RES

HUA
UBC THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies
Faculty of Arts

Equitable Funding Processes

Lessons from Roundtable Educational Society's Community Consultations

A community building project conducted with representatives from 4 grassroots organizations and 2 funders, RES' community consultations explores the work they're doing, the groups they serve, and the challenges of navigating the charitable sector.

3 common barriers grassroots organizations face:

Limited funding for operational costs:

- Without long term security to plan bigger projects, organizations are confined to shorter timelines, limiting the scope of projects that can be proposed.
- Many organizations rely on fundraising to cover staff fees.

Inaccessibility of application process:

- Grant writing is a long and arduous process, requiring staff hours and institutional knowledge.
- The dehumanizing need to appeal to funder's expectations around certain communities and use "sob stories" can perpetuate harmful narratives.

Precarity of Funding:

- Funders sometimes micromanage spending due to lack of trust.
- The power imbalance between government funders and organizations means that nonprofit workers fear that public political dissent can result in funding cuts.

Funders who are committed to equitable funding processes may consider:

Funding for overhead costs

"Having discretionary funds … gives you the ability to plan a more sustainable future, where not only can you imagine other projects but you can pay your staff."

- Access to discretionary and operational funds –> long–term planning, more consistent output, more ambitious projects

Practicing trust-based philanthropy

"I got used to needing to write a report back and [the funder said], 'no, just … prepare… a brief summary of what you've done.' I was so shocked. So I see how that actually allows us to do the work that we're supposed to do instead of spending time, resources, just energy on writing a report. It feels good to know that funders trust us."

- Trust and reciprocity allows for more creative initiatives to emerge by reducing administrative burden.
- Smaller organizations can more effectively and quickly respond to community challenges due to their preexisting relationships, knowledge, and language capabilities.

Simplifying the application process

"They reached out to us and said, we would like to be able to support the work that you're doing and our process is to have a conversation with you and learn about [your] work… They took on developing that paperwork based off of our conversation."

- Oral applications are more accessible to organisations that lack capacity for extensive written applications, which can widen the pool of applicants.
- Funders meet with and build sustainable relationships with the people whose work they fund.