

PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR FUNDERS

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FUNDING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT



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International Funders for Indigenous Peoples

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In *Funding Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Support*, we look at how funders collaborate with and bring support to indigenous communities around the world. Through examples from a diverse range of foundations, we will explore how grantmakers work with indigenous peoples, the approaches they take, and the practices they find effective.

This guide relies on information from over 25 interviews, a GrantCraft survey, and existing resources. A definitions page offers explanation of key terms in the report. Information derived from historic events or other published work is compiled in the closing section.

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Resources in the GrantCraft library are not meant to give instructions or prescribe solutions; rather, they are intended to spark ideas, stimulate discussion, and suggest possibilities.

Look for this icon in the guide to give you ideas for what you can do next:



Action step



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Who Are Indigenous Peoples?

If judged by dollars alone, funding to indigenous peoples can be considered a 'niche' within the wider field, with less than 1 percent of total international giving. Yet those funders, large and small, with experience in grantmaking to indigenous peoples are invariably its most loyal champions.

There is no universally accepted definition of indigenous peoples. There is basic acknowledgement in the international development community that indigenous peoples have the right to identify themselves.¹ This is the point of departure for any discussion on indigenous philanthropy: the recognition that indigenous communities have something valuable to offer to funders, starting with who they are.

"Indigenous peoples' identity is palpable: they know exactly who their ancestors were and feel a strong sense of responsibility to serve and protect the land they are from."

—Nonette Royo, Samdhana Institute



ACTION STEP

Read the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

"Indigenous communities have a shared cultural identity, live in ancestral territories, and follow the traditions of their ancestors through their structures of government and customary law," said Abdon Nababan, a Toba Batak from North Sumatra, and secretary general of Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in Indonesia.

According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, an advisory body headed by indigenous leaders, there are more than 370 million indigenous people across the globe, from the Arctic to the South Pacific. The descendants of those who inhabited a region before people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, they have maintained characteristics distinct from other segments of national populations.²

A United Nations (UN) study identified these general characteristics as:

- Occupation of ancestral lands,
- Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands,

WHY ALL THIS UN TALK?

References to the United Nations are unavoidable when talking about indigenous peoples, given the history of negotiations at the international level of how they identify themselves. The UN has served as an important mechanism for indigenous peoples to voice their rights and obtain recognition. If you're like a lot of funders, you probably don't work directly with the UN, but it is part of the territory and offers a wealth of information to get you started. Our *Definitions* section at the end of this guide has all of the related acronyms and UN terms you need to know in one place.

- Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as rituals/practices passed from generation to generation, traditional means of livelihood, customary governance),
- Language (mother-tongue or preferred language), and
- Residence in certain parts of a country or region.

An important note about terminology: While the UN prefers the term indigenous peoples, other terms commonly used include Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, First Peoples, tribal peoples, forest peoples, and hill tribes.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS PARTNERS

Those who support indigenous peoples find them invaluable partners in achieving their program goals. Environmental funders recognize that indigenous peoples live on the earth's last remaining reserves of high biodiversity. These funders, and those interested in cultural and language revitalization, support projects in indigenous communities. Others with a specific geographic focus often support indigenous partners when they comprise a majority of the population. Those who support social movements will fund organizing around indigenous rights and indigenous women, along with their participation in policymaking. In this publication, we will highlight some opportunities that indigenous peoples offer as partners with funders.



Indigenous Youth Caucus at the 2015 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Photo by Danielle DeLuca.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Does your organization work in an area where indigenous peoples live? Can you identify their tribal affiliation?
- How do you use definitions in your work to drive strategy and funding decisions?
- Indigenous peoples live in every major region around the world. Are there indigenous communities located in a focus region of your program?

“Defining indigenous peoples is an external issue. Indigenous peoples identify themselves as unique cultures rooted in their languages, production systems, and heritage.”

—Hassan Roba, African Rift Valley, The Christensen Fund



ACTION STEP

Check out the **UNDRIP Toolkit of the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples** for recommendations.

Indigenous Issues

Given colonization and the history of discrimination against indigenous peoples, the issues they face range from health and education to human rights and social justice. However, the central role of land in their cultures brings the issues of land rights and self-determination to the forefront. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides a succinct summary for funders of the most important issues to indigenous peoples around the world. This section gives an overview of central concerns of indigenous peoples and the funders who support them.

MARGINALIZATION

Long histories of colonization and discrimination have resulted in marginalization of indigenous peoples from dominant societies. "National statistics on health, poverty, and access to education show that many indigenous peoples are still the poorest of the poor, the least healthy, and ones who do not have access to formal education," said Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

In 2009, a UN Development Group report stated, "In many parts of the world, indigenous peoples suffer from a history of discrimination and exclusion that has left them on the margins of the larger societies in which they exist." The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) further details:

"While they constitute 5 percent of the world's population, they are 15 percent of the world's poor. Most indicators of well-being show that indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately compared to nonindigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples face systemic discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power; they continue to be over-represented among the poorest, the illiterate, the destitute; they are displaced by wars and environmental disasters; indigenous peoples are dispossessed of their ancestral lands and deprived of their resources

for survival, both physical and cultural; they are even robbed of their very right to life."

While their exclusion from the power structures of most societies means they are cut off from basic social services and mainstream income generation, it would be a mistake to view indigenous peoples as helpless victims. "From the industrialized view, indigenous peoples are seen as poor and weak," said Abdon Nababan, secretary general of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, explained Abdon, an average of 100 families collectively manages about eight thousand hectares of natural resources in each indigenous community. "When you look at the natural wealth in indigenous territories, they are wealthy peoples who need to be empowered to manage their wealth."

Land concerns—both land rights and self-determination—are core issues in indigenous communities, as is the preservation of culture and language.

LAND RIGHTS

Indigenous peoples so closely identify with the land of their ancestors that it forms the very fabric of their cultures. Land is not only the source of their economic livelihood, but the

thread uniting their spiritual, cultural, and social identity. “If we lose our territories, we die as a people and a culture,” said Tarcila Rivera Zea, a Quechua leader and executive director of the Center for Indigenous Peoples’ Cultures of Peru.

Consequently, official recognition of their ancestral territories is a primary concern of indigenous communities around the globe. Many indigenous peoples have achieved some level of recognition of what they identify as their ancestral lands, often through treaties, agreements, and legal cases, and, at the international levels, through various UN conventions and international court cases.

While most international conventions offer protections for individual rights, indigenous peoples seek *collective rights*. When indigenous peoples seek recognition of their land rights, they usually refer to a communal land title, as opposed to individual private property. Indigenous communities are increasingly going to the courts to enforce these collective rights delineated under different UN mechanisms, such as UNDRIP.

In particular, the 2001 ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) on a land rights case brought by Awas Tingni, a Mayagna indigenous community in Nicaragua, created an historic legal precedent. In 1996, the

government gave a corporation a 30-year permit to cut trees on their communal land. While the Mayagna had occupied this land for generations,



ACTION STEP

Take the time to educate staff across program areas on indigenous issues through a brown-bag lunch or distributing documents with summaries of facts.

their attempts to secure a collective land title had failed since the 1950s. After turning to the country’s court system, Awas Tingni won the first legally binding case on traditional land tenure of indigenous peoples at the international level.

“If we lose our territories, we die as a people and a culture.”

—Tarcila Rivera Zea, Center for Indigenous Peoples’ Culture of Peru

“Funder support for legal battles for indigenous land rights and the political advocacy to support them is crucial,” said Angela Martinez, senior program officer on natural resource rights at American Jewish World Service.



Quechua woman, member of the Association of the Communities of the Potato Park, leads the path high up in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Photo by Katherine Zavala.



Evelyn Arce, Executive Director of International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (Chibcha/Muisca Colombian descent) and Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Kankanaey Igorot descent). Photo by Mark Cherrington.

Inspired by these cases and other legal efforts, Maya groups in Belize devised a legal strategy to secure their land rights.

"This Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) case, and others that followed, set the stage for recognition of collective ownership of the traditional lands of indigenous peoples," said Gregory Ch'oc, the founder and former executive director of a Mayan organization in Belize, the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM).

The Maya won official recognition of their

"Long-term and flexible funder support for community organizing, legal defense, and political advocacy to support indigenous land rights, cosmovision, and self-determination is crucial for sustaining social change."

—Angela Martinez, American Jewish World Service

ancestral lands, which was the first goal in their strategy to secure collective land titles. With the exception of a case appealed to the Caribbean Court of Justice, these legal battles took place on the local level. However, they relied heavily on UN conventions and cases brought by indigenous communities in other countries.

Supported by the Swift Foundation and the Oak Foundation, SATIIM was the first indigenous group to apply the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) at the national level.

Despite this growing body of international precedents, on the domestic level, collective property rights of indigenous peoples are generally not recognized by national governments. The issue of land rights is the touchstone of many other concerns to indigenous peoples, not only their right to collective title, but also how they manage natural resources and develop economically. Since their traditions often challenge notions of national sovereignty, private property, and economic policy, land rights discussions often pit indigenous communities against development projects on their lands.

For many communities, mapping their territories is the first and most critical step toward their land rights. Maps provide legal documentation for official recognition of the collective property title of their communal land. Donors fund territorial mapping projects to achieve a spectrum of program goals, from the protection of biodiversity and cultural diversity to human rights agendas. "Before anything else is funded, mapping is the first, most urgent need," said Abdon Nababan, AMAN secretary general.

The level of threat to the community often determines the type of mapping project donors fund. A funder's cultural program might support a hand-drawn map with local names in a language threatened with extinction. An environmental program might support GPS mapping as a strategy to defend tropical forests slated for logging, since they will help a community keep their ancestral land—along with their sustainable management of it. "Sometimes mapping is done in stages, starting with a sketch map first," said Nonette Royo, of the Samdhana Institute. "The complexity of the map depends on who you are challenging. For instance, if a palm oil company has a map, then you need a high-quality GPS map since their professional mapper will try to discredit the community's claim on a 'sketch map'."

