



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Power Moves

Your essential philanthropy assessment  
guide for equity and justice





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Taking time out for self-assessment and learning is an important part of the organizational cycle of planning, action and reflection.*

The philanthropic sector's growing urgency to tackle longstanding inequities offers strong motivation for funders to take stock. Today, it is still all too easy to predict advantage or disadvantage based on race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or ability. Now more than ever, it's important to ensure that your strategies make sense given your goals, and that they are having the impact you seek for the communities you care about.

*Power Moves* helps you respond to the current moment of social foment and the enduring drive for justice by exploring your own power. Power, whether through organized people or organized money, is the force that changes systems, and changing systems is the only way to achieve equitable outcomes for all communities.

## USE POWER MOVES TO INCREASE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS AND HAVE GREATER IMPACT ON THE ISSUES AND COMMUNITIES YOU CARE ABOUT

- Examine how you are using power in your internal operations, grantmaking and external relationships.
- Incorporate timely input, tapping the knowledge and experience of your priority communities and of the nonprofits that work with them.
- Collect the information you need to think expansively and strategically about how to solve complex problems in partnership with others.
- Make intentional choices about how to leverage your power, privilege and resources with humility to advance equity and justice.



"With *Power Moves*, NCRP is stepping up once again to help the field understand what's needed at this important moment to take meaningful action to advance social justice. As much as the tools and stories can guide foundations to more effective grantmaking, it also reveals the depth of NCRP's knowledge and relationships in the sector."

- Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh  
*Senior Advisor, Racial Equity,  
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations  
Power Moves Advisory Committee Member*



EQUITY

POWER

## WHY FOCUS ON POWER?

*As a grantmaker, you cannot truly strive for and advance equity until you understand your own power and privilege in society and in relation to your grantees.*

Examining your privilege enables you to redefine risk and how your institution handles it. Then you can make conscious choices about how to use your power to be more effective and have lasting positive impact in ways that align with the goals, needs and strategies of the communities you seek to benefit.

*“Power is the ability to change the rules.”*

- Rashad Robinson in *Fast Company*<sup>1</sup>

This guide leads with a power lens and invites you to explore three dimensions of power: building power, sharing power and wielding power. Together, they represent the highest aspiration for grantmaking that advances equity and justice.

# WIELDING POWER

# SHARING POWER

# BUILDING POWER

*POWER MOVES* INVITES  
YOU TO EXPLORE THREE  
DIMENSIONS OF POWER



## **BUILDING POWER**

Supporting systemic change by funding civic engagement, advocacy and community organizing among marginalized communities



## **SHARING POWER**

Nurturing transparent, trusting relationships and co-creating strategies with stakeholders



## **WIELDING POWER**

Exercising public leadership beyond grantmaking to create equitable, catalytic change

Together, these three dimensions represent the highest aspiration for grantmaking that advances equity & justice

# POWER MOVES IS FOR YOU

*Do you want to ensure that your grantmaking is leaving a lasting positive legacy that makes the world a better place? Do you care about marginalized communities and want to more effectively advance justice and equity? Do you value community engagement and community-centered solutions? Then this guide is for you.*

## WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO USE THIS GUIDE?

For *Power Moves* to be truly helpful, the right time is when you are ready to ask yourself or your institution hard questions, ask your constituents the same hard questions, be ready to receive honest, perhaps tough, answers and make strategic changes accordingly. **To determine whether it is the right time for you or your institution to use these resources, review the toolkit glossary and then take the brief *Power Moves* readiness assessment [available online](#) and on page 68 of the full guide.**

## WHY SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS?

*Power Moves* grew out of NCRP's Philamplify project, which was rooted in the tenet that funders who receive honest feedback and share the results of that feedback pursue smarter strategies, make better grants and build stronger relationships. In this spirit, we encourage you to model transparency and openness by soliciting feedback (this toolkit includes tips on how to do this well) and sharing the results of your self-assessment with colleagues, constituents and the public.



"This is more than a toolkit. It is a guide offering multiple points of entry for foundations who want to unpack their translation of privilege into power and the ways which that power can intentionally advance social justice and equity. The structure of the toolkit is a road map for those beginning their journey and landmarks and reminders for those further along. It is a solid and needed contribution to the continued evolution of foundation practice."

