

## FundWell

### A Swift Summary of Wellbeing Stuff for Funders

February's edition of FundWell is curated by [Laura Bacon](#), Strategy Lead & Facilitator, Funder & Wellbeing Group, The Wellbeing Project

Dear FundWell Community / Changemakers,

We find ourselves in a "complex and cruel time". (This phrasing courtesy of [Mer Joyce](#), my friend and former classmate).

Recent actions by the US government have had significant ripple effects worldwide. In the social change sector, few have been spared. Those working on trans rights, immigrant rights, racial justice, public health, arts, education, environment, climate; DEI practitioners; global development professionals; those reliant on USAID funding – and many more – face serious threats.

At best, such disruption creates uncertainty, fear, and sectoral upheaval. At worst, recent policy decisions lead to death, deportation, disease, disruption of livelihoods, and long-term suffering, especially amongst those most vulnerable.

As we navigate these difficult times together, I share three reflections, with specific suggestions on how each applies to funders, followed by resources and prompt questions. Many of these ideas build on the grantee partner support program I led in a grantmaking foundation, as well as funder guidance I devised during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ! Sensemaking

Changes are happening at a dizzying pace. It's hard to keep up with the blizzard of layoffs, funding freezes, Executive Orders, court decisions, policy changes, etc. We are very tempted to sprint at the start of what is likely an ultra-marathon.

**Funders:** As we try to make sense of these times, listen carefully to grantee partners, without asking for too much of their time. Share what you can with them about your foundation's plans. Stay abreast on developments that affect your particular sector(s) and stay connected with other funders in your ecosystem. Devise longer-term plans to bolster the work that is now threatened. Breathe. This is confusing, exhausting, and heartbreaking for you, too.

#### 🗺 Acting Where You Have Control

It's valuable to consider how your work fits within the social change ecosystem and also to acknowledge and celebrate the roles others are playing. None of us can do everything, but we can all do something.

**Funders:** Beyond listening, act where you have the most control: what and how you fund. Do whatever you can to get more funding out the door. Expedite/accelerate disbursements, minimize administrative requirements for grantee partners, offer extensions, identify which of your partners need the most support right now. Offer opportunities for your grantee partners to connect with one another. Where possible, advocate internally for more flexible funding and/or relief funds wherever possible. Follow movement leadership and invest in long-term solutions. Engage with colleagues and grantee partners with empathy, kindness, and transparency.

#### 👥 Caring in Community

During hard times, community care and support is essential. Now, as in other difficult moments in history, community members are stepping up and leading with compassion and generosity. Folks are organizing – sharing jobs, consolidating resources, offering coaching and therapy, filing lawsuits, coordinating webinars and career-oriented sessions. (I include many of these in the resources below.)

**Funders:** Name and validate the pain people are experiencing. Researchers have long demonstrated that financial difficulties, job loss, legal threats, and relocation are amongst the most stressful life events one can experience. All of these life events are happening simultaneously and globally. Incorporate mental health, physical safety, and security considerations into your work. When working with impacted communities, consider adopting a trauma-informed approach. Resources can be found below.

I welcome additional resources and discussion.

In gratitude,  
Laura Bacon, Strategy Lead & Facilitator, Funder & Wellbeing Group, The Wellbeing Project



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Image Description: Social Change Ecosystem Framework by [Deepa Iyer](#)

### FundWell Essentials

- **Sensemaking:**
  - National Council of Nonprofits updates this [Tracking Executive Orders](#) chart regularly and ran a [webinar on Executive Orders](#)
  - [Resources to navigate uncertainty](#), an incredible compilation by Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, encompassing legal and compliance, scenario planning, financial modeling, nonprofit advocacy, board support and oversight, etc.
  - CGD's [Kehinde Ajayi](#) shares the following analysis: [Dealing with a Double Whammy: The Trump Administration's Directives on Gender and Development](#).
- **Take Action Where You Have Control:**
  - Powerful perspectives on philanthropy in Alliance Magazine from Nina Blackwell, Priya Dhanani and Sadaf Shallwaniin: "[There's a role for philanthropy amidst chaotic USAID funding freeze beyond being a band-aid](#)"
  - During previous phases of political uncertainty, nonprofit organizations [shared suggestions for funders about how they could be supportive, compiled here by Center for Effective Philanthropy](#).
  - Borealis Philanthropy [put forth this call to action](#): "We must align our funding with our values and invest abundantly in those most at risk — today. And tomorrow. And all the days we can. Borealis Philanthropy is issuing an urgent call for amplified accompliceship: The philanthropic sector must be radically coordinated to sustain and scale both rapid response and long-term investments in grassroots movements."
  - As pictured at the opening of this newsletter, [Deepa Iyer's Social Change Ecosystem Framework](#) is instructive to understand various roles needed now
  - For personal actions you can take, take a look at Mer Joyce's work-in-progress [How to Be Now: A Simple and Gentle Guide to a Cruel and Complex Time](#). She [would love feedback](#)!
- **Caring in Community:**
  - Community-offered: [Free coaching for those affected by executive action](#)
  - Community-compiled: [Navigating Crisis: Community Solutions for US Policy Changes & Foreign Aid Halt](#)
  - Community-compiled: [P.S.314 Open Forum Social Impact Sector Job Opportunities](#)
  - Community compiled: [Comprehensive List of Social Impact Coaches & Resources](#)
  - [The Career Pivot](#), by Wayan Vota
  - Learning for Action's [Five Ways Funders Can Support Trauma-Informed Principles](#)
  - [Use a Trauma-Informed Lens for Better Grantmaking](#), by GMA Foundations

### Talking Points: pick one and start a conversation!

- What helps you make sense of complex, rapidly-evolving situations? Frameworks? Reading about parallels in history? Talking to others?
- Which of the social change ecosystem roles do you play? Which roles do you support? Which might you want to pay more attention to?
- How can you amplify and support the helpers? What are sector-level solutions that community members are proposing, and how could you support those?

### Words on Wellbeing

*"I have to remind myself that our pursuit of justice, of equity, is a marathon, not a sprint."*

- *Faisal Al-Juburi, chief external affairs officer of Raices*

*"I'm trying to allow myself time to be with the emotions. I think that oftentimes, our default as women of color is to get distracted or get busy and to try to power our way through hard emotions."*

- *Tamika Lewis, clinical director and founder of WOC Therapy*

*"To keep ourselves grounded, we need to resist the urge to internalize the weight of these policies as personal failures. It's crucial to remain focused on the long view: our collective history of resistance, our shared capacity for resilience and our ability to create change despite being systematically undermined."*

- *Madison Nardy, director of 215 People's Alliance*

*"With all the emotions that are weighing on me, I will create the disruption needed to win bold policies, protect our voices and rights. I am relying on my community, because we are going to need each other now more than ever. Mutual aid groups, checking in on my family, friends and mobilizing collectively gives me hope. "*

- *Ariela Lara, student at UC Berkeley and organizer with the Sunrise Movement*

*"Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world."*

- *Kerry Washington*

*"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"*

- Mr (Fred) Rogers

The first four quotations above are from the Guardian article ["Don't burn out": nine activists and therapists on coping with post-election overwhelm](#).

Looking to go deeper? Explore our [Philanthropy x Wellbeing](#) Hub.

How does your funding organisation define wellbeing? Does it support wellbeing for its stakeholders? [Reflect and share here, in the Funders + Wellbeing Survey](#).

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