YOUNG FEMINIST COMMUNITY EVALUATION OF FRIDA'S PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING MODEL:
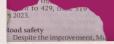## FEEDBACK, LEARNINGS AND POSSIBILITIES

FRIDA

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

FRIDA is continuously exploring new ways to reflect on its model and improve its participatory grantmaking practices. In this report we share the insights generated from an external evaluation process to assess the impact of FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking (PGM). As part of this external evaluation, we wanted to understand what participation means to the communities that we exist to support, where and how this grantmaking model brings joy and excitement, and what young feminist collectives found challenging in the process. Ultimately, we generated knowledge to transform and improve FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking Model.

ABOUT FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, we gathered a team of researchers to carry out a participatory evaluation that engaged the young feminist community of applicants, grantee partners, and advisors. The development of the methodology was a process of reflection and collaboration where all participants were included as active members of the team. We wanted to create a space to learn, exchange and co-create knowledge with everyone involved. The process inquired into participatory decision-making practices in philanthropy, but also provided insights into the nature of young feminist organising and provided an opportunity for FRIDA's community to learn together.

For this reason, we contracted external consultants with extensive experience in participatory research methodologies. In addition to the team of external research consultants, we contracted as co-researchers nine young feminist activists from the FRIDA grantee partner and advisory community. As part of their engagement, co-researchers contributed to the design of the data collection tools – including defining the objectives of each tool and framing the content of questionnaires. The consultants co-designed the methodology along with the FRIDA staff members who have been the most active in building, facilitating and managing FRIDA's PGM process.

The 9 co-researchers[1] were recruited through an open call process and selected based on:

- Their background in feminist organising and participatory methodologies.
- Regional diversity.
- Availability to participate in all key stages of the research.

After the selection, co-researchers were trained in conceptual frameworks around grantmaking, participatory grantmaking and data collection tools. We also led specific sessions to train them in informed consent, reducing bias and tackling the challenges they might experience when conducting interviews online.

Data collection methods included a desk review of FRIDA's data and reports. This entailed reviewing the feedback and voting comments from more than 900 groups collected during the calls for applications in 2016, 2018, and 2020, as well as 34 interviews with grantee partners, 7 interviews with advisers, 5 interviews with applicants, and 158 survey responses.

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KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The youth co-researchers conducted online semi-structured interviews with both grantee partners and FRIDA staff/advisory group members. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour and were carried out in 6 languages. In total, co researchers carried out 34 interviews with grantee partners, 7 interviews with advisors and 5 interviews with applicants who did not receive funding.

ONLINE SURVEYS

A survey was also designed to capture experiences and feedback on participatory grantmaking from a larger number of respondents. The survey was open for a period of 3 months, and it was available in 6 languages. It was sent to all collectives that participated in the FRIDA voting process from 2016-2020. We received 158 responses. A separate survey was also created for FRIDA advisors who were part of the peer review process during these cycles. Since data was collected in different languages to ensure better reach and participation, some of it had to be translated for further analyses.

Data was analysed and triangulated to identify emerging themes, trends, and outliers which were then confirmed with the original data.

CONSIDERATIONS

When the research process was set up in November 2019, it included in-person gatherings for reflection and data interpretation between the co-researchers. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to modify the methodology, and the data collection process was conducted exclusively online.

We also need to acknowledge the power dynamics that exist between FRIDA and the participants (i.e. grantee partners) who were interviewed. If they hope to be funded by donors, participants may be reluctant to share their challenging experiences. The evaluation tried to account for power dynamics by making the process participatory and confidential. FRIDA staff members took part in the co-design of the participatory methodology and supported cross-communication; however, they did not carry out interviews or engage in any data collection activities.

NOTE ON RESEARCH ETHICS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Before starting the research, the methodology development team reflected on and spelled out the potential risks for both co-researchers and other research participants. This included the possibility of feeling uncomfortable answering certain questions and of social risks if any of the sensitive information they revealed was disclosed outside of the research.

Co-researchers signed a consent statement that clarified the objectives of the process, a timeline highlighting key deadlines and the key responsibilities of all parties involved. Co-researchers took on the role of reminding other research participants that they were under no obligation to participate. They told interviewees they could choose not to answer any question or terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable for any reason.

All data collected was securely stored, and the methodology development team protected the confidentiality of all information gathered. Identifying information from participants, including first names and contact details, was gathered only after they consented to participate in this process. Such information has not and will not be disclosed publicly unless otherwise approved by them.

Raw data was fully anonymized for protection. Co-researchers had access to participants' interviews and transcriptions only. Once the data was processed, care was taken to anonymize any identifying markers to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Identifiable data (e.g. voice records) was deleted within three months following the completion of the study. Each stage of the process was in line with FRIDA's Safeguarding Policy.

For the reasons above, the quotes shared in the evaluation are all anonymous.

Suggestion: Read in-depth information on the 'how' in the *FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking Model: How Does It Work?* section of the Resourcing Connection Report.

YOUNG FEMINIST COLLECTIVES' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PROCESS

FRIDAs participatory grantmaking model was co-created by feminist organisers to serve young feminist movements in ways that best allows groups to access funding, learn from each other, and build connections across the regions they work in. Young feminists are present at all levels of FRIDA's work and organization, and participate in strategic, resource mobilization, and funding decisions. Young feminists are staff members, advisors, and board members who steer the strategic direction of the fund.

FRIDA engages young feminist collectives, grantee partners, and those applying for funding, as well as young feminist activist members of the FRIDA Global Advisory Committee in decision-making about its grantmaking process and about where funding goes.

FRIDA's grantmaking model is in an ongoing conversation and reflection with young feminist movements on what a feminist funder should look like. This model goes through an evaluation and adaptation process after each grantmaking cycle to continue to respond to its purpose.

Almost all young feminist collectives interviewed and surveyed as part of this evaluation, regardless of whether they received a grant, felt very positive about FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process. Groups very much appreciated the opportunity to participate, and expressed that the process itself was empowering and rewarding for them. Being able to participate in deciding who should receive funding in their context was overall described as a valuable learning opportunity that made them feel included, recognized, and accountable to other groups and to the movement as a whole.

The majority of the groups shared that it is important to include the young feminist collectives who apply in the decision-making process. They believed that the people who come from these communities should have a say in how funding is distributed, contributing to the transparency of these processes. It made groups feel that they were part of something collective and not just participating in an impersonal application process done behind closed doors where they don't have clarity about the selection process.

"The feminist organizers know most of the problems facing our communities, so they can properly set the agenda that can influence the donors."

"Making sure the approaches/ strategies are set in feminist principles and values, those who know the issues on local grounds are involved in the decision-making process."

"We understand the context, we value and support other people working on grassroots and feminist-rooted work, and we lift each other up."

"The fact that all the participating groups were asked to vote means a lot to us and shows us the intention for community-based decision making."

"The strong side was to feel that we are the ones who decide and not those people who are far from our reality and sit in their office spaces"

In this report, we have also interviewed and surveyed the Global Advisory Community, who participate in the Peer Review Panels that are integral to the participatory grantmaking process to share their feedback and experience. This feedback exchange with the Advisory Community happens more organically and is part of FRIDA's internal reflection process. Most FRIDA advisors who were engaged as part of this evaluation were excited by the opportunity to participate in FRIDA's processes and to guide them in better reaching young feminist organisations.

The overall opinion of FRIDA advisors was that a participatory model was the best way for a feminist fund like FRIDA to decide which groups receive resources. Regarding the process in which applicants themselves decide who receives funding, the majority of advisors agreed with the model and felt FRIDA was doing a good job implementing it. However, some did believe that the groups should be engaged further to ensure they understand which proposals are the best fit for FRIDA and which most need the resources.

