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RESOURCING CONNECTIONS: REFLECTIONS ON FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PRACTICE

CONTENTS

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Participatory Research Team	1
Introduction	2
Language Justice	3
It takes a village! Appreciation to the feminist global community	4
How we learn from participatory grantmaking practice	5
How FRIDA Adopted Recommendations From the 2015 PGM Report \ldots	
Diversity and Outreach	
Technology and Access.	
Data Systems and Analysis	
What Are We Exploring In This Report. The Key Questions	
Key Learnings	
Recommitting To A Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice	
Grounding Our Practice In Feminist Values And Principles	
Participatory Processes Are Co-Created By And	
For The Communities They Serve	
Participatory Practices Thrive Within An Intentional And Flexible Struct	
Building Access And Conditions For Participation In Our Processes	15
Intersectionality At The Foundation Of The Participatory Grantmaking Process.	15
Participatory Decision-Making Processes Reflect On Power in All its Fo	
Trust As An Outcome, Not An Assumption	
Practicing Feminist Solidarity And Accountability	
Meaningful Participation Strengthens Movement Connection	
Holding Space For The Complexities Of Participation	
Learning Together And Reporting Back To Young Feminist Movements Sustainable Systems And Practices	
FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking Model: How Does It Work? FRIDA's Approach To Supporting Young Feminist Organizing	
FRIDA's Grantmaking Strategy.	
Grantee Partner Journey	
Participatory Decision-Making Approach	
Who Is Part Of The Participatory Grantmaking Process?	

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	Open Call For Applications Participatory Grantmaking Model	
	STEP 1: Young Feminist Collective Submit Proposals	
	STEP 2: Screening Process	
	STEP 3: Young Feminist Collectives Vote	.27
	STEP 4: Final Decision And Grantee Partner Announcement	29
	ung Feminist Community Evaluation Of Frida's Participatory	
Gr	rantmaking Model: Feedback, Learnings And Possibilities	
	About Feminist Participatory Research Methodology	.32
	Young Feminist Collectives' Engagement With	22
	The Participatory Grantmaking Process	
	The Strongest Points Of Feedback Around FRIDA's PGM Model	
	Should more information about each group be available?	
	Should participatory voting be the only selection mechanism?	
	Is the process too time-consuming?	35
	How Does FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking	~~~
	Impact Young Feminist Movements?	36
	How Does FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking Model	20
	Contribute To Feminist Philanthropy?	30
	IDA Reflections On Young Feminist Community	
Fe	edback & Ways Forward	
	The Importance Of A Holistic Outreach Plan	
	Ensure Accessibility	
	Language Access	
	Be Mindful Of Time, Internet Access, And Transportation Costs	
	Make Feedback Available	
	Anonymity in the voting process	44
	Provide Support And Guidance On The Voting Process	45
	Holding Complexities While Facilitating Connections In The Voting Process	45
	Rebuilding Trust In Our Connections	.47
	However, It Is Not Necessarily A Non-Competitive Process	.47
	Voting Feedback: When Result Matches Contribution	48
	Make The Most Of Movement-Building Opportunities	49
	Opportunities And Limitations Of Online Participation	49
	Meaningful Participation Needs Intentional Facilitation	50
	Opportunity For Joint Advocacy And Knowledge-Exchange	
	The Importance Of Participatory Funding Strategies	
TL	IS PUBLICATION IS IN CONVERSATION WITH	.52

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PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH TEAM

RECOMMITTING TO FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PRACTICE; FRIDAS FUNDING MODEL, LEARNINGS, AND REFLECTIONS:

Project Coordinator And Writer: Jovana Djordjevic Reviewers: Mariam Gagoshashvili, Paige Andrew, Veronica Veloso Editor: Kim Kaletsky

YOUNG FEMINIST COMMUNITY EVALUATION:

FRIDA Grantee Partner Co-Researchers: Priyadharsini Palaniswamy, Jade P. Leung, Tatjana Nikolic , Deniz Nazarova, Aline Izaias Lucio, Dina Abdel-Nabi, Mona-Lisa Danieli Mungure

FRIDA advisory co-researchers: Twasiima Tricia, Hazal Atay Research Team Coordinator: Jessica Gonzalez Sampayo Feminist Participatory Research Methodology: Jovana Djordjevic, Kavita Devadas DATA Collection And Analyses: Recrear International Writer: Gioel Gioacchino, Recrear International Design: Marina Milanovic (IG @milanovicmarina) and Diana K. Cury.

RESOURCING CONNECTIONS AND YOUNG FEMINIST COMMUNITY EVALUATION RELAUNCH TEAM:

Editor: Amanda Hodgeson Designer: Mrinalini Godara

Appreciation to Current and Former FRIDA Staff Members for Their Inputs and Feedback: Veronica Veloso, Paige Andrew, Khensani Charllote Nhambongo, Maria Diaz Ezquerro, Mayra Zamaniego Lopez, Di Wang, Saadat Baigazieva, Mbali Khumalo, Senda Ben Jebara, Marta Music, Maryam al-Khawaja, Maria Eugenia Olmos, Leticia Vieira da Sailva, Boikanyo Modungwa, Nada Chidiac, Amanda Hodgeson, Maame Akua Marfo

To learn more about FRIDA's current participatory grantmaking system and process, please reach out to: Paige Andrew paige@youngfeministfund.org Resourcing Connections: Reflections On Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice

Back to Contents | 2

INTRODUCTION

This report emerged as part of a three-year long documenting process of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking model. It gathers our learnings in a comprehensive resource that can act as a compass for the next phase of this grantmaking model's journey. Having conversations with the young feminist community about participation in physically divisive times has brought new meanings to our practice. It has reminded us that our lives are interconnected and that different realities can and do coexist. It has expanded our perception of what we already know and brought to our awareness where we still need to grow. This perspective has created new life-enhancing opportunities to radically transform how we share movement, community space and the planet with each other. It has reminded us that the power of feminist movements is rooted in authentic connections that can transgress borders and feel potent and tangible even in virtual spaces.

As we reflected on our participatory grantmaking model, we also needed to reflect on FRIDA's role and responsibility in creating and facilitating spaces for participation in instances of both movement synergies and misalignment. We needed to name truths about the interlocking systems of oppression that build inequity and dynamics of power into our movement webs and expand distances between us. We learned from feminist movement caring practices where we needed to reflect on the complexities of this model to truly embody its values.

We entered this research process with full openness to the notion that the grantmaking model that we have been developing for many years and held close to our hearts might require a deep transformation. As part of our ongoing learning process, we wanted to uplift and solidify what has brought joy in this process, as well as to change and compost anything that needs to be left behind. The knowledge that we are sharing in this report is tentative and ever-evolving because our realities might shift and ask for change again in the future. However, there are feminist principles and values that will always guide FRIDA's grantmaking model and help us to facilitate a transparent, equitable and diverse young feminist movement-driven participatory process that brings organizers closer to each other. This report attempts to capture all the pieces of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process and the vastness of young feminist knowledge and experience. It goes beyond a participatory funding toolkit and instead dives deep into self reflection about the politics, principles, and values that are built into this participatory grantmaking practice. As part of our accountability to the young feminist movements, we are sharing in more detail about the mechanism behind this model, its benefits as well as challenges and limitations.

