

September's edition of FundWell is curated by the [Participatory Grantmaking Community](#) with support from [Vanessa Stevens](#).

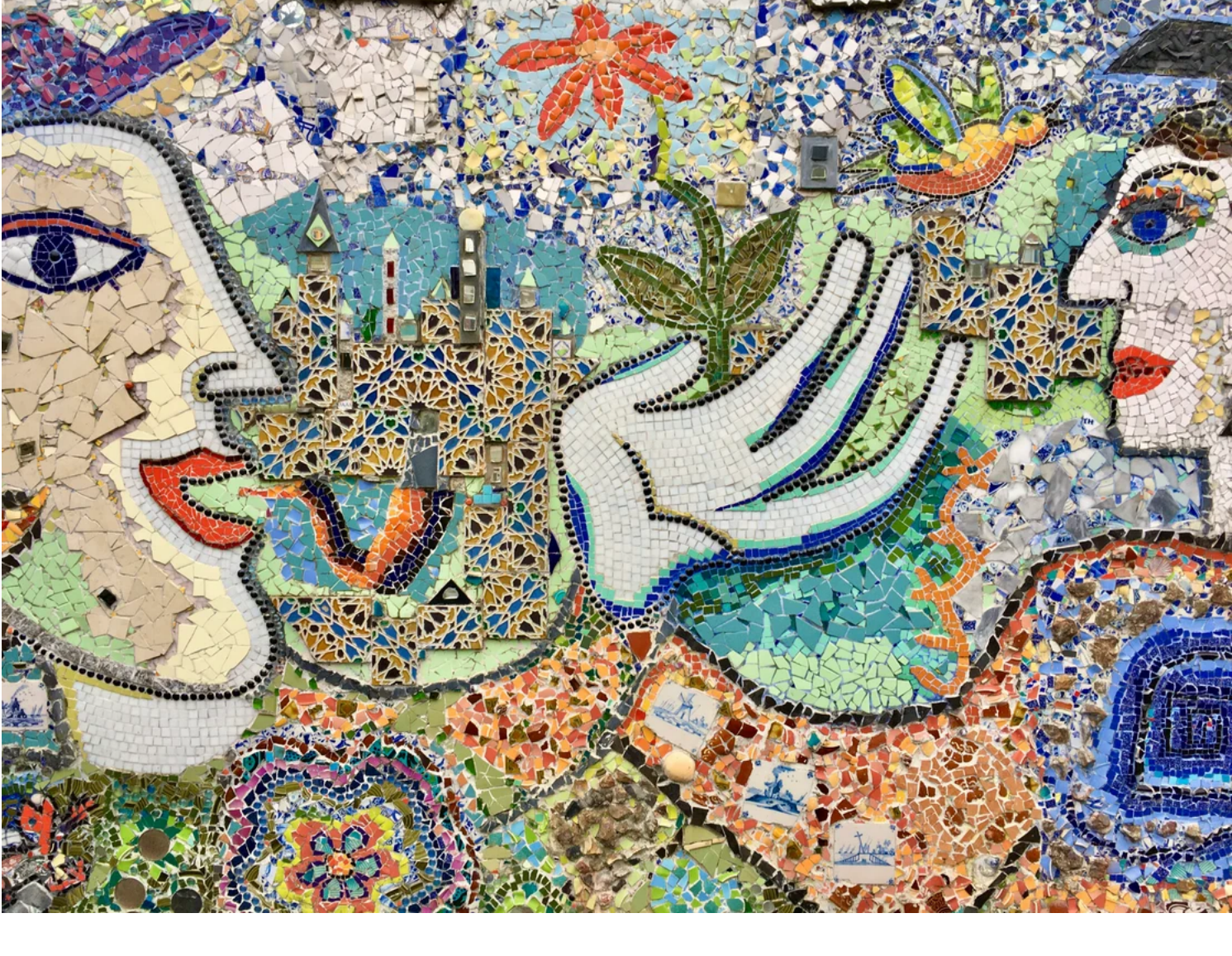


Photo Description: A colorful abstract mosaic city mural depicts two people in dialogue, arms linked, holding an orange flower with a bird flying above it.

Photo Credits: Photo by [Giulia May](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The power to influence decisions that shape our lives and communities is fundamental to our wellbeing.

[Participatory grantmaking](#) cedes decision-making power about funding—including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions—to the very communities that funders aim to serve.

And when grantmaking is done together in community, it can spark collective care, joy, and healing.

What's possible when impacted communities meaningfully engage in funding decisions with real power?

- Individuals with lived experience grow their confidence, skills, leadership, and agency. Research widely shows that generous acts, such as giving time and money, reduce stress and boost happiness.
- Diverse groups engage in joint problem-solving and develop a sense of community.
- Activists weave movement networks, deepening collective care and solidarity as civic space closes.
- Communities facing harm and oppression can find repair and healing when their voices are heard and trusted.
- Funders foster healthier, more equitable relationships with grantees and broader communities, restoring public trust in philanthropic institutions.
- Grantee partners feel proud to be selected by their community.
- More unrestricted resources flow to more relevant, responsive initiatives and nonprofits, resulting in stronger, more enduring outcomes for community wellbeing.