- Jara Dean-Coffey  
Founder and Principal, Luminare Group  
Power Moves Advisory Committee Member



## HOW IS THIS GUIDE ORGANIZED?

*Power Moves is organized by each of the three power dimensions, including:*

- A brief description of the topic.
- Best practice guidelines.
- Sample questions to gather internal data.
- Sample questions to solicit feedback from stakeholders.
- A discussion guide to help make meaning of the data and feedback, and reflect on progress.
- A next steps tool, which can be used for one dimension or all three.
- Tips for implementation.

*It also includes Tools You Can Use, a set of resources that will help in your assessment journey, such as:*

- Glossary of relevant terms.
- Readiness assessment.
- Sample assessment timeline and process.
- Tips on gathering feedback.
- Next steps worksheet.

*Additional materials on the website include:*

- Examples of best practice for each power dimension.
- List of relevant resources.
- Sample worksheets, templates and other assessment instruments.

## HOW SHOULD I USE THIS GUIDE?

*Power Moves* can be applied flexibly based on your needs, available time and resources. You can choose to work on all three dimensions of power or start with one; they can be explored individually and in any order. You can also choose to apply this toolkit to one grantmaking program, several or an entire portfolio.

The amount of time you allocate to complete the process may depend on several factors: the number, size and scale of grantmaking program(s) included in your assessment; the number of power dimensions you decide to explore; and the human resources you are able to allocate to this process. An assessment across all dimensions of power will likely take at least six months.

The sample timeline and process in *Power Moves* offer guidance but can be modified based on these considerations.





# READINESS ASSESSMENT

*Power Moves will guide you in examining internal operations, grantmaking and external relationships. How will you know whether your foundation is ready to embark on this process? Review the toolkit glossary on page 64 and then answer this set of questions to find out:*

1. After reviewing the glossary, can you envision talking about these concepts with your foundation staff and board leadership? Would leaders be receptive to these definitions?
2. Does your grantmaking prioritize benefit for under-resourced and marginalized communities? (Note: Your foundation may use another term such as “disadvantaged,” “vulnerable,” “at-risk” or “underserved.”)
3. Do your foundation’s stated or implied values align with equity?
4. Has the foundation committed to advancing equity for priority issues or communities?
5. Has your foundation’s board and staff leadership embraced systemic change as a grantmaking goal or strategy?
6. Does your foundation place a value on community engagement in its programs and external relationships?
7. Has your foundation taken any steps to integrate principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) into its internal operations?
8. Have your foundation leaders examined their power and privilege as grantmakers in relation to the nonprofits and communities they support?

If you answered “yes” to at least four of these eight questions, then your foundation would likely find value in using this guide to reflect on ways it can use power to increase effectiveness and impact.

If you answered “no” to five or more questions, this may not be the best time to dig into *Power Moves*. If that’s the case, here are some suggested steps to take first:

- Review relevant online resources on [ncrp.org](http://ncrp.org) to become better informed about the topics in this toolkit, including:
  - o Primers on advocacy, organizing and civic engagement grantmaking.
  - o Lessons on funding social movements.
  - o Articles on racial equity, implicit bias and white privilege.
- Seek training and support on why and how to incorporate equity as a core value and practice internally and in your grantmaking. The Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) and Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) offer such resources, as well as other CHANGE Philanthropy partners.
- Talk to some of the funders highlighted in this toolkit to find out how they got started on the path to building, sharing and wielding power for equity.



# BUILDING POWER

Supporting systemic change by  
funding civic engagement, advocacy  
and community organizing among  
marginalized communities



“One of the reasons we finally agreed on organizing was because we all agreed on the fundamental democratic nature of it. And in some ways, it’s a lot easier for a family with divergent views to agree on community organizing and the basic idea that the people who are most affected by a problem should have some say in the solutions. We may not agree on education reform – whether charter schools or standardized testing are good or bad – but we can agree that the families with kids who are falling behind in failing schools know best about what they need to achieve.”