Everyone involved in creation of this report are feminist activists from the Global South and the East. We hope to not only shift the power dynamics surrounding funding decisions, but also to decentralize narratives about who holds knowledge about and solutions for transformative community participatory practices. This report is dedicated to all young feminist collectives that have ever applied to FRIDA, supported their peers with their time and presence and trusted us to facilitate this process.

These learnings will guide FRIDA's feminist participatory grantmaking practice to resource young feminist organizing, wellbeing and connections and we will continue to report to the young feminist movements about how we implement them.

LANGUAGE JUSTICE

We acknowledge that even though our grantmaking process is facilitated in multiple languages, the language we use to communicate our work to the world is English. This language is not only overrepresented in our communication, but it can also introduce concepts that shape our imagination and how we envision our organizing, and impact and spur changes that do not necessarily speak to the realities of our communities across different contexts. The domination of one language can also impose culture-specific concepts that might not accurately describe movements' organizing experience. This can further create immense power dynamics that prioritize one knowledge source over others, as the language used in funding processes has the power to set agendas and direct our strategies and our work. This report also contains concepts that allow us to communicate some ideas more quickly with the philanthropic community, but those same concepts don't necessarily translate to the Global South and East socio-political contexts. Feminist organizers are continuously asked to translate their realities to the language used within philanthropic frameworks, which is sometimes too narrow to fit their vision. This report is written by non-native English speakers and we understand the challenge of language accessibility and representation. For this reason, we kept some concepts descriptive in the report. A summary of this report has been translated into Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, French and Spanish.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE! APPRECIATION TO THE FEMINIST GLOBAL COMMUNITY

This report includes conversations, stories, memories, knowledge, and experiences from an expansive community of feminist activists who have been part of creating FRIDA over the years. FRIDA would not exist today without the intentional participation of feminist activists across the world who gifted us their time, knowledge and love to create this young feminist fund. We hold deep gratitude for every feminist activist that has been part of the FRIDA Global Advisory and Grantee Community, who continuously show up to FRIDA's participatory processes and believe in its impact. We are also grateful to the staff members who support this process and bring their expertise into it. We are grateful to all young feminist collectives who have been part of FRIDA's grantmaking

process, and who shared their feedback and dreams for FRIDA's future. Also, big appreciation to our teachers, those that came before us and those that we continue to learn with within the network of feminist funds globally that have shared their knowledge and strategy spaces with us.

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HOW WE LEARN FROM PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PRACTICE

A participatory grantmaking process that involves young feminist organizers in staff, Advisory and grantee community, as well as in the young feminist collectives that apply, allows us to learn, co-create knowledge, and build on expertise and solutions together with feminist movements. We get to reflect and learn during each stage of this process, and this knowledge shapes and nourishes our programmatic work, how we plan, distribute and mobilize resources, and how we communicate our vision, commitments and learnings with the world. FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process creates a space for learning, exchange and feminist movement connection.

In our 2015 report on FRIDA's participatory grantmaking approach, <u>Letting The Movements</u> <u>Decide</u>, we gathered some insight on what was working and what needed to change in the participatory grantmaking model for our open call for applications. From 2015 onward, FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process has been modified based on the feedback gathered from the participants in that report, together with the data from our internal evaluation in each cycle. Today, we are reflecting more on what we have achieved so far, and what possibilities exist for the future of this model.

HOW FRIDA ADOPTED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2015 PGM REPORT

Diversity and Outreach

We have co-created regional and thematic funding strategies that guide us in facilitating an intersectional participatory approach for each of the regions where FRIDA funds. These tailored strategies help us understand what conditions we need to set up for certain communities to access FRIDA's application process. We simplified and improved our grantmaking, identified gaps, and became more intentional in our communication and outreach process. This has resulted in larger numbers of radical young feminist organizers receiving support from FRIDA and recognizing FRIDA as a potential funder that can support their work. In the future, we hope to have more on-the-ground outreach and further improve the accessibility of the model.

Technology and Access

One of the biggest changes to our model since 2015 is that we reimagined how to bring a participatory grantmaking model to life on an online platform. We have moved away from unsustainable tools like Excel sheets and designed a comprehensive system that supports our grantmaking process at every stage. For now, the model is hosted via SmartSimple and is set up with multiple portals for different communities, which facilitates communication across the platform. It was key for FRIDA grantmaking staff to be involved in the design, and to put a lot of thought into each stage of our grantmaking process. The platform is available in all FRIDA languages and connects all stages of the process from application, to the Peer Review Panel process, to applicant voting, to cross communication and due diligence, and to grant payments.

Data Systems and Analysis

FRIDA has published many reports on young feminist organizing and trustbased funding, and created a strategic plan together with young feminist organizers. As we learned more about FRIDA's role in global philanthropic advocacy, we have improved our data analysis systems through <u>a new</u> <u>strategic MEL framework</u>, and our grantmaking evaluation process. We have created participatory funding strategies where data and information from grantmaking cycles flows across our work and informs the way we support young feminist organizing. The data that we receive supports us in the longterm to make movement-informed decisions, even when movements don't have capacity for direct participation.

Voting System

Since 2015, we have made many changes to the voting process and to how voting groups are organized. We have created a comprehensive voting system that can navigate complexities while still supporting meaningful connections and the funding of diverse young feminist organizing. There is also another layer of review of the final decisions, which helps to support groups that might face disadvantages in the voting process. We reflect on the voting mechanism in this report as well, and we intend to change this system in the coming years.

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WHAT ARE WE EXPLORING IN THIS REPORT

Even after over a decade of participatory grantmaking practice, we engage in every grantmaking cycle with curiosity and with full openness to the notion that what we have been planting and nurturing might no longer be serving young feminist movements. We have asked the young feminist community of applicants, grantee partners and FRIDA advisors what segments of FRIDA's model brought joy and excitement, and what they found challenging and think should be reassessed or changed in the future.

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We have collected data from application forms, feedback forms, voting forms, feedback on the voting and FRIDA's process, email communications and Q&A, outreach processes, regional strategies, grantee data and other FRIDA research and reports. All the data that we have received has been read with a feminist lens and an understanding of how interlocking systems of oppression influence our data. We will also be sharing findings beyond numbers. We have learned that numbers reveal the success of this participatory model, but that the barriers even just a couple of groups could experience around access, bias and capacity can challenge the advantages of using numbers. We wanted to go deeper, questioning what participation means to the young feminist collectives that we exist to support, and what the impact of this model could be on those that participate.

THE KEY QUESTIONS

Q. What is the impact of funding practices where communities decide what is important to fund in their organizing context? What are the challenges and complexities of participation and connection, and how can we address them?

