



PRINCIPLES FOR FEMINIST FUNDING

This document sets out common principles for a feminist approach to funding. It was created in partnership with Canadian Women's Foundation, Community Foundations of Canada, and the Equality Fund (formerly The MATCH International Women's Fund). This evergreen document outlines our early thinking around how we will strive to live out our values. These principles are a work-in-progress and express some of what we already do and areas we want to improve. They are not exhaustive, given that we are learning as we live into our ambitions as feminist funders. They are values and strong ideas we aspire to live up to. We will continue to refine these principles and add practical examples to illustrate and enliven our approach and journeys.



PART ONE: PRINCIPLES FOR FEMINIST PHILANTHROPISTS AND DONORS

This is what we have in common as “feminist philanthropist” individuals and organizations, no matter what amount of money we contribute. This is how we work with each other, our supporters and donors, and our partners and stakeholders. Feminist Philanthropists...

1. Believe that we have to undo patriarchal relationships and social structures. These “power-over” relationships and structures have harmed everyone—especially women, girls, and trans and non-binary people.
2. Aim to raise the power and ambition of ALL women, girls, and trans and non-binary people—who carry many identities, backgrounds, and life experiences. The Honourable Rosemary Brown said, “Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.” Those are words to live by.
3. Pursue truth, reconciliation, and decolonizing practices. We recognize that colonialism is a root cause of “power-over” relationships and gender inequality in Canada and around the world.
4. Support and build collective action and movements, taking direction from organizations led by people they represent and acting on the concept of “nothing about us, without us.” Feminist philanthropists believe that “return on investment” can take different forms and that the financial bottom line is not the only important measure.
5. Contribute to gender equality with a strengths-based approach. This means giving to not only “fund deficits” but also investing in resilience.
6. Reflect on power imbalances in their own lives. Inherent power imbalances exist in the act of giving and receiving. We acknowledge broad social and economic power imbalances that give some people privileges while oppressing others. Feminist philanthropists acknowledge these tensions and inequalities, and work to build more equal relationships that value lived experiences.
7. Are not afraid to be challenged. We are not defensive when we have to learn new things, face tough truths, and envision different perspectives. It may be uncomfortable at times, but it is important.
8. Innovate and are open to new ways of working, while at the same time doing things that are tried and true. We pay attention to what we invest in and buy, and catalyze change for greater gender equality.

PART TWO: STRENGTHENING GRANTMAKING

This is how, as organizations, we can engage in feminist grantmaking and aim to do better. We prioritize funding organizations working towards transformative gender change. This includes organizations:



- where women, girls, and trans and non-binary people actively participate and lead, as they are most affected by gender inequalities;
- that apply an “intersectional approach”, recognizing and responding to the diversities of people and communities;
- that build networks, collective action, partnerships, and movements;
- that respond to peoples’ immediate individual needs while they try to change policy, law, and institutions for the better;
- that do innovative new things and use proven strategies that work;
- that strengthen the resilience of people and communities and try to shift the balance of social power and clout to those who have less; and
- that value and pay attention to the lived experiences of the diverse people they work with.



1. We aim to provide lasting, sustainable funds that cover administrative/core costs, are flexible and predictable, and last for multiple years. We do not provide only short-term funds that can only go to “direct service expenses”. We will work toward building the longer-term capacity of organizations through multi-year grants that can partially be applied to administrative costs. We also provide financial support for things many funders do not always like to fund: capacity-building, leadership development, networking, childcare, accessibility costs, meals, and so on. This is sometimes called a “grants plus” approach.
2. We ensure our grant making processes are clear and simple. We respect the limited resources of our grantees—from organizations with the smallest capacity to organizations with the largest capacity. Our decision-making processes are transparent and we strive to be accountable. Our goal is to ensure that our grant applications are simple, easy to understand, and concrete. The reporting we require of grantees is grounded in a learning approach. We ask for the most important impact information and avoid complicated evaluation.
3. We reduce the power imbalances inherent to funder/fundee relationships and use an intersectional lens. We use participatory decision-making processes so women and communities most affected by our work have a say in what happens. We aim to build relationships based on trust that we have shared aims and all bring our best efforts to the problems we are working to address.
4. We participate in partnerships, collaboration, and coalitions. We avoid competition with other funders, instead identifying ways we can work together toward a common goal. We encourage partnerships among our grantees and promote cross-organization and cross-movement efforts to solve a problem or respond to an opportunity.
5. We ensure measurement and evaluation required of grantees serves their needs too. Measurement and evaluation are tools that can build learning, demonstrate impact, and encourage people, government, and funders to support community programs. We help organizations measure impact in ways that truly make sense for them and direct the results to rally further financial and volunteer support.
6. We value the security, health, and well-being of our grantees. Change-making work can be draining and people often burn out. We support service providers and activists to pursue well-being, health, safety, and resilience. We learn from their journeys, accompany them, and convey their stories. We respect their privacy and share only what they feel comfortable sharing.
7. We work with those most affected by gender inequality and focus efforts on what matters to them. We consult and work in participatory ways. We aim to shift power to those most affected by funding decisions. We take our lead from those on the frontlines of challenging gender equalities that are building a more equitable, sustainable and just future.



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