

5 Ways to Redesign Corporate Philanthropy to Advance Equity

Traditional grantmaking practices in corporate philanthropy may unintentionally carry bias and perpetuate the inequalities CSR professionals are seeking to address. Below are five tips for CSR professionals as they start on a journey to redesign corporate philanthropy.

Understand that who is as important as what we fund.

- Commit to the philosophy of “no decision about us, without us” and reassess how you can apply that to your grantmaking. Give grantees a voice in the decision-making process.
- Trust nonprofit leaders to know what their communities need most and provide them with the resources to go after their priorities.
- When choosing a signature program or issuing a significant monetary gift, don't overvalue the cause or brand recognition of a nonprofit. When companies select partners based on the prominence of the nonprofit's brand, it often leaves out smaller, minority-owned, and governed nonprofits that can have more innovative approaches.



Adopt a trust-based approach to grantmaking.

- Gifting large sums of money (especially those between the five-figure to seven-figure range) requires trust. A trust-based approach actively works to break down the traditional power dynamic that often exists between donors and grantees.
- This is done through collaboration, learning, and listening sessions with nonprofits. It also requires the ability to remain flexible in what you're funding and how nonprofits spend it towards operational and programmatic costs.

Create more accessible grant-application processes.

- Purposefully think about the grantmaking process and actively remove barriers that may have unintentionally been created through our western definitions of rigor, objectivity, and truth.
- Critically assess your current grantmaking processes and criteria to make it easier for smaller organizations to access resources. Smaller organizations may be at the forefront of innovative approaches to new issues but may not have the same capacity as larger nonprofits.
 - Can you move toward a universal grant application?
 - Make the application more streamlined, or reduce the number of "phases" in your process?
 - Are you using grant criteria that unintentionally bias your decision-making towards large, traditional nonprofits? (i.e., criteria includes if they have a PR team, if their facilities or staff "look professional.")
- Build an open communication channel with potential grantees and ask for feedback about whether your grant application process is too burdensome or out of reach.



Consider transitioning to granting unrestricted funding.

- Issue monetary grants specifically for unrestricted funding to provide proximate, minority-led, long under-resourced organizations with the financial flexibility to grow and innovate.
- Set a goal to transition a portion of your portfolio to unrestricted funding for minority-led organizations.
- When or if the grantee requests capacity support, work collaboratively with the grantee. This can be a great way to integrate employee volunteerism! Your employees have talents and knowledge that can bring powerful support to growing nonprofits.

Use technology and grantmaking platforms to advance equity.

- When using a CSR or grantmaking platform, think about how it may actually perpetuate inequities through the way it was designed.
- Rethink the use of technology to be less of a "gated community" and more of a "concierge service," whereby organizations have easier access and awareness of how they can seek resources, regardless of their size.

