

M O M E N T U M F U N D

Racial Equity in Motion

May 2022

United Philanthropy Forum



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What is Momentum Fund?

In May of 2020, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation) issued a grant to United Philanthropy Forum (The Forum) to design a rapid-response grantmaking initiative in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative, known as “Momentum Fund,” had two primary aims: (1) build the capacity of 501c3 organizations that were managing COVID-19 funds focused on historically marginalized people and communities most impacted by the pandemic and (2) mitigate the impacts of the pandemic among people of color (Black, Indigenous, LatinX, Asian, Pacific Islander and other communities of color throughout the United States, in U.S. territories and across Native American reservations).



Though the Gates Foundation had not often worked with an intermediary to support its domestic grantmaking efforts, United Philanthropy Forum was the perfect partner for this work. They possessed the ability to meet the goals of centering racial equity in the process, distribute funds quickly, and reach a much broader range of organizations than the Gates Foundation usually serves.

Our Grantmaking Process

Understanding the need for racial equity to be the central tenet of an effective grantmaking process, The Forum first assembled an advisory board of five leaders from philanthropy-serving organizations who are known for their work in advancing racial equity in the field of institutional philanthropy. The Forum then tapped [The Moriah Group](#) to lead the initiative because the firm has a successful track record of partnering with foundations to design and implement grantmaking programs that are rooted in equity and center the reclamation of the humanity of communities of color. While we understood this small effort would not result in a sea of change within philanthropy, Momentum Fund staff and advisory members understood that a successful initiative required that we constantly interrogate and iterate our work. So, we created a process rooted in three core concepts:



01

Explicitly and unapologetically center racial equity.

We prioritized organizations led by BIPOC and intentionally serving BIPOC communities. And our outreach efforts emphasized the need to ensure that these organizations were aware of, and felt welcomed into, the Momentum Fund process.



02

Acknowledge the long history of effective social change.

We had the honor of partnering to build on the momentum of nonprofits and community-based organizations that have been leading this work for many years building – hence the name, “Momentum Fund.” Funding priority was given to entities staffed by people who both reflected the populations being served and demonstrated a history of building strong and significant relationships within BIPOC communities.



03

Position grantmakers and grantees as equal partners.

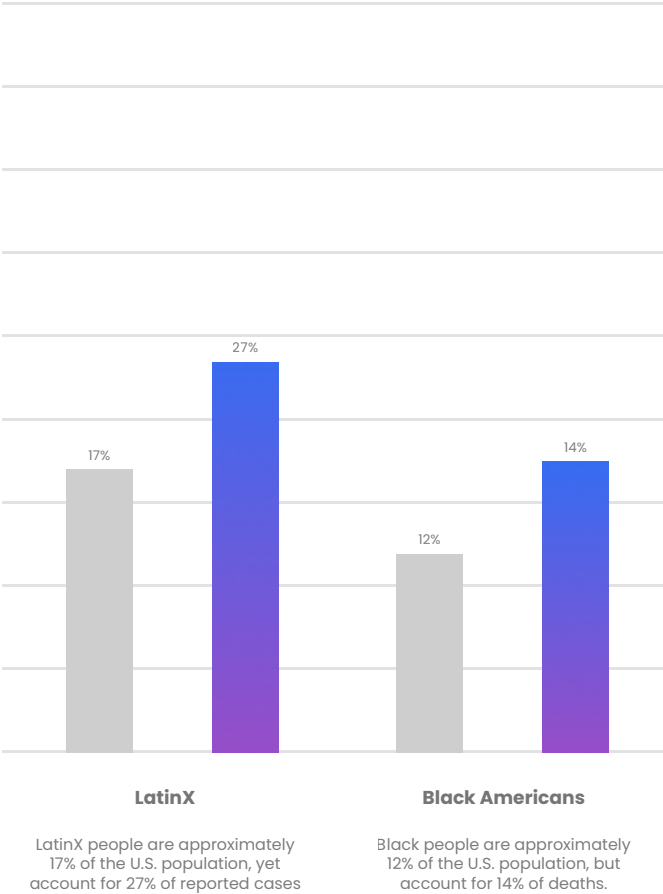
We worked to emphasize the importance of breaking down unequal power dynamics that can slow the momentum of organizations carrying out incredible work in their communities.