Q. In what ways can a participatory grantmaking practice provide a space for young feminist collectives to connect, practice solidarity and build movements? How can we make this process more intersectional?

Q. What young feminist solutions and tools are used to transform power structures in philanthropy and distribution of resources? How do young feminists envision a feminist funding mechanism to look like? How are young feminists collaborating with other groups and how do they involve communities in their work?

Q. What has shifted in FRIDA's grantmaking model and grantmaking strategy during our years of facilitating a participatory model, and how has involvement of the communities we fund reshaped the FRIDA model?

Q. What are the technical, political and ethical aspects of FRIDA's participatory model and its impact? What are the limitations of this model? What solutions exist for improvement?

Q. What are the challenges of implementing a participatory model of grantmaking, and what structure do we need to put in place to practice feminist values while facilitating a participatory process?

KEY LEARNINGS

What we have learned confirms that FRIDA's grantmaking model aligns our decision-making to our feminist values and principles and fulfills its main purpose-building movement connection, power and mutual accountability.

- Feminist participatory decision-making models are already a feminist movement practice and the vision movements have for a feminist funder.
- Participatory grantmaking deepens our understanding of diverse perspectives and realities and how to most effectively support young feminist organizers across political, social and economic contexts.
- Movement-building in an online space is possible. Facilitating meaningful connections and aligned visions allows us to uplift and be present for each other across geographies.
- After connecting with the impact of their participation, groups are more willing to participate in more of FRIDA's internal participatory processes and to apply participatory strategies in their own work.
- Recognizing a common vision that we are interconnected, and that sharing community and being in right relationship matters, and challenges competitive mindsets.
- Meaningful and accessible participation allows for young feminist groups to learn and connect with each other and to develop awareness about belonging to a larger movement. This experience has the potential to expand our empathy, compassion and solidarity toward peer feminist organizers.
- Connection and misalignment can happen simultaneously in a movementled participatory process. This requires a flexible, caring structure to act as a compass that points to the values that we seek to practice throughout the process.
- Transparency and clarity are key to building meaning into participatory processes facilitated by funders, as are clear intentions and principles that shape feminist participatory practice.
- It is important to maintain an intersectional lens and to put in concrete efforts to increase the accessibility of our process, including through languages, outreach, community involvement, and the accessibility of our application form. These practices can diversify the outcomes of the process and make the participation meaningful.
- To be truly participatory, we need to continuously reflect on the accessibility of our processes and build conditions for equitable participation.
- Movement solutions about participatory processes are different across contexts.
- Establishing sustainable systems and comprehensive movement-informed strategies that hold all pieces of a participatory process together help us move at a quicker pace.
- Young feminist organizers want to be part of decisions about funding priorities and strategies, but there need to be conditions in place so that their participation is connected with the process as much as with the outcomes.

Back

RECOMMITTING TO A FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PRACTICE

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FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund emerged from the collective vision of feminist activists across generations and from around the world who understood the urgent need for a fund that centres its mission around the experience, expertise and needs of young feminist organizers. FRIDA exists today because of the power of feminist organizers to dream up possibilities and transform them into being through collective visioning and action. The formation of a young feminist fund like FRIDA as a movement solution reminds us what is possible when feminist movements have the resources to lead, dream and decide along the many possible paths to liberation and justice.

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From the beginning, we wanted our funding practices to nourish the sustainability and vibrancy of feminist movements. As we developed our grantmaking process, we looked for tools and practices that already lived within feminist movements. Community-informed and -led decision-making processes have always existed across intersectional social justice and community organizing, and they have been reshaped and refined by generations of organizers who are challenging power-over approaches and centering the vision of those impacted by decisions.

To make the most of limited funding¹, feminist organizers have also continuously needed to dream up new ways to persevere, including creating alternative streams of resourcing through mutual aid, solidarity economies and direct action. This autonomous organizing has unveiled all the ways in which our relationships and connections alchemize abundance. The ability to come together and create feminist networks of support is our most valuable resource that sustains our activism. These feminist organizing tools and practices taught us that feminist activists need funding mechanisms that are receptive to the diversity of feminist organizing and built with the purpose of resource movement connection. It was clear that this would require a different approach from traditional top-down philanthropy.

 Today only 2% of all the funding dedicated to gender equality goes to women's and LBTQI+ organizing which leaves key drivers of radical change vastly underfunded. Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots. Feminist movement therefore created their own funding mechanism that would support the connection, agency and autonomy of feminist organizing within the feminist movement ecosystem.

We know that "the revolution will not be funded"² and that the funding is not what makes social movements persist in their fight for justice, freedom and liberation. Still, oppression is well resourced and extractive capitalist systems are sustaining and thriving on inequalities, imposing economic barriers to dignity, safety and justice and exhausting movements' capacities and resources. For autonomous, self resourced movements to thrive, we need to fight those systems and transform how we think about and distribute resources. We need to continue to leverage funds that enable feminist movements to organize, resist and move towards the feminist future we are dreaming up. Financial resources are needed to protect feminist organizers' safety and well-being in volatile environments. However, those resources also need to be in alignment with the needs, interests and lives of movements and detached from top-down funding approaches. How funders distribute resources, rather than just the resources themselves, can bring feminist movements closer to each other or deepen silos that are traditionally built through donor-driven agendas and interests.

Feminist organizers need resources that are flexible enough to move with them, change direction when they need to and support all the diverse strategies that accompany their visions for transformative change. Financial resources also won't be as effective in isolation from other non-financial means of support, so we must fund in ways that are bold, diverse, and creative, and that allow movement connections to be fortified in the process. As a self-led fund created by and for young feminist activists, FRIDA is attuned to young feminist organizers' needs for funding that holistically supports their sustainability and well-being. In order to align our strategies with this commitment, we created a grantmaking model that would mirror the feminist values of solidarity, accountability, exchange and caring connections. We are committed to creating and continually adapting systems and practices that reflect these values.

As feminist funders, we often mirror emerging feminist movement solutions in our practices and strategies. The opportunity to learn from the feminist activists of the Association for Women's Rights in Development and other feminist funds and organizations has been critical for FRIDA's growth. FRIDA adopted its first participatory grantmaking model from the Central American Women's Fund and that participatory approach has been an integral part of FRIDA's funding practice ever since. FRIDA's grantmaking model has significantly changed since then in response to the needs of a multilingual, cross-thematic global participatory decision-making process, however the feminist values and principles behind it have not changed, they have just been reinforced.

2 Referencing the title of The Revolution Will Not be Funded – INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

GROUNDING OUR PRACTICE IN FEMINIST VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

To dream and envision transformative funding practices, we need to be able to name them, live them, and embody them as everyday practice in our work. Global philanthropy might not have a shared interpretation of what community involvement in a participatory decision-making process should look like, and many funders might hesitate to define it at all to avoid limiting its potential to only what we can imagine at the moment. However, while we leave this concept open for growth, reflection and change, we also need to acknowledge that a lack of clarity and transparency in our processes can lead us as funders to hold onto power over the communities we exist to support. When agreements and definitions around the core values of participatory grantmaking strategies are loose or vague, funders largely still get to decide who is invited to participate in which organizational processes, at what stage, and under what kind of conditions.

