreach to raise awareness and increase accessibility.** Depending on the needs of your target community, and particularly when aiming to reach groups and individuals that have been historically subjected to structural oppression and exclusion, you will need to take additional steps to ensure they are aware of your foundation generally, and that they know of and have access to the specific funding opportunity you are offering. Tailored outreach might include:
  - Partnering with grantees or peer funders to leverage their existing networks and communication channels.
  - Publishing outreach materials in local outlets, such as radio or newspapers or providing local or remote information sessions interpreted in local languages.
  - Supporting “mentoring initiatives,” where local consultants can translate, interpret, and provide interested applicants with support to complete application documents.
  - Hiring local consultants deeply rooted in the target community to support outreach activities at the community level.

When possible, open direct lines of communication for grant seekers to ask you their technical questions about the proposal process as they arise, or take time to explain via virtual webinars or calls, considering language justice and accessibility accordingly.

In certain cases, it may be useful to work with activist-led groups, such as participatory granting making organizations, and intermediaries, to reach the grassroots in order to identify and fund groups that your foundation does not know exist or might otherwise be unable to reach. Using participatory re-granting mechanisms in these cases may expand opportunities for community-led and historically oppressed groups to access funds, and allow for more tailored capacity building and support than can be provided through direct grants. In other cases, you may consider working through intermediaries to support the field, especially if the intermediary is itself rooted in the movement. That said, you must also consider the potential risk of inadvertently reinforcing dynamics of power and privilege in a field by providing funds indirectly, especially if a re-granting or intermediary organization is not thoughtful about their power in their own processes and practices. Consider engaging in conversations about power and privilege with these organizations to avoid causing inadvertent harm to a field.

“ We just kept thinking: How are we going to reach these young people who are not even aware of us as funders? To include them, we needed to change our processes and reach them where they were.”



**Rachele Tardi**

FORMER DIRECTOR,  
OPEN SOCIETY YOUTH EXCHANGE

## 2.4 NEGOTIATING AND REVIEWING A PROPOSAL AND STRUCTURING GRANT SUPPORT

Typically, proposals are written documents submitted by potential grantees. If there is alignment between what they propose and the goals of the program, the grant maker and grantee define the focus and content of the proposal, the most appropriate type of grant, award term, and form of assessing progress.

During this phase of grant making, grant makers can consider if and how the work of the potential grantee addresses systems of oppression and discrimination in their context. This will help to prioritize grant making that proactively seeks to dismantle these systems and structure your support in ways that most appropriately meet the unique needs of each grantee to support their development, build their resiliency, and promote equity, both within the organization's internal culture and in its external work.



### Questions for Reflection

1. How does the work of the potential grantee address systems of oppression and discrimination within the field or context in which they are operating? How do they intend to monitor their progress?
2. How does the proposed budget reflect the grantee's efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organization? (e.g., staff benefits, professional development) For example, have they considered culturally competent resources and benefits for staff for their well-being, resilience, and healing? How are they considering professional development, especially for those staff from communities that have been historically excluded from career progression and leadership positions in this field?
3. Is the level of flexibility you have discussed with the grantee appropriate for them to accomplish this work within the duration of the grant? What are some ways you might provide more flexibility to account for unforeseen challenges or delays?

4. Has the grantee raised concerns about their own capacity to create inclusive, diverse, and equitable environments for their staff or to challenge systems and structures of power and privilege in the context in which they work? What opportunities do you see to provide financial or non-financial support to address these challenges? Who is best positioned to provide this kind of support for the organization to address these challenges in this context?