- Ashley Snowdon Blanchard

*Trustee, Hill-Snowdon Foundation, on why the foundation switched from funding social services to funding grassroots organizing.<sup>2</sup>*

## BUILDING POWER

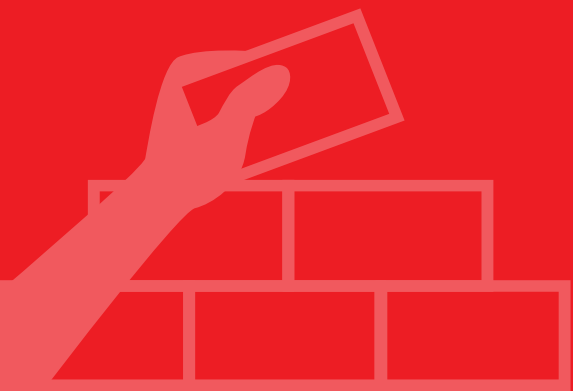
*This section will help you assess whether your grantmaking supports marginalized communities to build and shift power in meaningful and intersectional ways.*

### OUR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT FUNDERS WHO SUCCESSFULLY MAKE GRANTS THAT BUILD POWER AND ADVANCE EQUITY FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

- They are explicit about advancing systemic equity for specific marginalized communities in their goals, strategies and operations.
- They fund under-resourced communities to build power and be their own agents of change.
- They fund cross-cutting approaches. Building power may not fit neatly into narrowly defined issue areas.
- They fund for the long term while also being responsive to emerging or urgent opportunities.

### POWER MOVES CONTAINS TOOLS TO HELP YOU ASSESS YOUR EFFECTIVENESS IN BUILDING POWER:

1. Learning from Hill-Snowdon Foundation.
2. Kick-off group exercise for your assessment team, to explore questions such as:
  - a. What does it mean for us to advance equity? To build power?
  - b. What are our positive associations with the idea of building power and equity?
  - c. What are our negative associations? What assumptions or fears underlie them?



3. Sample questionnaires to guide the collection of internal data and external feedback vital to your assessment. Topics include:
  - a. To what extent does the foundation embody equity, diversity and inclusion internally?
  - b. What evidence do stakeholders see that our current goals and strategies are likely to achieve more equitable systems and outcomes for marginalized communities?
  - c. How do we support and empower marginalized communities to define solutions and lead change?
4. Building Power discussion guide to help your team analyze and reflect on your synthesized internal and external data and feedback. What does this information tell you about your current approaches? How might you apply new insights in your strategies and practices for greater effectiveness? Examples of questions include:
  - a. What surprised us about constituent feedback on this topic?
  - b. To what extent do we have a shared understanding with our grantees about how to build power to advance equity?
  - c. What are some outside-the-box ideas we've heard about that could help us support power building?
  - d. What additional information would we need to decide which strategies to pursue?
5. Next Steps tools, including:
  - a. A visual aid to see where you are on the continuum from beginning to build power to fully building power.
  - b. Several tips for implementing new power-building strategies, such as: evaluating your grantmaking with an equity lens.



“Ultimately, philanthropy is faced with an ethical question. No matter the type, size, location or mission, every foundation influences equity and justice through an inherent relationship to power. With *Power Moves*, NCRP has provided funders with a meaningful framework for ethical thought and action.”

- Kristi Andrasik  
*Program Officer, The Cleveland Foundation*  
*Power Moves Advisory Committee Member*



# SHARING POWER

Nurturing transparent, trusting  
relationships and co-creating  
strategies with stakeholders

“As funders, we come into a lot of these places with real baggage we have to deal with. Either people have had really difficult experiences with other funders, or else they think we have an agenda and are going to force them to do what we want or to jump through a lot of hoops to get our funding.”

- Surina Khan  
CEO, The Women’s Foundation of California<sup>3</sup>

# SHARING POWER

*To achieve sustained community-driven systems change, funders must be prepared to share some of their inherent power.*

Often, this means trusting your stakeholders and giving up some control. Sometimes, it will mean giving up a lot of control because nonprofits accustomed to the typical funder-grantee dynamic may not trust you until you do.

Engaging in power-sharing practices will ultimately affect your grantmaking: As mutual trust grows, you may become more comfortable with grant partners helping you set strategy and define success. You also may be willing to take on more risk, while mitigating risks to them and their communities.

