

# What Do Movement Leaders Need From Philanthropy?

“ I fight because I’ve witnessed and lived through injustice firsthand... this is not a professional endeavor for me. This is personal. And what ends up happening is, in this quest, this fight, we put so much of ourselves in it, but our personal self is often neglected.”

—Ivelyse Andino, Roddenberry Fellow

Movement leaders play many roles in building social movements: they carry messages to the public, respond to crises, and develop infrastructure aligned with a collective vision for systemic change. What are the needs of movement leaders, particularly in times of overlapping crises? How can philanthropy support leaders to continue their work now and for the long run?

This guide accompanies the video about the needs of movement leaders. After watching the video, follow the steps in the guide to deepen reflection and discussion, and to foster change.

*Move The Money: Practices and Values for Funding Social Movements* is a set of resources produced by the Building Movement Project.

*Move The Money* is geared towards grantmaking institutions seeking to deepen and transform their support of organizations, networks, and leaders involved with social change movements. These resources draw and build upon the wave of ongoing efforts that encourage the philanthropic sector to invest in movements.

This guide is one of four that are available along with accompanying videos at [www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org).

## the four needs of MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP



## Support the Four Core Needs of Movement Leaders

We created the movement leadership stool to describe the various areas of support that movement leaders identified. Each leg of the stool represents a need: skills, squads, spaces, and sustainability. We outline below each of the four legs of the movement leadership stool and offer reflection questions. Foundations seeking to invest in movement leadership should identify ways to support leaders in these four areas.





## Building a Range of Skills

Movement leaders recognized that they need to hone certain skills in order to play the many roles required of them both in their organizations and externally as spokespersons and leaders of networks and coalitions. In particular, leaders identified the importance of building skills around strategic analysis, narrative development, base building, cross-racial solidarity and conflict transformation. Movement conflict is inevitable, but movement leaders often lack the tools to address those dynamics and either need to develop the skills or lean on others. Additionally, several leaders pointed out that the role of the executive director and a movement leader are not necessarily aligned. Movement leaders have the skill set of seasoned community organizers whereas an executive director is responsible for managing an organization and all its components. Darakshan Raja (Justice for Muslims Collective) explains that while “the skills of an activist and organizer are not the same as building an organization,” being an executive director becomes the only pathway to leadership for many organizers and activists. Enabling movement leaders to explore how they can most effectively reach their goals could involve supporting alternative leadership structures and formations.

### *Reflections:*

- How is your foundation supporting the skills development of movement leaders currently?
- In addition to leadership development, how could your foundation support skills building for movement leaders?



## Developing Squads of Support

Movement leaders also stressed the importance of working with a range of people, both within and outside the organization. These include people supporting the movement leader (coaches, assistants and writers), the organization (individuals focused on internal infrastructure, operations and staff supervision) and the movement ecosystem (negotiators, consensus builders, agitators, and spokespersons). In order to buttress the movement leader's work outside of their organizations, they need the support of people who have knowledge of the entire ecosystem, who can manage conflicts as they arise and who can help to articulate why broader partnerships are vital.

### *Reflections:*

- How does your institution understand the connections between grantees? What would strengthen the broader ecosystem?
- How can philanthropy support movement leaders in building up their squads?





## Nurturing Spaces of Strategy and Support

Being in spaces with peers to strategize, vision, build relationships, and engage in generative tension is a way to deepen movement leadership. Examples of such spaces mentioned by movement leaders include fellowship programs such as the [Roddenberry Fellowship](#) (a 12-month program that offers fellows with funding, coaching, and professional support, with the ultimate goal of cultivating a cross-sector network of activists, community leaders, advocates, and changemakers), the [Solidarity Summits](#), a series of multi-day gatherings hosted by the Open Society Foundations between 2015 and 2019 for movement leaders to build relationships and strategize together, and the [Muslim Women's Leadership Program](#), hosted by the RISE Together Fund at the Proteus Fund, which offers a supportive space for women who primarily lead organizations in Muslim, South Asian and Arab communities. These spaces provide skills-building, an opportunity to connect with peers, space to discuss movement strategy, and time for self-reflection.

### Reflections:

- Philanthropy often funds single organizations but movement-building requires work across organizational boundaries. How do you currently invest in the spaces needed for movement leaders to build relationships and learn from one another?
- What happens when fellowships and leadership development programs end? How can philanthropy support ongoing connections?



## Practice Sustainability

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We think about a career as being 40 to 50 years long and I think in this work, a 5-to-10-year span of time can be a 40 to 50 year burden on a person's body, mind, and soul.”

—Charles Long, Movement for Black Lives

Not surprisingly, movement leaders had a lot to say about how the demands of movement building work can make it difficult to sustain long-term leadership. The toll of doing movement work is clear. Movement leaders endure direct and vicarious trauma because they are often organizing communities they belong to and the systemic problems in the struggle are personal to them. The constant “go, go, go” nature of movement building, including the urgency of crisis response, makes it difficult for leaders to pause or process. The resulting pressure on movement leaders—from workplace and movement conflicts to the inability to meet basic needs to chronic illness—can lead to burn-out and can drive them out of their positions. Though breaks from leadership roles should be supported, more attention needs to go to addressing the burn-out that movement leaders experience.





There's just still this thought process that if you are in movement work, you are doing it out of the love and you don't need any money to do it."

—Kimberly Peeler-Allen, Roddenberry Fellow

If folks want to be a part of our movement, if they can't meet their basic needs, then how are we supposed to win at social justice and social justice movements?"

—La'Tasha Mayes, New Voices for Reproductive Justice

This is why movement leaders emphasized that philanthropy must deepen and expand investments in people, and not only organizations, and throughout their leadership life cycles. Beyond programming dollars, it is vital to support the capacity of people to do their work. Philanthropy can ensure that grantees are able to provide health insurance benefits, time off, and workplace accommodations as well as wraparound support including leadership coaching, fellowships, leadership transitions and sabbaticals.

Movement leaders identified best practices such as including automatic well-being and sustainability line items in each grant, providing opportunities for fellowships and sabbaticals and resourcing ways for transitioning movement leaders to continue their work. In addition, movement leaders suggested funding for healing justice practices including facilitators and practitioners who are adept at addressing conflict within organizations and in movement spaces.

## *Reflections:*

- What is the impact of this moment on the movement leaders in your portfolio? What are the current ways you target funding for the well-being of movement leaders?
- What are your expectations of movement leaders? How could your foundation make their work even more sustainable?
- How can philanthropy support leaders throughout their leadership life cycle, even after they leave their organizations?
- Consider the quotes above from Kimberly and La'Tasha. How can foundations learn more about the effects of movement building work on movement leaders?



