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- ***What is the point of Philanthropy's Promise?***

There's a growing consensus among members of the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors that foundations and other grantmakers need to be more strategic and intentional in their giving. Philanthropy's Promise offers two concrete ways that grantmakers can be more effective. Learn more about Philanthropy's Promise

- ***Does a foundation have to dedicate at least 75 percent of its grantmaking towards the strategies specified in Philanthropy's Promise to sign on?***

No, a grantmaker that signs on to Philanthropy's Promise commits to dedicating at least 50 percent of its total giving for the benefit of one or more underserved communities, and at least 25 percent of its total giving towards support for advocacy and community activism.

- ***What types of grantmaking organizations can sign on to Philanthropy's Promise?***

All types grantmaking institutions are invited to sign on – and indeed have signed on – to Philanthropy's Promise: independent foundations, family foundations, community foundations, grantmaking public charities and corporate foundations.

- ***Is membership with NCRP required to sign on to Philanthropy's Promise?***

No, membership is not a prerequisite to signing on to Philanthropy's Promise. All grantmakers – members and non-members – are invited to be a part of this initiative.

[Learn more about becoming a member of NCRP.](#)

- ***What do we mean by “underserved communities,” “social justice grantmaking” and “advocacy, organizing and civic engagement”?***

NCRP used the Foundation Center's "special populations" in its "intended beneficiaries of grants" to identify 11 distinct groups that we classified as "underserved" or "marginalized." The are: economically disadvantaged; ethnic and racial minorities; women and girls; people with AIDS; people with disabilities; aging, elderly and senior citizens; immigrants and refugees; crime or abuse victims; offenders and ex-offenders; LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) and; single parents.

However, it's important to note that although we broadly use the term "underserved," funders are encouraged to think about the specific communities that benefit from their grantmaking – whether or not they are part of the 11 groups we have identified – and how they can be more effective at helping these communities.

For NCRP, "social justice philanthropy" is the practice of making contributions to nonprofit organizations that work for structural change and increase the opportunity of those who are less well off politically, economically and socially. This definition was adapted in the Foundation Center and Independent Sector report on Social Justice Grantmaking in 2005.

"Advocacy, organizing and civic engagement" are strategies at the core of social justice philanthropy. This phrase, when used by NCRP, includes policy research, advocacy, community organizing, litigation and other systemic reform strategies that can address the root causes of social problems, not just their symptoms.

- *Why did you choose the benchmarks of 50 percent of grant dollars for underserved communities and 25 percent for advocacy?*

When a foundation meets or exceeds these benchmarks, it shows the foundation is seriously committed to these principles; it is not just making occasional grants that align with the principles. The benchmarks are based on findings from *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best* ([see chapter I](#)). Data from the Foundation Center tells us that these benchmarks are achievable and sustainable, and there foundations that have found these strategies effective in achieving their missions long before NCRP published *Criteria*.

- *My foundation's mission isn't focused on social justice issues. How is Philanthropy's Promise relevant to our cause?*

We recognize that not all foundations are focused on social justice-related issues. If you think this applies to your foundation, we encourage you to take a few minutes and consider these questions:

1. Can I identify at least one point in which the issue area my foundation cares about intersect with issues of access to opportunity, equity and justice?
2. Should underserved communities – such as lower-income individuals, women and girls, the elderly, LGBTQ citizens, rural residents, disabled individuals and other marginalized persons – benefit from my institution's grantmaking?
3. Is there at least one underserved community that is affected by the kinds of work and activities we support?

If you answer "Yes" to any of these questions, we invite you to reconsider the relevance of Philanthropy's Promise to your foundation. Many issues that grantmakers care about don't exist in a vacuum. These are contextualized in and are affected by the social conditions that people are facing today.

We also encourage you to check out the reports on [education philanthropy](#) and [health philanthropy](#) from our

[High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy](#) series that make the connection between several issues that seemingly have nothing to do with social justice or each other. Forthcoming reports will be on the environment and climate and arts and culture.

If you answer "No" to all these questions, then perhaps Philanthropy's Promise may not apply to your foundation. We very much appreciate your taking the time to reflect and consider this initiative. We believe in the value of and need for asking these critical questions in a grantmaker's quest for effectiveness and lasting impact.

- *Why is NCRP celebrating foundations that commit to prioritizing underserved communities and also to empowering them through civic participation? Why not celebrate commitment to just one principle?*

Many grantmakers are trying to solve enormous problems, yet the resources that philanthropy brings to the table are quite small in relation to these problems. By intentionally prioritizing underserved communities and also empowering them through funding advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement, grantmakers increase their leverage. Each principle on its own has value; when combined, their power increases.