APPLICANTS EXPERIENCE WITH FRIDA'S PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING

Most applicants described their participation in decisions about which groups should receive funding as something that made them feel included, recognized, and accountable to other groups and to broader young feminist movements.

Unlike submitting an impersonal application evaluated behind closed doors with no clarity about the selection process, being part of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process made groups feel part of something greater.

Groups regarded the opportunity to read and discuss the work of peers in their region as a learning experience; for this reason, most groups decided to engage in the participatory voting process as a team. They experienced it as a collective process.

Most of the groups also shared that they value including their entire collective in the decision–making process. They believe that the people in their communities should have a say in how funding is distributed, and consider this a contribution to the transparency of grantmaking processes.

"The fact that all the participating groups were asked to vote means a lot to us, and shows us the intention for community–based decision making."

"[the process] gives feminists an opportunity to improve their proposal writing skills, be aware of the work other organizations are doing, and build a sense of solidarity."

Groups also shared that they experienced a great sense of responsibility when engaging in the voting process.

For most applicants, FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process was the first (and for many the only) opportunity to participate in a voting selection process and be part of deciding how funds should be allocated to young feminist movements. For many groups, this experience was both rewarding and challenging.

It was exciting and novel for the groups to be recognized as experts in their work and context. All participants expressed that after their involvement in FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process, they would be willing and eager to participate in other similar processes. In fact, several groups also participated in other participatory processes with FRIDA, which they also described as valuable and inspiring. This strengthened their belief in FRIDA's work and its participatory approach.

"As young feminists, we know better our needs and struggles so maybe we can appreciate better than the donors which groups should be supported. it brings ownership of the process and results are definitely around feminists."

"It was very inspiring and we were very curious to see what other feminist groups in the region were doing. Apart from that, we honestly felt like we were important and contributing to something that we were not given the chance to contribute to before. We took a lot of time to really review the groups as we deemed it a task that took great responsibility."

Most of the groups shared that it was very difficult to pick just five proposals. They felt that most of the groups were deserving and in need of funding.

"The greatest challenge was choosing just 5 projects because all of them were inspiring in one way or another and had an important message/ activity planned."

"The greatest challenge was choosing who to vote for because deep down we wanted all feminists to have access to the sources they need. It was hard to decide."

"We were interested and scared that we were taking part in the voting, this is a great responsibility, at the same time, it is trust and honour for us. It was not easy, because 5 organisations out of 11 or 12 were needed, and the organizations in the selection were all worthy and it was very difficult to choose someone from them."

The process generated in young feminist collectives a sense of confidence, sparking reflection and inspiration.
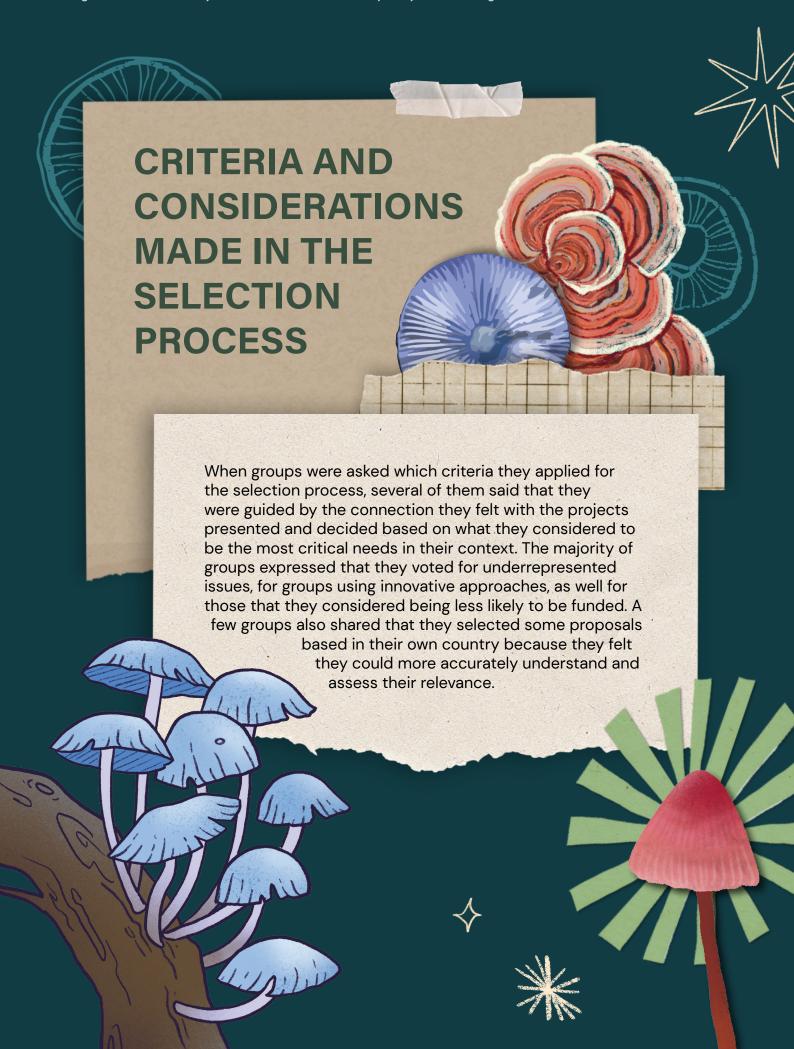
Most were impressed by the work other young feminists in the region were doing and many reported that participating in the process invited internal reflections on their own work. In some ways, being exposed to other proposals improved their work. Several groups mentioned that reviewing the proposals of others encouraged them to discuss within their groups how to move forward with their work and explore different ways of organising.

"It was very helpful and inspiring to know more about the works and future plans of other feminist groups. There were some proposals after reading in which we learned so many new things about different issues in some regions that we have not even heard before."
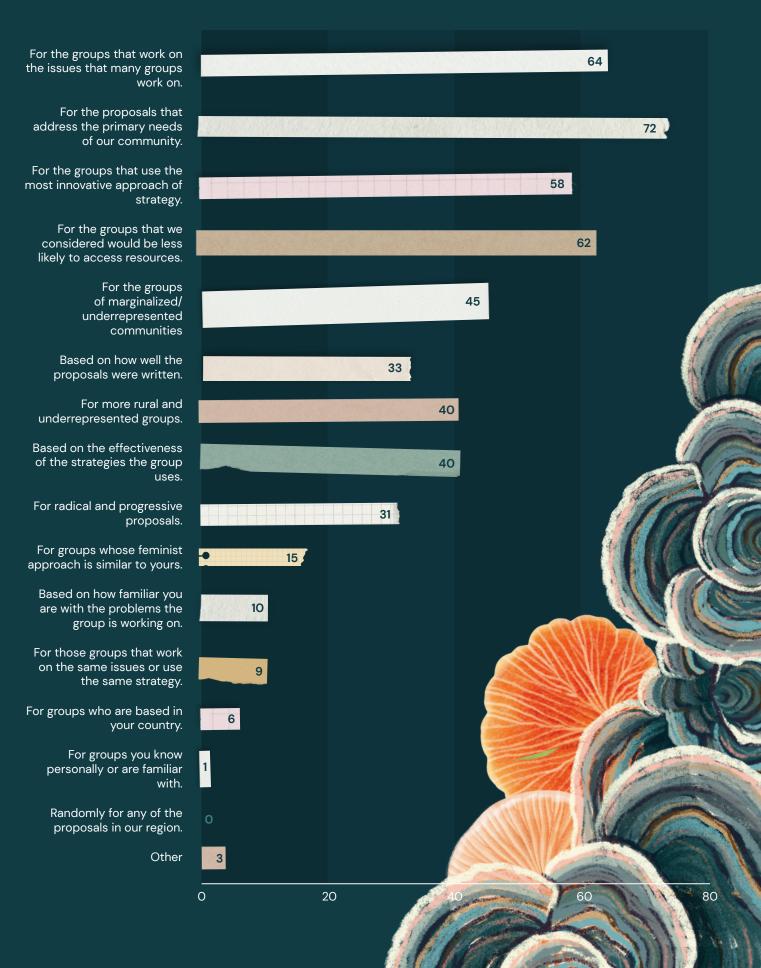
Groups felt that their participation was meaningful and that their votes and feedback have been taken into consideration.

