



**Fund the  
People Toolkit**

How-To Guides

# **Talent-Investment Menu**





# Talent-Investment Menu

What does it look like, concretely, to invest in nonprofit talent? What types of interventions are available? What works best? These are questions many funders and nonprofit leaders ask when first considering investing in nonprofit leaders and staff.

There are a wide array of options, in terms of categories of interventions, specific tactics, who could benefit, and how to make these important choices. This menu serves to open up a more expansive band of opportunities. *Thinking Through Choices in Talent-Investing in the Fund the People Toolkit* offers guidance on how to decide on interventions.

## Here are four considerations in approaching the talent-investment menu:

- 1. Widen the Lens:** Anecdotal evidence indicates that when foundations support grantee talent, they tend to invest in leadership development or professional development for individual people, with a focus on executive directors. And they tend to quickly focus on one tactic (such as executive coaching) before considering the spectrum of investment categories and tactics. (See *Who Drives Change in Talent-Investing in the Fund the People Toolkit* to learn more about the range of investment from individual to systemic, and which players get to define what needs to change and how.)
- 2. Customization:** Interventions ought to be customized in response to the stated or demonstrated needs of grantees. As Bridgespan recently put it in a thoughtful essay: “Based on our research and work with funders, we believe that making higher-impact leadership investments begins by making a significant investment upfront to answer two important questions: What is the problem, and what is the right investment to address that problem?”

**3. Significance:** Interventions are most likely to be effective when they are: bundled together, backed by serious financial and/or political capital, and sustained over time. Funders and nonprofits should align their scale of expectations with their scale of investment. Short-term, under-funded, scattered interventions are less likely to offer transformative results. As Stanford Business School’s Dr. Jeffrey Pfeffer writes in his business management book *The Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First*:

“It is important to have some overall... strategic vision of achieving profits through people, because an overall framework increases the likelihood of taking a systematic as contrasted with a piecemeal approach...”

In nonprofits and the foundations that support them, it is helpful to cultivate a vision of achieving mission-impact through investing in our nonprofit people, and then make investments that flow from that vision.

- 4. Consider the demographic issues at play.** How do your talent-investments strengthen equity and inclusion in the nonprofit workforce? How do they address inter-generational dialogue, knowledge-exchange, and shared leadership?

We have identified the following 10 categories of investment in nonprofit people. The list ranges from individualistic to systemic approaches.

- 1. Professional Development:** Building the knowledge, skills, and managerial ability needed to do one’s job
- 2. Leadership Development:** Developing personal and professional purpose, vision, self-awareness, ability to motivate others, ability to communicate and collaborate



3. **Career Development:** Empowering staff to clarify and build toward long-term professional goals within and beyond their current roles and organization
4. **Personal Sustainability:** Supporting engagement, morale, stress management, work/life balance, and long-term personal sustainability
5. **Human Capital Planning:** Preparation for building the organizational chart, skill sets, and staffing needed to develop strategic plans, and mission-related goals and objectives
6. **Management Ability:** Establish the knowledge and skills to implement high-engagement management practices throughout the organization, ensuring feedback loops
7. **Compensation & Personnel Policies:** Ensuring reasonable salaries and benefits, creating effective and equitable employment policies and practices (i.e. incentivizing employee saving, education, sabbaticals, severance, etc.)
8. **H.R. Infrastructure:** Establishing basic and strategic human resources staffing functions
9. **The 3 R's of the Talent Lifecycle: Recruitment, Retention, Retirement:** Developing procedures for intentional employee recruitment (awareness-building, campus outreach, paid internships, colleague networks, etc.), retention (internal career paths, professional growth and promotion, leadership cultivation, etc.) and retirement (executive transition plans, staff "alumni" engagement)
10. **Organizational Culture:** Intentionally nurturing a workplace environment that encourages and enables healthy morale, motivation and self-discipline, loyalty, leadership at all levels, engagement, inclusion, and productivity



## About Fund the People



Fund the People is the national campaign to maximize investment in the nonprofit workforce. To achieve this goal, we make the case, equip for action, and build a movement to change the attitudes and behaviors of funders, fundraising nonprofits, and the intermediaries that support them. There is a long-standing, sector-wide deficit of investment in the nonprofit workforce. Nonprofit professionals work in environments typified by high burnout and stretched resources. So there is a real demand for equitable salaries and benefits, more and better professional development, improved

human resources functions, and healthy organizational culture. Together, we can address these challenges by reshaping existing resources to prioritize nonprofit people as the central asset of nonprofit performance. Now more than ever, we can ensure that America's civic leadership is diverse, well-supported, high-performing, and sustainable for the long haul. Launched in 2014 and headquartered in Beacon, NY, Fund the People (originally known as Talent Philanthropy Project) is a project of Community Partners. Our work is informed by an Advisory Council of diverse leaders and a team of skilled staff and consultants, and is supported by a coalition of regional and national foundations.

**To learn more about Fund the People visit:**  
[fundthepeople.org](http://fundthepeople.org)

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**Rusty Stahl** is President and CEO of Fund the People, which he founded in 2014. He is also a Visiting Fellow at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Connect with him on Twitter at @fundthepeople.

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