## Practical Advice

- **Ask key questions that center intersectional power and privilege in your analysis of the proposal.** Consider how the work of the potential grantee addresses systems of structural oppression and discrimination in their context. The answers to these questions should help inform your decisions about structuring specific support to that grantee. Examples of these kinds of questions include:
  - How does the work challenge or perpetuate existing systems of oppression and discrimination?
  - How are impacted communities engaged in this work?
  - How does the potential grantee seek to be inclusive of communities that are particularly marginalized given the context of the place or issue that they are dealing with in this proposed work?
  - Who is setting the agenda for the work? Why have they prioritized these issues? Who is leading the work? Who is this group partnering with to advance this agenda?
  - How does the work reflect the intersectionality of the issue being addressed? For example, if the potential grantee is proposing to do work on women's rights, to what extent are they taking into account issues impacting women with disabilities, women in remote areas, women from racial or ethnic minorities, migrant women?
  - Will the grantee be exposed to or experience trauma (including traumatic experiences of others) as a result of the proposed work? If so, what support is in place or required to ensure the well-being and security of their staff?

- How does the budget reflect the grantee's considerations of staff well-being and care? Is their staff compensation equitable?
- **Prioritize flexible and multi-year funding.** This will enable grantees the space to set their own agendas and build their power in the field. Furthermore, flexibility will allow them to respond to unforeseen challenges in their operating environment. If flexible funding is not possible, consider supporting more of the organization's indirect costs to enable them to cover the full amount required to run programs effectively and efficiently. Many community-based organizations or those led by groups that have been historically denied their voice, agency and access to resources do not have the social capital within the philanthropic sector, such as connections or networks, to secure flexible funding.

For non-U.S. grantees, consider whether the organization may qualify for Equivalency Determination (ED), as this can help attract funding from new U.S.-based donors. Additionally, an organization that qualifies will also be able to receive flexible, general support from other U.S. funders, which likewise reduces proposal and reporting burdens on grantees.

Consider the ways implicit bias may influence your decision around providing flexible and long-term support for a grantee. Which organizations do you or your program already provide this kind of support to and why? Who leads these organizations? What issues do they work on and how do they approach their work? Which types of organizations do you trust with unrestricted funding and lower reporting requirements? When you have opted for project-level support, what was driving your decision making? This again, may be difficult and uncomfortable, but it is critical for holding yourself accountable.

- **Consider accompanying your grant making with organizational and leadership development support.** Some organizations seeking to build strength in various aspects of their organization—especially those that are chronically under-resourced and led by historically

oppressed groups—may benefit from additional, targeted support to address their self-identified gaps. For example, some grant makers pay for financial trainings as part of their grant or offer their own personal support and guidance related to financial compliance and reporting. Others provide targeted support for leaders (individuals or collectives) from impacted and marginalized communities, who often face increased challenges related to their historical and systemic exclusion from these positions, unrealistic expectations, and lack of autonomy and trust to make decisions.<sup>3</sup> For organizations struggling specifically with advancing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable culture within their organization, consider the appropriateness of offering support to address these issues, such as:

- Providing funds for training related to specific social justice issues, such as racial or gender justice.
- Hiring consultants to support the evaluation of existing policies, the development of new ones, or efforts to change internal culture.
- Providing support to organizations so they can find short- and long-term solutions to problems of harassment and discrimination.
- Sharing positive examples of inclusive and equitable policies and practices or existing training materials, from either your own foundation, peer foundations, or other social justice organizations and movements.
- Connecting grantees to other actors in the field to support their development and network building. For example, introducing a small grassroots group with a strong racial equity analysis in their strategy to another group you know that is struggling to address these issues internally or in their external work.

With all these types of support, it is important for grant makers to understand how they connect to broader organization-wide efforts to change culture to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. One-off trainings or formal changes in policies are not sufficient nor should they be the primary tool when tackling systemic issues.

“ We need to provide space for grantees to tell us what they need. One grantee we funded appointed a new female director for the first time, but she did not feel prepared for the role. It was only because she felt comfortable enough to ask that we were able to support her participation in a mentorship program. This helped her grow and develop as an incredible leader.”