Funding a mapping project often serves a donor's wider program goals, such as environmental protection or human rights defense. For indigenous communities, mapping is a part of

a legal strategy for the right to collectively own their lands—and to decide what happens on them, commonly known as self-determination.

SELF-DETERMINATION

“Self-determination and sovereignty over their natural resources are central issues to indigenous peoples who often follow systems of governance developed thousands of years ago,” said Gregory Ch’oc, former executive director of SATIIM in Belize.

Like land rights, self-determination is an umbrella term that covers central concerns of indigenous peoples, from the right to educate their children in their native languages to control over natural resources. It is also a highly contentious issue, since self-determination can extend into the realm of national sovereignty. For example, even when governments recognize ancestral lands, they often stipulate that the national government still owns the subsoil—which is critical when they want to drill for oil or mine on indigenous territories.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is an international instrument that delineates the rights of indigenous peoples.

UNDRIP explicitly addresses a key issue of self-determination: the obligation of governments and corporations to obtain the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous communities for any project on their land, “particularly in connection with the development, utilization, or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.” The principle of free, prior, and informed consent refers to the right of local

“Free, prior, and informed consent is a process of continual dialogue with communities, so the trick is how you make sure that happens.”

—Brian Keane, USAID

communities to give or withhold their consent to projects that may affect their territories. *Free* refers to consent given voluntarily, without manipulation, intimidation or coercion. *Prior* refers to consent that is given before the project activities start. *Informed* implies that communities have received complete information about the project, its location, duration, costs, risks, and impacts.



Christiana Louwa of Kenya and Peter Kostishack of Global Greengrants Fund at May 2011 IFIP conference. Photo by Mark Cherrington.

This last point on the right to decide what happens on their lands has the power to increase indigenous community control over their lands and natural resources. In coming years, indigenous communities will test its strength and limits to protect their right to self-determination, particularly when they oppose external plans for their lands, such as extractive industry projects and large-scale mono-cultivation.



ACTION STEP

Check out the UN Development Programme's State of Indigenous Peoples reports for quick summaries of indigenous issues.

While the UNDRIP is not legally binding, indigenous communities, such as the Maya in Belize, have used it in domestic courts to hold governments that signed it to their word. "In the best case scenario, indigenous peoples will be able to negotiate better, but they'll also be able to say no to development projects they don't feel will be beneficial to their communities," said Brian Keane, advisor on indigenous peoples issues at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Indigenous peoples' languages encapsulate their identities, cultures, and oral histories. They express concepts about ancestry and the environment that are not found in any other languages. However, up to 90 percent of the world's 7,000 languages—many of them indigenous—are predicted to go extinct over the next century.⁴

To indigenous peoples, the loss of their languages is tantamount to cultural extinction. Languages now only spoken by a handful of elders will be lost in less than a generation. Since traditional knowledge is passed orally from generation to generation, when an ancient

language dies, key concepts for humanity's future are buried with it. Funders, such as the Kivulini Trust in Kenya, support language and cultural revitalization to achieve larger program goals, including the defense of biological diversity, which is seen as dependent on cultural diversity.

The UN identifies indigenous peoples' language rights to include the right:

- to be educated in their mother tongue;
- to have indigenous languages recognized in constitutions and laws;
- to live free from discrimination on the grounds of language; and
- to establish and have access to media in indigenous languages.

Funders support cultural revitalization through a variety of programs and approaches, including the creation of native language immersion programs, the translation of laws and key political texts into indigenous languages, social media projects, and oral storytelling projects.

The UN has excellent resources to understand the underlying concerns of indigenous peoples that inform the work of the funders who support them (listed in the *Resources* section). Becoming familiar with indigenous peoples' history of marginalization, rights to their land and self-determination, and challenges of language and culture preservation is the first step for any funder thinking about supporting them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How might indigenous issues fit into your grantmaking strategies?
- Indigenous issues seem to suggest that funders use a 'rights-based' approach to supporting them. How does your organization address human rights issues, as a general approach or specifically in projects?
- How does your organization become familiar with communities?

Programs That Support Indigenous Peoples

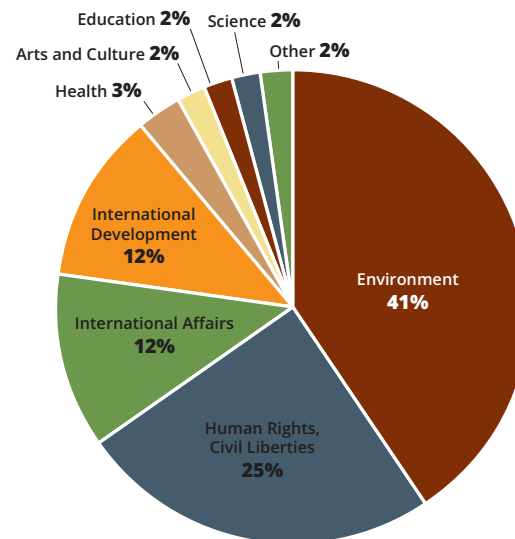
This section looks at what programs fund indigenous peoples. It focuses on those that grant the largest percentage of support to indigenous peoples—environmental, human rights, and international affairs—and also on new funding for traditional knowledge.

Since indigenous peoples are largely left out of philanthropy, evening the playing field can be a compelling reason alone to fund them. Yet in the context of the U.S. global giving, direct funding to indigenous peoples represents a tiny fraction. So the question to funders would be: why not partner with these important rich and diverse communities? Why not include voices and perspectives of indigenous peoples when it comes to issues such as environment, intellectual property rights, disability rights, indigenous rights, and women's rights?

While indigenous issues cut across most program areas, from health and education to sustainable development and culture, data from Foundation Center shows that funders currently supporting these communities often do so through environmental, human rights, and international affairs programs. Few funders actually have a dedicated indigenous peoples program. Some funders have also created wide program areas that can incorporate intersecting issues, such as climate change, food sovereignty, and indigenous communities.

As the pie chart shows, the three main programs that support indigenous communities are environmental, human rights, and international affairs. As we discuss below, funders have compelling reasons for choosing to partner with indigenous peoples to achieve their program goals.

Funding to Support Indigenous Peoples, 2012



Relative to other types of international grantmaking, the largest share of the funding for indigenous peoples supported the environment. Data Source: Foundation Center, 2015. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a sample of 1,000 large U.S. foundations. Due to rounding, figures exceed 100 percent.



ACTION STEP

Expand proposal criteria to include “unconventional” projects, like documenting indigenous names of sacred places, to achieve program goals related to environmental protection or human rights defense.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

There is wide recognition of the correlation between the earth's remaining biological diversity and indigenous lands. Indigenous territories are estimated to cover 24 percent of the world's land surface and contain 80 percent of the earth's remaining healthy ecosystems.⁵

The UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights notes that the 17 nations home to more than two-thirds of the earth's biological resources contain traditional territories of most of the world's indigenous peoples.

Environmental funders in particular often base their rationale of support for indigenous peoples on this convergence between the concentration of indigenous lands and biodiversity. Avelita Chicchon, program director of the Andes Amazon Initiative at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, notes, "When we talk about conservation of the Amazon, we know that 27 percent

is in indigenous territories, and most of that is covered with healthy forests."

Since so much of the earth's remaining biodiversity is located on indigenous territory, many funders consider these communities integral to their environmental defense strategies. Funding people to conserve the environment is an entry point for support to indigenous communities, whose land-based cultures have developed sustainable resource management strategies. "If you're interested in protecting the remaining biological diversity on the planet, you're going to want to work with indigenous communities," said Sonja Swift, trustee of the Swift Foundation and board member of the affinity group International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP). "These communities are strongholds of cultural and linguistic diversity, which comes in direct response to the ecological diversity of the places they live."

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: I AM THE WALRUS

Anne Henshaw, program officer for the North Pacific/Arctic focus area of the environmental program at the Oak Foundation, illustrates why environmental programs work with indigenous communities.

"In the Arctic, the overarching entry point for funding conservation is subsistence," said Anne. "Subsistence is tied to cultural identity and food security." In this part of the world, there is little agriculture. Communities harvest the only available natural resources—marine animals and fish. In Alaska, tribes are based in individual villages. The foundation supports the Eskimo Walrus Commission representing Alaska's nineteen coastal walrus-hunting villages, including Gambell, located on St. Lawrence Island. Gambell has written local ordinances to regulate walrus hunting, which allows both the island's residents and the walrus—on which the community relies for everything from food to clothing to fishing line—to survive in a sustainable manner. Walrus is an essential cultural, natural, and subsistence resource to Alaskan coastal Yupik and Inupiaq communities.

"For Oak, support for the Eskimo Walrus Commission's work in Gambell represents an important means to instill communities with their own authority and ensure greater compliance in marine mammal resource co-management," explained Anne.

"On paper, the Oak Foundation works in marine conservation in the Arctic, not explicitly on adaptation," added Anne Henshaw, "but in fact many of the organizations we support are helping to build adaptive capacity in communities and the ecosystems on which they depend. We are investing in a region's people so they can respond to the rapid climate changes taking place in the Arctic."

The Oak Foundation's Climate Change subprogram focuses largely on mitigation, advocacy, technology, and science, added Anne. "Now we are starting to see a shift to more people-centered funding."

“Since indigenous communities conserve biodiversity on their lands, philanthropic allies find support to them matched by community effort,” said Peter Kostishack, director of programs at Global Greengrants Fund and IFIP board member. “You put in a small amount of funding and all of a sudden, that contribution is matched many-fold.”

Funders recommend placing a dollar value on the more intangible contributions of indigenous communities in the area of environmental defense, in order to recognize the value of ancestral knowledge and practices. Traditional knowledge generally refers to the wisdom, innovations, and practices that indigenous peoples around the world pass on from generation to generation. For example, the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) designates budget lines for traditional knowledge and speaking a native language, giving a dollar value to project inputs of indigenous communities.

As climate change attracts more attention, the lines between environmental defense and sustainable development continue to converge. Indigenous peoples are increasingly seen at the nexus of these connections. “For indigenous peoples, sustainable development isn't some kind of new idea,” said Brian Keane, advisor

on indigenous issues at USAID. “Indigenous peoples can have a profoundly positive impact on redefining what is sustainable and being key actors in working toward it.”



