

Raise the Bar

A Tool to Move From Harmful to Liberatory Funding Practices with Palestine as Your Compass

Organizational Policies and Practices Brief

A commitment to practicing liberation requires internal policies and practices to mirror external values and commitments.

Funding institutions operate with a range of structures and governance models, so not all of the practices below will apply to every funding institution (for example, only private foundations tend to have invested endowments). That said, almost every institution contracts with vendors, and many offer employees retirement benefits that include a range of investment portfolios.

Funders wishing to align their internal practices with a commitment to liberation can start by (1) assessing internal policies and practices on governance, staffing, vendors, investments, and payouts to ensure that such policies and investments are values-aligned, (2) sharing information transparently where appropriate, and (3) making adjustments to both policies and practices when necessary.

Harmful practices highlighted in this section, which is part of [Funders4Palestine’s Raise the Bar tool](#), include investing endowment and retirement funds in extractive or exploitative industries (including companies that support genocide, surveillance, oppression, and illegal settlements and occupation in Palestine), failing to invest in political education for board and staff, and treating minimum legal requirements for annual payouts as the ceiling, rather than the floor.

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1. Funding liberatory Palestinian work

LIBERATORY			HARMFUL
Funding liberatory Palestinian work across all issue areas	How to get there	What's holding you back	Explicitly preventing funds from supporting Palestinian-led work or solidarity work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding Palestinian-led work across climate justice, gender and reproductive rights, education, health, etc., either directly or via intermediaries with Palestinian-led or Palestinian-advised decision-making mechanisms. <input type="checkbox"/> Holding a focus on particular issues or frameworks lightly, recognizing the complexity of the Palestinian struggle and how multiple issues and frameworks intersect in people's lives. <input type="checkbox"/> Funding storytelling, art, cultural work, and creative ways of shifting narratives and humanizing Palestinian experiences as values in themselves, and as part of a deeper political project. <input type="checkbox"/> Embracing grantees' work on norm and systems change, including via advocacy and political education. <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting efforts to build solidarity across movements, and supporting Palestinian leaders, organizations, and movements to join larger global or transnational conversations about the issues and struggles that matter to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge the idea that some aspects of Palestinian-led organizing are "too political" by exploring the forces and beliefs that drive that idea. <input type="checkbox"/> If your grantmaking is organized by issues or themes, start funding Palestinian work in portfolios through which you have not traditionally supported Palestinian groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Make the case internally for long-term and holistic movement support, including the understanding that change doesn't happen in a single grant term. Learn about and participate in exposing the harm, ineffectiveness, and misguidedness of expecting quick, tangible results (consult the resources at the end of this section for strategies and ideas). <input type="checkbox"/> Work with movement-aligned legal counsel and resources (like Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights) to gain a deeper understanding of work that is threatened with criminalization. <input type="checkbox"/> When assessing "risk," make sure to consider the risk of inaction. <input type="checkbox"/> Fund intermediaries that support liberatory Palestinian work as part of a wider mandate, or join a collaborative fund that supports Palestinian-led liberatory work. Take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by such spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding according to narrowly defined issues and/or with restrictions on region, issue, or activities with no space for experimentation or crosscutting approaches. <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on quick, tangible results rather than long-haul, movement-led work. <input type="checkbox"/> Shying away from or explicitly avoiding funding "political" and systems change work such as advocacy or political education. <input type="checkbox"/> Relying on legal counsel that takes a maximally conservative approach to who and how you fund. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding funding any work that has been politically targeted with criminalization without interrogating the actual legality of that work. <input type="checkbox"/> Failing to interrogate the connections between and across movements, communities, geographies, and instead viewing cross-movement and cross-regional solidarity as "mission creep." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Treating liberatory Palestinian work as too controversial, political, or dangerous to fund. <input type="checkbox"/> Discouraging or prohibiting particular forms of grantee partners' advocacy; for example advocacy aligned with BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions). <input type="checkbox"/> Placing heavy restrictions on Palestinian grantee partners or grantee partners whose communities are in solidarity with Palestine.