**Magda Adamowicz**

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

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3 Thomas-Breitfeld, Sean, and Frances Kunreuther. “Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap,” an Initiative of Building Movement Project, 2019, p. 2.

“ Our work revolves around listening to our fellows and walking with them. When you are supporting [a group of] young people, especially in a place like Puerto Rico, where trauma is present, you need to ask, ‘What do you need for your healing?’ Based on their self-identified needs, we have worked with local consultants to create spaces and provide tools for our fellows to heal both individually and collectively.”



**Loidymar Duprey**

PROGRAM OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE,  
OPEN SOCIETY PUERTO RICO PROJECT

In all cases, grantees should be the ones ultimately determining their organizational capacity needs. Trust them and act as a thought partner here to determine how to best support them.

■ **Elevate holistic security, well-being, and healing.\***

For organizations and individuals who are living with and experiencing the injustices they are fighting every day, it is critical to consider their mental and physical well-being by prioritizing support for holistic security, well-being, and healing. Consider how you can provide access to tools and resources or create spaces that enable healing for grantees. This support should always be culturally sensitive and context specific. Examples provided by grant makers include:

- Providing funds to improve office environments, staff benefits, or providing culturally competent resources for healing.
- Providing support to facilitate convenings with well-being and security as the primary focus.
- Providing grants, when necessary, that help remove grantees physically from spaces in which they are threatened.

■ **Support field-level diversity through specific grants when appropriate.**

In addition to providing support to individual grantees, think about how to leverage your foundation’s power and resources to promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive fields. Often, a lack of diversity in a field will be due to a long-term structural issue. Consider how you may structure a grant to support diversity in a field, such as encouraging two organizations to partner together as a way to promote more inclusive modes of working. Such a grant could also create fellowships to support leaders from historically oppressed communities, or organize convenings for staff in the same field from specific marginalized identities to connect and support each other when dealing with common challenges.

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\* Advice and lessons on holistic security, well-being, and healing are aligned with and build on those included in the Open Society Youth Exchange’s guide: *The Time is Now: Funding Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Fellowships*.

- **Tailor payment schedules according to grantee needs.** Depending on an organization’s financial circumstances, how you choose to sequence payments could be critical to an organization’s ability to receive those funds and plan for implementation, especially when working with smaller or under-resourced groups. For those groups, consider scheduling one payment as a way to build trust as opposed to scheduling multiple payments to ensure compliance. Ultimately, ask grantees what works best for them.
  
- **Consider how you can challenge systems of power and oppression through the activities that take place as part of or in support of a grant.** In your role as a grant maker, there are a number of activities that make up your job, including those outside of and in support of your grant making. For example, foundations spend tremendous resources and investments in activities such as organizing convenings or conducting research, often as part of a specific grant or project. Think about how you can bring an intersectional power and privilege analysis, and challenge the status quo of power in a field, when engaging in these activities.

For example, you can consider a number of questions such as:

- How do you or your program hire consultants, vendors or contractors? What opportunities do you have to ensure these are inclusive and equitable processes?
- When hiring consultants specifically for research, how do you determine their level of “expertise” and knowledge in this area?
- What role do you play in organizing convenings or even as a participant in panels or conferences? How did you determine who was invited to attend? Among these groups, who typically feels comfortable participating in these spaces? How can you ensure these spaces are as inclusive as possible?

“It is key to understand how we as funders play a role in who can access power, and how we can judge and shape movements unknowingly. Only with this awareness can we mitigate these impacts.”



**Gregory Edward Czarnecki**

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER,  
OPEN SOCIETY HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

## 2.5 LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF A GRANT

Over the course of the grant, grant makers continue to engage with and learn from the organization, build the relationship, and monitor the progress of the work supported. To deepen their understanding of grantees and their work, grant makers attend conferences, participate in site visits, speak with people at various levels in the organization and field, and, when applicable, review reports and deliverables.