Most of the groups expressed that this process allowed them to see the impact of their participation. Being able to witness the results of their engagement grew their trust in this grantmaking model and they felt that the time and the expertise that they had offered to this process were valued.

"When we were voting, we did not really feel the significance of our votes as we have never faced such a system before and we did not fully understand how this process works. At the end of the voting, we understood how the voting system works and fully realised that our votes were taken into account"

CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS MADE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

When groups were asked which criteria they applied for the selection process, several of them said that they were guided by the connection they felt with the projects presented and decided based on what they considered to be the most critical needs in their context. The majority of groups expressed that they voted for underrepresented issues, for groups using innovative approaches, as well for those that they considered being less likely to be funded. A few groups also shared that they selected some proposals based in their own country because they felt they could more accurately understand and assess their relevance.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria	Value
For the groups that work on the issues that many groups work on.	64
For the proposals that address the primary needs of our community.	72
For the groups that use the most innovative approach of strategy.	58
For the groups that we considered would be less likely to access resources.	62
For the groups of marginalized/ underrepresented communities	45
Based on how well the proposals were written.	33
For more rural and underrepresented groups.	40
Based on the effectiveness of the strategies the group uses.	40
For radical and progressive proposals.	31
For groups whose feminist approach is similar to yours.	15
Based on how familiar you are with the problems the group is working on.	10
For those groups that work on the same issues or use the same strategy.	9
For groups who are based in your country.	6
For groups you know personally or are familiar with.	1
Randomly for any of the proposals in our region.	0
Other	3

As part of the voting process, groups explain their selections. In the voting section, they can address any concerns or questions they have about the groups. In their comments, groups justify their vote by providing contextual analyses and deep reflections on the way they understood the value of – or resonated with – the vision of the proposals they voted for:

Focusing on muslim women's personal stories would bring out the real picture and context from the targeted regions/places. And these stories could be a strong foundation for future interventions on the issue. Also, it is good that they are planning to build the capacity to enable them to channel their learnings with others in their communities. Some of the approaches also seem innovative i.e. breaking fast events." – **South Asia**

As a group, honestly at first we were skeptical because it was hard for us to wrap our heads around food being used as a teaching tool to shift attitudes because it is unprecedented. Like never! ever! nowhere on planet earth in the history of intersectional feminism has this ever been done. Halfway through their proposal we were sold and convinced beyond any reasonable doubts. I personally read their proposal 7 times and the more I read it, the more it reeked of so much potential." – **Southern Africa**

They are the new kids on the block and we think they should be given a chance to effect change in their lives as well as the communities they represent particularly looking at the fact that it is one of the countries that still uphold colonial patriarchy driven anti-lgbt laws and they will need all the help they can get because they will operate for a while being unregistered and that on its own is hard fund. Reading through their proposal summary reminded us of when our group was just a few months old; we were sick and tired of systematic-identity-driven oppressions that we decided to do something about it, to the point where we had so many projects we wanted to launch all at once! We were that determined. The truth is, we all have a starting point and we hope that theirs is through this grant." – **West Africa**

We believe that this project supports the visibility of rural lgbtiq organization, historically forgotten even within the gender rights movements, these movements are usually in urban environments, leaving aside an important segment. It is necessary to support the empowerment of the rural lgbtiq groups as well. It is a new project with important activities planned. It could be an example for other countries in the regions with big indigenous and rural communities. Being a rural organization it might also imply that they have less access to funds. The project has very concrete actions that could create a great impact on the local level." – **Andina Region Latin America**

Across all regions, the majority of the collectives have provided a strong contextual analysis in support of their voting choices. They have been able to envision how the work of their peers is contributing to the broader feminist movements and also to their own organizing. The majority of young feminist collectives have made decisions in the voting process guided by their understanding of the needs in their context and have prioritized the issues that are underrepresented, underfunded, or that are offering new approaches and strategies.

Although the majority of the groups have expressed the importance of young feminists deciding about the distribution of funding and consider themselves knowledgeable about their contexts, many felt discomfort making the right choice when voting for their peers. The majority felt that all groups are worthy of funding and felt uneasy that some might not receive the resources they need. In the analyses of votes and voting comments, it is evident that the majority of groups approach the voting process with responsibility, empathy, and compassion. This has been very much visible in the way they show excitement about the work and potential of their peers as well as the understanding of the challenges they might be facing in their context and how the funds could also contribute to their growth and safety.

THE STRONGEST POINTS OF FEEDBACK AROUND FRIDA'S PGM MODEL

In addition to the model's strengths, we wanted to share aspects of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking model that surveyed groups found were either challenging or could be improved.

SHOULD MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EACH GROUP BE AVAILABLE?

In FRIDA's current participatory grantmaking process, applications that make it to the voting round are anonymized. Many groups felt that having summary descriptions of the work is not enough to fully understand what the group and/ or initiative is all about. This is especially true for groups who were applying for funding for the first time, as they might struggle to present their work clearly and convincingly. Many groups felt that knowing more about the organisations they were assessing could benefit and simplify decision-making processes.

Yet, other groups expressed safety concerns in sharing non-anonymized application material. They felt that receiving detailed information about groups and their work via email could pose a risk to groups operating in restrictive contexts.This may discourage some groups from applying for funding, and be a reason why groups might decide to share little information about their work.

Amongst FRIDA's advisors in the Peer Review Panel, there was some degree of consensus that more background information should be provided to those groups participating in the voting process. Some advisors felt that the decisions were being made based on which groups had the best skills in presenting their work and that this could affect the voting process.

> "I love this decision-making process, but I also feel that groups with fewer language capacities are more vulnerable in the process since they cannot convince others about the importance of their work." – **FRIDA advisor**

> "My recommendation though would be to share more information with applicants to support their voting process. …details about how many grantee partners are currently supported in the region, what thematic and approaches have the most/least representation in terms of grantee partners working on them and maybe even details about the representation of diverse identities in the grantee partners that currently are supported by FRIDA (how many groups are girl-led, how many are intersex-centered, trans youth/people – centred, how many are disability rights-focused). I believe a fact sheet like that would help applicants best understand where funds are most needed and inform their decision based on the accurate knowledge of FRIDA's resources allocation." – **FRIDA advisor**

Yet, other groups expressed safety concerns in sharing non-anonymized application material. They felt that receiving detailed information about groups and their work via email could pose a risk to groups operating in restrictive contexts. This may discourage some groups from applying for funding and be a reason why groups might decide to share little information about their work.

> "Sometimes we cannot apply for a grant for fear of prosecution and if we try to be very anonymous for safety we end up not receiving the grant… we felt that during that process that we had not filled out some of the things for safety and that's why we didn't get the grant."

> "The application process was public which makes you feel unsafe and end up not providing all the information about our work which is a disadvantage because they are scared of sharing much about their work due to security issues".

HOW CAN FRIDA ENSURE THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE VOTING PROCESS?

