

Funders and donors can build, share and wield power to bolster the pro-immigrant movement

By Lisa Rangelhelli

Together, the Movement Investment Project and *Power Moves* offer a roadmap for grantmakers about how to support a vibrant ecosystem of pro-immigrant organizations.

We in philanthropy seem doomed to repeat history. But it doesn't have to be that way.

When NCRP analyzed environmental grantmaking patterns in 2012, we found that the vast majority of funding went to the largest organizations with budgets over \$5 million, even though they comprised only 2% all environmental organizations.

The study concluded that failure to fund organizations at the frontlines of environmental injustice – especially communities of color and other under-resourced groups – contributed to the failure to make significant progress on climate and environmental policy.

Yet it appears that these lessons are not widely embraced in philanthropy, nor are they applied across other issues, including the immigrant justice move-

ment. We're in a moment when grantmakers have an opportunity to leverage power in support of frontline movement organizations and help secure a thriving future for all communities.

WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

According to NCRP's new Movement Investment Project brief on immigrant justice, as local communities have been threatened by hateful anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric, funding for the pro-immigrant movement has skewed toward national legal and policy organizations; and regional concentrations in giving do not reflect where the greatest threats lie, even in well-resourced states.

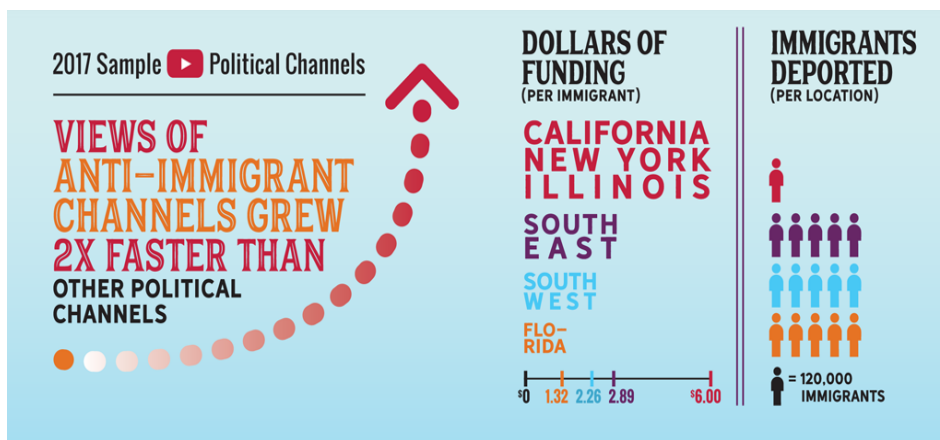
Whatever the issue, funding those most affected by harmful and inequitable policies is a winning grantmaking

strategy. Understanding and ensuring the strength of the full ecosystem of organizations that seek transformative change is also a winning approach.

Farhad Ebrahimi has learned this lesson through leading the Chorus Foundation:

"I've come to the conclusion that what we're collectively referring to is an ecosystem of power – one in which there are different forms of power that behave and interact with each other in different ways.

An ecosystem, of course, is not just a list of things but rather the web of relationships among those things. And, while it can certainly make sense to focus on a particular part of an ecosystem, that focus is always going to be most effective when made in the context of the whole."¹



From the State of Foundation Funding for the Pro-Immigrant Movement infographic.

WHAT CAN FUNDERS DO DIFFERENTLY TO BETTER SUPPORT MOVEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT?

As Ebrahimi noted, power is a central consideration that should guide grantmaking strategy.

Funders need to understand who holds power and how those with power – including grantmakers themselves – use it either to perpetuate or to challenge inequitable and racist policies, programs and narratives.

NCRP's *Power Moves*² guide looks at 3 dimensions of power that are highly relevant for philanthropy's role in supporting the pro-immigrant movement. NCRP's extensive research has found that funders who successfully use their privilege and influence to advance equity for marginalized communities follow these guidelines:

1. Building Power:

- a. Be explicit about advancing systemic equity for immigrants, refugees and asylees in grantmaker goals, strategies and operations.
- b. Fund diverse and intersectional immigrant and refugee communities to build clout and be their own agents of change.
- c. Fund cross-cutting approaches. Building power may not fit neatly into narrowly defined issue areas. Immigrants and refugees are affected by many issues – such as health, education and the environment – not just those related to their legal rights.
- d. Fund for the long-term while also being responsive to emerging opportunities or urgent crises.

