

SUMMARY REPORT

RESOURCING CONNECTIONS:

REFLECTIONS ON FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PRACTICE

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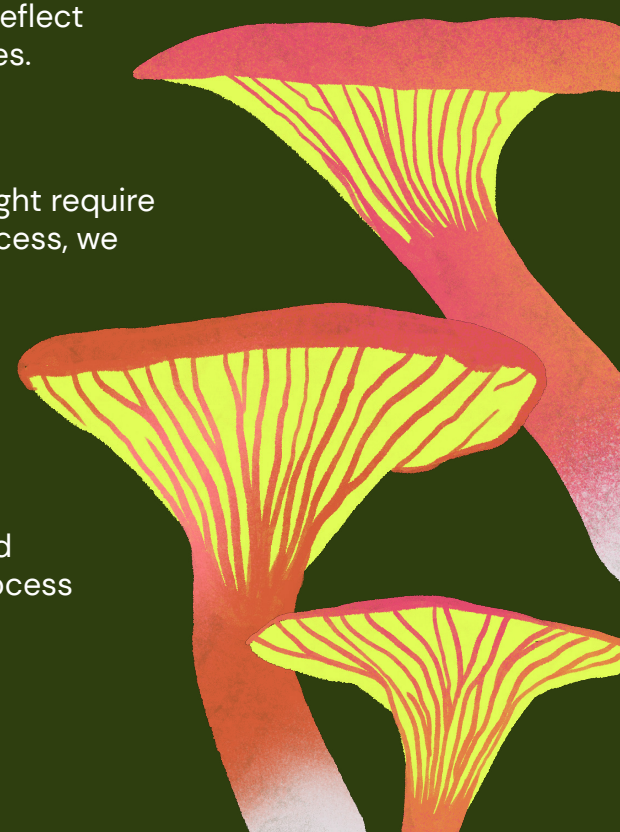
INTRODUCTION

Please note that is a summary of the [Resourcing Connections Report](#).

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. This summary 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.



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

FRIDA'S GRANTMAKING STRATEGY

FRIDA provides flexible, multi-year financial support, capacity strengthening, and space for movement connections to young feminist collectives across regions, 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 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.

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.

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.

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. FRIDA has understood that it is essential to collectively (re)elaborate the trajectory of the groups in its community in order to create a “well rounded” experience from application to transition.

We assessed that a GP Journey Model would balance, on one hand, the autonomy of 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 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. With this model we also aim to integrate financial and non-financial support 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 including staff, applicants, grantee partners and young feminists from the Global Advisory Committee.

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.

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.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

In 2022, for the first time FRIDA included grantee partners who were in the process of transitioning out of FRIDA to be a part of the participatory 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.

FRIDA STAFF MEMBERS

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.

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 Collectives Submit Proposals

General Application Process

Young feminist collectives from FRIDA's focus regions can submit their applications in seven languages through an online platform. 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.

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.

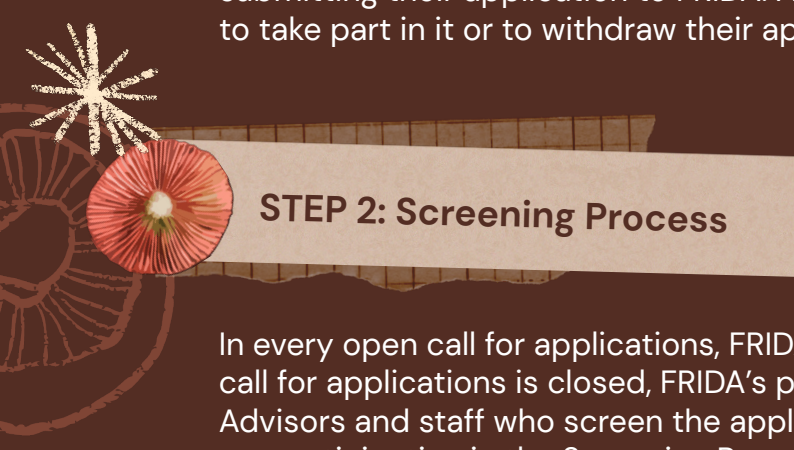
Information About The Process

All applicants are informed that this is a participatory grantmaking process where parts of their application will be shared with fellow applicants. 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 a downloadable 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 would 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 it or to withdraw their application.



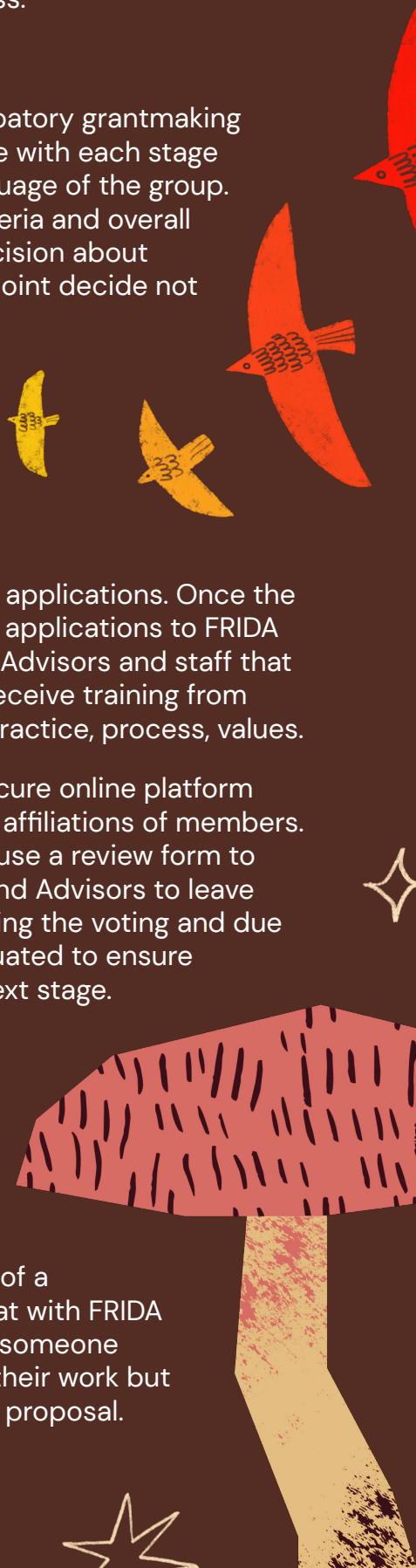
STEP 2: Screening Process

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. Advisors and staff that 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. 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, the applications are only evaluated to ensure they fit FRIDA's basic funding criteria and can move 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. 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?



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 the young feminist organizing 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 on the online platform for each region. After the voting groups are designed, the application summaries from applicants' proposals are automatically generated and assigned to their respective voting groups in each region. Each region has up to 15 voting groups, each 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. The 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 groups. 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.

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 may 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?

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.

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.

REFERENCE REQUEST: We inform the highest voted groups that we will contact the references 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.

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

FRIDA is continuously exploring new ways to reflect on its 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.

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

To read the full evaluation please visit [this link](#).

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 movement-led 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.

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 feelings within the mainstream feminist movement in certain regions.

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.

Groups performed the task of reviewing applications and voting on them with responsibility and care – as such, many 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 adding 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 about 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.

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.

Receiving the support and votes of other young feminists made participants feel that there was a collective value to their work. They expressed feeling recognized in ways they would not have if those who had acknowledged their work had been people in far-off offices, disconnected from their realities. Knowing that other young feminists believed in them and valued their work was an important validation and reassurance. 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.

Allowing for an expanded perspective 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, and 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 grantees.



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