ACTION STEP

Take a look at how more than one of your programs could incorporate indigenous projects, such as environmental defense, global health, or social justice.

HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMS

Human rights is one of the three most funded areas in portfolios that support indigenous communities. Given the central indigenous issues of the rights to land and self-determination, foundations sometimes employ a rights-centered approach. In 2003, the UN created a framework for development work based on human rights, known as The Common Understanding, which informs this approach.⁶

“A lot of this is basic movement building: Supporting indigenous peoples’ organizations in regional and national coalitions and global networks helps them advocate on policies that affect them, their land, and the environment.”

—Peter Kostishack, Global Greengrants Fund



*María Rosa Guzmán, founding member of the National Network of Indigenous Women Weaving Rights for Mother Earth and Territory (better known as RENAMITT, its Spanish acronym).
Photo by Jenny Barry.*

Foundation Center's 2015 report, *Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, found environmental and resources rights accounted for 37 percent of human rights funding to indigenous peoples in 2012.⁷ Indigenous human rights as a separate grants classification only accounted for 4 percent of total human rights funding, despite high numbers of indigenous peoples across the globe who are victims of assassination, forced disappearance, torture, illegal imprisonment, and sexual violence. A report from the human rights group Global Witness found that almost half of the environmental activists murdered in 2014 were indigenous peoples.⁸

The top funders of the human rights of indigenous peoples in 2012 included the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Christensen Fund.

Human rights are seen through different prisms. For example, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation uses a

racial equity lens to give to native communities in the U.S. Beginning in the 1980s, the foundation's support of indigenous communities began with large grants to tribal colleges. One grant to the University of New Mexico funds the American Indian Language Policy Research and Teacher Training Center to empower local tribes to create Native language programs. It has since

SEEDS OF CHANGE

Traditional 'seed saving' projects are an example of how support for indigenous peoples can be classified across investment areas. Funded in all geographic regions where agriculture is a cornerstone of indigenous economies, from India to Africa to Latin America, these projects are administered under different programs, such as agriculture, climate change, economic development, human rights, and gender equity, depending on a funder's overall lens and priority areas.

Known as 'heirloom' seeds in the U.S., seeds that survive different weather patterns over time were once traditionally collected by indigenous communities. However, the practice eroded as governments and NGOs brought in commercial seeds, often of nontraditional plants, in development schemes. These were less adaptive to the climate changes, which ultimately affected the food security and health of communities who survive on agriculture.

Some funders support traditional seed banks as integral to human understanding of the world and the issues we face. Those interested in climate change adaptation view seed saving as essential to future food security for both indigenous and industrialized societies, since it preserves species proven resilient against dramatic environmental changes. Bringing back traditional seeds that are drought resistant, for example, can be part of a strategy to prevent hunger in a community.

"Seed saving is aligned to the foundation's goals for food sovereignty," said Lourdes Inga, formerly of The Christensen Fund.

These projects preserve the variety of traditional crops, she explained, such as enset, an important root crop in Ethiopia; native potatoes in Peru; or varieties of rice around the world. Indigenous women are largely responsible for saving the seeds in many indigenous cultures; they are usually responsible for deciding which are stored for future cultivation. Women are the keepers of this traditional knowledge who pass it on to the next generation. As a result, these types of projects appeal to programs that focus on human rights and gender equity.

The diversity of program areas that can support seed saving projects reflects different funder strategies:

- The International Development Exchange (IDEX) funded a seed saving project in Guatemala as a strategy to repair community ties broken by 36 years of civil war. The act of sharing seeds brought together communities who later organized collectively around other issues.
- The Swift Foundation is funding seed saving in Peru as a cultural survival strategy to protect ancestral species from genetic modification.
- The Christensen Fund supported The Hopi Foundation to protect intergenerational agricultural practices through a Hopi seed library and grants for community-based food and agriculture initiatives.

increased its portfolio to tribal governments, Native organizations, and NGOs that work in Native communities, said Alvin Warren the foundation's New Mexico program officer and a member of the Santa Clara Pueblo.

Human rights funding to indigenous peoples is also administered through women's human rights programs. The Channel Foundation funds indigenous women's groups through this gender lens: "We always want to follow the lead of the people most affected by the human rights abuses they are experiencing," said Katrin Wilde, executive director. "This approach supports self-determination within indigenous communities." In another example, the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund has brought issues of indigenous peoples and disability rights under one umbrella by supporting indigenous people with disabilities.

Other funders support the inclusion of indigenous persons with disabilities at global and country levels. In Papua New Guinea, for example, many women and girls with disabilities are abused, often by their family members, and it is difficult for their voices to be heard. Advocacy and global organizing efforts led by the Disability Rights Fund and the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund, there is increased visibility of challenges faced by disabled indigenous peoples.

Human rights is an important entry point for funders who support indigenous peoples. From racial discrimination to political persecution, the daily reality of indigenous peoples' lives all over the world matches many human rights program goals.

"Funders can learn a lot about integrated approaches from indigenous communities, which don't tend to work within the confines of an issue but rather in how everything relates."

—Sonja Swift, Swift Foundation

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS

Travel scholarships constitute one of the highest areas of giving to indigenous communities. Since international mechanisms, such as the International Labor Organization Convention No. 169 and the UNDRIP, have helped indigenous peoples advance their rights, enabling their participation in international meetings is a funder strategy.

Some funders support indigenous peoples' travel to global meetings, such as sessions of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, or regional networking events, like the



*Inuk from Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet, Nunavut, Canada) jumps over lead in the sea ice en-route to the rich hunting grounds on the floe edge. Travel is increasingly dangerous and unpredictable as sea ice seasons grow shorter and New Year round shipping make conditions even more unstable.
Photo by Anne Henshaw June 2015.*

Global Leadership School of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), which brings together indigenous women activists.

Having indigenous representatives speak for themselves is critical. As Phrang Roy, project coordinator of the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty, shared at an IFIP meeting in 2006, "The issues of the poor and the marginalized amongst the indigenous peoples must be the rallying points of our enhanced partnership. Nothing for indigenous peoples without indigenous peoples."

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Some foundations are promoting indigenous traditional knowledge as an important contribution for human survival. Traditional knowledge refers to technical information, innovations, and practices of indigenous peoples developed from centuries of experience. It tends to be collectively owned, and can be transmitted through stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, rituals, customary laws, languages, agricultural practices, and resource collection.

"To end the climate crisis, to solve global poverty, our indigenous partners are our greatest teachers," said Rajasvini Bhansali, executive director of the International Development Exchange (IDEX). "More than ever before, the concepts, ways of being, and lessons learned from indigenous experimentations are relevant." Others see the long experience of indigenous communities, such as their close observation and adaptation to weather changes over millennia, as critical insights to solving the myriad problems facing the world.

"I've always used the lens of 'What models offer solutions to the world's most intractable problems?' It's clear that indigenous communities are right at the forefront."

— Katherine Zavala, International Development Exchange

The Tamalpais Trust initiated the launch of a collaborative fund dedicated to promoting and harnessing this traditional knowledge, called the Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning Fund. The fund, supported also by The Christensen Fund, the Novo Foundation, and the Swift Foundation, disbursed its first round of grants



Anank Nunink Nunkai (Shuar, Ecuador) at 2011 IFIP conference. Photo by Mark Cherrington.

in early 2015. "Traditional knowledge and native science are being recognized as successful contributors in addressing problems of climate change, food security and sovereignty, protection and care of Mother Earth, and revitalization of indigenous languages and culture," notes Jaune Evans, executive director of the Tamalpais Trust.

Ken Wilson, former executive director of The Christensen Fund, sees a trend toward recognition of traditional knowledge in academic disciplines. "We are moving away from linear, mechanistic thinking to systems thinking," said Ken. "There's now a great deal more productive connection between indigenous knowledge and environmental science."

The Christensen Fund's support to promote the acceptance of traditional knowledge at the highest levels of policymaking includes grants for a Traditional Knowledge Institute at the United Nations University, a global think tank and postgraduate school based in Australia. The university works with leading universities and research institutes in UN Member States, and functions as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations system. In addition, both The Christensen Fund and the Ford Foundation have made grants to the Indigenous Peoples' Biocultural Climate Change Assessment, which documents traditional knowledge of climate change. The highest scientific authority on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,

recognized such indigenous climate observations and adaptation measures as “the way forward” to the world’s thinking on climate change in the future.

Increasingly, organizations are taking note of issues through which indigenous peoples are funded. In 2015, Foundation Center updated its widely-recognized taxonomy to include terms such as *traditional knowledge*, *food sovereignty*, and *sacred sites*, which will improve tracking of funding trends related to indigenous peoples.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS

Funders who work with indigenous peoples will often receive proposals that do not fit neatly into a single program area, but cut across several. For example, a community’s intention to map their ancestral lands could fall under different focus areas such as environmental protection, human rights, or cultural survival, to name a few.

“A lot of indigenous groups tend to propose projects that are comprehensive in nature,” said Jennifer Barry, director of development for the Mexican Society for Women’s Rights (Semillas), a Mexico-based funder that supports indigenous women’s groups. “They deal with a lot of issues at the same time that don’t fall into a single thematic funding area.”

IDEX employs a strategy that funds at the intersection of food sovereignty, climate change, and alternative economics, which indigenous peoples surveyed identified as priority issues. IDEX-funded seed saving projects in indigenous communities are an example of this cross-cutting strategy at work.

The Swift Foundation also created wide program areas that recognize how different program areas overlap. Indigenous communities can apply to five program areas: land stewardship; biodiversity and cultural diversity; climate advocacy; resilient local economies; and global networks and collaborations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How might traditional knowledge add value to what you know about a given topic?
- What are some reasons that you think indigenous peoples receive a small portion of overall philanthropic giving?
- How feasible is it that your organization fund indigenous peoples in different program areas? Which ones?
- Think of a grant or organization you support that might fit into more than one program area. How did you determine the correct fit? How did the intersectionality of issues affect your final funding decision?



