

Report: Current Approach to Strategic Philanthropy Is Limiting

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The current top-down approach to strategic philanthropy limits its overall effectiveness, leading to a widening disparity between the amount of money invested in communities and what is actually being accomplished. That was the conclusion of a new study by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), which pushed for a greater emphasis on social justice philanthropy.

The report, “Real Results: Why Strategic Philanthropy is Social Justice Philanthropy,” was written by Niki Jagpal, NCRP’s research and policy director, and Kevin Laskowski, the organization’s senior research and policy associate. The two authors argued that today’s strategic philanthropy practiced by nonprofits favors short-term metrics and is largely disconnected from the communities these organizations serve.

Jagpal and Laskowski wrote that unless grantmakers explicitly address the needs of underserved communities and invest in policy and community engagement, they are unlikely to achieve their goals of helping communities. In other words, they contend that strategic philanthropy must adopt the techniques favored by social justice philanthropists.

“All grantmakers want to maximize the impact of their grants,” said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of NCRP. “What they may not realize is that the missing piece in their grantmaking strategy is the social justice lens.”

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