- If our foundation isn't meeting these benchmarks but would like to work toward them, how much time do we have to do so? Can we sign on now?

NCRP acknowledges that it takes time for a foundation to alter its grantmaking strategy; that is why foundations that sign on to Philanthropy's Promise can take up to three years to meet the benchmarks.

- My foundation cares about vulnerable populations and our grantmaking does try to get at the root causes of social problems (not just treat symptoms). But we simply don't track our grants using the categories "marginalized communities" and "social justice grantmaking".

When crafting their public statements, we invite foundations to use their own words to describe their own commitment to empowering marginalized communities. Indeed, the statements we have received reveal an array of philosophies and strategies expressed in a rich diversity of language that enriches discussion in our sector.

- How will NCRP or the participating grantmakers determine whether or not a foundation meets commitments made in the public statements?

Ultimately, it's up to the leadership of each foundation to determine whether it is meeting its commitment. Publicly available data at the Foundation Center will help verify fulfillment of these goals, but the data isn't perfect. NCRP urges foundations to work with the Foundation Center on the coding of its grants to ensure that the data accurately reflect that foundation's grantmaking.

- Are the two strategies promoted by Philanthropy's Promise based on research proving their effectiveness and impact?

Yes! [Chapter 1 of *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best*](#) provides an extensive background on targeted universalism, systems change, advocacy and community organizing and other related concepts behind the two strategies promoted by Philanthropy's Promise.

The [High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy reports](#) provide an in-depth look at intentionally focusing on the needs of underserved communities, and investing in advocacy and community organizing to generate the greatest impact for grantmakers focused on [education](#) and [health](#)

. Future reports will be for funders concerned about the environment and climate, and arts and culture.

Also check out the “[Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities](#)” reports, which look at the monetary and non-monetary benefits received by communities from funder-supported nonprofit advocacy and community organizing. These reports have shown a substantial return on investment when foundations invest in these strategies.

How is Philanthropy's Promise linked to *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best*?

[Chapter 1 of *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best*](#) provides substantive background on targeted universalism, systems change, advocacy and community organizing and other related concepts behind the two strategies promoted by Philanthropy's Promise. Signing on to Philanthropy's Promise does not necessarily mean a grantmaker endorses all the benchmarks proposed in *Criteria for Philanthropy at its Best*

. Philanthropy's Promise pertains only to the two benchmarks identified and explained in Chapter 1.

- What if my grantmaking institution has different priorities, but we support other organizations signing on to Philanthropy's Promise?

Thank you for your interest in supporting Philanthropy's Promise even when your foundation is unable to sign on.

We could use your help in spreading the word about Philanthropy's Promise and encourage other grantmakers to sign on. Here is an easy, convenient and quick way for you to do so.

- *What tools can NCRP provide me with to make the case to my trustees that we should sign on to this?*

Thank you for taking Philanthropy's Promise to your trustees. Feel free to use these various resources, which are all available at www.philanthropypromise.org :

1. [Video about Philanthropy's Promise](#)
2. [Philanthropy's Promise in a Nutshell \(PDF\)](#)
3. [List of foundations that have signed on](#)
4. [Frequently Asked Questions \(PDF\)](#)

If you need additional assistance, please contact Samantha Davis us at [info\[at\]philanthropysprmise.org](mailto:info[at]philanthropysprmise.org) or (202) 387-9177 x16.

- *I personally believe in what you're promoting but my organization won't sign on. Is there a way for individuals at funding organizations to show their personal support?*

Absolutely! We value the help of individuals like you. Here's how you can show your support:

1. [Invite your colleagues in other foundations and nonprofits to check out Philanthropy's Promise.](#)
2. Write a blog or post about Philanthropy's Promise on Twitter (#highimpactphil), Facebook and other social networking sites you're a part of.

- *I work for a nonprofit. How can my organization get involved?*

Thank you for your interest in being a part of Philanthropy's Promise. We need nonprofits like you to make this initiative a success. Here's how you can get involved:

1. [Invite your nonprofit colleagues to check out Philanthropy's Promise and join you in promoting it to others in their network.](#)
2. [Encourage foundations \(yes, including your donors!\) to check out Philanthropy's Promise and consider signing on.](#)
3. Write a blog or post about Philanthropy's Promise on Twitter (#highimpactphil), Facebook and other social networking sites you're a part of.
4. If you haven't joined already, become a member of NCRP. Our standing as a voice for nonprofits grows stronger with each new member. [Learn more about member benefits](#).

- *Who at NCRP can I talk to about Philanthropy's Promise?*

For more information, please contact Samantha Davis at [info\[at\]philanthropyspromise.org](mailto:info[at]philanthropyspromise.org) or call (202) 387-9177 x16.

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