ACTION STEP

Check out the UN’s page on The Common Understanding on incorporating human rights into development work and see where it fits with your organization’s way of working.

Strategies and Approaches

Funders employ a wide variety of strategies to support indigenous peoples, including direct giving, working through intermediaries, long-term investments, and supporting indigenous control of philanthropic resources. As with other topics in philanthropy, there's no one-size-fits-all solution, so it's important to understand the range of options available for supporting indigenous groups.

When you consider working with any new population, it's helpful to think strategically about their readiness, knowledge, and frameworks. Here are some questions that can guide your decision on the best approach for collaborating with indigenous communities:

- What other funders are working in this geography and/or with indigenous communities? How can we complement or collaborate with other funders?
- What are the issues that directly reflect our mission and values?
- What issues indirectly affect how we can achieve our mission?
- Where might we direct our funding (e.g., country, nation, community) and what are the needs?
- What is the political, historical, social, and economic context for making grants in those countries or localities as it relates to indigenous rights?
- What is the change we are seeking? How will indigenous peoples be part of defining the change?



ACTION STEP

Analyze what routes your organization takes to fund groups internationally. Are grants direct? To an intermediary? To a non-local NGO?

Given the two themes that run through all indigenous issues—the rights to ancestral lands and self-determination—the approaches of those who support indigenous peoples can be encapsulated in two approaches: empowerment and ecosystems.

INDIGENOUS-LED PHILANTHROPY

An empowerment approach is based on the right of indigenous peoples to determine the nature and use of resources that come into their communities.

The International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) explicitly employs an empowerment approach, which gives full decision-making authority to grantees. FIMI's simplified three-page application is accessible to even the smallest grassroots groups who may have no formal registration or bank accounts. In this participatory grantmaking model, advisory committees composed of former grantees and indigenous women leaders from different regions review proposals and make funding decisions.

For FIMI, a key element of this approach is indigenous control over the project budget. FIMI has found giving indigenous women some flexibility and control over how project funds are spent ultimately empowers them across the board. If the goal of a funding program is to repair an imbalance of power, giving access to resources is a critical tool.

Other funders use an empowerment approach to support indigenous-led philanthropies.

The Christensen Fund supports the Kivulini Trust, an indigenous-led philanthropy, which re-grants to local indigenous groups in Kenya and Ethiopia. The trust develops the capacity of indigenous grassroots groups, such as farmers and women, to access grant funding through close mentorship and training in accounting and grant reporting. Once a group is ready, it can apply to the trust for funds or apply to another grantmaker.

“In the future, indigenous peoples will control their own resources and have significant control over giving to their communities, which will greatly improve the vibrancy of philanthropy,” said Ken Wilson, former executive director of The Christensen Fund.

Indigenous-led philanthropies base their ethos and strategies on traditional views of reciprocity, in which giving is an exchange between equal parties. This way of working promotes a power dynamic different from the standard grantor-recipient relationship. Foundations that support indigenous-led philanthropies promote community decision making and control over their resources.

Trustees of the New Zealand-based J R McKenzie Trust decided to hand over grants administration entirely to the Maori communities it serves. The programs now support Maori development and disadvantaged children's programs (which are not all Maori-exclusive.)

Over the years, Maori leaders like Manaia King, deputy chair of the trust, developed what he called an ‘action research model’ of philanthropy. Their giving decisions depend on data gathered in participation with communities, constant feedback for the duration of a project, and an evaluation process in which the Maori themselves assess project success. Since a Maori cultural framework underpins funding strategies, outcomes are determined by communities themselves. “The Maori are developing 100-year life plans for the future,” which influences how the outcomes are defined, said Manaia.

In 2011, the Alaska Conservation Foundation and a Steering Committee of Native Alaska leaders, created the Alaska Native Fund to support indigenous solutions to environmental problems



Nareusho, a Rendille woman living near Ngurnit in Northern Kenya. Photo courtesy of The Christensen Fund.

in their communities. The fund supports projects that promote traditional knowledge to address food security, sustainable development, alternative energy solutions, environmental health, and climate change. Every other year, the fund hosts a gathering among funders, grantees, and conservation partners for capacity building, collaborative learning, and networking.

The fund came from the idea to help Natives keep what they have and to restore what has been lost, largely through large-scale extractive industry projects.

The Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) supports projects financed from its 2,300-strong membership. AMAN provides seed support and indigenous communities collectively pay the remainder of the funds and implement the project. For mapping projects, AMAN offers technical support through a facilitator who trains community members how to map and use technology, such as GPS imaging. The cost of a mapping project runs \$10,000 on average, with \$3,000 from an AMAN grant. Over the last three years, indigenous communities have produced 10 million hectares of territorial maps. These are archived in AMAN's ancestral domain registry, waiting for official government recognition. (The Indonesian government does not currently recognize indigenous territory.)

PROFILES OF GRANTMAKERS IN INDIGENOUS PHILANTHROPY

Every issue at a foundation needs a champion to succeed. We asked funders what they felt were the main obstacles to indigenous support at their organization. For many, indigenous issues were not considered part of their mission or geographic scope. Others reported they did not “find strong enough nonprofits in those communities,” while some said they only supported nonindigenous NGOs. As one grantmaker commented, “We struggle with decision making due to a lack of knowledge and meaningful connections with these communities.”

However, funders have used personal and meaningful experiences with indigenous communities to shape how their organization supports them:



Monica Aleman, gender equity program officer for East Africa programs at the Ford Foundation, was born and raised in a Miskito family in Nicaragua. As the former program director at the women-focused NGO, MADRE, she built relationships with indigenous peoples, and later founded the International Indigenous Women’s Fund.



Manaia King, a member of the largest Maori tribe in New Zealand, received a government scholarship to study law. He now works at the New Zealand Ministry of Health and is the deputy chair of the indigenous-led giving program at the J R McKenzie Trust.



Sonja Swift from Swift Foundation was working for a nonprofit based out of Oregon when she learned of First Nations in British Columbia standing on the frontlines and spending months at the front of blockades to protect the headwaters of three major salmon bearing rivers from coal bed methane extraction. “I found myself in a sense of urgency to get them funds directly,” she said. Swift Foundation continues to support First Nations in the region to protect their territories.



Ken Wilson, former executive director of The Christensen Fund, was born in Malawi and focused his doctorate on indigenous knowledge, health, and human ecology in southern Zimbabwe. He witnessed the “huge amount of vision, talent, and energy in the world held by indigenous and other marginalized peoples that was not getting backing from philanthropy” and committed to correcting the imbalance.



Brian Keane, of USAID, first met indigenous communities while traveling through the Amazon. “I got to see firsthand both communities that were intact and weren’t experiencing problems, and also communities where gold miners and loggers were in the area,” Keane recalls. “I started working with some communities to help them prepare for and figure out ways to protect their rights.”

These champions of indigenous philanthropy offer a snapshot of funders doing this work. One commonality is that they all witnessed—in one way or another—indigenous peoples’ ways of life. These and other funders suggest that if a foundation lacks a champion, think about how to offer first-hand experience with indigenous communities to staff and trustees, and how to diversify hiring and board membership practices.

The Oak Foundation's empowerment approach relies on constant feedback from grantees on how funding could be more effective toward outcomes they have defined. "Sometimes you want projects that seem perfect and the end point is clearly defined and crisp. We had to start with the appreciation that we were empowering people, which means those communities define for themselves how they want our resources to help them," said Imani Fairweather Morrison, the foundation's Mesoamerica program coordinator.

ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH

Ecosystems is another funding approach that reflects the indigenous worldview that all life—human and nonhuman—is interrelated. This approach often results in flexible program areas that show fluidity and appreciation for different interpretations of an issue.

The International Development Exchange (IDEX) incorporated the idea of an ecosystem into their theory of change. "We wanted it to address the complexities in which IDEX and our partners work, so we looked to nature to help us put our theory of change into perspective," said Katherine Zavala, at IDEX. The IDEX theory of change is based around concentration areas that have emerged from a ten-year inclusive and participatory evaluation process with grantee partners and leaders in philanthropy. These include community self-determination, organizational resilience, and global solidarity.

As part of this strategy, IDEX supported an organization in Chiapas, Mexico to convene a learning exchange on the cross-cutting issue of agro-ecology with other indigenous groups in Central and South America. Since indigenous peoples do not distinguish 'nature' as an external factor in their lives, traditional agricultural practice is usually sustainable and aligned to cycles in nature, such as planting according to moon cycles. This nexus where agriculture and ecology meet aligns with IDEX's ecosystems theory of change. "These strategic events serve to move forward our theory of change and our partners' work," said Katherine.



ACTION STEP

Hold a planning session about initiating a relationship with an indigenous group through a smaller, short-term grant.

Strategies that funders use to support indigenous peoples can be divided into two areas: program and operational. The following examples offer strategies that other funders have used to collaborate with indigenous peoples, either through institutional lenses or through mechanisms that allow greater access to indigenous organizations that do not operate under official charity registrations.



*Raul Nunink (Shuar Ecuador) and Gloria Ushigua (Sapara, Ecuador) share ideas at an IFIP conference.
Photo by Mark Cherrington.*

PROGRAM STRATEGIES

How you think about a grant to indigenous peoples depends on the lens or approach you use to achieve your goals. This is often decided at the institutional level; other times, program by program. The overarching approach of your organization or program will frame how you might consider working with indigenous peoples and how to structure your grants. The examples

“In five years, indigenous peoples and funders will have what I call ‘rich-to-rich’ relationships. A paradigm is emerging around the environment and those who best manage natural resources.”

—Abdon Nababan, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago

below illustrate how different organizations formulate their support to these communities.

Funding according to thematic issues

The Ford Foundation's organizational strategy is based on institutional thematic issues, such as inclusive development and economies, democracy and open governance, gender and sexuality, and racial justice. “All of these themes have clear constituencies with whom we work and who we identify as priority groups,” said Monica Aleman. “Indigenous peoples are certainly one of those priority groups, and they are given attention across thematic issues.”