Without a deep understanding of the ethics of participation, and how privilege and oppression shape our realities and our own relationship to power, participatory processes can serve as instrumentalization, optics, and without real decision-making power for the communities involved. This further increases mistrust in participatory processes handled by funders and instead of bringing organizers together, it could potentially cause further exclusion of communities, frictions in social justice movements, and perpetuation of harm towards those whose expertise these processes should be designed to amplify and protect.

The participatory grantmaking journey for FRIDA meant simultaneously and continually building new systems and integrating learnings from each grantmaking cycle. In this constant motion, some essential principles and values of our processes could have been overlooked in building the mechanics. We recognize that to fully embrace a movement–directed grantmaking approach that is flexible, creative, and reflective, we need to articulate the guidelines we use to mirror the feminist practices, values, and principles that we aspire for in our work. We do not romanticize the meaning of participation or underestimate how much power it has in both life-affirming and harming practices. Participatory processes can perpetuate harm when they lack concepts of accountability, transparency, equity, and justice at their core. We acknowledge that a thoughtful structure rooted in intersectionality, contextual analyses and the capacity to hold complexities must be present in order to facilitate authentic participation and connections. FRIDA is committed to investing time, resources and knowledge to continuously re-imagine and build upon the structure that holds our participatory grantmaking process, and to analyze the nuances of how power operates within it.

Neoliberal capitalism thrives in power-over structures that keep decision-making in the hands of those with privilege, access and wealth. These systems continue to grow their dominance by investing in the exclusion, disconnection and marginalization of communities, keeping people out of decision-making processes that concern their life, well-being and the land they inhabit. These power-over approaches occur within philanthropy and institutional giving, as grantmaking institutions hold power over the distribution of funding, and the narratives and agendas their funding enforces.

To meet that need, this report articulates the principles that will guide us through all the possibilities of a feminist participatory grantmaking process and help us reflect on where we are at, where we dream to be, and what we need to practice on our way there as a fund. As these feminist principles of participation expand and reshape with new learnings and experiences over time, we are grounding our practice in the following commitments:

- Young feminist activists from the global south and east are codesigning FRIDA's grantmaking strategy, grantmaking process, and distribution of resources as part of staff, board and advisory committee members, as well as grantee partners and the broader young feminist community.
- FRIDA's participatory grantmaking model will always evolve to mirror the feminist principles of intersectionality, solidarity building and exchange.
- The model encourages accountability practiced within movement spaces as well as FRIDA's accountability toward young feminist movements.
- FRIDA's approach to grantmaking is rooted in trust and support for the holistic well-being of young feminist movements.
- FRIDA's participatory approach is an ever-expanding universe that reflects, evolves and explores new ways of working together that engage with contradictions and build conditions needed for connections to emerge.
- FRIDA examines its own power and position in relation to feminist movements and is committed to embodying decolonized practices of resource distribution.
- FRIDA learns with the community and reports back to the community. Young feminist presence, feedback and guidance is embedded in final decision making processes across the organization.
- FRIDA will commit resources and knowledge to co-create and maintain a structure that holds space for generative conflict and expands access and capacity for participation.
- FRIDA commits to expanding its models of support while examining its own capacity to ensure those models are sustainable.
- FRIDA will be a space for brave dreaming about what is possible. We will explore different approaches to participatory practices, with the recognition that they might not always work. We stay accountable for the mistakes that uncover new learnings and approaches, as well as for repairing those mistakes.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES ARE CO-CREATED BY AND FOR THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process and systems are facilitated and co-developed by young feminist activists from FRIDA's focus regions. Young feminist movements are abundant in knowledge, experience and strategies, and together we can dream up solutions for a participatory grantmaking system that serves these movements and mirrors feminist values. Young feminist leadership in the design of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking model has been critical to address diverse perspectives, needs and realities. If a participatory decision-making process doesn't involve the communities it is serving in its strategy and system design, it might not identify and address the needs, dynamics and nuances of those communities' lived experiences. Furthermore, it can also perpetuate the same hierarchies of knowledge dominance and production that have long existed within philanthropy. A decision making process in which young feminists participate must be built and facilitated with their expertise, ideas and solutions at the center. By following this principle, young feminist visions and experiences are integrated across FRIDA's organizational structures, and decisions made are always resourced by their knowledge and experiences.

PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES THRIVE WITHIN AN INTENTIONAL AND FLEXIBLE STRUCTURE

Community-led participatory processes require a deep understanding of the conditions needed for meaningful community participation and engagement to occur. FRIDA is committed to maintaining an intentional structure that can facilitate young feminist movement-led decision-making in an online space³ and nourish connections and solidarity, as well as address the complexities of these processes⁴. This structure connects all pieces of this process together in a holistic participatory decision-making model, and allows each part to inform and interact with one another. The intention is not to impose a rigid structure that limits organic connection, but to allow for flexibility, adaptability and change to occur at any stage, and to illuminate any inconsistencies or misalignment with our grantmaking values.

³ We need to emphasize that FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process is facilitated online and that there are systems designed to hold this space

⁴ Explained in detail in the next chapter about FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking Model

BUILDING ACCESS AND CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN OUR PROCESSES

In the context of philanthropy, participatory decision-making processes can be a transformational practice, but they can also further inequalities, distrust and disconnection if the people who take part in them are not provided with an intentional support system that fosters their active participation.Communities show up to the participatory process with all the parts of their reality, experiences, stories and backgrounds, all of which are complex, nuanced and diverse. It is often the most impacted communities who are left out of the decision-making processes that concern them. The unattainable requirements ask them to mobilize an inequitable amount of their time and internal resources to show up and participate in a process that doesn't recognize their experience. Barriers to participation include language and internet access, complex application forms and selection processes, administrative and financial documents, etc.

Learning how to engage with the complexities of participatory decision-making methodologies requires its own preparation and pace. As participatory funders, we need to honor these practices with flexibility, adaptability and time. It is important that funders reserve the time needed to address the challenges of their funding model, and build knowledge and alternatives together with the communities they support. We need to be receptive to community feedback and to meet the needs of people who are engaging in our processes. Meeting those needs can include, but are not limited to, using simplified and accessible application formats and language, providing translation and guidance throughout the application process, minimizing complex technology, supporting those without internet access, offering financial compensation for participants' time, etc. Our strategies must be creative to continuously build conditions and access for diverse communities to not only be part of, but also feel ownership within, funders' participatory decision-making processes, and that their experience and contributions are acknowledged and valued.