Our goal was unequivocal: The Momentum Fund would support the organizational infrastructure and capacities of BIPOC communities that are historically marginalized, underserved, and under-resourced and have been impacted the most by the pandemic. Through our efforts, \$9.1 million in grants were awarded in August and October of 2020 to 139 organizations in 31 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Reimagining Systems, Structures, and Grantmaking

Disproportionate Number of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation



For decades, social justice movement leaders have demanded that we restructure the systems and institutions that are the backbone of our society—ending the extractive and harmful practices that degrade life outcomes for BIPOC communities and destroy our natural environment. The challenges and repercussions wrought by the pandemic have only escalated this degradation as death and destruction mount in BIPOC communities.

The pandemic has exposed decades of divestment in local, state, and national public health systems throughout the United States, U.S. territories, and Native American lands. This divestment has directly and indirectly led to more than 50.4 million reported cases of COVID-19 and the deaths of more than 802,000 people in the United States. (In comparison, more than 267 million cases and more than five million deaths have been reported worldwide.) as reported by the New York Times. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation “... people of color have experienced a disproportionate burden of cases and deaths.” Per their data published in October of 2021, LatinX people and Black people represented a larger share of reported cases and deaths than their total share of the U.S. population. LatinX people are approximately 17% of the U.S. population, yet account for 27% of reported cases and 18% of deaths. While Black people are approximately 12% of the U.S. population, but account for 14% of deaths.

This restructuring should also repair past and current wrongs, intentionally heal BIPOC communities, create policies and practices that affirm our collective humanity, celebrate our myriad cultures, and grant space for all of us to thrive.

This restructuring should also repair past and current wrongs, intentionally heal BIPOC communities, create policies and practices that affirm our collective humanity, celebrate our myriad cultures, and grant space for all of us to thrive. The pandemic, along with increased awareness of the entrenchment of white supremacy and its deadly effect on people of color—particularly in the summer of 2020—has only amplified this clarion call. Reimagination efforts in the field of institutional philanthropy also predate the onset of the pandemic and have shifted. Several foundations that started operationalizing racial equity and increasing funding in communities of color have “doubled down” on these efforts in recent months. New commitments to similar activities have surged among numerous foundations and funds. And new social justice-centered foundations and funds have emerged.



While the investments from these commitments have yet to result in a significant increase in funding for BIPOC-led and -focused organizations, there are still many compelling lessons that institutional philanthropy can learn from this initiative and implement in its own work moving forward. In fact, Momentum Fund stands as an example of successfully restructuring philanthropy. Our staff, with guidance from the advisory board, “reimagined” the concept of emergency-response grantmaking by prioritizing the needs of the BIPOC-led organizations that are serving and working in partnership with the communities that were—and still are—suffering from the most hardships during the pandemic.

Momentum Fund Grantee Partners

Just as we centered the needs of BIPOC-led organizations and communities in our Momentum Fund grantmaking, we centered the report about this work around the lived experiences and expertise of our grantee partners. Instead of detailing the process that was used to award the grants and implement other aspects of the initiative, **we anchored the report with stories featuring three Momentum Fund grantee partners:**



Hopa Mountain, Inc.



Latino Community Fund



**St. Croix Community
Foundation**

These organizations exemplify how Momentum Fund grantee partners use aspects of their culture to preserve, reaffirm—and in some cases—reclaim the humanity of the people in their respective communities. Their stories, combined with the myriad ways that other Momentum Fund grantees responded to the pandemic, provide a blueprint for effective racial equity and racial justice-focused grantmaking.

Making Responsive, Community-focused Grantmaking the Norm

This companion to the Momentum Fund report highlights several lessons learned and/or reinforced throughout this experience. And we hope these lessons will inspire, inform, and support additional efforts to reimagine institutional philanthropy throughout our nation.

