



**Fund the
People Toolkit**

Discussion Guides

Talking Talent for Funders





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Objectives



This tool will:

- Provide guidance and a shared vocabulary that facilitates productive conversations about talent
- Increase the number and frequency of conversations that funders have about talent needs and potential talent investments
- Increase funders' understanding of the strengths and challenges of nonprofit talent, and the mutual benefits that can result from such investments

Purpose of Guide

Fund the People has designed this guide to help your foundation conduct meaningful discussions about investing in staff development in your grantees or the wider nonprofit community, and to determine your next steps for action.

Parameters for Discussion & Action on Talent Investing

We recommend that your foundation carry out these discussions over the course of three to four months. This timeframe allows time to discuss this topic, reflect and consider opportunities to build the talent of nonprofit grantees, and take action on your grantmaking strategy. It is essential that you involve several groups in driving this process: represent your foundation's leadership, program, and grants management staff (if applicable), your board of trustees, and other key stakeholders. The guide can be used with the foundation's full team or sub-groups (executive leadership, program staff, program teams, grants committees, board, etc.).

Ideas for Use

- **Think/Pair/Share:** Ask each member of your staff or board to consider the questions posed in the discussion guide individually, taking notes as they silently reflect. Individual staff members then discuss their responses with one or two other people before sharing highlights with the full group.
- Use selected questions as a reflective exercise at the start of your next meeting.
- **Recruit a team of staff and board representatives to explore the potential benefits of and opportunities for talent-focused grantmaking in your organization. Ask them to determine responses to these questions after conversations with other staff and board members.**

Caveat

We recommend that your foundation staff survey current grantees to hear directly from them about their talent development needs. Completing this initial



exploration will allow your foundation to pursue more meaningful discussions that will help to identify existing gaps and to develop a cohesive talent-investing strategy. We outline this and other steps in *How To Guide: A Funders' Guide to Investing in Grantee Talent*. But the lack of such survey data need not stymie initial internal conversations to gauge what your team already knows and believes.

Suggested Readings from the Fund the People Toolkit

- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Thinking Through Choices on Talent-Investment](#)
- [Top Reasons to Invest in Nonprofit Talent](#)
- [Funder Myths & Realities](#)
- [Guide to Investing in Grantee Talent](#)

Section 1: Orientation Toward Talent Investment

- 1) What are our (individual and organizational) assumptions about the people who work in our grantee organizations and other nonprofits?
 - a) How do these assumptions shape our individual and organizational attitudes and behaviors toward current and prospective grantees and other nonprofits?

Learn More: You may find it useful to review [Fund the People's Funder Myths vs. Realities tool](#), which elucidates beliefs about the nonprofit workforce commonly held by funders
- 2) What do we believe are the benefits and drawbacks of investing in the staff and people systems of our grantees and the wider nonprofit community?
 - a) Are perspectives aligned across our organization, and between board and staff?
 - b) Describe the perspective, or range of perspectives.
 - c) Do we understand enough about the staff and people systems of our grantees?
- 3) What are our beliefs about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the staff of our grantees?
 - a) Are the leaders and staff of our grantees diverse in

terms of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background, and other areas? How about the leaders in wider nonprofit community in our funding area?

Section 2: Current Practice

- 4) To what extent do we already invest in nonprofit talent?
 - a) At what levels of funding have we invested?
 - b) At what levels have we supported talent (individual leaders, organizations, ecosystem)?
 - c) What types of interventions have we invested in? (See our [Talent-Investment Menu](#) for types of investments.)
 - d) What has worked well in the talent investments we've already made? What has been challenging? What progress have we made on diversity, equity and inclusion in our talent investments?
- 5) What do we know about the talent-investment needs of our grantees?
 - a) What don't we know?
 - b) How could we learn more?

Learn More: [Fund the People's field stories](#) offer useful examples of how funders learn about the talent-investment needs of grantees. [The Weinberg Foundation](#) and the [Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund](#) field stories are particularly useful on this topic.
- 6) Given our current funding structure and priorities, what are the potential challenges of including talent investments within the grants we make?

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- 7) What is our vision for building our investment in grantee talent?
 - What do we want to achieve by investing in nonprofit people?

Section 3: Vision for Future



- How will an intentional focus on equity and inclusion inform our future talent investments?

8) What form(s) might our talent funding take?

- Invest in current grantees as part of their primary grants, by adding additional funding to existing grants, or as a separate program or portfolio?
- At what “level”— from individual leader to nonprofit ecosystem—will we target our investments? For more information on the components of talent investment, see our [Talent-Investment Menu](#).
- Which aspects or levels of talent investment appeal to us most? Are we interested in funding individuals, organizations, or a nonprofit ecosystem (geographical, issue-based, or other)?
- How will we deploy our resources?
 - Create a program that we implement (e.g. fellowship or training program)
 - Engage an intermediary to design and manage a program
 - Provide funds to grantees for agreed-upon talent investments
 - Some combination of these options?

Section 4: Practical Next Steps

9) What else do we need to learn to move forward?

10) Who else needs to be involved in this conversation in order for our foundation’s talent-investing strategy to succeed?

Levels of Talent Funding Commitment: As your foundation identifies the current talent needs of your grantees we suggest you consider three different levels at which to invest in talent. Often nonprofits will direct general operating funding toward programmatic needs. You have the opportunity to change this practice by being intentional about your grant support and earmarking dollars specifically for talent development.

Level 1

Incorporate specific questions in your grant applications to determine if and how nonprofits are investing in the talent of their employees. See the questions that are included in the [Weinberg Foundation’s program](#) and [general operating support applications](#).

Level 2

Ask grantees the questions listed above. If the answers align with your objectives, approve funding targeted at their top talent need.

Level 3

Ask grantees the questions listed above. If the answers align with your objectives, approve funding that targets more than one of your grantee’s talents and concerns.



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

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