2. Prioritizing Palestinian decision-making in grantmaking

LIBERATORY			HARMFUL
Ceding decision-making power to Palestinians	<i>How to get there</i>	<i>What's holding you back</i>	Undermining Palestinian decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating respect for Palestinian grantee partners' leadership and autonomy with fully flexible, unrestricted support, trusting in their knowledge of what their communities need and supporting their ability to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground. <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making power fully ceded to Palestinian liberatory activists via the highest level of community-led participatory grantmaking practice (if held in-house) or by moving multi-year, unrestricted grants to intermediaries (especially Palestinian-led intermediaries) that already have such mechanisms in place (to identify such intermediaries, visit funders4palestine/givingguide). <input type="checkbox"/> Funding Palestinian liberation efforts on their own terms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Use organizational values around community self-determination, "nothing about us without us," or the importance of placing affected people at the center of justice work to bring Palestinians into decision-making or evaluate intermediaries through that lens.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cede power by funding via intermediaries that have full or a high degree of Palestinian decision-making.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If you can't cede power (yet), start to shift power by incorporating some degree of Palestinian consultation or decision-making into your grantmaking processes. Don't stop there—work toward increasingly participatory grantmaking, and take steps to transition decision-making around resource distribution to impacted community-led control.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reject frames that place Palestinians and Israelis on equal footing, particularly around access to power and resources. Ask your Palestinian grantees which Israeli groups, if any, they trust and collaborate with, and let that inform your grantmaking decisions.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Funding via intermediaries that fail to include Palestinians in decision-making.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Funding Israeli groups without considering whether they are actively undermining Palestinian liberation efforts.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Relying on leadership and boards that remain not at all or minimally reflective of Palestinian communities to make grantmaking decisions.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Grantmaking cultures that overvalue "objective" decision-making and offer little space for feedback, learning, and accountability mechanisms.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Treating Palestinian-led work as exceptional, risky, or unusual.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>"Balancing" any funding of Palestinian civil society with funding to Israeli groups, including those actively undermining Palestinian liberation.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Excluding Palestinians from participating in or advising on grantmaking decisions because they are considered too "biased."</i>



3. Funding long-term liberatory movement infrastructure

LIBERATORY			HARMFUL
Robustly funding long-term, liberatory movement infrastructure	<i>How to get there</i>	<i>What's holding you back</i>	Blocking or undermining the emergence of long-term, liberatory movement infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fund amply enough to cover the real costs of Palestinian community work, including core costs like rent, salaries, compliance, finance staff, or admin systems, especially since so much of the work of Palestinian organizations goes unpaid, underpaid, or self-financed, or relies on volunteerism. <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted large grants span multiple years, ideally with front-loaded (rather than phased) payments that maximize sustainability and enable effective financial planning. <input type="checkbox"/> Reserves and investments are permissible and encouraged uses of grant funds. This includes funding operating reserves, rainy-day funds, or long-term endowments that strengthen financial independence and resilience over time. <input type="checkbox"/> Working with grantee partners to design long-term funding trajectories—this can include step-down plans, diversified funding strategies, or transitions to alternative capital—as a means to avoid abrupt funding cliffs. <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate transparency with grantee partners about your institution's time horizon (e.g., in case of planned sunset/spend-down) and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Minimize restrictions on grants and adopt a flexible, curious posture toward changes that occur during the grant period.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Avoid one-off transactions and move toward accompanying and supporting grantee partners over longer periods of time.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explore internal context and history to identify potential levers and openings for change: are grants in other portfolios structured differently, or treated with more flexibility? Does your organization have a tendency to introduce fewer restrictions and offer longer term support to grantee partners led by particular communities or working in particular contexts?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seek out peers who offer large, multi-year, unrestricted grants and support long-term infrastructure. How did they do it? What had to shift?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Challenge assumptions around grant size and build the case for large grants (for example, see this resource).</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Fund intermediaries that are already robustly funding long-term movement infrastructure.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Find out what would enable grantee</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Project-based funding, short-term or one-off grants, time-restricted grants, and other grantmaking approaches that restrict or block movements' ability to build sustainability and independence from philanthropy</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Restrictions on grants that prevent groups from using the funds to support long-term infrastructure (for example, making multi-year commitments contingent on specific outcomes, or allocating grants in amounts or with time restrictions that prevent their use for reserves.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arbitrary, one-size-fits-all restrictions on how much of an organization's annual budget your grant should represent.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Failure to understand the context in which grantee partners are operating, the conditions their communities face, or the movement ecosystems they are connected to.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A desire to "pick winners" rather than fund in ways that strengthen collaboration across movements.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding only via narrow donor-determined frameworks, like humanitarian aid. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricting grant use to block grantee partners from holding reserves, making investments, or allocating resources to broader movement infrastructure like convenings, defense funds, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging grantee partners to report on and/or claim exclusive credit for their wins, rather than learning about the wider movement infrastructure that makes those wins possible.



