

Community-Centric Fundraising as a Narrative Change Strategy

Tips and provocations for artists seeking to disrupt white supremacist systems in arts philanthropy, prepared by independent researcher Erika Pettersen

Introduction to Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF)

Fundraisers and other nonprofit professionals of color founded the Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF) movement as a critique of and response to donor-centrism, a fundraising philosophy that has dominated development discourse and practice since the early 2000s. CCF seeks to transform nonprofit fundraising in ways that challenge white supremacist systems in philanthropy and support racial and economic justice goals.

While CCF is rooted in nonprofit fundraising, its aims are relevant to the struggles of individual artists of color, who face pervasive labor exploitation and racial inequities within the current arts funding landscape. Moving toward a future of arts philanthropy rooted in racial equity requires that artists engage in CCF practices, contributing to new narratives that de-center funders and re-center artists and their communities.

Donor-centrism in Arts Philanthropy: Dissecting the "Crisis of Relevancy"

The "crisis of relevancy," a prevailing donor-centric paradigm in arts philanthropy, suggests that artists and arts nonprofits need to develop narratives that are more relevant to funders' interests. The [*Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding*](#) report shares powerful replies from POC arts leaders:

To my mind, the landscapes of arts funding and overall philanthropy would do well to come together in service of repair and follow the leadership of Black and Indigenous folks in doing so. What I'd like to see is nothing short of transformation.

Geoffrey Jackson Scott
co-founder at Peoplemovr

From where I sit, the question is less what stories we should be telling and more who should be telling them. I'm an advocate for 'for us, by us institutions' and think the priority within the sector should be empowering and resourcing communities to tell their own stories.

nico wheadon
principal of bldg fund LLC

We are in a moment when adaptation to audiences and employees demanding real equity and justice are both an existential matter for a lot of institutions and a huge opportunity to reimagine and remake the field.

Eboné M. Bishop
founder at Evolv

Fundraising Narrative Shifts Moving from Donor-centrism to Community-centrism

From dependence...

Artists survive by engaging in transactional relationships that give outsized power and influence to high net-worth donors and funders.

toward autonomy!

Artists thrive by fostering authentic, transformational connections and partnerships with community members, donors, and institutional funders alike.

From opportunism...

Fundraising success equals increased funding, regardless of who provides the money, how it's secured, or how it's spent.

toward accountability!

Fundraising success equals cultivating and stewarding funding in ways that are accountable to an artist's values and community.

From scarcity...

Resources are scarce and artists must compete against each other for financial support.

toward abundance!

Resources are abundant and arts and culture ecosystems thrive when artists engage in reciprocity and collaboration.

Fundraising for Autonomy

Cultivating Trust-based Relationships with Funders

- Creating formal or informal ethical gift acceptance policies and practices can ensure mutuality between funders and artists regarding shared values.
- Fundraising can be a site of negotiation. Conversations with funders and donors are opportunities for artists to amplify the issues they care about, communicate with radical honesty about their and their community's needs, and to explore possibilities based on the interests of both parties.

Harnessing People Power

- Diverse forms of capital—social, educational, and institutional—are crucial non-monetary contributions. Collaborating with and being accountable to other artists and community members builds up “social proof,” establishing trust with funders, and creates a “hive mind” for fundraising.
- By engaging in crowdfunding or peer-to-peer fundraising, not only can you grow grassroots support via small gifts, but also can deepen your responsiveness to individuals and communities you strive to represent, inspire, and honor with your art.

Fundraising for Accountability

Intentional Grant Writing and Budgeting

- Using asset-based language to describe any POC communities that an artist is a part of or collaborates with counters deficit-based frameworks that fuel the “White Savior Complex” trope in philanthropy.
- Budgets can communicate an artist's politics, values, and standards. They provide an opportunity for artists to be transparent about who they collaborate with and how they choose to spend their money. In budgets, artists can also assert how much their own time and labor, and that of their collaborators, is worth.

Fundraising for Abundance

Ecosystems-based Fundraising

- Participating in coalition building can not only help an artist to build their own networks, but also create opportunities to help other artists whose work they value navigate funding opportunities.
- When an artist shares funding with other artists whose time and labor they benefit from, it fosters ongoing reciprocity and collaboration.
- In times of relative abundance, an artist can leverage their fundraising activities to direct attention and funds to the work of other artists who are part of a shared community--or who have less access to capital due to factors such as race, economic class, and ability.

Additional Resources

Links to resources that can support your CCF practices:

[The 10 Community Centric Fundraising Principles](#)

["The Vital Connection: BIPOC-Led Narrative Change and Pluralist Democracy,"](#)
article by Bridgit Antoinette Evans and Tracy Van Slyke

["How donor-centrism perpetuates inequity, and why we must move toward community-centric fundraising,"](#) article by Vu Le

[Solidarity Not Charity: Arts and Culture Grantmaking in the Solidarity Economy,](#) report by Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard

[Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding: An Exploratory Report on Community-Centric Fundraising in the Arts and Culture Sector,](#)
report by Erika Pettersen

["4 Antidotes for Scarcity Mindset,"](#) article by Yura Sapi

["The Way it Works': Abuse, Alienation, and Our Current Condition as Arts & Culture Workers,"](#) lecture by Clara Takarabe