2. Sharing Power:

- a. Be highly responsive, inclusive and transparent in communication with existing and prospective grant partners.
- b. Invest in the success of grant partners by providing multi-year general operating support.
- c. Simplify application and reporting processes to reduce language and technological barriers and to avoid further straining the already stretched capacity of many potential grant partners.
- d. Engage with and solicit input from immigrants, refugees and asylees you seek to benefit by going beyond the usual suspects.

3. Wielding Power:

- a. Convene grant partners and community stakeholders to advance pro-im-

migrant movement goals while also playing a supportive participant role at other convening tables.

- b. Organize and collaborate with philanthropic peers who share common concerns, as well as with other sectors that are potential allies, such as local government and business officials.
- c. Inform, raise awareness and advocate by using your reputation and expertise to illuminate critical issues and amplify the voices of the most marginalized immigrants, refugees and asylees.
- d. Deploy non-grant financial assets creatively to advance foundation and grant partner goals and shift resources and power to diverse and

intersectional immigrant and refugee communities.

Power Moves encourages grantmakers to reflect on each dimension of power by asking questions internally, and also by soliciting honest feedback from grant partners and the communities the funder seeks to benefit. Upon gaining insight from this information, funders can map their progress in each dimension and identify clear next steps for action.

HOW CAN FUNDERS TAKE STOCK OF POWER CONSIDERATIONS AND IDENTIFY NEXT STEPS?

The Movement Investment Project offers 5 recommendations that come directly from pro-immigrant movement leaders.

The following guiding questions use the *Power Moves* framework to help funders think through how to put those recommendations into practice. These questions, informed by conversations and advice from immigrant- and refugee-led groups, can spur important discussions among funder boards and staff interested in exploring how they can better support the ecosystem of pro-immigrant organizations.

Building Power:

1. What are your reactions to the Movement Investment Project's findings that only 1% of funding from the country's largest foundations were explicitly for immigrant and refugees, and only a small fraction of that amount went to base-building organizations? How might you adjust your grantmaking strategy to address these disparities? Even with a tough federal policy environment, immigrant movements can achieve a lot at the state and local levels while also continuing to lay the groundwork for eventual nationwide immigration reform.
2. If you're already funding services for immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, do these service providers

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5 ESSENTIAL PRACTICES
FOR DONORS TO SUPPORT THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT

- Give long-term, flexible and capacity building support to frontline groups
- Fund organizing and services
- Help grantees access 501(c)4 funding
- Work with other funders to fund the movement ecosystem
- Support beyond the grant

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From the State of Foundation Funding for the Pro-Immigrant Movement infographic.

also organize with and advocate for their constituents? How could you support their efforts or add new community organizing groups to your portfolio?

3. What proportion of your current funding goes to groups that are led by people from the immigrant and refugee communities whom you seek to benefit? Could you shift more funding to immigrant-led organizations? Keep a full picture of who's leading this movement and consider funding the diversity of immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker identities, including Black, Asian American Pacific Islander and LGBTQI.
4. What assumptions and knowledge do you hold about which communities have the leadership and capacity to advance pro-immigrant causes? Remember that many im-

migrant and refugee leaders fear for their safety and may work through informal and invisible networks for their protection. How can you access and build trust with those leaders and networks?

5. In what ways do you think about "risk" in the context of funding pro-immigrant movements? Question your ideas about what a risky grant is. Consider the dire risks that immigrant and refugee communities face every day compared to what may feel risky for a funder who enjoys wealth, privilege and security. What are the risks of *not* investing in experienced leaders who know how to organize their communities?
6. In what ways do you define success when choosing which movements to fund? What are realistic short-term and medium-term signs of progress

toward long-term policy change? When you're funding pro-immigrant movements, progress (i.e. a single win, policy or outcome) will not always be grounded in numbers; it may be intangible, such as growing leaders, learning and building long-term strategy – not just looking toward the next election.