In the early months of the pandemic, there were more than 800 formal grantmaking efforts established and implemented throughout the United States to provide funding for related needs. Additionally, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and even small businesses that did not use grantmaking in their community engagement strategies regranted funds to small organizations and provided cash assistance for families and communities. Among the 139 Momentum Fund grantee partners, 38 did not have grantmaking and/or fund distribution experience prior to the pandemic. And hundreds of grantmakers relaxed their requirements for the use of restricted funding to allow grantees more flexibility in the use of funds for existing grants.

As the pandemic quickly wrought havoc on communities across the country, hundreds of funders quickly mobilized capital, collaborated with other funders and intermediaries to maximize resources and expand their reach, and streamlined grantmaking practices to eliminate unnecessary burdens for applicant organizations and communities. They repurposed existing grants and even suspended grant-reporting requirements to move billions of dollars in a relatively short amount of time. These timely and important actions prove that institutional philanthropy can act more responsibly, responsively and collaboratively to meet the needs of communities—especially BIPOC communities that have been victimized by systemic racism for centuries. Now, they must normalize this responsive, community-focused grantmaking across the nation.

“... Can philanthropy just fund us like you want us to win?!”

Gilda (Gigi) Pedraza, Latino Community Fund



“We have to examine how we do our work in institutional philanthropy if we want racial equity and racial justice to be real in these spaces.”

E. Bomani Johnson, The Moriah Group

Centering the Lived Experiences of BIPOC Communities to Inform Equitable Grantmaking

One of the great lessons of the Momentum Fund came from our insistence on listening to the described needs of community and organizational leaders and responding accordingly. While the grants focused on capacity building, we also created space to learn about the most-critical, pandemic-related needs in the grantees' communities, the ways that organizations and networks were working to meet those needs, and how a Momentum Fund grant could best support their work.

Funders must ultimately broaden their understanding of what effective grantmaking and long-term investment means in communities that are constantly assaulted by white supremacy. What works in Black communities, Indigenous communities, LatinX communities, Asian communities, Pacific Islander communities and other communities of color are varied ways of amassing and sharing resources via dynamic forms of collaboration. These solutions and interventions are derived from the lived experiences of people in BIPOC communities. But all too often, these "cultural knowledge systems" are not recognized as effective community-change strategies by institutional philanthropy.

"They are looking at Indigenous ways of working—cultural knowledge systems—things that only the communities and these leaders can project out into the future ... [to] create the kind of change that we all want to see."

Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, Hopa Mountain, Inc.

"If you want to find equity, if you want to empower people, you ask the community what they need."

Nonie Woolf, FAST Blackfeet



Repairing BIPOC Communities by Supporting Healing Practices that are Rooted in Culture

“We already know in our communities what we need. We just need the resources in FAST Blackfeet to help us become a strong, healthy Blackfeet Nation.”

Nonie Woolf, FAST Blackfeet

Although the quote above specifically refers to the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, its message has been repeated by many Momentum Fund grantees. Culturally rooted and culturally responsive practices can effectively protect, reaffirm, and reclaim the humanity of BIPOC. For centuries, BIPOC communities have used these practices to resist violent, destructive, dehumanizing attacks designed to promote and advance white supremacy. Momentum Fund staff and Advisory Board understood that the grantees could determine the best uses for the grant awards. By allowing the grantees to determine how capacity would be best enhanced in their respective communities, the funds were used to enhance the culturally rooted and culturally responsive practices that were already being used to ensure the survival of thousands of people in hundreds of communities throughout the country.



Supporting BIPOC Communities by Honoring their Need for Rest

One of the most prominent messages that we have received from deepening our relationships with the Momentum Fund grantees is, *"We need rest!"* The nation is in the 20th month of the pandemic and experiencing another surge in cases caused by many factors including the emergence of the Omicron variant. Ongoing attacks against the rights of BIPOC communities—especially women and non-binary people— to live safe, healthy lives are gaining steam throughout the country. And we continue to suffer through the growing devastation of climate change. Our grantee partners are physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually drained. While institutional philanthropy has often supported the gathering of people and organizations as a secondary or tertiary aspect of large grantmaking programs, we believe that culturally responsive practices that uplift resting and healing should grow in prominence in the field. The BIPOC leaders, organizers and healers who carry out the work funded by the millions of grants awarded each year deserve to rest, too. And their health and healing should—and must—be considered a primary goal of grantmaking processes.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the numerous people and organizations that contributed to the success of Momentum Fund.

