



*Improving the lives of Iowa's women & girls*

**IOWA WOMEN'S**  
FOUNDATION

## WHAT IS SOCIAL CHANGE PHILANTHROPY

*What is social change philanthropy?*

"Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the economic injustice that makes philanthropy necessary."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Social change philanthropy focuses on the root causes of social, economic and environmental injustices. It strives to include the people who are impacted by those injustices as decision-makers. It also aims to make the field of philanthropy more accessible and diverse. In social change philanthropy, foundations are accountable, transparent and responsive in their grantmaking. Donors and foundations act as allies to social justice movements by contributing not only monetary resources but their time, knowledge, skills and access. Social change philanthropy is also sometimes called social justice philanthropy, social movement philanthropy, and community-based philanthropy.

*What does that definition really mean?*

### **1) Social change philanthropy focuses on the root causes of social, economic and environmental injustices.**

This means that social change philanthropy supports organizations that are getting to the roots of problems instead of only addressing the symptoms.

An example: In a community with widespread asthma due to air pollution from a nearby bus depot, it's the difference between just funding medical treatment for people with asthma and funding organizing in the community to regulate bus idling and emissions.

### **2) It strives to include the people who are impacted by those injustices as decision-makers.**

In social change philanthropy, the process of giving is as important as where the money goes. Asking those who are directly affected by and working on an issue what to fund is a key part of this process.

An example: This might mean that a foundation or donor interested in addressing the widespread asthma problem would include local residents and organizers in their decisions about where to direct their funding.

### **3) It also aims to make the field of philanthropy more accessible and diverse.**

Because right now this isn't the case. For example, a study done by The Joint Affinity Groups shows that 10% of foundation board members and only 2.2% of family foundation board members are people of color.

### **4) In social change philanthropy, foundations are accountable, transparent and responsive in their grantmaking.**



When funding happens behind closed doors, everyone who applies and relies on that money has no information about what goes on. Organizations get funded, but they don't know why or how they were chosen. Or, organizations don't get funded and they don't know why or whether they should apply again. When foundations and donors are transparent about their process and goals, it can open up the possibility for conversations about whether the grantmaking is responsive, and the ways in which foundations and donors can be accountable to the communities they impact.

**5) Donors and foundations act as allies to social justice movements by contributing not only monetary resources but their time, knowledge, skills and access.**

There are many concrete ways donors and foundations can be allies to social justice groups, from helping an organization fundraise to sharing your access and powerful connections to hosting an organization's event at the foundation's office. It is also about respecting grantee groups as partners in social change.

An example: One of the board members of the foundation plays golf with the city's Public Transportation Commissioner. When she learns from their grantee group that they have been unable to get a meeting with the Commissioner, she uses her connection to help them set one up.

*How much money goes to progressive social change anyway?*

One study done by the National Network of Grantmakers shows that less than 3% of funding in the United States goes to progressive social change. How much money is that? They estimated that in 1997, \$336 million went to progressive social change out of a total of \$13.8 billion in giving. This amount includes family foundation, private independent foundation and public foundation giving.