Some groups recognized that groups may be partial toward those working in their countries, regions, or with similar thematic areas. They questioned how to ensure impartiality in the participatory grantmaking process. In addition, some groups feared that it would be difficult to maintain anonymity: groups who know each other may coordinate to vote for one another, further harming emerging groups with less connection within the movement.

Many groups also expressed concerns that feminist spaces are not always intersectional and feared that groups may not understand the importance of intersectionality when voting. For example, some groups working with trans and intersex collectives expressed concerns that they may be discriminated against, especially given the resurgence of anti-trans rhetoric within the mainstream feminist movement in certain regions.

"Certain issues are prioritized over others, for example, those who are doing subtle and joyful work may not be viewed as needing funds more urgently."

"Lack of exposure to inclusive diversity within the regional feminist spaces – some feminists still have no knowledge and acceptance of transgender diversity within the feminist spaces."

"In any social justice movement, the voices of those with privilege are heard more. It's not a problem until these voices become the only voices. Therefore there needs to be a policy of transparency in these processes and representation of intersectional communities."

Interestingly, in the analyses of vote allocations across contexts many collectives indeed applied an intersectional lens when voting. This is most likely because of their understanding of the dynamics that exist across feminist movements that should be taken into consideration when voting for funding priorities. The majority of young feminists in the voting process recognize these complexities and approach the voting process with intersectional analyses at the center. The majority of surveyed and interviewed collectives have found this to be a potential challenge in the applicant decision-making process and many have expressed a concern if FRIDA as a funder would be able to identify how bias, increased access, and privilege facilitate the outcome of the voting process.

SHOULD PARTICIPATORY VOTING BE THE ONLY SELECTION MECHANISM?

Despite positive feedback on the voting process, some groups felt uneasy about the responsibility of excluding some groups from gaining access to funding. Although certainly a minority, some groups expressed discomfort with voting, questioning whether they would make the "right" decision. The majority felt that all groups are worthy of funding and felt uneasy that some might not receive the resources they need. This shows that groups really show up to this process centering care and feminist solidarity.

When asked how they would envision this process differently, many suggested the need for another layer of review by FRIDA staff and advisors. Not all believed that the decision should be left entirely to the young feminist groups applying for funding. Many of them believed that FRIDA, with their experience and expertise, should also participate in the process and perhaps make the final decisions based on the recommendations made through voting. Some also felt that FRIDA should be more transparent about what happens after the participatory voting process and how it approaches these concerns and deals with bias.

> "Voting should not be the only way a group receives resources. It could be one of the reasons, and organisations voting should be able to point out why they voted. An alternative way would be a committee trained to avoid biases and some background in areas being applied under."

> "We would like to see a collective decision-making process in FRIDA. In our opinion, it could be supported with the votes of experts and advisers of FRIDA."

> "We feel that more than participation, it's the representation within the participants that matters. Is every section of feminists being represented as voters? Do they represent every section of society in a particular region? Are only English-speaking/knowing feminists represented in this process?"

FRIDA in fact does have another layer within the peer review process: following the voting, the young feminists who are a part of the FRIDA Advisory Community and grantee community participate in final decision making calls to review the final voting results and support the final decision process.

The evaluation also engaged the Advisory Community to get a sense of how they understood their role in the participatory grantmaking process. Regarding the participatory process in which applicants themselves decide who receives funding, most advisers agreed with the model and felt FRIDA was doing a good job implementing it. Almost all advisers felt that the grantmaking process was clear and that they had received the necessary and appropriate support from the FRIDA team. However, some did believe that the groups should be engaged further to ensure they understand which proposals are the best fit for FRIDA and which most

need the resources. The overall opinion of advisers was that a participatory model was the best way for a feminist fund like FRIDA to decide which groups receive resources; advisers also felt they could support it with regional expertise and inform final decisions when needed.

> "I absolutely love this process and believe it's one of the ways FRIDA truly lives up to its values and core beliefs. Applicants' votes should have priority over advisors' recommendations given that as activists they are best positioned to identify which proposals are most needed in the region and which approaches are more likely to succeed and yield positive results."

> "FRIDA's participatory process should remain so as to move away from the traditional grant-making process which usually doesn't favour young feminists."

IS THE PROCESS TOO TIME-CONSUMING?

Even though the majority of groups shared that the timeframe they had to read and vote for applications was enough, groups felt it must be acknowledged that it does require a significant time dedication for them to actively take part in such a participatory process.

As mentioned above, groups performed the task of reviewing applications and voting on them with responsibility and care. As such, many groups organised participatory processes where they worked together to review, discuss and assess the applications.

Though most were happy to dedicate time for this and described the process as worthwhile, for some, this was a burden and added to the many responsibilities they already have.

> "Being a low-resource group, in every sense, submitting the application was not an easy process for us, we made our way through the devaluation of our position and social capital. It was fruitful for us to write an application and receive support."

YOUNG FEMINISTS IMPLEMENT PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES IN THEIR ORGANISATIONS

During the evaluation, we had the opportunity to learn about how young feminist groups engage their communities and which organisational systems they implement. We wanted to learn how they make decisions within their collectives and ensure that FRIDA's decision-making processes are familiar and resonant to young feminist organising.
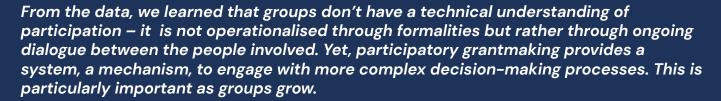
The data informed us that many of the groups don't apply a fixed concept of leadership and participation. When asked how they practice participation, most groups explained that they strive for consensus within small teams of co-leaders who share the responsibility for their organising.

With small teams leading the organisation and participating in its work, these groups often make decisions together, instead of having a single person in charge. They regularly meet to discuss and debate all major decisions within the organisation. Most of the groups that participated in this evaluation said that when participating in the voting process, they met to review the summaries and came to a joint decision on who to vote for. Many also got together to participate in the interview as a group, or, if that was not possible, had meetings prior to the interview to discuss the topic and agree upon an organisational position. In other words, for feminist groups who participated in the evaluation, consensus building is achieved through dialogue and enabled by affective bonds, rather than through specific tools and processes. Interviewees showed great interest in participatory practices and expressed curiosity towards discovering new models. Groups are actively asking themselves: "How do we make our decisions?"

> "So this is what I mean when I say the participatory decision making (…) was sort of baked in and we didn't recognise it because, you know, three of us co-founders would just talk about this over breakfast. It was what was on our mind. It was part of our everyday life."

> "We make decisions collectively, involving all members of the organisation. Moreover, if the decision is important and has an impact on different minority groups, we consult professionals and members of the community."

From the data, we learned that groups don't have a technical understanding of participation – it is not operationalised through formalities but rather through ongoing dialogue between the people involved. Yet, participatory grantmaking provides a system, a mechanism, to engage with more complex decision-making processes. This is particularly important as groups grow.

Participatory grantmaking poses the question: 'who makes decisions and what platforms and processes can we use to make them?' When FRIDA poses this question, it spills over to the grantee partners. It sparks internal reflection, questioning and experimenting, especially because interviewees pointed out that participation within a group becomes harder as the organisation grows. For example, only one group was explicit in saying that their model is hierarchical. They shared that from a team of 3, they grew to a team of 8, thanks to FRIDA's support. As the team grew, it was too hard to manage horizontal participation. They then realised it did not work for them if all people participated in all decisions and instead, they

decided to organise by assigning roles. Many groups considered participatory grantmaking to be inspiring precisely because it invited them to think more critically about their understanding of decision making.