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Momentum Fund Grant Review Committee – Organizations

ABFE

Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy

CFLeads

Council of Michigan Foundations

Forefront

Funders Concerned About AIDS

Grantmakers in Health

Hispanics in Philanthropy

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

Native Americans in Philanthropy

Neighborhood Funders Group

Northern California Grantmakers

Philanthropy Massachusetts

Philanthropy New York

Philanthropy Northwest

Philanthropy Ohio

Philanthropy Southwest

Philanthropy West Virginia

Philanthropy Southeast

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funders

Momentum Fund Grantee Partners

Round 1 – September 2020

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
AIDS United	Washington, DC	National
Alianza Americas	Illinois	National
AAPI Civic Engagement Fund	New York	National
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc.	California	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Alternate ROOTS	Georgia	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Arizona Center for Empowerment	Arizona	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Arizona Undocumented Workers Relief Fund at the Arizona Community Foundation	Arizona	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Asian Pacific Environment	California	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative, Inc.	Georgia	County/Counties
Black Belt Community Foundation	Alabama	County/Counties
Borealis Philanthropy	Minnesota	National
Bread & Roses Community Fund	Pennsylvania	County/Counties
Bread for the City	Washington, DC	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS Inc.	New York	National
Brooklyn Communities Collaborative, Inc.	New York	County/Counties
Brooklyn Community Foundation	New York	County/Counties

Note: One grantee requested to not be listed.

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
Building Changes	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories
BVM Capacity Building Institute	Georgia	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Campaign for Southern Equality	North Carolina	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Center for Economic Democracy (CED)	Massachusetts	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Center for Traditional Music and Dance	New York	County/Counties
Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative	Illinois	County/Counties
Chinook Fund	Colorado	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Coalition of Asian Americans Leaders	Minnesota	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Common Future	California	National
Community Connections Grant Program dba Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency	Michigan	County/Counties
Community Foundation of Greater Flint	Michigan	County/Counties
Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley	Colorado	County/Counties
Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo	California	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Connecticut Community Foundation	Connecticut	County/Counties
Contigo Fund	Florida	County/Counties
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA)	Hawaii	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Crossroads Fund	Illinois	County/Counties
DC Bar Foundation	Washington, DC	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Deaconess Foundation	Missouri	County/Counties

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
Decolonizing Wealth Project	Michigan	National
Diverse City Fund	Washington, DC	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island	Rhode Island	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Dreaming Out Loud, Inc.	Washington, DC	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Elton John AIDS Foundation	New York	County/Counties
Emergent Fund	New York	National
Episcopal City Mission	Massachusetts	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)	Ohio	County/Counties
Fairfield County's Community Foundation, Inc.	Connecticut	County/Counties
Farm Aid, Inc.	Massachusetts	National
First Nations Development Institute	Colorado	National
Florida Immigrant Coalition	Florida	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Foundation for Louisiana	Louisiana	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Front and Centered	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing	New York	National
Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.	Georgia	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	California	National
Greater Milwaukee Foundation	Wisconsin	County/Counties
Greater New Orleans Funders Network (GNOFN)	Louisiana	County/Counties
Hawai'i People's Fund	Hawaii	State(s)/Territory/Territories

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
Headwaters Foundation for Justice	Minnesota	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Highlander Research and Education Center	Tennessee	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Hispanic Federation	New York	National
Hispanics in Philanthropy	California	National
Honor the Earth	Minnesota	National
Hopa Mountain, Inc.	Montana	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Horizons Foundation	California	County/Counties
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights	Illinois	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Innovia Foundation	Washington	County/Counties
Justice for Migrant Women	Ohio	National
KANENHIIO IONKWAIENTHOS	New York	Reservation(s)
LA Voice	California	County/Counties
Latino Community Foundation	California	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Latino Community Fund Georgia	Georgia	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Latino Community Fund of Washington State	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Liberty Hill Foundation	California	County/Counties
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, DePaul University	Illinois	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Live In Peace, Inc.	California	County/Counties
Local Initiatives Support Corporation NYC	New York	County/Counties
Maine Initiatives	Maine	State(s)/Territory/Territories