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where ultimate decision-making authority sits. This includes being transparent with grantees if your organization's governance structures lack accountability, or depend on the will of an individual or set of individuals without direct connections to the communities or groups supported by their grants.

- Investments in movement infrastructure include robust safety systems, such as legal defense funds, digital and physical security, rapid-response reserves, and community-owned land and spaces that provide protection and support resilience.
- Resources are allocated for Palestinian- and movement-led convenings, retreats, and secure gathering spaces where strategizing and coalition-building can occur free from surveillance or repression. Such spaces are ensured to be community-centered, where funders are not required to attend, provide input, or approve the agenda.
- Support is provided for rest, healing justice, mental health, and collective care practices that sustain organizers and communities over the long haul, recognizing that wellbeing is essential to liberation work.
- Grants are only one tool in your toolbox, and you invest in alternative financial mechanisms: basket funds, low- or no-interest rate loans, asset transfers, and direct investments in self-sustaining infrastructure for long-term independence. For private foundations, this can look like experimenting with integrated capital

partners to build long-term, community-controlled infrastructure and how you can offer it, including beyond grants. For example, you fund direct community work, consider also funding the groups your grantee partners trust and rely on for any technical assistance, support, training, and flanking.

- Deepen your knowledge of the broader philanthropic, legal, financial, and movement ecosystem in which your grantee partners are operating. This will allow you to identify gaps, obstacles, shifts, and opportunities, including new ways to move money and alternative structures that require investment.*
- Be transparent with grantee partners about the existence and identity of any source funders (for example, governments or family foundations) that might be the root of certain restrictions, opening the possibility for partners to reject such funds if they wish.*
- Reflect on the structures (if any) that hold your institution's long-term commitments in place, and consider how that might be in tension with a commitment to supporting movements for the long haul.*



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investments that go beyond the 5% of your endowment that must be dedicated to grantmaking annually (for more information, explore the resources, trainings, and communities of practice offered by [Justice Funders](#)).

- Include the broader movement support ecosystem in your funding and/or investments: fund intermediaries, cooperative fiscal hosts, and other structures that move money efficiently while reducing bureaucratic barriers.

4. Moving money with creativity, flexibility, and anti-fragility

LIBERATORY			HARMFUL
Getting money where it needs to go, absorbing necessary risk, and adapting new tactics and learning new approaches to do so	<i>How to get there</i>	<i>What's holding you back</i>	Funding only registered organizations and often still with layers of restrictions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding grassroots unregistered groups and frontline individuals, and ensuring that your funding reaches groups led by and designed to reach the most marginalized and underrepresented communities. <input type="checkbox"/> Offering non-traditional money transfer mechanisms or currencies or otherwise adapting to any additional compliance burdens, based on a holistic assessment of risk that includes the risk of failing to support organizations responding to crisis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Continually question the degree of flexibility you provide, how that affects the groups you fund, and/or how it shapes the wider landscape for their work. If you run up against structural obstacles to expanding your own institution's flexibility, cede power by funding intermediaries who already know how to flex farther.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seek out peers who directly fund unregistered initiatives, support individuals, and/or use non-traditional money mechanisms when needed. How do they do it?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Limited internal will or capacity to think and act outside the box when facing obstacles to moving funds.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A conscious or unconscious culture of offloading risk and labor to partners (for example, requiring registration, without support to do so or alternatives when registration may not be possible or strategic).</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The tendency to confuse privilege with capacity, or the failure to distinguish between the capacity to communicate effectively with</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not funding unregistered initiatives. <input type="checkbox"/> Funding only international NGOs (often with Global North leadership) or US 501(c)(3) organizations doing work in Palestine. <input type="checkbox"/> If funding registered organizations in Palestine from the US, doing so with narrow, restrictive conditions: project funding (including Expenditure Responsibility), restrictions on region or activities, limits on political speech, etc.