> "In the implementation, it's very participatory. All the team has a say in what to do, what not to do and the suitability of the choices we have. I'm the founder and the CEO but that doesn't mean that my opinion is obligatory. At the end of the day, I don't recall that any decision was made by one person specifically at the beginning period. Another observation is that when we were an initiative, meaning limited resources and activities, participatory decision making was easier. The more you grow the harder it becomes."

Groups tend to involve their communities in decision-making processes.

Most of the groups surveyed also involve their communities in decision-making about their programmatic work, and about how they offer community support and services. They are conscious that if they are creating programs for a certain community, such a community needs to be consulted and involved in decision-making.

> "Among our team, we take decisions in a participatory method, we discuss the needs and requests of the community in one platform, we listen to all the team members and make decisions based on that. Likewise, when we are doing beneficiary selections for meetings we consult the community"

> "We always consult the community before making decisions. We make decisions based on their needs, our experiences, and possibilities."

A few groups are also experimenting with participatory grantmaking internally.

Two groups shared concrete examples of how they tried to implement participatory decision-making practices internally. One group made available small funding and let community members vote and decide which project should get the funding. After ideas were proposed, the group facilitated a discussion so that every community member involved participated in deciding what kind of project to select. The group focused on facilitating the participatory process, while the community members decided everything else. They communicated with their community by saying:
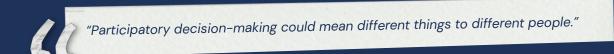
> "We have learned a lot and are now implementing FRIDA's participatory model"

Another group shared that they tried to mirror FRIDA's participatory grantmaking. The group had come together to vote on FRIDA's grantmaking cycle and realised the power of participatory decision-making. So, when they received funding, they encouraged the young girls they worked with to make decisions together about how to spend it. They were curious about the quality of the conversations and noticed that girls made collective decisions with respect.
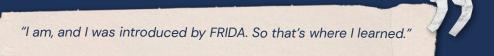
It appears that many groups are discovering what internal organising practices work for them without following a fixed model, but with an orientation towards challenging hierarchical practices. One of the lessons learned is that:

> *"Participatory decision-making could mean different things to different people."*

Broadly, interviewees saw FRIDA as an example to look up to in terms of internal organising and participatory decision-making. Several interviewees stated that the relationship with FRIDA generated interest and learning around participatory practices.

One interviewee, when asked if they were familiar with participatory decision-making practices, responded:

> *"I am, and I was introduced by FRIDA. So that's where I learned."*

Young feminist groups took FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process very seriously and many made significant efforts to ensure that, when participating in the voting process, they included all members of the group (even if that meant incurring costs). Many also expressed that this level of participation continued during the implementation of the work they received funding for, including for financial decisions.

HOW DOES FRIDA'S PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING IMPACT YOUNG FEMINIST MOVEMENTS?

An aspect of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process that participants have expressed the most appreciation about is the possibility for young feminists to see themselves as part of a movement. The types of feminist groups that collaborate with FRIDA tend to focus their resources and energies at the grassroots level. The participatory grantmaking process is built to invite groups to become aware of feminist work in their region, learn from other groups and establish new partnerships.

Most interviewees stated that reading about other initiatives in the region widened their perception of the young feminist movement.

Interviewees explained how reading other groups' project summaries awakened in them new ideas and the desire to tell stories about the movement. Grantee partners resoundingly shared that the FRIDA grant application process helped them value and adopt a wider regional perspective. In one of the voting comments, an applicant described reading proposal summaries as an opportunity to 'see and think with the eyes of other gazes' (translated from Spanish). By witnessing the panorama of different thematics and approaches proposed, another applicant suggested that they acquired a more comprehensive outlook on the many forms of feminist struggle.

Learning more about the work of other groups in the region supported a sense of solidarity.

A widened awareness of their regional contexts made young feminists feel like they are not alone and that their work speaks to the work of other young feminist collectives. Reading about the work of other groups made young feminists aware of the diversity of feminist movements. The realization that many factors that affect young women in their contexts also affect others throughout the world promoted in many of them the need for an intersectional perspective in their work. They also had the opportunity to learn more about the challenges other young feminists face in their countries and regions, and the strategies and approaches they apply in their organization.

The awareness and realisation that other young feminists are doing both similar and different work provides inspiration and a sense of recognition.

Although they were all excited and hopeful that they would be selected, many expressed that if they weren't, they would still feel reassured knowing that the funding would be going to such amazing groups and supporting other young feminists in realizing their dreams. A group interviewed expressed that after reading the summaries from other groups, they were so impressed by their work and the difficult conditions they were working under that they thought about withdrawing their own application because they felt that others needed the funds more than they did.

Receiving the support and votes of other young feminists also made participants feel that there was a collective value to their work. They expressed feeling recognized in ways they would not have if those who had acknowledged their work had been people in far-off offices, disconnected from their realities. Knowing that other young feminists believed in them and valued their work was an important validation and reassurance of the need for their work. By 'seeing each other' through the voting process, groups shifted their perception of isolation and understood differently their social transformation power.

Participatory grantmaking also creates a culture of horizontal power as opposed to top-down power.

Those who received grants associated being selected by the movement with a greater sense of responsibility for their work. One interviewee conveyed the importance of it by saying that, by voting for them, their peers acknowledged and recognised their work as something valuable. The appreciation for their work encouraged them to continue.

Although project summaries are anonymised, FRIDA's voting system includes a mechanism to establish new partnerships. In the voting comments, groups respond to a question expressing whether they want to connect with other groups. Most groups respond yes to this question. Applicants often express interest in following other groups' work and seeing their projects come to life.

Allowing for an expanded perspective thus invites different ways of organising and invites grantee partners to be creative. This is especially important given that traditional funding systems perpetuate a culture of competition amongst groups, which often hinders the creation of partnerships. In traditional grantmaking, the donor establishes a more restricted dialogue between their own values, agendas, priorities, and the approaches and reach of the grantee partner. Instead, participatory grantmaking opens multiple channels of communication simultaneously. Donors exercise great power when they decide how and what to fund. Yet, donors also use financial resources to amplify their power by establishing networks over which they maintain control and manage direct communication. Participatory grantmaking has the potential to share the power of networks with grantee partners and, at the same time, creates more power with grantee partners by fostering movement connections among them.

HOW DOES FRIDA'S PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING MODEL CONTRIBUTE TO FEMINIST PHILANTHROPY?

FRIDA enters into dialogue with current and prospective grantee partner groups from a place of trust and allyship.

This approach is not always common in the philanthropic sector, but it resonates with the organisational cultures of young feminist groups. Young feminists value the quality of their connections and personal relationships. FRIDA's grantee partners describe how friendship acts as a glue: it is an important dimension of their work because it binds the group together.

In the evaluation, grantee partners stressed that their interactions with FRIDA staff are profoundly human – they recognise FRIDA is guided by principles of self and collective care. Sadly, young feminists around the world are used to being mistrusted because of their age and other intersecting factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, race or class. Having an international fund engage with them respectfully reinforces that they do in fact deserve trust and recognition. For example, in contrast with traditional vertical relationships they experienced with other donors, grantee partners valued that FRIDA is open to recommendations and incorporates them in subsequent processes. This made them feel heard and like equal partners in the process.

FRIDA places more attention on the well–being of the group itself than on what they deliver.

During the interviews, grantee partners felt that donors are usually more interested in funding 'projects,' rather than 'groups.' Because of this, donors are less willing to fund operational costs, and this negatively affects groups' capacity to sustain themselves.

An interviewee explained that FRIDA's interest in their group, rather than in their projects, created a sense of group cohesion. They explained that using the language of 'the group' instead of 'the project' created more shared responsibility that shaped how they function as an organisation.