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice	Massachusetts	State(s)/Territory/Territories
The Movement for Black Lives	Arizona	National
MRG Foundation	Oregon	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Na'ah Illahee Fund	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories
NACA Inspired Schools Network	New Mexico	Reservation(s)
National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders	Texas	National
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures	Texas	National
New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association	New Mexico	State(s)/Territory/Territories
New York Immigration Coalition, Inc.	New York	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Newark Arts Council	New Jersey	County/Counties
NewMexicoWomen.Org	New Mexico	State(s)/Territory/Territories
North Carolina Black Organizing and Leadership	North Carolina	State(s)/Territory/Territories
North Star Fund	New York	County/Counties
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights (NMCIR)	New York	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Para Los Ninos	California	County/Counties
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans	California	County/Counties
PFund Foundation	Minnesota	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Philanthropy Delaware	Delaware	State(s)/Territory/Territories
POISE Foundation, Inc.	Pennsylvania	County/Counties
Potlatch Fund	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
Pride Foundation	Washington	National
Project South	Georgia	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Restaurant Workers' Community Foundation	New York	National
Return to the Heart Foundation	Washington, DC	National
Santa Cruz Community Ventures	California	County/Counties
Schott Foundation for Public Education	Massachusetts	National
Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.	California	National
Sierra Health Foundation: Center for Health Program Management	California	County/Counties
Social Justice Fund Northwest	Washington	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Southern Black Girls and Women's Consortium	Alabama	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Southern Plains Tribal Health Board Foundation	Oklahoma	Reservation(s)
Southwest Florida Community Foundation	Florida	County/Counties
St. Croix Foundation for Community Development	U.S. Virgin Islands	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Texas Women's Foundation	Texas	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Third Wave Fund	Massachusetts	National
Transgender Strategy Center	California	National
Transforming Power Fund	Michigan	State(s)/Territory/Territories
UnidosUS	Washington, DC	National
United Way of Southwestern Oregon	Oregon	County/Counties
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley	Pennsylvania	County/Counties

Grantee Partner	State	Geographic Service Region
United Way of the Quad Cities	Iowa	County/Counties
United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona	Arizona	County/Counties
Vieques Love	Puerto Rico	State(s)/Territory/Territories
West Side United	Illinois	County/Counties
Westside Health Authority	Illinois	County/Counties
Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis	Tennessee	County/Counties
Women's Foundation of California	California	State(s)/Territory/Territories
The Women's Foundation of Colorado	Colorado	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Women's Foundation of Minnesota	Minnesota	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Women's Foundation of Oregon	Oregon	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Young Community Developers	California	County/Counties
Youth Engagement Fund	New York	State(s)/Territory/Territories
YWCA USA, Inc.	Washington, DC	National

Momentum Fund Grantee Partners

Round 2 – December 2020

Grantee	State	Geographic Service Region
Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy	California	National
The Center for African American Health	Colorado	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Chicago Foundation for Women	Illinois	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Community Foundation of St. Clair County	Michigan	County/Counties
Korean American Community Foundation	New York	County/Counties
The Merchants Fund	Pennsylvania	County/Counties
Prosperity Now	Washington, DC	National
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA	North Carolina	National
Teen Health Mississippi	Mississippi	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights	California	National
Borealis Philanthropy	Minnesota	National
Bread & Roses Community Fund	Pennsylvania	County/Counties
Bread for the City	Washington, DC	State(s)/Territory/Territories
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS Inc.	New York	National
Brooklyn Communities Collaborative, Inc.	New York	County/Counties
Brooklyn Community Foundation	New York	County/Counties



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