

[View this email in your browser](#)



Dear Friends,

Since our inception, Amplify Fund has recognized that Black and Indigenous communities bear a disproportionate harm from policies that do not include them in decision-making. Funders' lack of investment in long-term, community-driven solutions are partly responsible for this inequity. Hence we identified funder organizing as a tactic to achieve our ultimate goal of devolving decision-making power to historically marginalized communities.

Progressive funder organizing was less common in 2017 when Amplify was launched, in the wake of the first Trump presidency. Today, however, almost every social justice philanthropic intermediary seeks to do some form of funder organizing. That's a good thing. But we are now asking ourselves what our unique contribution is, and how this can all add up to something larger than our individual efforts, especially in anticipation of increased assaults on civil society. To start to answer these questions, we need clarity on our shared funder organizing vision.

Amplify Fund's Original Approach to Funder Organizing

When Farhad Ebrahimi offered [a working definition of funder organizing in The Forge](#), we adopted the language of “building power, developing leadership, and effecting structural change within the philanthropic sector itself” while being “informed by and accountable to pre-existing organizing efforts taking place in marginalized and oppressed communities.” Even before that articulation, though, we were building individual relationships with values-aligned funders (local and national), scheming of ways to shift funding and grantmaking practices, and holding ourselves accountable to a set of racial justice values.

Through years of experience, and in recent one-on-one conversations with our funders, we learned that our approach to funder organizing has not been without its challenges. For one, working with individuals within funding institutions meant we held disparate definitions, goals, and tactics depending on the person we were working with. We need to develop a common vision for our sector while recognizing that there will be several goals within that vision, and making room for a multiplicity of tactics. We believe that, in order to create this vision and deepen our funder organizing approach, we have to find points of collaboration with other philanthropy-serving organizations (PSOs) that also organize progressive funders towards racial and social justice, rather than just individuals within foundations.

“

With affinity groups and collaborative funds spaces, it's easy to experience saturation... The beauty of being able to work across issue areas and geographies also means there are many places to be. It gets tough with a small team and not a lot of personnel capacity to be at all tables.”

Desiree Flores
Executive Director, General Services Foundation



Amplify Fund's New Approach to Funder Organizing: Call for Partnership

The field of social justice collaboratives and intermediary organizations that seek to organize funders has grown in the last few years. Instead of trying to eke out separate niches, it is more useful to think in terms of coordination and collaboration so that together we are creating an ecosystem with more leaders capable of shifting structures and norms. We have three motivations for such partnerships:

1. While relationships and networking are important aspects of foundation jobs, few staff have the time or capacity to participate in multiple affinity groups. Giving them one space to build community, participate in political education, practice turning their learning into action, and hear from movement leaders can alleviate some of the over-saturation.
2. We are more powerful if we combine forces. Amplify Fund's funder organizing efforts intersect with many others because we work in [8 different places](#) on broad-based topics like land justice, economic justice, human dignity, and holistic well-being. We are also part of [Neighborhood Funders Group](#) (NFG) which has an even broader issue and place-based reach. Aligning across funder organizing efforts will give us strength in numbers, help us amplify our message, provide important inspiration and support, and intimidate those trying to use their power to weaken our ecosystem.
3. This political moment demands a coordinated response because nonprofits and foundations are already experiencing attacks. We need to focus on the sustainability and safety of our grantee partners, make the funding part of their jobs as easy as possible so they can focus on protecting their communities, and become real partners, standing side-by-side in advocacy and organizing. One PSO alone will not be able to address the onslaught of crises.

“

Real success is when people move beyond thinking about individual institutions into thinking about the field and how they support moving the field.”



Isaac Lev Szmonko
Organizing Director, Solidaire

Amplify Fund's Offering in Coalitions

As the original grantmaking arm of Neighborhood Funders Group, Amplify Fund is unique. Few other national intermediaries have done place-based grantmaking through trust-based, unrestricted, multi-year funding using movement-led strategies. This means we are not only able to advocate for good funder practices but actually implement those practices, i.e., “walk the walk.”

Our place-based grantmaking gives us particular insight into how national organizations can enter local contexts without causing unnecessary disruption. The places we work in were selected because they are often overlooked by philanthropy but they are important and strategic places for base-building, especially amongst communities of color. We have relationships and insights from 7 years of movement-led funding to offer funder organizing coalitions.

Finally, we are unwavering in our racial justice approach. In our original theory of change, we named structural racism and the legacy of slavery as the context in which we are all operating. Because of that, we apply a racial justice analysis, not just identity politics, to our decisions, and you can see the effects of that in our staff, our grantees, our strategies, and our political analysis.

While many philanthropic institutions have focused on racial justice in recent years, Amplify Fund has used this frame since 2017. And our home institution, Neighborhood Funders Group, has long been one of the few places in philanthropy focused on people of color-led grassroots organizing. Our personal and professional experiences make us knowledgeable, skilled, and resolute in our commitment to racial justice, even as philanthropy wavers and reverses the momentum that stemmed from the massive demonstrations after the murder of George Floyd.

“

We joined Amplify to learn how to transform our practice, become a racial justice funder and be in community with other racial justice funders.”

Malcolm McClain
Program Officer, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation



In 2025, we plan to deepen and broaden our relationships and collaborations with other PSOs and intermediaries to plot ways to work in concert with each other. If you want to join us in these efforts, reach out today!

leticia@nfg.org

leticia@nfg.org

Leticia Peguero

she/her

Interim Senior Director, Amplify Fund
leticia@nfg.org



Copyright © 2024 Neighborhood Funders Group, All rights reserved.