The foundation's race and gender work in East Africa prioritizes working with indigenous women's organizations on three strategies: constitutional reform, movement building, and media outreach. Ford also funds projects on sustainable development that support

DOES SIZE MATTER?

The size of grants to indigenous communities is often determined by the capability of the organizations funded. Some foundations prefer to fund indigenous communities through an intermediary or large organization, such as a multinational environmental group. These grants tend to be bigger and often renewed. Others work through regional indigenous groups. While not true for all funders, many that give directly to indigenous organizations tend to give smaller grants over a longer period of time.

The Ford Foundation directs most of its indigenous-related grantmaking to larger institutions based in medium-sized or capital cities. Grantees must be legally registered, and have the capacity to handle large grants. The foundation prefers to give grants of at least \$50,000, usually for twelve months. “Not all local, community-based organizations have the capacity to manage that size grant, since it comes with a complex set of legal requirements,” said Monica Aleman of Ford Foundation.

Intermediaries often give smaller grants directly to local indigenous groups. FIMI's AYNi Fund gives \$5,000 to grassroots women's groups who may have no official registration or little administrative infrastructure. “The amount of money is not very high, but what they are doing with these amounts is incredible,” said Mariana Lopez of FIMI.

Smaller grants are generally more manageable for small, indigenous organizations that have less experience with international funding. Once they are more established and have the capacity to handle the paperwork required by larger grants, they often seek general operating support for the staff needed to administer and report on the funding.

The Samdhana Institute gives small grants (between \$5,000 to \$10,000) and medium grants that range between \$10,000 to \$50,000 to groups in the Philippines and Indonesia. Its criteria on the size of grant depends on the plan of the grantee community. “The community will always be there, whether or not there are donors,” said Nonette Royo. “The success of how they handle funds, small, medium, or bigger grants, is really based on their vision and what is required to get where they want to go.”

indigenous land rights. This approach used by Ford and others treats indigenous communities as a population group affected by many intersecting issues.

Dedicating an income flow to indigenous support

While few foundations have indigenous-specific program areas, corporate giving can sometimes be more targeted. LUSH Cosmetics structures their program around sales donated directly to grassroots groups, many of whom are indigenous communities. The company dedicated a product for this purpose—the Charity Pot, a hand and body lotion—and donates 100 percent of sales after tax to its grantees.

“Many foundations have their investments and endowments,” said Pearl Gottschalk, charitable giving ambassador at LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot program. “Ours comes directly from the sale of a product we sell in our stores.” The proceeds go into the Charity Pot Fund, which receives online grant proposals year-round from groups with annual budgets under \$500,000. In 2011, LUSH decided to give special attention to indigenous groups.

This dedicated income also frees LUSH Cosmetics, a company founded in the UK, to give to wider pools of candidates, such as those involved in direct political work, which U.S.-based charities are not allowed to do.

“We’re one of the rare donors that can fund non-registered charities—that means groups

that are doing the hard hitting, political advocacy work that other people don’t want to fund,” said Pearl.

This strategy also spreads public knowledge and support for otherwise isolated indigenous communities. Consumers learn about them when they buy the Charity Pot product.



ACTION STEP

Experiment by making a capacity building grant to incubate or grow an indigenous business.

Making an impact investment

Impact investing is a recent trend in financial circles that is being adopted in philanthropy. The Swift, Tides, and Gordon and Betty Moore foundations, for example, have added impact investments to their portfolios. Taking a cue from socially responsible investments that seek both capital return and social benefit, impact investments support indigenous entrepreneurs.

“The big difference between impact investment and philanthropy is the issue of access to capital,” said Donna Morton, director of business strategies for Principium Investments and IFIP board member. “The poorest people pay the most for capital, and their businesses are largely cut off from capital markets.” Donors interested in supporting the right of indigenous

TRADITIONAL FOOD GOES RETAIL

The Oglala Lakota people of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota received an impact investment for a startup enterprise marketing the Tanka Bar, a nutritional energy bar made from traditional foods, such as bison and cranberries. It is now selling at the top of the retail market in such chains as Whole Foods. “This business could not have gotten off the ground exclusively with philanthropy,” said Donna Morton, of Principium investments and of Metis, Ashoka, and Ogunte tribal background. “But there are incredible opportunities for investors and philanthropists to collaborate.”

Funders can support capacity building in business acumen to help with initial planning. Impact investors can then step in once the business is ready for the market. “There’s a bit of a dance between the two,” said Donna. “At different levels, there might be more capacity building donors can fund to ready an indigenous community’s enterprise for the next stage of investment. If we can all stand on the same side and listen to what indigenous communities bring to the table, there are amazing ideas for green businesses.”

communities to determine how to manage their territories can offer both grants and other investments to build their businesses. Program-related investments can enhance the communities that foundations are already supporting with grants. The idea is to support business investment in which indigenous peoples maintain majority ownership for the benefit of the whole community.

"Exercising self-determination includes developing ways of sustaining and managing indigenous territories and having an economic resource base for doing that," said Peter Kostishack of Global Greengrants Fund, which supports sustainable development projects in indigenous communities.

The goals of impact investors and grantmakers intersect in their interest to provide meaningful work for indigenous communities with the least access to capital. "Indigenous peoples need those dollars more than anyone else to support businesses that can play a meaningful role in the development of their territories," said Donna.

For philanthropic institutions looking to align their endowments with their values, impact investment offers a possible route for effecting change. For example, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund made the decision to align 10 percent of its endowment investments with its sustainable

development program goals and to divest completely from fossil fuels. Other foundations that have signed a letter of commitment to assess their investments and set a timetable to divest from fossil fuels include such grantmakers as the Wallace Global Fund, the Bullitt Foundation, The Christensen Fund, the Park Foundation, and the Threshold Foundation, among others.

Indigenous territories tend to be on biodiverse lands that are ideal for gas and oil exploration. "There's nothing more frustrating than realizing how much your entire endowment is in complete contrast and working against what you're trying to support in the world," said Sonja Swift, trustee of the Swift Foundation, who initiated the foundation's impact investment program.

Rasmuson Foundation also uses impact investing as part of its programs. One example was a \$1 million program-related investment (PRI) in the Cook Inlet Tribal Council's (CITC) video game initiative. Rasmuson Foundation, the largest private foundation in Alaska, had maintained a traditional philanthropic relationship with the Native organization for nearly two decades, funding such initiatives as capital support for CITC's service centers. "Through this PRI the foundation saw the potential power of video games as a way not only to create a revenue



Screenshot from the video game Owlman, a Cook Inlet Tribal Council initiative. Photo courtesy of E-Line Media and Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

stream to sustain CITC's mission, but also to preserve the stories, values, and languages of indigenous peoples in Alaska," said Chris Perez, program officer at Rasmuson Foundation. Amy Fredeen, an Inupiat who serves as the executive vice president and CFO of CITC, and IFIP chair, noted, "This innovative approach to impact investing models true partnership with the Alaska Native community and the Foundation."

The council's Upper One Game company launched the first Native video game, based on the Iñupiat storytelling tradition, in partnership with E-Line Media. The game features an Iñupiat character, Nuna, and her Arctic fox companion. The game demonstrates how a double bottom line investment can sustain the council's mission both financially and culturally. Initially garnering 2.2 million downloads, the game not only produced financial returns, but introduced a worldwide audience of gamers to Iñupiat traditional stories, wisdom, and community members.

Making capacity development part of every grant

Several funders interviewed emphasized the importance of developing the capacity of indigenous organizations in every grant. Whether directly funding an indigenous-run organization or working through an intermediary or local NGO, support ideally builds the self-reliance of indigenous communities. Some funders develop capacity after they have given initial project funding.

If the first project worked out well enough, a foundation can heighten its impact by helping an indigenous group function better as an institution. "They need institutional funding to strengthen their organizational structures," advised an anonymous donor. "If this is done, they perform well."

"That's something the foundation community can really step in and address: how do you build the capacity of indigenous organizations in order to get grants and report on them?" said Brian Keane of USAID. "The vast majority have very little funding to help them function as an organization."

Most grant programs accessible to indigenous communities is for project funding, not operations.

The Swift Foundation took this capacity-building approach when it gave a two-year, \$80,000 grant to the Asociación Andes, an Indigenous NGO in Peru to strengthen its organizational structure and enable institutional growth, along with support for projects on food sovereignty and alternative economies in the face of climate change.

"We see ourselves as partners and recognize they are the experts. Native communities have the capacity and knowledge to solve their own challenges."

—Alvin Warren, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

This section shares how you might organize grant support to an indigenous community on paper. Do you decide to give directly to an indigenous organization or indigenous-led philanthropy, give to an intermediary, create a donor-advised fund (DAF) at an intermediary, go for a fiscal sponsorship, or provide support through an NGO? The strategy chosen depends on a variety of factors, largely based on an organization's staff size, expertise, local reach, and size of the grant. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and a foundation may choose to apply multiple strategies to its approach. These strategies allow collaboration with a greater pool of indigenous communities working on activities that align with the funder's programmatic priorities.

Giving through an intermediary

Intermediaries, otherwise known as re-grantors, manage substantial portfolios in indigenous philanthropy. Intermediaries often serve as bridges between funders and implementing organizations or communities. They often fulfill a crucial role as the on-the-ground intelligence for larger foundations without the capacity to manage a network of smaller grants.

A foundation can either support the mission and programs of the intermediary itself, or direct its grants to be managed by the intermediary through DAFs. "It is a big advantage for donors to give to intermediaries since they take care of the regulations related to international giving,"

said Jennifer Barry, director of development for the Mexican Society for Women's Rights (Semillas).

Started in 1990, Semillas gives grants to grassroots women's groups under five program areas: economic autonomy, maternal mortality, land rights, other human rights, and security for human rights defenders. Semillas has many funding partners, including several large foundations, who have granted support year after year as a way to sustain portfolios that address indigenous needs. To facilitate direct giving from these foundations, Semillas undertook an equivalency determination and also has a fiscal sponsor.

The Channel Foundation often provides support to indigenous groups through intermediaries. As a small foundation based in Seattle without a global presence, supporting indigenous peoples through intermediaries has been a successful strategy for the foundation to reach and cultivate networks with small, often remote, communities.

