

Members as Funder Organizers

Unlike many other pooled funds, the Amplify Fund Steering Committee is committed to doing the work of funder organizing. Now representing twenty one funder members, the Steering Committee re-asserted their central role as funder organizers in 2021, but this responsibility is at the roots of the fund.

In 2017, a rare opportunity to influence significant funding within their institutions presented itself to a group of foundation staff. They took the opportunity by collaborating and hiring consultants (and later staff) to design a place-based pooled fund focused on equitable development, racial justice, and power building... later to be named the Amplify Fund.

Original funders included the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and the Surdna Foundation. The Kresge Foundation and the JPB Foundation were recruited quickly afterwards as additional seed funders.

Funder Organizing in Practice

LEARNING

The Steering Committee learns about each of our eight places through grantee interactions (e.g., learning visits, presentations), about our grantmaking approach and practices through reports and meetings, and about racial justice with the help of consultant Gita Gulati-Partee.

STRATEGIZING

In 2021, the Steering Committee started systematically engaging in funder organizing by power mapping foundations at the national level, and in our places, using an adaptation of SCOPE's Power Analysis Tool. In each place, local funders, national funders, and Program Team members are discussing fundraising and power-shifting goals and strategies.

Amplify made a grant to SCOPE to support the use of this tool, and staff was trained in its use by SCOPE's former Organizing Director, Manisha Vaze, now Director of NFG's Funders for Justice program.

WINNING

Under Rini Banerjee's leadership, the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation modeled their current place-based work off Amplify Fund's local strategy advisor model and power building goal.

The Missouri Foundation for Health made an explicit investment in Black-led organizations in St Louis, following the Amplify Fund strategy written by the Missouri Local Strategy Advisors.



AMPLIFY FUND
NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP



Photo credits: NFG

Amplify's Steering Committee Relinquishes Power to Local and BIPOC Leaders

In the Fund's early days, the Steering Committee approved the strategy development process, the locally developed strategies, and the first two grant docket in Missouri and Puerto Rico. However, it became clear that, if we were to truly position BIPOC communities as decision makers and follow local expertise (two values identified in our theory of change), the Steering Committee's role would have to change. So, we devolved decision making at all levels of the pooled fund.

LOCAL STRATEGY ADVISORS

In 2018 and 2019, each place's strategy was developed by Local Strategy Advisors and implemented by Amplify Fund staff.

PROGRAM TEAM

Specific grantee decisions in each place are determined by Program Team members, currently composed of Amplify Fund staff and consultants, all of whom are women of color deeply connected to the places in which they work.

GRANTEES

Beginning in 2021, and continuing into 2022, the redesign of Amplify Fund is being led entirely by grantees through a process called the Future of Amplify.

When each place refreshes their local grantmaking strategy, grantees will determine the overall grantmaking strategy. To learn more about the Participatory Strategy Process, watch this video. https://youtu.be/olt_zTarh0Y

"Amplify is a space where we're really encouraged to surrender, to relinquish our own individual ideas and goals, and organizational mission and vision to come together around something that is shared"

MESHIE KNIGHT
PROGRAM OFFICER, ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION
MEMBER OF AMPLIFY STEERING COMMITTEE