Social change is often long term, non-linear, and complex. Furthermore, perceptions of progress can and will vary considerably depending on context, history, and culture. Monitoring and learning activities and evaluative frameworks should also center this reality.



### Questions for Reflection

1. How have you engaged in conversations with grantees about anticipated progress? What does success look like for grantees in the context in which they operate? How have they considered the ways that structural oppression and discrimination in their operating contexts will influence this progress?
2. What are your main considerations when organizing a meeting with a grantee to discuss progress? What steps can you take to ensure these engagements prioritize their safety and well-being?
3. How do you collect information about the progress of work throughout the duration of a grant? How is this information also meaningful to the grantee? Are there barriers for the grantee (e.g., technical, cultural, language) to engaging in this information sharing process? How might this process be biased toward well-resourced groups?
4. Has a grantee expressed interest in building their capacity in terms of monitoring and learning? What opportunities are there to support this group and build their capacity when it comes to donor reporting?



## Practical Advice

- **Engage grantees in defining what progress means for them and in analyzing impact.** Although those groups that have been historically oppressed are disproportionately among the intended beneficiaries of social policy and program goals, including those funded by philanthropy, they have been historically excluded from designing metrics of success or interpreting the impact of programs and interventions on their lives. In this way, those conducting evaluations are in a position of power in that their judgements of the quality of an intervention may have serious implications for those intended to benefit from the support.

Ask grantees what meaningful change looks like for them and the best way to capture this progress (including the kinds of reporting you require). When organizing formal reflection exercises, consider how you can engage the field and grantees to weigh in and contribute to your analysis. Shared ownership over the evaluation process will help build trust, set clear expectations, and allow organizations themselves to lead in determining what has been working for them.

- **Speak with those directly impacted by the issues grantees work on.** Ask them what progress they have seen over time, what they would like to see in the movement, and which groups they feel represent them. Take advantage of informal opportunities for these conversations, such as conferences, convenings, or even less formal or non-work instances, such as local events.
- **Put in place meaningful but simple reporting practices and offer flexibility.** Whenever possible, allow grantees to report on the progress and impact of their work in flexible and creative ways that are meaningful for their learning and yours. Consider organizational capacity in the nature, content, and cadence of reporting you ask for from organizations and individuals in order to increase accessibility. Minimize unnecessary burdens whenever possible. For example, you may consider:

“ I was supporting a grantee whose reporting was ‘terrible’ but when I went to do a site visit to understand why, I saw that they were doing incredibly impactful work—they just didn’t express it with the language, style, and terminology I was used to hearing.”

**Anonymous**

OPEN SOCIETY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

- Allowing grantees to submit reports in the language of the target community and covering the cost of translation.
- Accepting “reports” over the phone or during site visits or through different formats, such as multimedia or visual reports, and writing your own summary to meet compliance.

In each of these instances, it is critical to check with your grants management colleagues about the legal reporting requirements necessary. Keep in mind, general support grants are the most flexible when it comes to reporting.

Finally, it is good practice to cover the costs of any monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities you are requesting of grantees. Without covering these indirect costs, funders may be disadvantaging under-resourced groups. Encourage honest information sharing with grantees to determine their needs in this area.

- **Prioritize grantee well-being and security during site visits and grantee meetings.** In-person meetings with grantees are incredibly valuable to gain understanding of how an organization is making progress toward its proposed goals. Therefore, it is critical that grantees feel comfortable and safe to ensure open and honest information sharing. Power and privilege show up in physical spaces and this is important to consider. When you can, visit grantees in their own space, remembering to check when would be a good time so as not to disrupt their work. In instances where you meet elsewhere, make location selections with specific consideration to where grantees will feel safest and most comfortable given their identity (including race, gender, disability, citizenship status, among many other dimensions) and the context.