FRIDA effectively accompanies grantee partners in their organisational development journey. In doing so, it becomes an important partner as groups discover their internal culture, self-visioning, and direction.

Receiving a grant from FRIDA provides experience and credibility to groups. Traditionally, grantmakers expect organisations to demonstrate their capacity to implement funding. For example, most donors demand that organisations have a certain level of administrative infrastructure before they can receive funds. The participatory grantmaking model proposed by FRIDA supports groups in becoming more comfortable with managing resources. This is powerful, especially in regions of the world, such as in the SWANA region, where young women are often kept from controlling their own financial resources.

Practice in managing small funds and understanding the grant cycle makes it more possible for grantee partners to apply for bigger funding. To be eligible to apply for funding, most donors require prior experience. FRIDA grantee partners are able to grow their portfolio, gain a better understanding of philanthropic cycles and allocating and managing funds. Many shared that they felt more confident applying for other grants since they could now demonstrate previous experience with managing grants.

FRIDA supports unregistered groups.

FRIDA provides greater flexibility. As a principle, flexibility contributes to improving philanthropic culture overall. Most of the groups that receive FRIDA's funds are 'too small to be funded' by traditional donors. For example, out of the respondents to the PGM survey, 47% were unregistered collectives. Grantee partners have expressed that traditional philanthropic culture makes them feel stressed, uncomfortable and inadequate.

For many emerging young feminist groups, registrations can be inaccessible – this harms their ability to secure funding for their work. Others prefer to remain unregistered as they do not wish to be part of the system, but also recognize that this is a barrier in accessing other resources. Interviewees expressed that not requiring registration is positive and crucial in being able to reach more groups doing powerful work in their communities.

Grantee partners stressed that they feel discomfort about the volatile nature of trends in development: several interviewees pointed out that they have seen donors get fixated on one region/issue/cause/approach, missing the creativity and possibility of what does not fit into their agendas. What we see in the data is a search for coherence within the grantee partners. They reject trying to speak the donors' language and crave frank dialogue with funding partners who could be potential allies.

Grantee partners feel trusted in their interactions with FRIDA.

The data conveys grantees' overall excitement toward participatory grantmaking. By including groups in the decision-making process, participatory grantmaking invites a more horizontal and accessible partnership between grantee partners and FRIDA. Trust is a novelty in philanthropy where, as a norm, control over results and compliance with technical requirements prevails over empathy for diverse experiences and cultural contexts. For example, an interviewee recounts how, for safety reasons, their group decided to suspend activities for a few weeks after a terrorist attack in their city. A donor threatened to pull their funding because they had suspended activities. The interviewee expressed frustration and disbelief sharing this story.

Several interviewees shared their amazement over how much freedom FRIDA gave them to implement their work. Trust is a value that FRIDA cultivates throughout the grantee journey, and that encourages grantee groups to grow their capacity and leadership.

The relationship groups establish with FRIDA – in many cases their first donor relationship – has the capacity to create a template for a new generation of donor- grantee culture. In fact, when a group experiences a more horizontal relationship with a donor in which their opinion and feedback is valued, they might be more likely to give feedback and avoid approaching other donors from the position of having less power. Young feminist groups are more likely to raise their voices to make it known when the system is failing them.

A participatory grantmaking system that doesn't focus on building trust-based relationships where funders offer holistic support and resource the well-being of the grantee partners can still enforce transactional connections. Organising communities should not only take part in deciding where funding is going but in how funders set overall funding priorities and offer funding in a way that sees and resources collectives' individual needs.

FRIDA REFLECTIONS ON YOUNG FEMINIST COMMUNITY FEEDBACK & WAYS FORWARD

In this section, we are weaving together our responses to the findings from the external evaluation as well as the internal reflection. Many of the feedback, stories and experiences that we have received illuminated the impact of resources that inspire connection between and within movements. They have activated our imagination and helped us to envision all the possibilities that could emerge from a participatory grantmaking practice.

FRIDA stays devoted to resourcing the feminist futures that we want to see unfold.

① THE IMPORTANCE OF A HOLISTIC OUTREACH PLAN

FRIDA leans on the broadness of its networks, community, friendships and social media to share information about each call for proposals. On some occasions, we have been able to organize events with the leadership of Advisory Committee members to share more about FRIDA and our funding opportunities with young feminist in their contexts. For instance, one of FRIDA advisors organized a community event in the Pacific region, sharing information with young women and trans youth on how to apply to FRIDA's call for applications. This had a great impact in that grantmaking cycle on the number of groups applying from that region. Similar events have been organized by advisors, staff and grantee partners across regions and also international activist spaces. These events have helped to create connections with communities that haven't had access to FRIDA's funding before and to learn what support they would need to apply. In-person and online events and dedicated outreach processes have also helped us clarify our funding criteria and make our processes more accessible.

Because the scope of FRIDA's funding is so broad, many potential applicants have felt unsure whether FRIDA would be open to funding their organizing. Regional

funding strategies that feed into FRIDA's overall grantmaking also allow us to understand who is missing from our processes, the challenges groups face in different regions when it comes to accessing funding and how to address those challenges. Participatory mechanisms are helpful to diversify our grantmaking process and outcomes, but they can't work in isolation from other tools that make our processes more accessible for a wide range of communities. Regional strategies that inform our outreach plans are key to guiding us in creating conditions for meaningful and diverse participation.

ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY

Interviewees recommended that FRIDA explore whether groups can share their applications in other formats while taking into consideration their security and safety. If this is not possible, FRIDA should be transparent with the collectives about this challenge and why a certain format is required.

While we agree that other formats might open space for more creative connection among those participating, we have also witnessed that consistency in the formatting of applications neutralizes the voting process and decreases bias. Furthermore, not all groups feel comfortable with video formats or could be exposed to risks if videos or photos are shared. So far the written format has offered the most equity for our global, cross-thematic, multilingual participatory process.

The written application format allows us to practice consistency and fairness in a participatory process that engages more than 500 young feminist collectives in every cycle. However, FRIDAFRIDA can explore more creative ways of supporting the presentation of written proposals and propose more detailed guidelines.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

We acknowledge that an application process in only seven languages still creates quite a disadvantage for many young feminist collectives. FRIDA does, however, address language access when creating voting groups. For instance, we will sort groups who have similar writing skills or approaches into the same voting group to ensure there is more language equity. Many have shared that the FRIDA voting process has been an important opportunity for them to learn how to present their work, so it is on us as a funder to improve our language diversity in order to support their participation.

MAKE FEEDBACK AVAILABLE

Whether they received the funds or not, most groups valued taking part in the participatory decision-making process. However, many would have liked to access the feedback they received from other groups. They expressed that it would be very valuable for them to know what their peers thought of their proposal, as it would help them reflect on their work and potentially improve their applications for future grantmaking rounds. This transparency would also help to address the concern that there may be a lack of impartiality when groups know those they are voting for, or vote for applications exclusively because of the region or thematic area in which they work.

Groups recommended that FRIDA might want to observe and consider how applicants compare with one another in the voting process. New or smaller groups might have a harder time articulating what they do and what they hope to accomplish with the funds. FRIDA needs to ensure that these groups receive support when applying. Both emerging groups and those that are more established have a lot to contribute to their communities and to the feminist movement as a whole; it is important to ensure they are both getting fair chances to receive support.