INTERSECTIONALITY AT THE FOUNDATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PROCESS

Since FRIDA adopted a participatory grantmaking model, each grantmaking cycle has posed new questions and reflection about what meaningful participatory decision-making processes look like in each of the contexts where we fund. For participatory grantmaking to be effective in reaching diverse communities, the decision making needs to be built using an intersectional lens that unveils interlocking systems of oppression and their multilayered manifestations.

Intersectional approaches expose inconsistencies within our model and shed light on who

is missing from our grantmaking process and what we need to change in our approach. We hold an ongoing commitment to build within our participatory processes a brave space for engaging with complexities and understanding how multiple systems of oppression could obscure dynamics of power and privilege, limit visibility and access, and build up bias, exclusion and discrimination towards one community while benefiting another.

As a feminist fund, we need to be transparent about the principles and values in our work that are consistent and non negotiable. We strive to politically position ourselves against interlocking systems of oppression. As funders, we need to be aware of the power we hold to replicate harmful practices simply by choosing to be unaccountable or to overlook it when our internal systems and practices are not aligned with our values. By applying a critical intersectional lens across our work, we expand our knowledge and capacity to facilitate multiple power dynamics and reimagine how we engage with movements in ways that center care, trust and wholesome connection.

PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES REFLECT ON POWER IN ALL ITS FORMS

The intention of the participatory governance structure and across FRIDA's programmatic work is to decentralize power over different decisions and ensure that a diversity of perspectives and experiences are considered. Because we intend to support threads of feminist connection across generations, movements and geographies, we seek out exchanges, learnings and practices that would highlight the power inequities that exist in our work, where those inequities come from and what they are trying to sustain. FRIDA has a responsibility to examine the power dynamics that shape its processes and to channel power in ways that build the power of the collective with young feminist movements. Instead of holding the power of deciding how resources are distributed, FRIDA can use its power and access to co-design and facilitate accountable participatory grantmaking practice with young feminist organizers that can also transform the potential of these resources.

TRUST AS AN OUTCOME, NOT AN ASSUMPTION

In alignment with our values, FRIDA practices transparency at each stage of the grantmaking process, including sharing data and learnings back with the young feminist activists who participate. Also, we need to be transparent about the information that we can't share in order to protect the confidentiality and safety of the activists we support, particularly depending on their regional and cultural context. Transparent grantmaking processes that hold many confidentiality





and accountability complexities are not easy to implement, however, they require active trust-building between the funder and the community they support.

Even if we feel our processes are values-aligned, we as funders should not expect that organizers will show up with radical trust in funder-facilitated participatory processes. Interlocking systems of oppression deeply affect our lives, communities and relationships, and many young feminist collectives show up with an expectation that systemic oppression will also show up in FRIDA's grantmaking processes. The expectation of trust as implicit rather than something that must be mutually nurtured and shaped is also connected to the power dynamics in donor-grantee relationships. As funders, we can expand trust only by demonstrating our accountability through action and daily practice. We need to be vulnerable and transparent in reporting back to movements about our work and the challenges we face, and we need to honor the time and the effort it takes for trust to be built and in many cases restored. If we practice transparency and accountability towards the movements we support we enable more equitable exchange. Trust-building is a long-term process, one that invites us to experience new possibilities and funding strategies where we create and remodel solutions together with the movements we support.

FRIDA is committed to building close trust-based relationships with young feminist collectives, and to celebrating our successes and addressing our challenges transparently. A mutual trust-based relationship invites us to share our internal challenges and struggles as funders and as grantee partners, trusting that we will be met with compassion, care and support, and to nurture relationships of respect and mutuality that are rooted in true allyship.

PRACTICING FEMINIST SOLIDARITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Participatory grantmaking should not be practiced as a way to remove funders' responsibility over resource distribution and place that responsibility instead onto movements they are supporting. Funders are still responsible for how they design and facilitate their participatory grantmaking processes, how they choose to engage the communities they serve, and where they draw limits of comfort in power-sharing. As participatory funders, we need to commit to practicing active accountability and transparency about our process towards the movement we support.

Historically, as part of the non-profit industrial complex, funders have attached many accountability requirements to the resources directed to social justice movements, while the power over resources allowed for no reciprocity. This uneven power dynamic has been enforced through overwhelming reporting requests that ultimately divert grantee partners from reporting to each other about their work as part of collective accountability, knowledge-building and exchange. Inequitable distribution of resources and funding practices across geographies have narrowed the capacity for movements to be

accountable to each other, increased competition over resources, and limited interdependence and space to build sustainable solidarity networks. On the other hand, participatory grantmaking processes have the potential to shift this practice and cultivate accountability and relationships of reciprocity and collaboration, involving increased transparency and decision-making about the resources within movement spaces. FRIDA is devoted to facilitating participatory grantmaking processes that encourage connection, exchange and mutual accountability among young feminist organizers who are a part of it. FRIDA also stays accountable to young feminist movements by keeping its key processes open to young feminist participation, practicing transparency in our funding, governance, finances and resource mobilization, as well as reporting back to the movements about the outcomes of those processes.



MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION STRENGTHENS MOVEMENT CONNECTION

In FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process, young feminist collectives get to read and learn about, as well as support, each other's work. FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process creates a peer movement space where young feminist collectives can experience a sense of collective agency by informing and directing funding priorities in their context, and by building relationships of mutuality and shared accountability with one another. Young feminist collectives get an opportunity to learn from each other's realities and strategies and build on each other's visions of organizing toward freedom and justice. A successful participatory grantmaking process for FRIDA would allow for an abundance of pathways, strategies and transformative feminist approaches to be in conversation with and inspire one another. If it fosters the right connections and exchange, a participatory grantmaking process can generate a space for young feminist collectives to recognize themselves as part of vibrant, expansive feminist movements where every group, initiative and action is contributing to one another, therefore magnifying their collective power. The movement building and exchange that FRIDA's participatory decision-making process seeks to support has the potential to expand beyond FRIDA's grantmaking process, and to become embodied practices that young feminist collectives bring into their own communities.

HOLDING SPACE FOR THE COMPLEXITIES OF PARTICIPATION

Even though we strive to build participatory grantmaking processes that encourage affirming connections and enhance collaboration, we recognize that this does not mean that they will be free of disconnection, competition and friction. Meaningful connections and misalignment can occur simultaneously and interchangeably. Diverse perspectives and strategies about how to arrive to the futures we envision collectively can co-exist in the same movement space. Movements for justice are not homogenous in their organizing, and people arrive to them with different lived experiences and backgrounds. Systems of oppression are deeply present in our lives, and can affect us in similar or unique ways, which can manifest in our collaborations, visions and strategies. These complexities and contradictions are present in any participatory decision-making process and need to be addressed and facilitated with care.

As a participatory funder, FRIDA has the responsibility to engage with the complexities of our processes with a restorative approach that prevents the perpetuation of harm, without deepening frictions. The intersectional lens increases our capacity for creative intervention and allows us to hold space for generative conflict by helping us understand conflict's origin, where it wants to move us, and where it asks us to grow. An accessible, transparent participatory decisionmaking model allows us to experience the power of interconnectedness, as well as its complexities. However, it also provides tools of support when violence and abuse happen.