"They can help get the grants to groups in an accessible and culturally relevant manner," said Katrin Wilde, executive director of the Channel Foundation. "They're closer to the ground than we are."

By making themselves as accessible as possible to donors while maintaining close connection to on-the-ground efforts, intermediaries can be a vital link to indigenous communities for foundations of all sizes, and especially those looking to streamline operations and paperwork.

Creating a donor-advised fund

Some donors create donor-advised funds (DAFs) that are administered by intermediaries. These mechanisms allow funders to achieve their goals with relatively little staff or direct effort, as another organization provides most of the administrative functions. DAFs can also be a mechanism for funders who don't specifically have a way of embedding indigenous funding into their existing work, but would still like to support this population.

The Swift Foundation created a DAF administered by Global Greengrants Fund to support international organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) nonprofit status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service. Global Greengrants Fund's experience, international advisory boards, and reasonable fees made them a logical match for grantmaking to a wider universe of communities and indigenous peoples' organizations around the world.



At the UNPF II, former DRF program officer Catalina Devandas (now UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) speaking out on indigenous persons with disabilities. Also pictured with Daniela Bas, UNDESA, and Mirna Cunningham, former UNPFII member and DRF Global Advisor. Photo courtesy of Stephane Leblais.

In British Columbia, the Swift foundation's DAF gave \$30,000 to the Yunesit'in government to launch the Tribal Guardian Program to mentor youth. In Belize, the DAF administered a three-year \$150,000 grant to the Maya-led Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management to enable communities to defend their human rights, lands, and culture and to create models of sustainable development. Swift Foundation staff shared that these grants fit their vision for impact.

Similarly, the founders of the Kalliopeia Foundation created a DAF called the Tamalpais Trust to support their interest in indigenous-led initiatives on cultural and spiritual practices, human rights, and sacred lands and waters. The fund is nested at the Rudolf Steiner Foundation (RSF), which has a social finance arm that administers various DAFs. RSF disburses non-U.S. based grants to about 14 indigenous organizations with the capacity to receive grants between \$100,000 and \$400,000. The total

portfolio reaches about \$2.5 million a year. These larger grants support the overall work of an organization.

A word on general support: while U.S. funders need to comply with certain restrictions on providing general operating funds to foreign organizations, finding someone with expertise in international development either on staff or externally will make sure they can get the funds where they are needed most.

Giving through a fiscal sponsor

If an indigenous group does not have an official charity status, such as a U.S. 501(c)(3) tax filing, or an equivalency in their own country, funding can also be provided through a fiscal sponsorship. This mechanism gives funders a wider pool of communities that communities that do not have official but do not have official registration as NGOs. In other words, the tax status of a group should not be an obstacle to funding.

DEBUNKING A MYTH: HOW U.S. FOUNDATIONS CAN DIRECTLY GIVE OVERSEAS

Many foundations believe that it is difficult for a foundation in the U.S. to make direct grants to organizations overseas. We interviewed Ken Tsunoda of NGOsource, a project of the Council on Foundations and TechSoup Global, to help us debunk this myth. Ken shares:

United States-based grantmaking foundations can directly make charitable grants to overseas organizations in one of three ways: (1) if the international organization is a **U.S. public charity** or foreign government; (2) if it qualifies as the equivalent of a U.S. public charity by virtue of an equivalency determination (ED); or (3) if the foundation exercises expenditure responsibility (ER).

An ED requires a good faith determination that a potential grantee is organized and operated like a U.S. public charity or a foreign government. If the overseas grantee is found to be equivalent, the grantmaker may lessen reporting requirements and restrictions on the use of grant funds by that grantee.

Grantmakers exercise ER when grantee organizations are not exclusively charitable, when they are unable to provide the information required to complete an ED analysis, or when the ED analysis concludes the organization is not equivalent. The ER rules require **specific forms of oversight and monitoring** before, during, and sometimes even after the grant period to ensure that the funds are used exclusively for the intended charitable purposes of the grant.

U.S. foundations that want to establish long-term funding relationships with their grantees, help build a grantee's organizational capacity beyond specific project goals, or want more flexibility in the disbursement of grant funds (for example, for capital equipment or general operating support) tend to prefer ED over ER.

Through a fiscal sponsorship, indigenous groups can receive U.S.-based grants for which they would otherwise be ineligible under U.S. regulations. The fiscal sponsor often provides administrative support, such as financial management, fiduciary oversight, and due diligence for the funder and grantee, usually for a small percentage of the funds. Under these contractual relationships, the nonprofit is legally responsible for the funding.

LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot program provided funding to remote indigenous tribes in the Ecuadorian, Brazilian, and Peruvian Amazon through a fiscal sponsorship provided by the nonprofit Amazon Watch.

"It is important for donors to realize the reality of the constraints remote indigenous peoples are facing," explained Pearl Gottschalk of LUSH. "They're often deep in the Amazon; without access to a phone; and often they are three days down the river from the closest e-mail—sometimes they don't even have a bank account registered in their name due to political oppression by their governments." While LUSH prefers to give directly to groups, fiscal

sponsorships are another tool that allows them to fund the specific groups they would otherwise be unable to support.

Funding a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that works with indigenous communities

Funding indigenous communities through a local or international NGO is another path foundations often take. This route allows them to collaborate with a local agency that has connections, expertise, and experience with leaders in a region. Often these organizations provide direct services to indigenous peoples. For example, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation funded the organization Imaflora in Brazil to work with indigenous communities in the Xingu area to develop a seal of origin for their products. "It is rare that we would give a large grant directly to an indigenous group, because we don't want to give them the administrative burden," said AVECITA Chicchón, program director of the Andes Amazon Initiative at the foundation. "Instead, they often prefer to pick a partner organization they can work with and we support them." In Peru, the foundation gave a

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Helpful questions to inform a foundation's decision to fund indigenous peoples through an intermediary, fiscal sponsor, or NGO:

- What role will the indigenous organization play in the planning, administration, implementation, and evaluation of the project, including the budget?
- Does the intermediary have a written policy of how it works with indigenous peoples?
- Are the roles and responsibilities of the funder, the intermediary organization, and the indigenous community or group clear and defined?
- How does the intermediary document indigenous peoples' role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of its programs?
- Does the intermediary have good-faith support of local indigenous communities and organizations? Is it verified through joint proposal submissions, letters of support, or memoranda of understanding with indigenous grantees?

"Due diligence is important to assess the cultural competency of the intermediary working with indigenous peoples," advised one funder. "Context-specific approaches are particularly important when working with them." Funders should research what intermediary might be the best administrator of their funds and should look into, for instance, whether the intermediary specifically supports indigenous women, transgender people, or those with disabilities. The intermediary will likely do different work than a funder's core operations, but the values and vision should be similar.

\$1.7 million, two-year grant to the organization Instituto del Bien Común (the Institute for the Common Good) to work with communities in the Amazon. “IBC is managing the funds and working with local indigenous peoples directly,” said AVECITA.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What differences do you see between multi-year and one-time funding relationships?
- How might indigenous issues be embedded into your current funding?
- Which type of funding strategy would work best for your organization and why? What are the drawbacks and advantages to each one?

GOING TO THE SOURCE: DIRECT FUNDING FOR THE LONG TERM

The Oak Foundation’s relationship with the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) in Belize illustrates how a large foundation can give directly to an isolated indigenous community and achieve huge impact.

A major factor that initiated this long-term relationship was the mandate from a trustee that the foundation commit more resources on the ground. At that time, Maya and Garifuna traditional peoples in southern Belize had started to organize after learning that the government had turned part of their territory into a national park where it planned to drill for oil. Eventually the five affected Maya communities decided to bring the issue to court, beginning close to twenty years of legal battles.

The Oak Foundation first support SATIIM to complement a World Bank Development Marketplace grant for a sustainable community forestry program. This support was also given to help them “graduate to receive better and sustainable funding from other organizations” said Imani Fairweather Morrison, mesoamerican program coordinator. She was able to make the case internally based on her confidence in SATIIM’s leadership and activism. “They are taking on huge battles; it’s not easy to reach 30-40 communities spread out in a remote region to keep them united on thorny issues, to deal with major litigation, and bring in media nationally while engaging local leaders,” she said.

“We made the conscious decision to give them a larger, long-term grant so they wouldn’t need to invest resources in writing proposals to us every year,” said Imani. “We didn’t want our grantmaking to be a burden.” It was decided that SATIIM would still file reports every year, but the grants would be multi-year (three years on average) and consistent. For more than ten years, Oak has supported the organization’s core costs. This flexibility freed SATIIM’s staff to devote their time to the goals of the funding—strengthening Maya land rights and traditional environmental defense.

The Oak Foundation ties this financial flexibility with fluid communication to ensure transparency and progress toward goals. “SATIIM and other grantees check in all the time. They invite us to their functions and keep us apprised. We monitor the press, get the other side of the story, and triangulate with other stakeholders,” Imani said.

Oak’s decision to adapt its support for SATIIM enabled isolated communities in Belize to take on both a national government and a foreign oil company. A series of court cases have led to the Maya’s newest initiative to map their lands in preparation for collective land titles.

Tools for Partnering With Indigenous Communities

We asked foundations with experience in funding indigenous peoples for their top recommendations on where to start. Establishing trust over time was the most offered advice. Try simply getting to know the indigenous communities you're looking to fund by reading about their traditions and lands. Attend meetings and conferences that bring donors and indigenous leaders together and get to know others who are already doing this work.

BUILD KNOWLEDGE WITH PEOPLE

Many funders who have collaborated with indigenous communities also seek their input on day-to-day processes. "Bringing indigenous people onto the boards of foundations can transform their capacity to adapt to the needs of the people that they're trying to work with," said Ken Wilson, former executive director of The Christensen Fund. Working closely with someone with an indigenous worldview can offer entirely different insights on goals and grantmaking practices.

