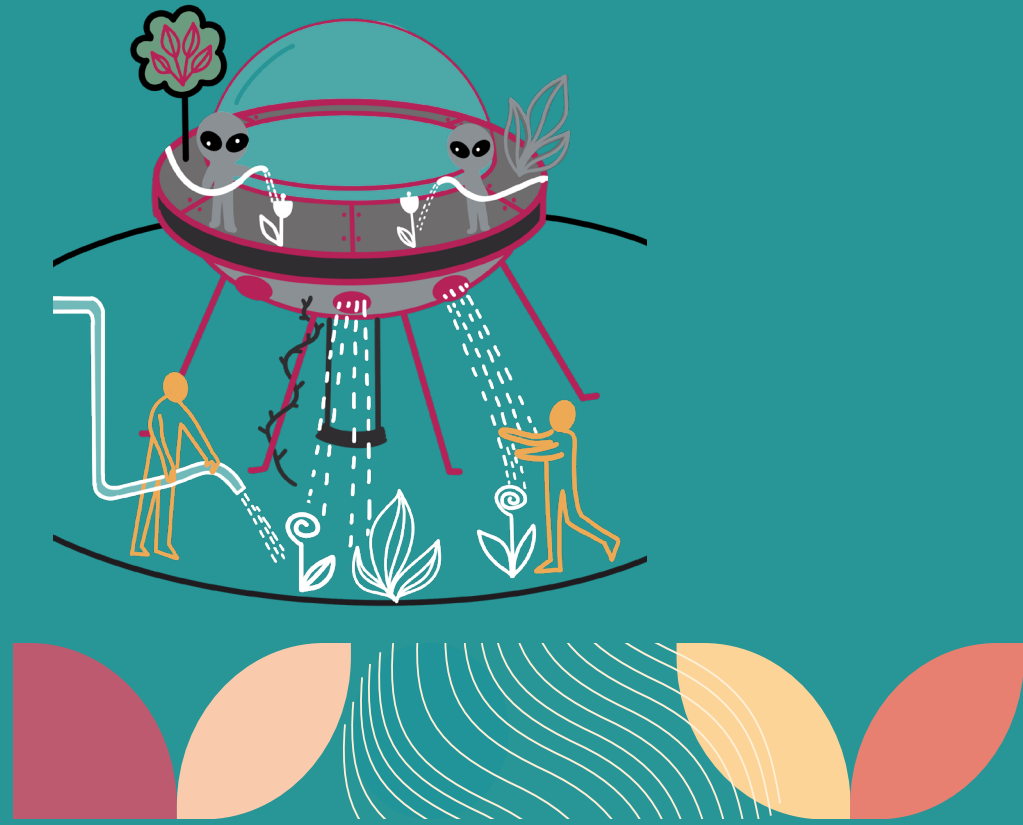


Grantmaking



Grantmaking

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What this skill is about

Considering changes in the mindset needed to be a good grant-maker

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Practice: Giving grants

Thinking through goals, incentives, formats and decision-making

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Reflecting and learning

Not just money, but building capabilities, connections and credibility

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Core capabilities explored

Combining resources and skills to add value to local initiatives

WHAT THIS SKILL IS ABOUT

Considering changes in the mindset needed to be a good grant-maker

Finding ways to practice some of the skills related to grant making and to identifying and building the capacities of local leaders is also important to happen in this early stage.

It is common for community foundation initiators to be more interested at the start up phase in generating money and in ways of structuring the foundation, and less so in ways of giving money well in the community. **However, knowing how to give money well is equally important as knowing how to raise funds.**



The quality of both practices generate better conditions for the donors' money to be well spent and to reinforce a virtuous feedback cycle of raising, giving, achieving and communicating results. This encourages donors to continue giving and new donors to become part of the community foundation platforms.

These skills are related to grant giving program design and may not be so easily within the reach of local groups, if their activity so far has been operational.

It requires a change in the mindset from the perspective of what I can do with my body, time, energy, knowledge and team to the perspective of **what the community can do through many people** who have specific interests and motivations.

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PRACTICE: GIVING GRANTS

Thinking through goals, incentives, formats and decision-making

So a good grantmaking program **identifies motivations** in the community and **provides incentives** for people to engage, to bring their ideas forward as potential solutions.