## **FUNDERS WHO SHARE POWER EFFECTIVELY WITH CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE GRANTEES AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES:**

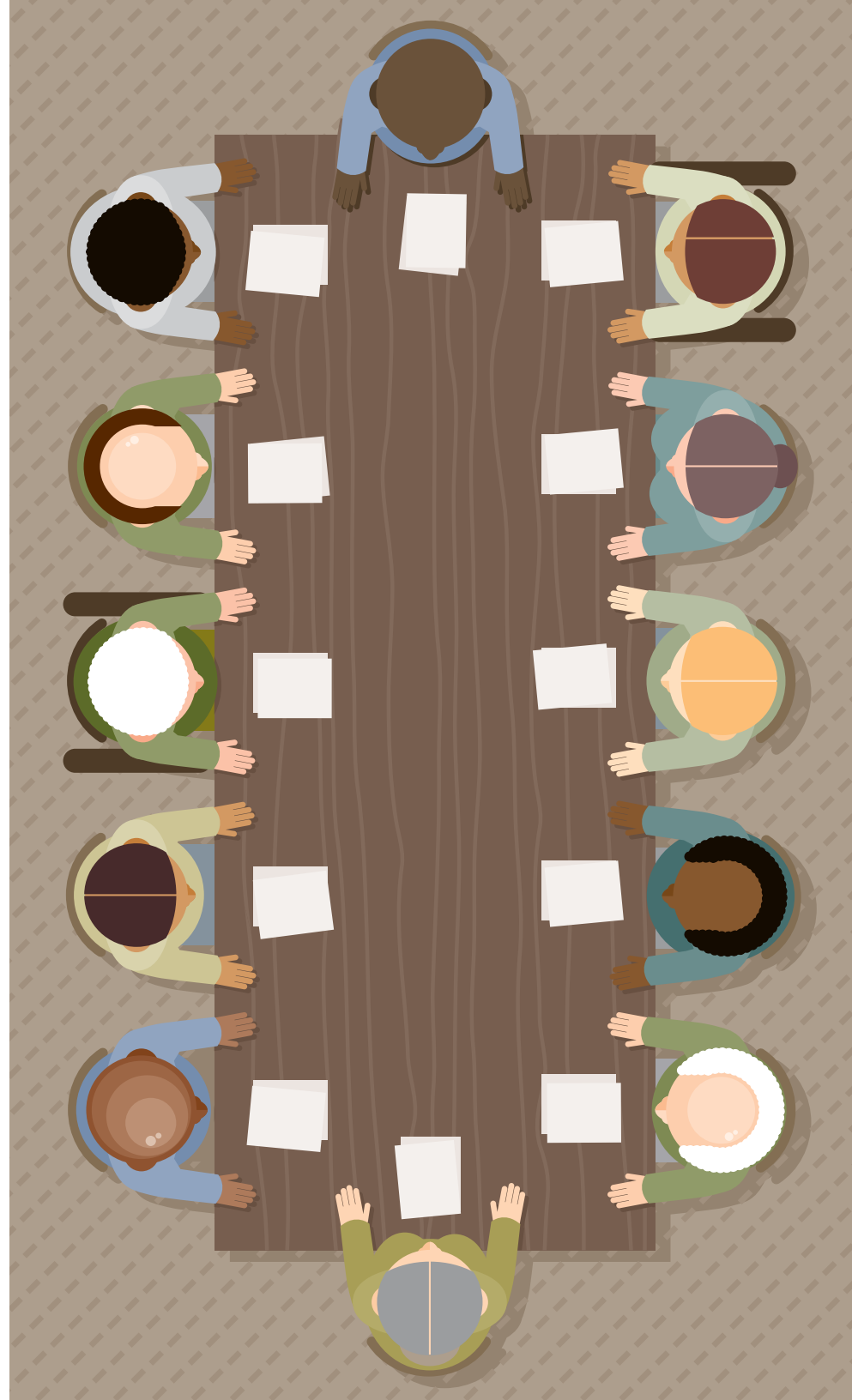
- They are highly responsive, inclusive and transparent in communication with existing and prospective grantees.
- They invest in the success of their grantees.
- They engage with and solicit input from the communities they seek to benefit, going beyond the usual suspects.

## **POWER MOVES CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING TOOLS TO HELP YOU ASSESS YOUR EFFECTIVENESS IN SHARING POWER:**

1. Learning from California Civic Participation Funders.
2. Kick-off group exercise for your assessment team, to explore questions such as:
  - a. What does it mean to each of us to “share power” with grant partners?
  - b. Who do we define as our community or constituency beyond grantees?