Ken admits that it may not be feasible for some foundations, particularly small family foundations, to bring in non-family board members. In that case, he advises steady, incremental changes in operations, such as diversifying staff with indigenous expertise. "The important thing is to make sure that you

don't do one small thing and then stop," he advised. "Bringing on one minority person into a majority-dominated institution and then saying, 'we've handled the problem,' does not make you diverse."

If a foundation doesn't have indigenous staff or opportunities for board service, it can still host an advisory board with grassroots indigenous champions. "We are trying to change the paradigm that indigenous women can only be beneficiaries and grantees, and not donors giving the grants," explained Mariana Lopez, advisor at the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), which uses indigenous-led advisory boards to review proposals..

Alvin Warren, program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, based in New Mexico, noted that the foundation made it a practice to hire Native people. "Having people who understand the context, cultural values, and norms in the places Kellogg Foundation funds is important," shared Alvin.

Other funders find their expertise on the ground through local advisors who know indigenous communities. These advisors can be indigenous leaders or those who work with them. Several foundations interviewed for this guide work closely with teams of advisors in program regions. These local advisors recommend

"We're trying to reduce all that reporting, evaluation, and paperwork—groups staring at computers when they need to be in the field fighting for their territory and what's happening in their community."

—Pearl Gottschalk, LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot

potential grantees, provide support, and conduct due diligence.

FIMI has a network of indigenous women in each country that perform field visits, which allows for culturally appropriate evaluations. As a result of this network, FIMI was able to send a bilingual program evaluator to a community in Peru that only speaks Quechua. “For us, it was crucial to be able to send an indigenous woman with more experience. A person from Peru who speaks Quechua, and who understands evaluation and monitoring, would make the most of connecting with this community,” said Mariana.

GET ADVICE FROM YOUR PEERS

Given that indigenous peoples, particularly those located in remote areas, are often not connected to international networks, it’s especially important for funders to reach out to donor groups. Learning from those with experience and linking to the growing network of indigenous funders will build connections, partnerships, and best practices. “We follow an approach of talking with other activists and funders; they put us in touch with others. We build our network that

way,” said Katrin Wilde, executive director of the Channel Foundation.

Katrin recommends going to events where there are other donors who fund indigenous communities with key questions in mind: Where are the needs? Where are the funding gaps? Where can our size and types of grants make a difference?



ACTION STEP

Use open calls for proposals to reach a wider pool of potential indigenous partners that best meet your program goals.

Lush Cosmetics' Charity Pot program found one of its indigenous partners from Ecuador at an IFIP conference. “From the conference we got to know them by speaking with them firsthand, and so we invited them to apply online,” said Pearl Gottschalk of LUSH. “We probably wouldn’t have

THE FOUR Rs OF INDIGENOUS PHILANTHROPY

Evelyn Arce (Chibcha/Muisca Colombian descent), executive director of IFIP, likes to call indigenous philanthropy ‘relationship philanthropy.’ This thinking reflects a set of principles, known as the Four Rs of Indigenous Philanthropy (Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, and Relationships).

Respect: Honor traditions and respect the ideas of indigenous peoples. Go beyond ‘making grants’ and build long-term relationships and self-reliant communities.

Reciprocity: Embrace the global indigenous value that giving is an exchange in which both parties receive and take. Value indigenous inputs, such as speaking a native language that is endangered or ancestral knowledge, as important as capital investments.

Responsibility: Be familiar with the principles articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Recognize the importance of having indigenous peoples speak for themselves, particularly about policies that affect their lands and cultures.

Relationships: Understand the interrelationship in indigenous communities of ancestral cultures, lands, and spirituality.

“Our indigenous reciprocity is not a philosophical principle, but rather is the way we are instructed to live our lives,” said Roberta Jamieson, a Mohawk leader and CEO of Indspire, a scholarship program for Native students, speaking at a convening for indigenous philanthropy in 2014. “This distinguishing factor of reciprocity leads us to other principles: the idea that we are guests on this land, not owners; that our relationship to natural resources must be sustainable; that we are part of some kind of cosmic hospitality system to which we can offer little and yet use a lot.”

identified or crossed paths with this group had we not connected through the conference.”

IDEX has found donor delegation visits to a region particularly helpful to learn about potential grantees and the work of other funders in the same area. On delegation visits, funders also tend to connect with other funders who have offices or advisory committees already there on the ground. Not only can they offer critical contextual perspective, but

they can become a trust-building bridge to new communities.

“For someone new, I would suggest talking to an affinity group,” said Amy Rosenthal, program officer for the Conservation and Sustainable Development program at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. While IFIP is the only dedicated affinity group with a global scope, there are regional affinity groups, such as the Funders of the Amazon Basin and The

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Trust is a paramount challenge between funders and indigenous communities. For the communities, long, often ugly, histories with dominant cultures make it more difficult to trust ‘outsiders.’ For funders, it may be harder to receive the type of communication and reporting that they expect. To build the trust necessary to meaningfully partner, those with experience in these communities advise thinking in the longest terms possible. “Indigenous groups are often working on systemic and cultural change that can’t be achieved in a year,” noted Jennifer Barry, director of development of the Mexico-based funder Semillas. But even those with long-term commitments to directly funding indigenous groups often start with smaller grants as stepping stones. IDEX begins its relationships with grassroots indigenous groups with an initial short-term grant as an opportunity for each organization to learn about each other.

Long-term commitment to indigenous organizations also gives time for institutional strengthening. While project funding will assess the effectiveness of a program, long-term funding gives a bird's-eye view of how an organization works over time. This allows time to assess institutional strengths and weaknesses. The trust developed by longer-term relationships also cultivates transparency. “With our grantees in Belize, it’s a relationship of commitment to their causes versus a one-off grant,” said Imani Fairweather Morrison of the Oak Foundation.

For proponents, long-term commitment actually reduces dependency as organizations become more resilient and experienced. To them, open-ended engagement transforms the dynamic between funder and recipient by allowing the grantmaker to work as a strategic ally. “Foundations should have a long-term commitment if they want to create social change,” suggested Carolina Suarez, executive director of the Association of Corporate Foundations, a donor affinity group in Colombia.

IDEX has engaged foundations, such as the Novo Foundation, the Libra Foundation, the West Foundation, and the Vista Hermosa Foundation, among others, to consider long-term funding with at least a ten-year perspective. Jennifer Astone, program director at the Swift Foundation, recommends that funders consider multi-year support based on a longer view of outcome results.

“I don’t think a project approach always works when thinking about criteria to fund indigenous groups,” she explained. In her experience, indigenous communities offer unconventional strategies that may not fit funding criteria at first glance. A proposal that documents a community’s historical land use, such as berry gathering, trapping, and trails, may not appear to match funding objectives of an environmental grant. Yet land-use documents have proven invaluable for advocacy and legal cases on the recognition of indigenous land rights. Since indigenous territories contain important reserves of biodiversity, funding a step to secure these lands meets the objectives of environmental programs.

Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, who share strategy, issues, and challenges with each other.

“For a corporate foundation like ours, the opportunity to engage with indigenous leaders and representatives from around the world through affinity group meetings like IFIP has deepened our understanding of issues relating to indigenous peoples worldwide, and of the importance of UNDRIP as a major milestone in the advancement of their rights,” said Tracy Austin, executive director of the Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation for the Americas.

CONDUCT A LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

A successful landscape assessment results in improved and holistic knowledge about a given issue, geography, population, and/or approach. When Anne Henshaw, of Oak Foundation, started working in Alaska, her experience was in Canada. As an anthropologist, she knew she needed to learn about the social networks, the communities, and work of other organizations in the area. “First, I had a colleague who knew a lot of people and indigenous leaders, and I asked him to do a landscape assessment,” said Anne. “His assessment laid out the politics, the active NGOs, and indigenous groups, along with their missions and budgets. Oak’s theory of change in Alaska was largely informed by what I learned through this study.”

Anne learned about the long history of environmental work in Alaska on federally protected lands. She also discovered that non-Native organizations did not have people on the ground connected with the ‘doers’ that locals trusted. “This ‘social license’ is critical—we believe—to work effectively and strategically,” said Anne. In this case, the landscape assessment helped the Oak Foundation find an NGO doing work connected to both the local community and the foundation’s mission.

BROADEN ACCESS

There are several ways to make your funding programs more accessible to indigenous groups. But the most common response among funders we interviewed was “simplify.”

“Look at your system to see where it is limiting access to indigenous groups,” said Peter Kostishack, of Global Greengrants Fund. He



The Balinese Adat blessing conducted by a Balinese Mangku (temple priest). The person being blessed is Apai Janggut, a Dayak leader in Sungai Utik, Kapuas Hulu West Kalimantan. Photo by Martin Hardiono.

advises taking a long, hard look at standard practices. “Ask, is your application process accessible? How can you simplify paperwork required for the grant? What languages are acceptable for applications and reporting?”

“Social license is critical to work effectively and strategically.”

—Anne Henshaw, Oak Foundation

Funders with experience funding indigenous communities shared that whenever possible, simplifying paperwork, such as proposals and reports, to elicit less formulaic, more intuitive answers ultimately results in a more participatory, impactful collaboration. IDEX developed a ‘reflective reporting process’ that asks big questions that require both quantitative and qualitative responses. “Partners use this reflective tool to think about what they were able to do in the past year, what goals they achieved, and the impact of the work. It’s very



ACTION STEP

Organize a meeting with International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, Native Americans in Philanthropy or a network of funders in a region where you work to learn about their practices.

straightforward,” said Katherine Zavala. This process is designed to celebrate the work of groups while accurately reflecting what was accomplished to give IDEX a clear idea of how the grant funds were used.

FIMI has an open call for proposals every two years that accepts submissions from all types of organizations, from informal collectives to those with more infrastructure.

“It is cost-effective to let communities frame how funding is going to be used. Each community has their own family and village support structure, so you need to listen to them.”

—Amy Fredeen, Iñupiat, Cook Inlet Tribal Council

“At LUSH, we really care about reducing paperwork and difficulty for money to get where it really needs to get the most,” said Pearl Gottschalk. “We don’t ask for reports. Instead, we try to build a relationship with the group itself and evaluate informally through conversations tied to that relationship.” For example, LUSH often goes to visit their site projects or meets face-to-face with community leaders to

assess the project as LUSH staff travel to various locations. “That visit is more valuable to us than a report with some pictures.”