LEARNING TOGETHER AND REPORTING BACK TO YOUNG FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process is an ever-expanding universe for learning and reflection. We listen to and welcome community feedback as a blessing that encourages new ways of thinking and moves our processes, systems and strategies closer to the young feminist movements that we exist to support. We see impact and value in processes that allow us to continuously learn, reflect and change our practice as a fund.

FRIDA incorporates space for feedback and change at every stage of the process, and applies learnings across our strategies, including stepping away from practices that we have outgrown. After each cycle, we collect learnings and evaluate the principles that our participatory model seeks to align with. We review where the model needs to change, adapt and expand. Changes in the organizing contexts of young feminist collectives can shift unpredictably and we must

ensure our grantmaking systems are dynamic, flexible and ready to adapt. FRIDA commits to being daring and curious about exploring different models of movement participation and engagement in our processes, as well as to being accountable to young feminist movements while we implement them. The data that we receive from young feminist organizers globally belongs to those movements. FRIDA commits to using this data responsibly, and to sharing this collective wisdom and knowledge with movements by reporting back.

SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

While in the past FRIDA was not able to document, share and implement learning after each grantmaking cycle, FRIDA has now implemented robust documentation, training and knowledge-sharing processes to ensure that the pieces of information that sustain this model are shared and built into holistic practices that are easy to replicate in each cycle. FRIDA continues to commit to a participatory model that is curious, ever-evolving and adaptive to the young feminist community's needs. This commitment also implies that we continue to evaluate and strengthen our internal capacity to practice the principles behind our participatory model. FRIDA seeks to listen inward while being attentive also to movement needs, so that we can remodel our systems internally to sustain this practice for the long haul.

FRIDA'S PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING MODEL: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Who Gets The Grant? FRIDA's Grantmaking Process Explained

1. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS OPENS! FRIDA opens the Call for Applications, young feminists across the globe apply and/or share the call widely.

2. APPLICATIONS ARE SUBMITTED! Groups submit applications online in Spanish, French, Portuguese, English, Arabic or Russian.

3. YOUNG FEMINIST GROUPS THAT FIT FRIDA'S FUNDING CRITERIA ARE INVITED TO BE PART OF THE VOTING PROCESS! Groups who are eligible are placed into subregional and/or thematic voting groups and vote for the top 5 applications in their voting groups to receive funding.

4. APPLICATIONS ARE SCREENED BY FRIDA STAFF & ADVISORS! Groups continue their amazing work on the ground and receive feedback from FRIDA as soon as the screening process is complete.

5. FINAL DECISIONS! Regional Committees made up of FRIDA Staff, Advisors, and current grantee partners review the results from the voting groups. This is an opportunity to discuss which thematics or countries which were named priorities in the Regional Strategies remain underrepresented.

6. DUE DILIGENCE PROCESS! The references of the selected groups are contacted as FRIDA carries out a due diligence process. This is also supported by FRIDA Advisors, staff, and sister funds to ensure a robust process.

7. ENTER THE FRIDAverse! Groups have welcome calls with FRIDA community members and become a part of the FRIDA community.

8. GRANTS ARE AWARDED! Groups who are found compliant post the due diligence process receive an award email and work with FRIDA staff to receive the grant safely.

FRIDA'S APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUNG FEMINIST ORGANIZING

FRIDA's Grantmaking Strategy

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund provides flexible, multi-year financial support, capacity strengthening, and space for movement connections to young feminist collectives across regions⁵, thematics, and strategies. FRIDA supports young feminist collectives to build solidarity networks across movements, exchange knowledge and practices, and co-create advocacy initiatives. FRIDA applies participatory decision-making practices across the fund and all of its grantmaking. Not only are young feminist communities part of resource allocation decisions, but they also decide how FRIDA's grantmaking process can best support the needs of the young feminist community.

FRIDA's grantmaking strategy is created in conversation with young feminist organizers and mirrors the organizing needs and practices of young feminist movements. It includes all the ways in which FRIDA provides financial and non-financial support to young feminist organizers.
This strategy allows us to be flexible, creative and reflective about new ways in which we can provide holistic support to young feminist movements. Feedback and analysis following every open call for applications as well as our annual renewal processes for current grantee partners, informs this strategy, as well as our ongoing communication and reflection with grantee partners, advisors and the broader FRIDA community.

Grantee Partner Journey

FRIDA is committed to supporting young feminist collectives through multi-year financial and non-financial resources. All groups who apply and are accepted during FRIDA's open call for application are welcomed to the FRIDA Community and begin their 5 year journey as a FRIDA grantee partner. FRIDA's Grantee Partner journey offers core, flexible funding and primarily online learning and linking opportunities for and between grantee partners, as well as direct budget support for the group's sustainability through capacity development.

5 Southwest Asia and North Africa Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa, Central, Southeast and East Europe, Caucasus and Central and North Asia, South, Southeast, and East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean As a part of their journey at FRIDA, groups also have access to non-financial support through Focal Points. Focal Points are staff members from their region who support them with reporting and applications, as well as the growth of their group. This focal point structure allows a space where young feminist collectives can share their challenges, learnings and successes, and receive holistic support. To cultivate and nourish trust-based relationships with young feminist organizers, our strategies and decisionmaking processes need to be transparent and open for reflection, feedback and change of our approaches. At the end of their journey, each grantee partner has access to a grantee transition program that offers transition grants and tailored capacity strengthening support. This program is intended to enable sustainable transition and growth to groups in the way they envision it, and to join the FRIDA alumni community.

Update: In 2025 FRIDA launched its new Grantee Partner Journey framework.

Challenges faced by young feminist organizers are increasingly complex, demanding better articulated responses that include and go beyond money, posing the need to intentionally integrate and mirror financial resources to non-financial support. FRIDA has understood that it is essential to collectively (re)elaborate the trajectory of the groups in its community, in order to intentionally create a "well rounded" experience from the moment they apply to be part of the FRIDA community until the moment they transition.

We assessed that a GP Journey Model would balance, on one hand, the autonomy for groups to decide what's best for their activism –as we acknowledge them as experts of their own reality– and, on the other hand, the active role of an intermediary fund like FRIDA as an incubator of young feminist movements. Seed funding provided by FRIDA aims to increase the capacity and reach of young feminist organizers. It also aims to do so gradually, progressively, and in a cadenced manner so that such increased capacity is sustainable and allows grantee partners to more easily navigate the complex challenges posed by the volatile and uncertain global political environment.