From a [public health strategy](#) at the Scattergood Foundation to reparative philanthropy through the Decolonizing Wealth Project's [Youth Mental Health Fund](#), participatory grantmaking is a political and practical tool to build community power and self-determination for more effective, democratic, and just philanthropy. Participatory grantmaking also requires wellbeing as an essential starting place:

- Contextualized [safeguarding](#), trauma-informed, and security practices
- Intrapersonal and organizational work on anti-oppression and liberation to interrogate traditional narratives about power, knowledge, accountability, and risk
- Resources for inclusion, accessibility, and language justice for full participation
- Equitable [compensation](#) to reduce barriers and recognize lived experience as expertise
- Flexible timelines and objectives so community decision-makers drive the process and outcomes
- Awareness of [money trauma](#) and the [emotional labor](#) involved in making funding decisions
- Facilitation that fosters mutual respect, shared accountability, and healthy conflict transformation
- Care for foundation staff who have lived experience or may experience vicarious trauma

A 2021 [study](#) by the University of Washington found that 88% of large U.S. philanthropic foundations believe that involving stakeholders leads to more effective grantmaking. Yet, only 10% reported enabling grantees or impacted communities to decide how to allocate funding. More recently, a 2025 [national study](#) by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations found that 42% of surveyed U.S. grantmakers reported engaging in participatory grantmaking between 2022 and 2024, an encouraging indication that participatory approaches are becoming more widely adopted.

Wellbeing isn't possible without agency. Participatory grantmaking is a beautiful and joyful process that can be messy and challenging at times, but it's necessary to honour and amplify the power and wellbeing of communities.

— Participatory Grantmaking Community

FundWell Essentials

 Heart-Centered Relationships

In the U.S., [Borealis Philanthropy](#) intentionally built **heart-centered relationships** among committee members who've experienced police violence when its Communities Transforming Policing Fund shifted to a participatory grantmaking approach. With facilitation and healing justice support from the [Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective \(BEAM\)](#), Borealis Philanthropy [intentionally created space to ground and connect](#).

 Inner transformation

In Sierra Leone, the [Fund for Global Human Rights](#) and [Purposeful](#) developed the [Tar Kura Initiative](#), with youth making funding decisions. An external evaluation found that the process built **agency and confidence** among young people who participated as grant reviewers. Young people felt both trusted and capable of making important decisions, leading to growing leadership and activism.

 Caring for nonprofit teams

In the U.K., [Camden Giving](#)'s place-based community panelists met with grantee partners and **observed signs of burnout that nonprofits may not feel comfortable sharing** with funders. The panelists shared their concerns, and Camden Giving topped up their unrestricted grants with an extra 10% restricted for staff and volunteer wellbeing.

 Community resilience

In Australia, the [Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund](#) was established following the devastating 2019-2020 wildfires. An academic journal [case study](#) found that community-led participatory grantmaking fostered a **shared commitment to the community, sparking a renewed sense of hope**. The process deepened existing relationships and created new opportunities for people to support one another.

Talking Points

Continue the discussion with your colleagues:

-  What role does agency play in your wellbeing? How is your wellbeing affected when decisions that impact you are made *without* you?
-  What would be possible if your foundation were more participatory? Explore the [Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Toolkit](#) for ideas.
-  When developing participatory grantmaking programs, how can you go beyond “do no harm” principles to actively nourish community, healing, and joy?

Words on Wellbeing

“What we are doing here, in essence, is a tool that helps us keep open some of the civil society spaces that are closing. Participatory grantmaking helps build resilience and solidarity between grantees and funders, and that is critical when civil society spaces are being threatened.”

Coco Jervis, Mama Cash

“The number of people who I get to work with through participatory grantmaking is joyous. People trying to make the world a better place, and particularly people doing it for the first time, are joyous to be around. For some people, participatory grantmaking is like walking through the wardrobe to a Narnia of social change possibilities. It's a total shift in how someone sees the world and their place in it, from that flows hundreds of ideas for a better world.”

Natasha Friend, Camden Giving in [“Do Participatory Grantmakers Have More Fun?”](#)



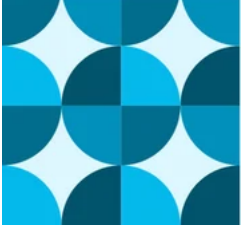
Participatory Grantmaking Community

The [Participatory Grantmaking Community](#) is a global collective of 2,000+ individuals and organizations in 73 countries interested in sharing knowledge and practice to improve participatory grantmaking and encourage its use within philanthropy.

- [Sign up for our community listserv or Slack](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).
- Join our upcoming [webinar on community-led governance](#) on October 22nd.
- Explore our 2025 [Impact Report](#).
- Express interest in our [Start Well Learning program](#) about participatory grantmaking essentials.
- Reach out to us at info@participatorygrantmaking.org. We'd love to have a conversation!



Notes & What's Ahead

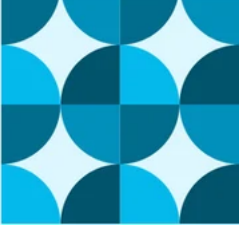


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WELLBEING SHOWCASE

OCTOBER 14, 2026



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