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has an open proposal process. “Anyone can apply and we have a dialogue about the work they are proposing and their capacity on the ground,” said Alvin Warren. “Ultimately, we want to make sure the project is successful and sustainable.”

EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

Louis Delgado, board member emeritus of the affinity group Native Americans in Philanthropy, recommends a cross-program learning process. He recalled how the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation educated all foundation staff on issues facing indigenous communities. The training ultimately led to a special grant initiative, as well as additional, sustained grantmaking for indigenous peoples in particular programs. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation undertook a similar program when it explored educational funding to native communities.

“For large foundations, this approach should be replicated because it gets the entire foundation behind an effort to support indigenous peoples, and does not leave it to one particular staff

INDIGENOUS-GUIDED PHILANTHROPY: GETTING STARTED

After starting to work with indigenous populations, a next step might be to put indigenous people into the grantmaking role. Here’s what several funders had to say about how to take that next step:

- Bring in experts who know about indigenous giving, such as donors that are seasoned in working with indigenous peoples, key indigenous leaders, and educational platforms like the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples and Native Americans in Philanthropy.
- Empower indigenous peoples, which means decision making at all phases, from planning to evaluations and reporting.
- Don’t be surprised that many indigenous organizations will be on a learning curve with grantmaking culture.
- Have at least one staff member dedicated to supporting ongoing learning and participation from indigenous communities.
- Be courageous, since indigenous-led funding usually requires institutional change.
- Take risks, venture into the unfamiliar.
- Check in regularly with participants to gather feedback and iterate on process.

person to get informed and push for change,” said Louis. Through education, multiple champions for this work can emerge, which helps with program sustainability and growing a broader base of knowledge with a given population. At foundations that might already be working with indigenous populations, this is an important step to strengthen and deepen that relationship.

EXAMINE YOUR CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS

Peter Kostishack, of Global Greengrants Fund, suggested that when foundations analyze

both their institutional and personal cultural assumptions, it improves the chances of effective collaboration with indigenous peoples. Thinking about double standards, communication style, and approaches to work can offer new insights.

It is a hazard of the trade that things don’t always go as planned. Funders need to have the same patience for a poorly written financial report from an indigenous organization as they would for any NGO. “You wouldn’t stop funding NGOs just because you had a problem with one of them,” Peter said. “Problems can be worked out, but sometimes require doing things a little bit differently.”

BE FLEXIBLE

In any partnership, it’s unreasonable for one partner to completely adopt the practices and approach of the other, and so it is important to find a compromise between cultural practices and program needs. In indigenous philanthropy, that nexus is found in the word flexibility.

Mariana Lopez, an advisor at the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) identifies different kinds of flexibility:

FLEXIBLE TIME FRAMES

Many variables at the ground level can delay a project or impede completion in the scheduled time period. “In one of our grantee organizations in Cameroon, the director got sick and died. It was very shocking for the organization, and they needed several months to recover from that.” In another case, a traditional seed saving project in Guatemala was delayed until a national indigenous women’s organization convinced the male leadership in the village that women can manage their own budgets. The project was months off schedule but the local women’s group was ultimately introduced to a wider network through their national advocacy partner. “You need to trust the process.”

CULTURAL FLEXIBILITY

Direct democracy is a common characteristic of indigenous peoples around the world. Decision making often involves entire community meetings that run for days. Imagine a community hall in the depths of the Amazon. Every member of the community takes their time to speak. “Sometimes they need the consensus of the community, and this takes time. You need to respect their process of decision making.”

FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY

While it may be standard practice to specify budget lines for particular activities, in indigenous-led philanthropy, those lines get blurred to encourage empowerment and creativity. Letting go of some control, and allowing changes in the budget during implementation, entrusts grantees to make strategic decisions after funding is received. “It is very important to trust how they decide how to manage the budget.”

FLEXIBILITY IN DEFINING WHAT IS VALUED

Funders who work with indigenous peoples refer frequently to intangibles beyond monetary value that are crucial to the success of a project. The use of traditional knowledge, spiritual practices, or even an indigenous language in a project can be documented as a community’s matching contribution.

The leadership of indigenous communities often rotates, which means that a new leader may be expected to report on a project headed by a previous one. Global Greengrants Fund navigates this challenge by having in-country advisors contact former leaders and interview them for project reports. "Coming at least half way to understand why an indigenous organization is different than an NGO with a paid development person really doesn't take a whole lot of effort," he suggested.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Has your organization changed its processes to make it more accessible to a grantee or community? How feasible is it for your organization to diversify its program staff/board to include indigenous peoples?
- Has your organization ever offered training or information for trustees, board members, and staff on indigenous issues?

NEXT STEPS

As a general overview of the main issues and strategies around indigenous philanthropy, this guide has, we hope, led you toward the first step in getting to know these communities. The sources in the endnotes and resources page invite you to delve a little deeper. If there is a single piece of advice that rings through each section of this guide, it would be: *take the time to get to know indigenous peoples.*

Whether you read the the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, click on a website listed below, or find out who supports indigenous peoples in your focus areas, you will be one step closer to understanding the deep commitment of those who already work with these communities. Perhaps you are left with the sense of urgency of these funders. There is a rush to prevent extinction—of species, cultures, and ancient knowledge.

Hassan Roba of the The Christensen Fund spoke of a project to help a hundred people in Kenya recover lost words of their ancestral language. Christensen Fund supports the indigenous-led Kivulini Trust to fund exchanges with relatives across the border in Ethiopia who speak a similar language. They can supply the missing pieces to this ancient language and keep it alive.

Or maybe you have the sense that climate crisis can be solved with the knowledge of those who distilled the memory of the human species in their traditions and lifestyles. Indigenous peoples have solutions worth being funded.

As Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, said, "This is the time for us to think more deeply about philanthropy with indigenous peoples. They offer time-tested solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. There is no time to lose."

We covered a lot of terrain in this guide so that we could make it accessible to the broadest range of social investors and nonprofits possible. We recognize that organizations have different goals and needs. Some staff have years of experience with indigenous peoples, and others are just getting started. We hope social investors and non-profits alike feel some aspect of the advice, stories, discussion questions, and action steps helps you improve the impact of your support.

As with all GrantCraft resources, this guide is intended to connect social investors that care about improving their grantmaking practice. We invite you to share your own experiences and tools.

If something here inspires a reaction or new idea, let us know. We look forward to hearing from you!

Definitions

Biodiversity—the variety of living organisms in an ecosystem.

Dominant culture (in a society)—the norm for a society as a whole (the established language, religion, customs, values).

Donor-advised funds—A donor-advised fund, or DAF, is a philanthropic vehicle established at a public charity. It allows donors to make a charitable contribution, receive an immediate tax benefit, and then recommend grants from the fund over time.

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)—the principle generally requires that communities must be adequately informed about development projects in a timely manner and should be given the opportunity to approve or reject these projects free from undue pressure. FPIC is emerging more broadly as a principle of best practice for sustainable development. The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes FPIC as an aspect of indigenous peoples' right to property, their cultural rights, and their right to self-determination.

Impact investing—Impact investments are investments made in companies, organizations, and funds with the intention of generating social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.

Indigenous philanthropy—a niche area of philanthropy that invests in indigenous communities in a culturally appropriate way.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR)—The IACHR is a principal and autonomous organ of the Organization of American States ("OAS") whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere.

Mother Earth—is a common personification of nature that focuses on the life-giving and nurturing aspects of nature by embodying it in the form of the mother. In Inca mythology, for example, Mama Pacha or Pachamama is a fertility goddess who presides over planting and harvesting. Pachamama is usually translated as "Mother Earth" but a more literal translation would be "Mother Universe" (in Aymara and Quechua mama = mother / pacha = world, space-time, or the universe).

Rights-based approach—conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. (www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/index_62012.html)

Self-determination—embodies the right for all peoples to determine their own economic, social, and cultural development. (www.iwgia.org/human-rights/self-determination)

Traditional knowledge—know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained, and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity. (www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/)

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)—is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights.

Additional Reading and Endnotes

RESOURCES

Grantmaker's Guide: Strengthening International Indigenous Philanthropy, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP)

Indigenous Communities and Biodiversity, World Bank

Indigenous Peoples Fact Sheet, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

International Grant Making: Funding with A Global View, GrantCraft

The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, United Nations

"The Way Forward: How Indigenous Philanthropy Can Change the World," Cultural Survival Quarterly

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations

Working With Intermediaries: Global Grant Making Through Partner Organizations, GrantCraft

ENDNOTES

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5. **Indigenous Peoples and the Environment,** Leaflet No. 10, Office of the High Commission for Human Rights.
6. **The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies,** UN Practitioners' Portal on Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming.
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CREDITS

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Association of Corporate Foundations	HBH Fund	J R McKenzie Trust	Principium Investments
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Channel Foundation	Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago	LUSH Cosmetics Charity Pot	Samdhana Institute
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Cook Inlet Tribal Council	International Funders for Indigenous Peoples	Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation for the Americas	Swift Foundation
Cultural Survival		Native Americans in Philanthropy	Tamalpais Trust
Ford Foundation		NGOsource	U.S. Agency for International Development
Global Greengrants Fund			W.K. Kellogg Foundation

ABOUT FOUNDATION CENTER



Established in 1956, Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants—a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance knowledge of philanthropy at every level. Thousands of people visit Foundation Center's website each day and are served in its five library/learning centers and at more than 450 Funding Information Network locations nationwide and around the world.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL FUNDERS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



International Funders for Indigenous Peoples

The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples is the only global donor affinity group dedicated solely to indigenous peoples around the world. For the past sixteen years, IFIP has built momentum toward a new movement in philanthropy that recognizes indigenous communities as high-impact investments. IFIP works to increase philanthropic investment to indigenous communities around the world through regional meetings, international donor summits, social media engagement, advocacy, webinars and original research.

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