This journey model envisions to integrally and holistically equip groups with money, connections, skills, knowledge, resources and a larger sense of belonging for them to be nourished and inspired to continue the work that they do after their relationship with FRIDA comes to a close. It is important to note that while in the past non-financial support seemed disjointed and disconnected from the financial resources (most non-financial support provided by donors is conceptualized as a mere appendix or an add-on supplement to grantmaking), with this model, we aim to integrate them in a way that responds to the agency and responsibility of FRIDA not just as an intermediary fund, but as a resource ally, a philanthropic advocate, and an all-around partner and accomplice to young feminist activists.



Participatory Decision-Making Approach

All FRIDA's grantmaking is facilitated through a young feminist community decision-making process. The open Call for Applications involves all members of the FRIDA Community as staff, applicants, grantee partners and young feminists from the Global Advisory Committee participate in this process.

Who Is Part Of The Participatory Grantmaking Process?

FRIDA's advisory, staff, and grantee partner community, as well as young feminist activists who have applied for grants have roles in the community decision making process.

FRIDA GLOBAL ADVISORY COMMUNITY

FRIDA's Global Advisory Committee is organized regionally and consists of young feminist activists based in the regions where FRIDA funds. FRIDA was created by young feminist activists who formed the original advisory committee, which supported all of FRIDA's operations in its **GRANTEE PARTNERS** early stages. All young feminist activists from FRIDA's Global Advisory Committee In 2022, for the first time FRIDA are part of the participatory grantmaking included grantee partners who were process in the open call for applications in the process of transitioning out of in their respective regions. FRIDA to be a part of the participatory

YOUNG FEMINIST COLLECTIVES -**APPLICANTS**

All young feminist collectives that apply for FRIDA funding during

the open call are invited to read applications from their region and vote for the groups they feel should be supported with funding.

FRIDA STAFF MEMBERS

As a self-led young feminist fund, the majority of staff members are young feminist activists from the regions where FRIDA funds. FRIDA programs staff designs the entire participatory grantmaking process and reviews final grantmaking decisions. FRIDA's staff from other teams are a part of the screening process which is vital to ensuring that the groups who move to the voting process are eligible for FRIDA funding before groups are welcomed to the community.

process. These groups joined the final decision making calls to weigh in on the groups who were selected to join the

community. This is a practice we intend

to keep as a part of the open call.

OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING MODEL

FRIDA's open call process is a cross-regional, cross-thematic, multilingual application process for young feminist organizers that involves multiple stages. The decision to host a call for applications considers the journey of FRIDA's current grantee partners and internal resources to ensure there is capacity to welcome new groups.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES are co-designed with each regional advisory committee before an open call is announced. They are a guiding lens to understand contexts, needs, gaps, opportunities, and challenges in all regions where FRIDA funds. This lays foundations for FRIDA's regional and thematic outreach plan and ensures that FRIDA's call for applications is both accessible and attuned to complexities.

OUTREACH PLANS are co-designed by staff and advisory committee members before each call for applications to ensure that we have tools in place to reach out to young feminist communities. From ongoing focused online communication in 7 languages, to webinars and local events to learn about the application process, the many outreach tools we use ensure that we learn about the conditions of groups in different contexts and how they need to be supported in the application process.

STEP 1: Young Feminist Collective Submit Proposals

General Application Process

Young feminist collectives from FRIDA's focus regions can submit their applications in seven languages⁶ through an online platform that currently facilitates all stages of FRIDA's participatory grantmaking process. Groups can log into an applicant portal and work on their application until they are ready to submit it. They can track each stage of the review process on the platform. The platform is accessible on all devices. If a group is unable to apply online they can submit their proposal in another written format.

At the moment, FRIDA only accepts applications in writing. We know that other formats may be more engaging and familiar to some, but so far written applications have allowed for the most consistency in the community voting process. This also ensures that groups can read applications at their own pace and translate text to local languages when needed.

6 Arabic, English, French, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish and others.

Before submitting their application, all groups complete a short questionnaire to confirm their alignment with FRIDA's funding criteria. If confirmed, the group receives access to the application form and if not, they receive a message that explains again FRIDA's funding criteria. If a group who receives this message believes they are in alignment with FRIDAs funding criteria, they can reach out to FRIDA to share more information and get access to the application form.

Information About The Process

All applicants are informed that this is a participatory grantmaking process where parts of their application will be shared with fellow young feminists. They are informed that they can share their work in whatever way is most comfortable for them (without needing to use NGO jargon, for instance). Each stage of the process is explained in an application pack in seven languages. The parts of the application form that are shared with other applicants are easily identifiable and groups are asked to not share the name of their group or any other information which may jeopardize the group's anonymity. Applicants can indicate if there is information they would prefer not to share in the peer review process- but that they need FRIDA to be aware of-, and they can also share if they have any safety concerns about the process.

Confirmation Of Participation

Applicants confirm if they are willing to take part in a participatory grantmaking process. If they choose to participate, they receive a timeline with each stage explained. We also share all information in the preferred language of the group. This ensures that groups have information about FRIDA's criteria and overall grantmaking process so that they can make an informed decision about submitting their application to FRIDA. All groups can at any point decide not to take part in the process or to withdraw their application.

STEP 2: Screening Process

In every open call for applications, FRIDA receives over 1,000 applications. Once the call for applications is closed, FRIDA's programs staff assigns applications to FRIDA Advisors and staff who screen the applications for eligibility. All FRIDA Advisors participate in the screening process. Advisors and staff who are participating in the Screening Process for the first time receive training from FRIDA programs staff on FRIDA's participatory grantmaking practice, process, values.

Applications are assigned to staff and Advisors through a secure online platform based on the region/ country/thematic of the group and the affiliations of members. Each application is reviewed by at least two individuals who use a review form to leave feedback during the screening process. The review forms are also a space for staff and Advisors to leave relevant information about the group which can be used during the voting and due diligence stages. At this stage, applications are only evaluated to ensure they fit FRIDA's basic funding criteria and can move on to the next stage.

Confidentiality during the Screening Process

All staff and Advisors sign confidentiality agreements with FRIDA, which cover their involvement in this process. FRIDA also asks staff and Advisors to indicate if they are a part of an applicant group before the screening process begins as this is a conflict of interest and the individual cannot be part of the screening process. Before screening each application, the online platform ensures that a *Conflict of Interest* form is signed to determine whether the advisor or staff member is a part affiliated with any group they have been assigned to screen. If they are not part of a group, but are affiliated with them, we ask that they share that with FRIDA so we can ensure that the group's application is assigned to someone else to review. In other cases, when they know of a group or their work but are not closely affiliated with them, they can still review their proposal.



STEP 3: Young Feminist Collectives Vote



What Does The Applicant Voting Process Look Like?

All groups that are aligned with FRIDA's criteria are part of the voting process. Generally, up to 500 of the approximately 1,000 proposals we receive in every cycle fit the criteria and are part of the applicant voting process⁷. Once the screening process is completed, the programs staff design the voting process.