BE MINDFUL OF TIME, INTERNET ACCESS, AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS

A participatory decision-making process in which young feminists have the opportunity to reclaim their power inevitably requires time, effort and resources. Recognizing this at all levels is crucial. Even though the majority of groups shared that time allocated for the voting process was enough, it might still be a challenge for some. The meaningful engagement of young feminists in the grantmaking process should ensure that no extra burden is put on them, as this may significantly restrict the ability of some groups to participate. FRIDA incorporates into their regular practices monetary recognitions for the time and effort of young feminists that participate in this processes. However, engaging in the participatory grantmaking process and in the review of other proposals, for example, represented for some groups an expense both in time and money. FRIDA can experiment with other participatory models that still hold feminist values and support movement connection, without creating an obligation to participate. Instead, it could be a process where information is shared and groups can choose not to participate based on interest.

Taking part in the review process requires internet costs. For some groups, having access to a laptop and to internet access requires significant effort and financial investment.

Many groups also found their transportation costs to be a burden. Groups with only one laptop available, for example, opted to meet face-to-face to conduct the process together – this involved travel costs. Although several groups expressed that they tried to take advantage of regular and/or scheduled activities for which they already had allocated a budget, for some this was not an option.

Thus, FRIDA might consider providing financial support for data packages and transportation costs to ensure that groups in hard-to-reach areas are able to fully and meaningfully participate in the process.

6 ANONYMITY IN THE VOTING PROCESS

In the Voting Stage, applicants get to read anonymized summaries from other applications in their geographic and thematic context. Applicants have sometimes requested the opportunity to learn more about the peer feminist collectives in their voting groups, connect with them and visit their social media pages before voting. However, we intentionally anonymize the summaries to minimize any non-alignment, bias or safety concerns thatcollectives might have. Many of the groups who apply are also newly established and might not have materials to present yet, while others might have a strong online presence that represents their work well. Anonymization also provides an additional safety layer for groups whose organizing might put them at risk, without leaving them out of opportunities to connect and learn from other feminist collectives.

However, FRIDA can explore mechanisms to add more information to guide groups in their voting process without putting applicants at risk or disadvantage.

FRIDA should share summaries from the regional strategies, clarity on who we have been supporting so far, and where we've identified gaps with voting groups. Even though this is available on our website, it may need to be more accessible to support voting decisions if applicants find only voting for 5 groups challenging.

⑦ PROVIDE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE ON THE VOTING PROCESS

Some groups also expressed that they would appreciate more support and guidance from FRIDA on the selection and voting process itself, beyond the voting guidelines. For new applicants, the review and voting process is exciting, but many also expressed feeling nervous because they wanted to make sure they did their best and were fair with those groups whose proposals they were reviewing. Most took this responsibility very seriously and felt accountable to those groups, to FRIDA, and to the movement. Thus, providing extra support to those pre-selected groups participating in the voting process, especially those participating for the first time, would be very valuable. Videos, webinars, guides, test voting processes, examples, etc. would all help groups understand the process better and feel more empowered to participate.

⑧ HOLDING COMPLEXITIES WHILE FACILITATING CONNECTIONS IN THE VOTING PROCESS

In FRIDA's participatory grantmaking open call for proposals, we have learned that applicants truly believe that a participatory decision-making process aligns with their vision for a feminist funding mechanism. However, this doesn't mean that they show up with wholehearted trust and without doubt about the fairness of this model or that all young feminist collectives will apply the same values and principles. It is evident that young feminist organizers recognize the complexity of feminist movements. Young feminist collectives have expressed concern about whether FRIDA will be able to recognize how privilege and access can direct outcomes in participatory processes across different contexts. Many believe that, like any other grantmaking process they've experienced, certain groups might be excluded or there will be more competition than solidarity. When the lived experiences of organizers are not present in resourcing related   decisions, it is impossible for those decisions to be made from an intersectional perspective. This perspective is key however in building, practising and expanding a relationship of trust, cooperation and interconnectedness within the participatory grantmaking process and then in relationship with the funder.

However, the final outcomes of the voting process often indicate that groups apply an intersectional lens when voting for their peers. They ensure that underrepresented groups and those with less access to funding in their context are supported. Still, even though the groups recognize the value of their peers reading and voting for their work, they feel the need for another layer of review by FRIDA staff and advisors that mostly focuses on ensuring that concerns around issues such as representation are taken into consideration. They believe that FRIDA also needs to build understanding about each context its funding reaches in order

to organize this voting process and make sure that those without much access are fairly considered. Collectives have requested that FRIDA create a system that can recognize when groups experience disadvantages in its participatory grantmaking process and when FRIDA's engagement is needed. For this reason, we believe that a participation alone is not enough and that this process requires an informed and caring structure to facilitate meaningful connections.

ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES THIS CAN LOOK DIFFERENTLY, FOR INSTANCE:

In West, East, Central and Southern Africa, the voting process is organized in English and French sub-regionally and thematically. For instance, there are separate voting groups for LBTQ+ organizing, FGM/child-marriage-focused collectives, climate and environmental justice, art, etc. Given how many proposals we receive, this has allowed for more diverse strategies and approaches to be voted for and supported. In Latin America, the voting is sub-regional, country-based and also addresses the access of large cities and more remote contexts. We have also established priorities around supporting Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizing. The process is also organized in Spanish and Portuguese.

In the Caribbean, the voting process is in three languages, which means that everyone's proposal most likely needs to be translated into all three, which may require more thought.

Southwest Asia and North Africa have the voting organized according to sub- region, country, language access, and large cities vs more remote contexts.

Young feminist collectives who apply from the countries that are perceived as part of different regions get to choose the region that they feel most connected to, instead of being placed into regions based only on geography. There are shared histories that connect different contexts, communities and cultures that aren't just about geographic proximity. This disrupts dominant narratives about regions, borders and connection, and decolonizes the idea of distribution of wealth and resources. In many reports on social justice funding, the data is divided per region, which does not take into consideration which countries, contexts or thematics within those regions are continually underfunded. There are many realities that exist simultaneously, and we can learn and address different experiences in community with each other during the participatory grantmaking process.
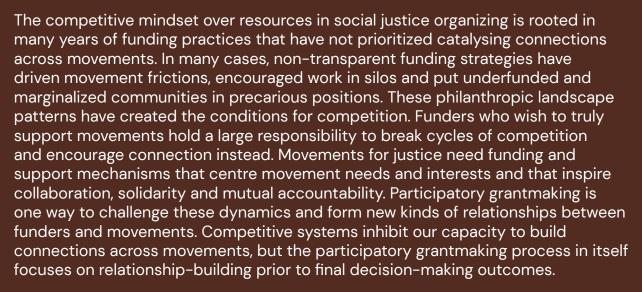
9 HOWEVER, IT IS NOT NECESSARILY A NON–COMPETITIVE PROCESS

Participatory grantmaking can help us practice more collaboration and solidarity when making decisions about resources, but won't feel non-competitive for everyone. Participatory decision-making is not necessarily the opposite of competition, and participation alone without a caring infrastructure won't inspire solidarity. If we don't recognize that participation and competition can co-exist in our process simultaneously, we fail to acknowledge the dynamics imposed by oppression and inequality that don't just disappear even in a system that at its core intends to challenge those dynamics.

10 REBUILDING TRUST IN OUR CONNECTIONS

The competitive mindset over resources in social justice organizing is rooted in many years of funding practices that have not prioritized catalysing connections across movements. In many cases, non-transparent funding strategies have driven movement frictions, encouraged work in silos and put underfunded and marginalized communities in precarious positions. These philanthropic landscape patterns have created the conditions for competition. Funders who wish to truly support movements hold a large responsibility to break cycles of competition and encourage connection instead. Movements for justice need funding and support mechanisms that centre movement needs and interests and that inspire collaboration, solidarity and mutual accountability. Participatory grantmaking is one way to challenge these dynamics and form new kinds of relationships between funders and movements. Competitive systems inhibit our capacity to build connections across movements, but the participatory grantmaking process in itself focuses on relationship-building prior to final decision-making outcomes.