7. Do you seek to build power on key issues such as health, education, jobs or the environment? All of these issues have relevance and potential for impact among immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. If you want to build power in any issue area, invest in their leadership; building pro-immigrant power is not solely about immigration policy.
8. What could you do to support 501c4 organizations that are immigrant-led? How does funding only the c3 parts of a movement's ecosystem hinder progress?

Sharing Power:

1. In what ways can you streamline processes to make it easier for front-line immigrant and refugee groups to apply and get grants out the door more quickly? Being adaptable and flexible in designing grant processes – with input from communities – will ensure you remove any unintended and unnecessary barriers to receiving a grant.
2. How much of your strategy and vision for immigrants and pro-immigrant movements have been shaped by and with these communities? What can you do to share or even cede power to movement leaders to create that vision and follow their lead?
3. In what ways can you build trust to allow for greater power sharing? Multi-year general support grants are a great way to signal confidence in your grant partners.

4. Are immigrants and refugees represented in your organization? How can your employment and recruitment policies better foster inclusion of immigrants and refugees with experience organizing pro-immigrant movements on your staff, board and advisory councils?
5. How inclusive are your feedback processes among these communities? When reaching out, first talk to a pro-immigrant organizer. Be aware of how fear from U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement, police and deportation will affect immigrant and refugee communities' willingness to trust those outside the community. Be patient and proactive to establish trust.
6. Have you considered the value of participatory grantmaking models? Designating a portion of grant funds to pro-immigrant organizers is an effective power-sharing and power-building strategy.

Wielding Power:

1. In what ways do you collaborate with and organize other funders to

support a vibrant movement ecosystem? The infographic can be a great conversation starter with your funder networks. There is likely an immigrant and refugee perspective that funders need to understand and address regardless of the geographic or issue focus.

2. Can you leverage your philanthropy and business networks to help open doors to other funders and donors for pro-immigrant movement organizations? Funding for immigrant justice is too top-heavy. For the movement to be sustainable, its champions must bring other funders to the table, particularly at the local level – including 501(c)4 funders.
3. Do you invest in companies that profit from private prisons and detention centers? Consider how your non-grant assets may harm the pro-immigrant cause and how you can proactively use your investments and your power as a shareholder to influence corporate policies.
4. In what ways can you use your credibility and bully pulpit to speak out about deportations and to de-

fend immigrant organizing? If you are a 501(c)3, you can lobby. But even if you are a private foundation, you can engage in public education, research and media relations to support immigrants and refugees. ■

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Notes

1. Farhad Ebrahimi, "How to think about power (especially if you have some)," *Responsive Philanthropy*, February 2019, <https://www.ncrp.org/publication/responsive-philanthropy-february-2019/how-to-think-about-power-especially-if-you-have-some>.
2. Learn more about *Power Moves: Your essential philanthropy assessment guide for equity and justice* at <https://www.ncrp.org/initiatives/philamplify/power-moves-philanthropy>.

Immigrant Justice and Criminal Justice Reform

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online toolkit for funders to join in the divest/invest conversation and use the frame to guide their grantmaking.

FFJ asks grantmakers and donors to take action: Change your grantmaking and invest philanthropic dollars into grassroots organizing to end criminalization and especially toward campaigns to move public dollars from police, prisons and immigrant detention. ■

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Notes

1. Learn more at https://maketheroadny.org/pix_reports/Justice%20Reinvestment%20Final%20Report.pdf
2. View the webinar recording at [https://zoom.us/recording/share/zzopucaG-](https://zoom.us/recording/share/zzopucaG-2NixbCi8uhy7v_1541Ael8ejs_7nd8_8_6wlumekTziMw/)

- 2NixbCi8uhy7v_1541Ael8ejs_7nd8_8_6wlumekTziMw/
3. Tanvi Misra, "Where cities help detain immigrants," *CityLab*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/07/where-cities-help-detain-immigrants-mapped/563531/>.
4. Watch the webinar recording at <https://zoom.us/recording/share/1JPixsbpTSIAXFCLix8cLihxlCq39jYPFbwH0ORXTWwlumekTziMw?startTime=1540400499000>.