## 2.6 ENDING A FUNDING RELATIONSHIP

Throughout their careers, most grant makers will be required to end funding relationships. Reasons for ending funding are varied and may include: the support provided was for a time-bound initiative; the work the grantee was implementing has succeeded or failed; the goals and priorities of the funder and those of the grantee are no longer aligned; the funder's budget was reduced and they have to re-strategize; the funder and/or the grantee are facing security or legal challenges; there has been a breakdown in the relationship (i.e., performance issues, fraud, etc.); a funder's office or program is closing; or, maybe the grantee organization is folding.

In other instances, grant makers may not be required to end funding completely, but substantially reduce their support to an organization, individual, or field. In an ideal world, thinking how to adjust a funding relationship will not be an afterthought. However, even when forced to react quickly to unanticipated events outside of a funder's sphere of control, thoughtful planning can help to minimize adverse and potentially disproportionate effects on grantees and the field, especially grassroots groups led by people from impacted communities or historically oppressed groups. Use a power and privilege analysis to understand how the grantee and field will be affected by losing this support.



### Questions for Reflection

1. What role does this grantee play in the field or geography in disrupting or perpetuating structural systems of oppression and discrimination, and historic legacies of injustice and inequality? What will be the impact of ending or reducing funding on the diversity of actors that exist in this field/geography?
2. What will be the impact on your portfolio and program strategy of ending or reducing funding to this grantee in terms of advancing objectives related to challenging systems of oppression and discrimination in the field?

3. What will be the impact of ending or reducing funding on the health of this grantee? What will be the impact on staff from directly affected communities or historically oppressed groups?
4. What will be the impact of ending or reducing funding on the grantee's programming? How will this affect the communities that they serve? What proportion of the organizational budget is represented by your funding? How dependent are they on you for advice and support (beyond funding)?
5. How has this grantee made progress or struggled with issues related to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizational culture? How have they struggled or made progress challenging systems of oppression and discrimination in their external work? How has this affected their long-term resilience and effectiveness?



## Practical Advice

- **Identify the principles and values that will drive your exit strategy.** This can help ensure that exit decisions and processes are as equitable as possible and minimize harm and impact on marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- **Seek to understand the consequences of ending funding, at an organizational and field level.** In addition to the effects on the grantee (in many cases this will affect people's livelihoods), ending funding can influence the dynamics within a field—the standing of an organization or individual within a field, the interest and engagement of other funders, or the relationships among peer organizations that may now start competing for funding. This is especially true in fields that may lack a diversity of actors. Use this understanding to structure support to give the grantee an opportunity to adjust to the loss of funding and plan for the future.

■ **Offer flexibility.** Try not to take funding away abruptly from grantees. When possible and appropriate, aim to create the softest landing possible for the grantee, for example, by building flexibility into the exit in terms of the types of funds you make available to the grantee during this period, as well as timeline, reporting requirements, and non-financial forms of support. If you can provide tie-off funding, consider making general support grants wherever possible to U.S. public charities and organizations with equivalency determination status. Seeking equivalency determination for a grantee, even once you have decided to end the relationship, could be immensely beneficial for the organization in the future, as it will allow it to receive general support grants from U.S. private foundations. If general support is not possible, consider other ways of providing flexibility such as offering program-level grants or offering no-cost extensions if the grantee requires extending the date to which they can spend existing grant funds.

■ **Communicate clearly and consistently.** Carefully crafted, clear, consistent, and appropriately timed messages that are aligned across the network are a key element of a responsible exit strategy. Communicate with the grantee early and often, and always before a public announcement is made. If possible, put things in writing as this helps bring clarity and manage expectations. Choose both the language and channel for communication based on the grantee's specific needs. For example, if you work with a group or individual that does not speak English as a first language, or at all, or does not have access to high-speed internet, provide translation or interpretation and follow up by phone to ensure that the grantee has received your communication. Also, carefully craft your communication in order to mitigate against the risk that ending funding (of an organization, portfolio, or field) will lead others to reduce their support as well.

