

Grantmaking Best Practices

At Tides, our vision is clear: We believe that a just and equitable future can exist only when communities who have been historically denied power have the social, political, and economic power they need to create it.

Our mission is to turn this vision into reality by working in deep partnership with doers and donors to center the leadership of changemakers from these communities, connecting them to services, capacity building, and resources to amplify their impact.

How Do We Do This?

Stated simply: by centering and trusting remarkable grantees representing communities who have been historically denied power.

How You Can Do This.

We encourage you to view the grantmaking process itself as an expression of your values, as well as a tool for change. Collectively, we need to resource frontline leaders at scale not just because it's the right thing to do, but their success will determine how successful we all are at grappling with the biggest issues of our time.

In this guide, we provide actionable insights to root your work in grantee-centered practices. We encourage you, and can support you, to explore and experiment with community-led approaches, and weave participatory grantmaking practices into fund structures. Our ultimate goal is to empower you to deepen your engagement with communities by building relationships with them and other partners, to further the causes that resonate with your philanthropic mission.

In this guide you'll discover not just best practices, but a roadmap to transformative impact. Your commitment can fuel real and lasting change, underpinning the shared vision of a just and equitable world.

Tides' 5 Grantmaking Principles

- 1. Get Off Your Assets.** It's all about taking action. We encourage you to move your resources where they're needed most, swiftly and effectively, with Tides' support. Activating resources can make a world of difference for frontline leaders who drive meaningful change in our communities, supporting a more just and sustainable future for all of us.
- 2. Always Be Transparent and Accessible.** Open, honest, and ongoing communication with you and our grantee partners is at the core of our approach. We can help you provide clarity around your funding decisions, build systems that remove barriers to resources, and foster greater trust and shared purpose with grantee partners.
- 3. Have a Learning Mindset.** We believe in the power of curiosity and adaptability. There's always more to discover, and we'll help you stay open to new approaches, learning alongside grantees, and sharing your insights with other funders. We also recognize that the burden should be on us as donors to do the work to understand the impact we're having with grant funds.
- 4. Focus on Community-led and Context Responsive.** We trust in the expertise of community partners and believe in letting them take the lead to steward resources. We can help you meet the evolving needs of grantees and their ever-changing environments to realize win-win outcomes.
- 5. Build and Center Collaborative Relationships.** Real change happens when donors come together and truly listen to the communities most affected. We can help create spaces where donor partners and grantees can collaborate effectively and purposefully.

Concerned Citizens of Cook County, a Tides Foundation Frontline Justice Fund grantee partner, seeks to promote social and environmental justice — with a focus on negative health and environmental impacts due to industrial facilities in their communities.



Top 5 Practices for Impactful Giving

- 1. Prioritize Multiyear Funding.** Provide support over multiple years. It offers stability and allows grantees to plan for the long term.
- 2. Provide General Operating Grants.** Deploy general operating grants for 501(c)(3) organizations. This flexibility enables grantees to allocate funds where they're most needed.
- 3. Maximize Your Annual DAF Payout.** Grant a minimum of 20% of your donor advised fund (DAF) each year. This regular allocation ensures that your philanthropic dollars are actively funding leaders who are creating a more just and sustainable future for all of us.
- 4. Include Community Voices.** Involve community leaders in grantmaking decisions. They bring valuable insights and experience to the table. Remember to compensate them for their contributions in a fair and meaningful way.
- 5. Invest in Systemic Change Efforts.** Support policy advocacy and movement building efforts to ensure that your funding is tackling systemic injustices. Fundamentally, we need more just and equitable policies so everyone has a fair shot.

Georgia Muslim Voters Project, a grantee partner of Tides Foundation Healthy Democracy Fund. They work to elevate the Muslim voice through the power of civic engagement and voter registration.





Go Deeper With Your Grantmaking

Here are more best practices with a focus on equity. Please reach out to Tides to learn where to start with these high-impact actions.

Eliminate General Operating Grant Reporting. When providing general operating grants, remove reporting requirements. Utilize annual reports, subscribe to newsletters, or initiate conversations with grantees as a means of learning and understanding their work.

Provide Project-Based Funding for Non-Expenditure Responsibility Grants. When funding project-based initiatives, it's beneficial to support the full project cost. Remove caps on indirect fees to ensure the project's success. Keep written reporting to a minimum.

Make Application Formats Accessible. Make the application process flexible and accessible. This can range from simplifying written applications to considering verbal applications. A small grant should have little to no work associated with it.

Run a Transparent RFP Processes. In any competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, transparency is key. Clearly define the grant opportunity, criteria used for eligibility, who makes the decisions, and when. Create channels for feedback with all applicants about their experience in the RFP process.

Commit to Ongoing Communication. Maintain open and flexible lines of communication with grantee partners for the duration of the relationship.

Share Insights with Peer Funders. For applicants aligned with your goals but not successful in securing a grant, offer to share their information with peer funders who might align with their mission.

Diversify Organizational Support. When funding the same grantee partner year after year, explore other forms of support. Consider directly funding capacity building efforts, leadership development, or supporting organizational health and sustainability.

Streamline Communication Channels. To reduce the workload on grantee teams, allow grantmakers to communicate directly with them where possible.

Encourage Participatory Frameworks. By shifting decision-making power about funding decisions to community experts, you are ensuring that your grantmaking is effective, democratic, and just.

Consider Unique International Grantee Partner Needs. When working with international grantees, consider actively supporting them in establishing their Equivalency Determination (ED) status, so they can accept more flexible forms of support. ED certification is a fundamental capacity building practice.

Who we support can only get us so far. **How** we provide funding and support grantee partners is just as important in shifting power to marginalized groups and creating a more just and equitable future for all of us.

Join us. Reach out to philanthropy@tides.org to learn more.