- c. What assumptions or fears do we have about building trust and sharing power?
- 3. Sample questionnaires to guide the collection of internal data and external feedback vital to your assessment. Topics include:
  - a. How burdensome are our application, reporting and evaluation processes for applicants and grantees? Do they pose any unintentional barriers for organizations led by people of color, people with disabilities or other marginalized groups?
  - b. How does our foundation gain honest (preferably anonymous) input and feedback from grant partners and applicants? Do we analyze the feedback with an equity lens? How do we act on this feedback?
- 4. Sharing Power discussion guide to help you make meaning of the synthesized internal and external data and feedback and engage in group reflection. Examples of questions include:
  - a. In what ways is the foundation demonstrating trust in its grant partners? How are grantees showing they trust us?
  - b. What do other community stakeholders think of the foundation, and do our prioritized communities see us as a true partner?
  - c. How would sharing power more than the foundation does now help us better achieve our goals? What would be reasons not to further share power?
- 5. Next Steps tools, including:
  - a. A visual aid to see where you are on the continuum, from beginning to share power to fully sharing power.
  - b. Several tips for implementing new power-sharing strategies, such as: honing cultural competency, humility and skill in developing honest relationships.





# WIELDING POWER

Exercising public leadership beyond  
grantmaking to create equitable,  
catalytic change



"It's all part of our concern about the strength of the civic fabric. More and more voters feel as if they don't matter, they don't have a role. I can't think of anything more threatening to the civic strength of the community than that."<sup>4</sup>

- Maxwell King

*President and CEO, The Pittsburgh Foundation, on why his foundation filed an amicus brief in support of a lawsuit to invalidate the state's gerrymandered congressional map.*

## WIELDING POWER

*Bold grants can catalyze transformative change. Yet many funders rely on grants alone to achieve impact, missing the opportunity to leverage the other tools at their disposal to advance their mission, values and equity goals.*

In 2014, Ambassador James Joseph famously addressed community foundations on the five types of philanthropic capital. He urged them to move from being a "grantmaker to social enterprise that strategically deploys not just financial capital but social, moral, intellectual and reputational capital."<sup>5</sup>

Yet the idea of wielding power and influence can be difficult for foundations that pride themselves on being a "neutral convener." In fact, having a point of view that is well-grounded and has moral integrity will enhance your institution's credibility rather than tarnish it, especially if you acknowledge your institutional and personal privilege and align your actions with the goals and strategies of your priority communities.

### FOUNDATIONS THAT WIELD THEIR POWER RESPONSIBLY AND EFFECTIVELY FOR EQUITY DO THE FOLLOWING:

- They convene grantees and community stakeholders while also playing a supportive participant role at other convening tables.
- They organize and collaborate with philanthropic peers that share common concerns, and with other sectors such as government.
- They inform, raise awareness and advocate by using reputation and expertise to bring visibility to critical issues and amplify the voices of the most marginalized.
- They deploy nongrant financial assets creatively to advance foundation and grantee goals and shift resources and power to underinvested communities.







## **POWER MOVES CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING TOOLS TO HELP YOU ASSESS YOUR EFFECTIVENESS IN WIELDING POWER:**

1. Learning from The Pittsburgh Foundation.
2. Kick-off group exercise for your assessment team, to explore questions such as:
  - a. What does it mean for our foundation and its leaders to wield power?
  - b. What are our positive associations with the idea of wielding power? What excites us about this?
  - c. How have we seen peers or our community successfully wield power?
3. Sample questionnaires to guide the collection of internal data and external feedback vital to your assessment. Topics include:
  - a. Does the foundation have guidelines for taking public stands on current issues or events? How often has a leader of the foundation taken public stands in the last year?
  - b. Has the foundation used its convening, communications and engagement tools to amplify the positions, voices and activities of marginalized constituencies?
  - c. Has the foundation ever offered to use its assets and investment tools to support grantee or community goals?
4. Wielding Power discussion guide to help you make meaning of the synthesized internal and external data and feedback and engage in group reflection. Examples of questions include:
  - a. What kinds of leadership strategies (if any) are we pursuing?
  - b. What kinds of leadership strategies (if any) do we seem to be avoiding?
  - c. How might some of these leadership strategies help us better achieve our goals? The goals of our grant partners?
  - d. How do we need to show up as a leader to most effectively support the issue or community we care about?
5. Next Steps tools, including:
  - a. A visual aid to see where you are on the continuum, from beginning to wield power to fully wielding power.
  - b. Several tips for implementing new power-wielding strategies, such as: anticipating pushback when you advocate on issues.



