

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite growing challenges to civil rights, inclusion and economic justice across the country, and especially in the South, the philanthropic sector has not recognized the potential in local organizations and the legacy civil rights infrastructure of the Alabama Black Belt, the Mississippi Delta and places like them across the South.

These two regions benefitted from just \$41 in foundation funding per person between 2010 and 2014, compared to the national funding rate of \$451 per person and the New York state rate of \$995 per person. Just 16 percent of the \$55 million given by foundations to benefit these two regions in that five-year timeframe was for power-building strategies like policy reform or community organizing.

Beginning in 2016, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) and Grantmakers for Southern Progress began documenting the challenges, opportunities and assets of Southern communities like Selma. We interviewed more than 90 community, nonprofit and foundation leaders and co-hosted four focus groups to gather as much information as possible from the people who know best.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Southern communities are rich with natural leaders and existing organizations – whether incorporated as a 510(c)3 or not – but often funders don't recognize them. Sometimes, foundations and donors disregard Southern leaders because these individuals seem to lack the educational credentials or formal capacity that grantmakers expect from experienced nonprofit executives. Sometimes, foundations and donors defer to existing power structures by working only with established political, business or social sector leaders.

Southern leaders who come from and are deeply connected to those affected by poverty, racism, sexism and other injustices are those most well-equipped to lead positive change in their communities.

And the capacity to effectively relate to, persuade and represent communities is more important than the

capacity to write a grant proposal or speak a funder's language. Southern leaders understand what is and is not possible in their communities. They understand what rhetoric can push boundaries in a productive way and what may be detrimental.

Southern foundations have a crucial role to play in convening partners around a "big table." Southern funders also can help bridge the gap between how work in their communities is described and how national organizations expect it to be described.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Are you ready to start your high-impact philanthropy in the South? Here are four recommendations to get you started:

- Understand context. Build authentic, transformational relationships.
- Appreciate collective power. Explore advocacy funding as a complementary strategy to funding direct service.
- Focus on shared goals and value different approaches. Set a "big table" inclusive enough for diverse local and national partners.
- Make long-term, flexible commitments of capital, time and capacity.

Across the Deep South – where building democratic accountability and collective power for disenfranchised communities was once a globally recognized specialty – there are exciting opportunities for philanthropic investment. If Southern and national funders as well as individual donors come together and identify specific places and causes that align with their values, Southern leaders in the Deep South can and will change their communities for the better.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Nonprofit leaders, advocates and funders across the South offer some insights that will lead to greater and more sustainable impact for Southern philanthropic investments.

-  **DO** search for and fund Southern organizational leaders who represent the communities they serve.
-  **DO** prioritize leaders and organizations that have the trust of their communities as represented in relationships and the influence to get people to show up and speak out.
-  **DO** support Southern community leaders and organizations that are able to articulate how identity, history and politics combine to suppress the power and prosperity of their communities.
-  **DO** look for networks of collaboration, resource-sharing and co-strategizing that already exist.
-  **DO** provide flexible, multi-year funding and capacity-building support.
-  **DON'T** assume formal education and nonprofit management capacity are necessary to engage one's community in an inclusive vision for a more just and sustainable future.
-  **DON'T** burden your grantees with unreasonable goals and reporting requirements.
-  **DON'T** assume the community leaders and organizations most well-adapted to affecting systemic change in a given community are those already well-connected to political, economic and philanthropic power.
-  **DON'T** rely only on established 501(c)3 organizations to leverage your Southern investments.
-  **DON'T** treat your grantees like contractors.