This process is designed differently in each region, based on the feedback from previous cycles, advisory comments, and regional strategies that the FRIDA community co-creates to deepen the understanding of young feminist organizing

⁷ In an effort to make this part of the process more robust, one proposal post the 2022 Call for Applications is to only move groups who are in line with the priorities identified in the co-created Regional Strategies to the voting process. This is still a proposal and any change of this nature will be communicated widely to groups during the outreach for future Calls for Applications

in each context. FRIDA strives for a process that can hold complexities and respond to the needs and challenges that groups might face. For instance, the voting can be organized sub-regionally taking into consideration thematics, geopolitics, language justice, and access.

FRIDA programs staff create voting groups within the online platform for each region. After the voting groups are designed, application summaries of applicants' proposals are automatically generated and assigned to their respective voting groups in each region. Each region has up to 15 voting groups, containing up to 15 voting summaries. The voting summaries are anonymized and consist of responses to the following questions:

- · Proposal id/ country/ thematic they work on
- Why and how was your group founded?
- What is your group's mission?
- Share the main activities your group has carried out in the past. If you are just starting, what are the main activities you have planned?
- How will your group use the FRIDA grant?

The groups also receive an email with a timeline, Voting Guidelines, and a guide on how to review applications on the online platform in the language they applied in. We share information about the groups that FRIDA is currently supporting and encourage groups to have language access in mind when voting—not every group can present their work with the same language proficiency, so groups should more strongly consider the work and communities that they feel are important to be supported in their context, rather than eloquence of language. Groups have an opportunity to communicate with FRIDA any concerns they might have about the process, or to let us know if they won't be able to take part for any reason.

In the voting stage, applicants read anonymous application summaries assigned to their voting group and can choose to vote for five groups⁸. The voting is not hierarchical, and the applicants can't vote for their own group. When voting, the young feminist groups share a brief rationale for their selections and explain why they would prioritize funding for the work of the groups they vote for. They can also share any questions, concerns, or comments about any of the applications in their Voting Group to add to the due diligence process if needed. The applicants can also express interest in connecting with any of the groups that have been part of their voting group and/or other donors in case their proposal is not selected.

8 In each region voting groups can have from 10 to 15 proposal summaries for applicants to read and vote for. Applicants can only vote within their voting group and they need to vote for up to 5 proposals.



STEP 4: Final Decision And Grantee Partner Announcement

How Are The Final Decisions Made?

After groups submit their votes, FRIDA's staff, Advisors and transitioning grantee partners review the voting results in their respective regions. This review is done via a call facilitated by staff where participants discuss how groups have voted, their voting feedback, and any dynamics that might have arisen in this process –for instance, how underrepresented groups and those with little or no access to funding are reflected in the votes. At this stage groups who will go to the due diligence stage are selected. The call is also a space to identify and share any potential bias or contextual dynamics that have occurred during the voting and make decisions on how to move forward with the final votes. If some groups have the same number of votes and only one can be awarded, Advisors and grantee partners on the call make this decision based on previously applied analyses from the voting process and FRIDA's regional strategies.

In case it is reported that there are gaps in the voting process, or that groups that come from underrepresented priority communities have not received high vote counts, this is also the space to collectively make a decision to move that group to the due diligence stage along with the highest voted ones. The applicant votes are always prioritized in the decision-making process, however, Advisors and grantee partners can advise that additional grants in each region be awarded accordingly.

How Many Groups Can Receive A Grant?

FRIDA shares with the applicants the number of groups that are participating in the voting process in their region, the number of Voting Groups, and the number of grants that are allocated to each region. We ensure that there is a regional balance in grant and budget allocation. In an effort to exhibit the imbalance in philanthropic giving and funding commitments across different regions, FRIDA's regional strategy highlights the gaps, underfunded contexts, and thematic areas in each region. As a result, FRIDA can allocate a higher number of grants for groups operating in these contexts. In each region, there are usually about 7–12 Voting Groups, each receiving up to 15 proposals to review. Depending on the number of Voting Groups, at least one group from each Voting Group goes on to receive the grant.⁹

9 The grants awarded can go up to 4 per each voting group.

How Do We Confirm If The Highest Voted Groups Fit FRIDA's Funding Criteria?

All groups considered for a grant go through a due diligence process. The due diligence process is done by FRIDA staff as part of FRIDA's accountability towards all young feminist organizers who are part of the voting process. FRIDA needs to ensure that funds are supporting the organizing and work of young feminist groups selected through the peer review process. FRIDA is committed to funding young feminist groups that are self-led so we get in touch with groups to receive more information.

REFERENCE REQUEST: We inform the highest voted group that we will contact the references they provided in their application. We understand that many groups are newly established and can't provide references from previous funders, so we also ask them to provide references of individuals and/or organizations connected to feminist organizing in their context that can share more about their work.

LOCAL PARTNERS: Advisory committee members and FRIDA staff can also contact local partners or sister funds to collect more information about the group.

CALLS WITH GROUPS: In some cases, we have a call with a group to better understand their work, structure, and leadership.

What Happens After A Group Is Selected To Receive A Grant?



Once the due diligence process is complete, all awarded groups receive an award email and are invited to share any notes of love, solidarity, and appreciation with the groups that voted for them. These notes are shared with the entire community. The groups that were not selected in this cycle receive an email with a list of the groups that were awarded in their voting group. FRIDA also shares other potential funding opportunities whenever capacity allows.



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Back to Contents | 31

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



FRIDA is continuously exploring new ways to reflect on its participatory grantmaking model and improve its participatory grantmaking practices. 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.

11/10

In this section, we share a summary of insights generated from an external evaluation process to assess the impact of FRIDA's Participatory Grantmaking (PGM).

To read the full assessment, please visit this link.

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.

Nine co-researchers¹⁰ 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.

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.

10 FRIDA Grantee Partner Co-Researchers: Priyadharsini Palaniswamy (India), Jade P. Leung (Philippines), Tatjana Nikolic (Serbia), Deniz Nazarova (Kyrgyzstan), Aline Izaias Lucio (Brazil), Dina Abdel-Nabi, Mona-Lisa Danieli Mungure (Botswana)





FRIDA Advisory and Intern Co-Researchers: Twasiima Tricia (Uganda), Hazal Atay and Jessica Gonzalez Sampayo (Puerto Rico)

YOUNG FEMINIST COLLECTIVES' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PROCESS

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, and 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 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 and contribute 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 STRONGEST POINTS OF FEEDBACK AROUND FRIDA'S PGM MODEL

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.

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. Resourcing Connections: Reflections On Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice



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.

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.



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 for is the possibility for young feminists to see themselves as part of a movement. 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.

Back

ontents | **37**

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 faroff 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 FRIDA 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.

A participatory grantmaking system that doesn't focus on building trustbased 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.



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 toapply. 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

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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.



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 that collectives 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.



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.



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

Back to Contents | 46



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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 homogeneous¹¹. 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.



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.



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 realities¹³. 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 decisionmaking processes.

13 They have been integrated across FRIDA's governance, communications, strategic and MEL framework, resource mobilization and general funding strategies.



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