In all communities there are some usual suspects, **organizations that are known** as having the capacity to generate good projects, and there is also a lot of or **hidden talent** – people who might bring their solutions, but who have not yet found the right frameworks to do so.

A **decision in the grant-making process** can be exactly this one: should we work with the usual suspects? Should we try to surface new talent from the community? Working with the usual suspects often means less risk, while surfacing hidden talent means generating a stronger impact on the participation and leadership infrastructure in the community.

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Grant making also has practical considerations.

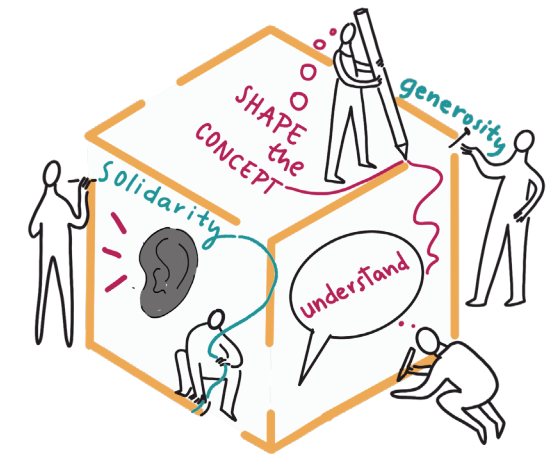
One is in terms of **what information** is asked from potential grantees. How complex should the proposal be?

Another one is who **will make the decision** about which proposals should be brought forward? Are we going to support all proposals or do we want to work with the ones that show most promise? A framework such as a Donors Circle has a limited space for 3 or 4 projects, so in case of a stronger interest from the community, somebody will need to decide which are the projects to be brought forward.

Both questions are important and they require nuanced responses.

For instance, decision-makers may be knowledgeable people, but part of the elite of the community, perhaps reinforcing power imbalances.

Deciding also needs defined criteria, but these criteria should be connected to the **potential and capacities that actually exist in the community, rather than theoretical ones** or what is considered best practice. This requires knowledge of the community.



All these decisions have implications on the credibility of the group. Very likely, these will be new situations for the local initiators.

As such, it is the role of the accompaniment program to support these decisions with real-life practical situations from other communities that can show what happens, as well as to inspire the local initiators and to support their analysis of the risks and benefits of different alternatives.

In the end, there will not be a perfect solution, but it can be a well thought-out solution that the local group is comfortable with, at this stage.

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REFLECTING AND LEARNING

Not just money, but building capabilities, connections and credibility

Where do you draw the line on supporting initiators, especially when you yourself are new to the game? How does a community foundation contribute to the value that local initiators put into their projects?

This is a setting where the 4C+ frame, as applied to community foundations, can be quite useful.

- The community foundation provides **financial resources**, thus enabling projects to be put in practice. But it is not only this.



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Capsule #3 Booster

- The community foundation may support the capability of the initiatives by **providing a framework** where they can increase their professionalism and understanding of the sector.

- They can help build **new connections** between initiators and between these and other community leaders and donors.

- They can help bring **credibility** to the initiatives that they support.

Many times, a support framework is not strictly about the money, but also about the **trust** that the community foundation or a large community of donors facilitated by the foundation puts into that project.

It is also an **incentive to act** at that moment, not later, or to increase the quality of the project or how well thought that project is. Oftentimes, this trust and capability investment is equally important or even more relevant than the financial investment, but the real power lies in the combination.

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CORE CAPABILITIES EXPLORED

Combining resources and skills to add value to local initiatives

Local initiative groups will have somebody that cares about the success of the project on their side. How much of this genuine motivation and care can be translated into practical ways depends a lot on the capacity of the group and the resources that the foundation itself has.

In cases where the foundation works with **new initiative groups** from the community, with people who are not experienced in running projects, it is quite helpful to raise resources for the **capability and connection** aspects, as these will be important contributions to the value of the projects.



This is also linked to the skills of the grantmaker to have a good reading of the community assets and to be able to connect projects to resources in the community, rather than only seeing the foundation team as a provider of resources.

It is also important to be able to set limits and define the foundation's role as a supporter rather than as a manager or a volunteer for all the projects receiving grants. The main responsibility to implement the project and make it successful lies with the leaders and managers of that particular project.

But what the Community Foundation can do is to **combine different resources and skills to add value** to that particular project and to a specific field of activity. And to help the teams identify their own position and address situations when needed.