# FCCP'S POWER IMPACT TEAM

*DRAFT*

## Recommendations for how funders can help communities build power

From January - May 2018, FCCP's 12-member Power Impact Team (referred to below as "the Team") examined what it takes to build power. The Team presents the following recommendations as a **work-in-progress** set of values and ideas for how funders can best resource power-building over the long-term to realize their institutional goals. These are intended for funders supporting or interested in supporting building community power and for funders who see power as a necessary component to policy wins.

| | Recommendation | Why? |
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| 1 | Center **racial equity**; explicitly orient grantmaking strategies around **dismantling structural racism** and support grantees that do the same | While racial equity is often seen as a moral imperative, it is actually a strategic imperative in power building. Communities will be powerful only when structural racism is dismantled. Grantmakers focused on building power should explicitly assess how their strategies target structural racism and oppression. Asking grantees how their theories of change aim at the same goal can advance a needed field-wide conversation. |
| 2 | Be **explicit that you're invested in building power for specific constituencies** (not a side goal), and embrace the outcome of **long-term impact** | When funders articulate a commitment to power building, why it matters, and how it serves goals - they can partner with field leaders more comprehensively. Tying grantees' hands to campaign or policy goals (e.g. shut down X coal plants in X period of time) can be at odds with the ingredients required to achieve durable long-term gains that contribute to multiple wins (e.g. leadership built, community connections, increased political will, larger base). A mutual understanding of who grantees aim to have *power over* (the target) and *build power with* (the constituency) is valuable. |
| 3 | Articulate a shared commitment to building authentic, resilient, **grassroots power in place;** even policy work is more durable when connected to a local base | An authentic grassroots base is critical to a power building strategy. Research suggests that even policy wins are only durable and sustained when a base has driven the win, and stays connected through implementation. Thus advocacy strategies will be more successful long-term if connected to a local base. The Team thought funders could benefit from criteria that differentiates grassroots base-building from other organizing methodologies. |
| 4 | Invest in work that **changes narrative and worldviews, and addresses ideology** ("third face of power") | Authentic grassroots organizing can change worldviews; it is a "first face play" and a "third face play." But the scale is necessarily small. The Team recognized that our movement is very weak in the realm of ideological, narrative, and culture change. Funders could help by building this field, but not as an alternative to grassroots organizing - rather by connecting and rooting it in the worldview work that organizers know best. |
| 5 | **Give long-term grants** (5+ years) | No matter how many times it's said, this is still a baseline. Building power is complex and necessarily long-term. It cannot be oriented to, or assessed on, one-year cycles. |

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| **6** | **Cooperatively fund** over multiple years and **across silos; co-develop strategy** with anchor organizations | Especially grassroots, place-based funding should be more cooperative and geared towards common strategies that cross silos and make a long-term commitment. Local work is too often supported by small grants from funders with widely divergent goals. However, when funders collaborate, they risk centralizing top-down strategy. <u>Having anchor groups at the table to co-create strategy</u> can mitigate this and align strategies with community leaders from the outset. |
| **7** | Practice [Trust-Based Philanthropy](#) and develop authentic **partnership with impacted community leaders**. | "Trust" came up repeatedly in this process. Trust-based philanthropy (outlined by the Whitman Institute) suggests a grantmaking approach centered around <u>mutual learning not metric accountability</u>. The latter sometimes penalizes grantees for telling the truth about scale or impact and serves as a barrier to co-learning. In a partnership, funders develop an understanding of the group's vision and model and can support fluid, evolving needs to build power (rather than what the funder determines). |
| **8** | Recognize and **invest in many aspects of leadership** | Power requires leadership at many levels. <u>Organizational leaders</u> must be adaptive, strategic, iterative, sustained (e.g. via sabbaticals) and have a strong team around them. <u>Grassroots or base leadership</u> is central and required for durable change. <u>Public leadership</u> (elected, appointed) must be accountable, and in some cases from, the base itself. All of these levels require deep investment to sustain an ecosystem of leaders capable of long-term change. |
| **9** | Embrace a more creative, **risk-tolerant approach**; allow the field to determine outcomes and set strategy | Supporting power building is risky because a funder cannot be guaranteed of a particular outcome. Rather, field leaders need <u>flexible resources that allow the goal of building power to stay front and center</u>, even if they need to pivot to different tactics. If funders hand over the reins to leaders to set strategy, they can better equip the field to adapt, iterate, and succeed. |
| **10** | Be **responsive to moments** where power can be built | Moments of opportunity and crisis contribute to power building. Moments can be local (e.g. Flint, Standing Rock, Ferguson) or national narrative opportunities (e.g. connecting Wells Fargo's bad PR to long-standing campaigns), but both require <u>fast and targeted support best left in the hands of trusted leaders</u>. Local moments only build power if funds and activities are directed by savvy local leaders, not national parachute operations that at times contribute to chaos and leave little behind. Relinquish control by providing anchor organizations with flexible rapid response pools so trusted leaders can strategically respond when these moments arise. |

Thank you to the Power Team for dedicating your wisdom, time and energy to advancing these ideas in FCCP and beyond!

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❖ **Doran Schrantz**, ISAIAH Minnesota

This is a work-in-progress! Please share suggestions and feedback at https://funderscommittee.org/power-impact-team/