

FundWell

A Swift Summary of Wellbeing Stuff for Funders

September edition of FundWell is curated by The Wellbeing Project

Hello FundWell community,

At The Wellbeing Project, we’ve got a big, bold vision: to embed wellbeing into the social change sector. The reality is that making this kind of positive impact takes resources. But let’s face it, securing funding as a nonprofit can be a bit tricky. As the saying goes: “Once you know one foundation... you know one foundation.”

Application and reporting processes can be mired in mystery, sometimes come as last-minute detailed requests or are stretched over years, often pulling us away from the work itself. A single mid-year report can easily swallow 8–10 hours of staff time on our side. Multiply that by X funders and those hours really start to add up.

That’s why this month we want to celebrate foundations who are changing the way they do things. Because when funders simplify applications, trim reporting and reduce administrative burden, they build trust and ultimately, center grantee wellbeing. These are changes foundations have full control over, that save hours of work, lift stress, and set the foundation for deeper, more equitable partnerships. We’ve been lucky to partner with funders who:

- Swap long narrative reports for learning calls and brief financial reports focused on real conversations where feedback flows both ways.
- Accept a brief letter of interest and simplified budget instead of a complicated and long application.
- Provide core, report-free support with flexibility to adapt to unforeseen circumstances or emergencies.

Shifts like these don’t just save time. They build trust, ease stress, and remind us we’re true partners. A learning call creates space for real dialogue which feels very different from submitting a long report and never hearing anything back about it. Small process changes like this have opened the door to genuine learning and deeper relationships with funders which is something we truly celebrate.

— Dana + the TWP team



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Photo Description: Neon Sign with text: "This is the sign you've been looking for"

FundWell Essentials

- This [Stanford Social Innovation Review article](#) “The Rise of Trust-Based Philanthropy” highlights the shift towards trust-based philanthropy, which aims to enhance grantee wellbeing by reducing administrative burdens and fostering equitable relationships between funders and grantees.
- In this [blog post](#) [Claire Poelking](#) highlights how the **MacArthur Foundation** is enhancing grantee wellbeing by reducing administrative burdens and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, allowing grantees to focus more on their impactful missions.
- **Humanity United's** focus on grantee wellbeing involves three moves: swapping stiff written finals for recorded convo-style reports (staff do the typing later), covering translation so partners can speak their own language, and co-defining success up front so orgs chase their own goals instead of donor-made KPIs.

Talking Points: pick one and start a conversation!

⋮ How do you balance the need for accountability with the desire to build trust and flexibility in your grantmaking processes?

⋮ What’s one innovative approach you’ve seen or implemented that significantly reduced the administrative burden on grantees, and how did it impact your relationship with them?

Words from some of our partners

“For several years, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s Civil Society and Leadership Initiative has waived written grant reports whenever possible, opting instead for conversations over Zoom. They are now extending this practice by also waiving financial reports when feasible. Grantees have unanimously expressed appreciation—highlighting the time saved and the value of connecting in a more candid, less formal setting that also allows them to share meaningful feedback.”

Jean K. Ries, David and Lucile Packard Foundation

“Getting rid of reporting may sound radical, but static reporting about what happened and what was done doesn’t fit with a systems change approach. If we trust our grantee partners, let’s focus on working and learning with them, about what matters. Reporting about outputs, activities, actual spend vs anticipated spend, will not help us shift systems. Learning together about what’s changing, why, how, and how can we adjust or adapt as a result of this insight and learning, in real time, will.”

Amy Sutton, Porticus

[Read full article here](#)

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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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