Participatory grantmaking practices have the potential to challenge the competitive and neoliberal capitalist way of working in isolation from community and other organizing. They remind us of solidarity economies and principles of collaboration that sustain our work and allow us to practice at a small scale what we hope to grow into wider movement practices. FRIDA's process is about learning to make funding decisions collectively, knowing that all organizing is interconnected and equally important. Funders need systems that facilitate learning, exchange and active solidarity and inspiration, while recognizing that all collectives that apply for funding might equally be needing the grants. Understanding this can help funders grasp the full potential of participatory grantmaking, while acknowledging and addressing its limitations.

VOTING FEEDBACK: WHEN RESULT MATCHES CONTRIBUTION

When communities connect with the impact of their engagement in the grantmaking process, it can fundamentally change how they relate to their power and their participation in collective action and transformation within their communities. Young feminist collectives get to witness and be in relationship with the impact of their participation, and also that there is some level of movement alignment in the results that emerge. The voting process is very diverse and involves many radical and underfunded organizing strategies, innovative approaches, or solutions that might seem risky or may commonly not receive support through traditional funding. A transparent, movement-driven participatory process intervenes in organizing dynamics that are affected by interlocking systems of oppression and funding that reinforces competition. We interrupt these patterns and expectations by creating space to witness interconnectedness and practice compassion, accountability and active solidarity.

Even though among applicants there are many differences in approaches, priorities and alignments, some shared framework around values and principles emerges in the final voting decisions. The opportunities and challenges that groups have shared with us have been consistently based on values of safety, mutual respect, connection and liberation. Supporting young feminist collectives to experience this synergy and values alignment is just as important as the decision-making outcomes.

Even when there is a feeling of competitiveness, we witness the compassion and empathy that guide groups' approaches to this decision-making process. This shows up in the voting rationale that they share for each group they gift their vote to. In their rationale, groups always apply context analyses and intersectional lenses about work that is under-resourced in their region and which collectives funders may be less likely to prioritize. This voting feedback not only influences the final results, but also some of FRIDA's overall funding criteria. For instance, income generating activities have existed separately from FRIDA's funding criteria for a long time. However, we saw in one voting process that a group who wanted to open an income generating queer space to support their LGBTQI+ work received a vote from everyone in their voting group. All collectives who voted for them emphasized how important autonomous financing is in their context and that more projects like that should be supported. Now, FRIDA does fund income generating activities that are resourcing groups' activism. This is just one of many examples of how this voting process changes our strategy and criteria and allows us to apply more context-specific approaches based on this applicant feedback.

12 OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE PARTICIPATION

Almost all aspects of the participatory process happen in an online space. We have learned that technology can assist and facilitate connections that still feel close and tangible. When we reflect on our first grantmaking cycle in 2012 and many of the following cycles, lack of internet access and disproportionate access across regions created major challenges and disadvantages for young feminist collectives. Even though this gap might be smaller today, many groups still depend on accessible internet connection to participate in this process. Collectives in countries where internet access is controlled by oppressive regimes or sanctioned, for example, are not able to safely access and apply through our online system even though it is built with safety protocols. As we reimagine what is possible beyond the current conditions, we are developing tools to navigate these challenges and facilitate meaningful participatory decision-making processes in an online space.

13 MAKE THE MOST OF MOVEMENT-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the voting process, groups can share if they would like to be connected with any of the other groups. Most of the groups request the opportunity to engage with other feminist groups. It might be interesting to create an online community to facilitate collaboration, exchange, and movement building. This could include not only FRIDA grantee partners but also, with their consent, those applicants that are not selected to receive funding.

It is often the case that groups may be working on similar issues. Some advisors and applicants alike also proposed the idea that groups working on similar or complementary issues could collaborate on grant applications or initiatives. Finally, interviewees expressed that it was also important for groups that FRIDA supports them in connecting with other donors who may be interested in funding their work.

14 MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION NEEDS INTENTIONAL FACILITATION

FRIDA funds young feminist organizing that is multilingual, cross-thematic, interconnected within different movements and abundant in strategies and approaches. Although young feminist organizers globally might be facing similar realities and challenges in their organizing, young feminist movements are not homogeneous[2]. Creating a participatory grantmaking process that can respond to the many dimensions of feminist organizing globally has been much more challenging for us than focusing on a specific thematic or geographic context.

FRIDA's model is exploring different approaches to participation across socio-political contexts, focus areas and language barriers for the more than 500 applicant proposals that end up in the voting process during each cycle. In every grant cycle, we adapt and change the model in each of FRIDA's focus regions to address their specific challenges. We must explicitly map out the internal infrastructure that holds this participatory process in order to facilitate young feminist movement connections and exchange and address complexities with transparency and care. It is also important that the knowledge that is shared in the participatory grantmaking model never just stays within the realm of grantmaking, but is in dialogue with all other pieces of FRIDA's work.

15 OPPORTUNITY FOR JOINT ADVOCACY AND KNOWLEDGE-EXCHANGE

FRIDA's grantmaking model in many ways responds to the participatory values that young feminist collectives express in their work and organizing. Many groups have shared that they have learned from FRIDA's participatory decision-making model and created similar practices when they were in a position to distribute resources through sub-granting or other processes. One of the advisors interviewed shared that based on FRIDA's model, they found their way to their own participatory grantmaking model in co-creation of another feminist fund in their region. Many advisors and grantee partners have also participated in participatory grantmaking processes of other funders where they also shared their knowledge acquired through FRIDA's grantmaking model and they got an opportunity to influence other donor-driven processes. There is an opportunity for FRIDA to reflect on these practices together with those who have been part of its participatory grantmaking process and track the impact of the model beyond the context of philanthropy. For many this model has inspired more participatory thinking and collaborative approaches to organizing and working together and this is something FRIDA can continue to be connected to and learn from.

16 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATORY FUNDING STRATEGIES

Young feminist leadership has been key in creating strategies that are aligned with the needs of global young feminist movements and their shifting realities. The majority of FRIDA's processes, especially our programmatic work and funding decisions, strategy and criteria are open to guidance, feedback and input from the young feminist community. However, we are aware that when funders request community participation in their decision-making processes, it can add extra labour on organizers who are often already overburdened. To offset this, we create our funding strategies with movements, so that even when participation in funder processes are too overwhelming, their needs are still embedded into our process and the final decision-making. Funding strategies that are generated through community participation might take time to develop, but they allow us to save time in the implementation stage.

A strategy created through a participatory approach also seeds and cultivates trust in FRIDA's decision-making process, especially when no direct participation in the final decisions is possible. All decisions require a different pace, so that trust and pre-discussion about strategy helps us to save time and make decisions more quickly.

FRIDA's strategy to holistically support young feminist movements should always be created with:

- FRIDA Global Advisory Committee input and recommendations
- FRIDA staff cross-team input and recommendations
- Data gathered from every call for applications: voting process and overall feedback
- Data gathered from grantee partner feedback: surveys and reports
- Inputs from the thematic and regional funding strategies

Different options for young feminist community participation in the process should be available. Data shows that young feminists do care about the final decisions, even if they do not always have the capacity to participate, so we could encourage more engagement by opening up more possibilities for how to participate.

FRIDA builds a library of young feminist knowledge annually that allows for deeper thematic and geographical context analyses. Therefore, FRIDA is responsible for the data it receives from young feminist communities, and should continuously embed this in its decision-making processes.