In situations where there are multiple colleagues with open grants to the same organization, and their funding will continue beyond yours, coordinate with them to align your messaging to avoid confusion for the grantee.

“ It is not our role to impose the way organizations commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, we always have the option to end the relationship with organizations who do not share our DEI values. When doing that, it is our role to share our concerns about DEI and to provide a rationale for why we can or cannot fund.”



**Mariana Berbec-Rostas**

PROGRAM OFFICER, OPEN SOCIETY  
HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

# 3. ADDITIONAL DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AND GRANT-MAKING RESOURCES

Below we provide a selection of resources that we hope will be useful to you as you continue to learn and reflect on how you can prioritize grant making that proactively seeks to dismantle systems of oppression, discrimination, inequality, and injustice.

- [Astraea Feminist Funding Principles](#). This guidance, produced by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, provides a set of principles to guide powerful grant making. These principles are based on lessons learned from Astraea's own experience supporting activists on the frontlines of social change and are intended to be applied across different organizational strategies, geographic priorities, and theories of change.
- [Beyond Words: Power and Trust in UK Grant Making](#). This report was produced by the Grant Givers' Movement, a non-hierarchical group of people working in this sector that seeks to interrogate and challenge the status quo in grant giving, especially around power. The document includes findings from the movement's recent survey around how those within the grant-making sector perceive their own power, the dynamics of grant-making organizations, and the power balance between grant makers, grantee partners, and the communities they seek to serve.
- [D5 Coalition](#). D5 is a five-year coalition to advance philanthropy's diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their website includes a number of useful tools and resources.
- [Disability and Philanthropy Forum: Funding for Inclusion](#). This forum has a number of resources for foundation staff to promote disability inclusion, including articles and resources for peer learning and collaboration as well as resources to support operations, organizational culture, and grant making.

- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Pillars of Strong Foundation Practice](#). This report produced by the UK's Association of Charitable Foundations outlines how foundations can promote DEI. It sets out nine characteristics of excellent practice in a foundation, which include collecting data on diversity, implementing DEI practices in funding activities, and how the foundation can make itself accountable to those it serves and supports.
- [Equitable Evaluation Initiative](#). This initiative intends to build infrastructure that supports and advances evaluation as a tool for and of equity for organizations with this as core to their work and missions. Their website has a number of useful tools and resources.
- [From Words to Action: A Practical Philanthropy Guide to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#). This GrantCraft guide explores challenges and opportunities to explore how diversity, equity, and inclusion can be meaningfully integrated into grant-making practices and a broader ethos for foundations.
- [Grant Making with a Racial Justice Lens](#). This latest version of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity's guide includes revised content and data from more recent research to provide foundations with useful tools for implementing a racial justice lens that will boost success at supporting structural transformation and building community power.
- [Nonprofit Executives and the Racial Leadership Gap: A Race to Lead Brief](#). This report was produced by the Building Movement Project, an applied research center and Open Society grantee that develops research, tools, and training materials that bolster nonprofits' organizational capacity. The report highlights, through comprehensive research, the unique challenges that nonprofit leaders (and organizations led by people of color, in particular) face.
- [The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture](#). This paper by Megan Ming Francis, PhD, explores the power that funders have to change the priorities of organizations they fund, a phenomenon she calls "movement capture." She outlines how the NAACP's priorities were changed by funders in the early twentieth century, and how the organization's agenda is still shaped by this today to demonstrate how powerful funders, even with the best of intentions, can influence the priorities of marginalized groups.
- [Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector](#). This report, also produced by the Building Movement Project, applies an intersectional analysis to examine the impact of both race and gender on the aspirations, experiences, and career advancement of women of color working in the nonprofit sector.
- [Using Competitions and Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\)](#). This GrantCraft guide provides practical advice for grant makers considering open calls to solicit proposals, including key lessons to ensure this process yields a diverse and inclusive applicant pool.

**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**

**Grant Making Support Group**  
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