“Grants are one important strategy for increasing prosperity and educational attainment and strengthening communities and nonprofits in Arkansas. But they aren’t our only strategy. To move the needle, WRF staff also serve as ambassadors, advocates and activists for a shared vision of progress – and we motivate others to be leaders as well.”

- Sherece Y. West-Scantlebury

*President & CEO, The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation  
Former Board Chair of NCRP*

*WRF underwent a Philamplify assessment in 2013.*

## PLANNING NEXT STEPS

*After your institution has gotten feedback and reflected on its practice for one, two or all three power dimensions, Power Moves provides guidance and tips for your team to plan next steps:*

- Affirm which aspects of each power dimension you would like to grow, strengthen or improve.
- Develop specific objectives for progress within each dimension.
- Develop a short-term action plan for the next 12 months to work toward each objective.
- Designate which individuals will take responsibility for follow-through on each task.
- Identify best practice resources: individuals, institutions and innovative ideas that can help you make progress in each relevant power dimension.

## HOW YOU RESPOND MATTERS

This toolkit offers funders a way to examine their use of power through a structured, reflective process. It is also a call to action for philanthropy to respond proactively to society's power struggles around race, class, gender, age and disability, and to support the movements engaging in those struggles.

Those who are most marginalized need every available resource and ally in the fight for equity. Philanthropy's continued relevance depends on how you choose to respond.

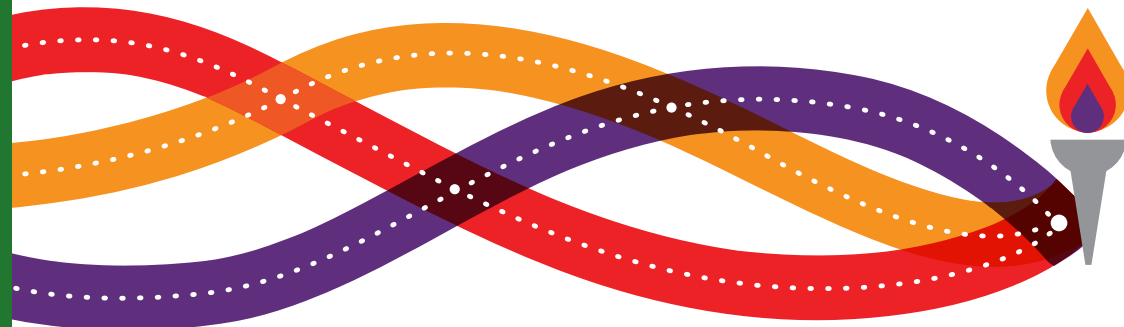
## GET STARTED!

Explore what the most strategic social justice grantmakers already understand: To make the world a better place, communities need to build power; funders need to share their power with these communities; and they both need to wield their power to influence relevant audiences and decision-makers.

Acknowledge the fundamental role of power and activate it to create change with humility and attention to privilege.

**Download *Power Moves* today and check out a rich list of resources at: [ncrp.org/Power-Moves](https://ncrp.org/Power-Moves).**

NCRP staff are available to answer questions about how to use this guide. Please let us know how NCRP can support you to embark on your *Power Moves* journey. Contact us at [powermoves@ncrp.org](mailto:powermoves@ncrp.org) or (202) 387-9177 x31.





## END NOTES

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## ABOUT NCRP

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy envisions a fair, just and democratic society in which the common good is recognized as a high priority; where a robust public sector is empowered to protect, preserve and extend the commonly held resources and the public interest; where a vital nonprofit sector provides voice and value to those most in need; and where all people enjoy equality of opportunity, access and fair treatment without discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, economic status, national origin or other identities.

NCRP envisions philanthropy at its best contributing to this vision of society by operating with the highest standards of integrity and openness and by investing in people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity and nonprofit organizations that serve and represent them.

*Power Moves* draws from extensive research, including a dozen foundation assessments NCRP conducted for Philamplify.

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