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- Release supplemental funds to current grantees during moments of escalation (raids, arrests, attacks, censorship, mass violence) without added requirements, rather than compelling organizations in crisis to pause their work in order to apply for emergency support.
- Participating in or convening rapid-response pooled funds that allow multiple funders to deploy resources quickly and reduce duplication or delays.
- Building and maintaining strong relationships with peers and intermediaries so that you can coordinate to move funds when needed.

- Work toward funding unregistered initiatives without sacrificing flexibility or adding burden for grantee partners.*
- Enhance emergency/crisis support resources and ease access to them for grantee partners.*

- funders and the capacity to work effectively with communities.*
- Limited knowledge of or curiosity about the local conditions that may make registration impossible or unstrategic.*
 - A belief that small or informal groups require greater oversight or lack strategic acumen.*
 - Requiring potential grantee partners to secure 501c3 status or obtain a fiscal host if they wish to receive funding, instead of working with them to identify existing channels or relationships through a potential grant could be moved.*

5. Being in relationship with grantee partners

LIBERATORY	<i>How to get there</i>	<i>What's holding you back</i>	HARMFUL
Being in consistent relationship with partners, including by demonstrating accountability			Top-down, one-way communication with partners, leaving little to no space for partner consent, negotiation, recourse, or appeal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining transparent channels for questions, feedback, and additional support, with measures in place to ensure follow-up. <input type="checkbox"/> Willingness to listen and learn from partners, supported by mechanisms for regular feedback gathering from grantee partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Grantee partners can decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Recognize the need to re-align your relationship with grantee partners toward justice and reparations rather than charity.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Express curiosity about grantee partners' positions; recognize how judgmental or cautious approaches undermine shared understanding and mutual growth.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A tendency to respond to issues, concerns, or rumors about grantee partners with depositions rather than dialogue.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A lack of open, transparent, meaningful, and non-punitive channels to bring challenges or make requests, or a failure to make partners aware that such channels exist.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prohibiting organizations you fund from expressing solidarity with Palestine; punishing or threatening groups that issue public statements or otherwise speak publicly in support of Palestinian liberation. <input type="checkbox"/> Treating grantee partners facing backlash or repression as "reputational risks" and using this as an excuse to monitor or investigate

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requests and bring forth challenges without retribution and make requests that will be taken seriously and responded to.

- Support is increased materially and (with consent) publicly when grantee partners face backlash, reputational threats, or state repression.
- Prioritizing accountability via ongoing self-interrogation of grantmaking practices to ensure that grantmaking strategies stay truly reflective of values, including making adjustments to strategy and practice as needed to ensure values alignment.
- Owning any past and current harms, and taking concrete steps toward repair and to avoid future harm. For example: 1) Exploring and disclosing the origins of private or family foundation wealth, including acknowledging the exploitative or extractive systems on which it was built. [Justice Funders](#) is a great place to explore these histories in community with others; 2) Shifting practices away from a history of harmful funding, and also publicly naming the historic harms; 3) Taking steps to own and repair harm when realizing a mistake has intentionally or inadvertently caused harm.
- When grantee partners request it, making introductions to other potential funders, or otherwise opening doors to donors/funders.

- Be transparent with grantees when public positions they have taken could imperil their funding.*
- Open clear, transparent, and two-way channels of communication to facilitate dialogue, listening, and learning, including ongoing staff learning.*
- Open some channels that invite grantee partner questions and requests for additional support, taking grantee requests and suggestions seriously and responding to all feedback and questions.*
- Only ask grantee partners for feedback on areas where you are equipped to make changes.*
- Notice places where you pay lip service to the value of partnership, but aren't following through in action. What would need to shift to close the gaps between theory and practice?*
- Recognize the power dynamics always at play, and find ways to shift them where possible—for example, ensuring that grantee partners can say no to requests without risking retaliation.*

- Evading difficult conversations with grantees about transparency, institutional practices, or past harms.*
- Requesting feedback/evaluation from grantee partners without mechanisms for applying or otherwise following up on feedback offered.*
- Evaluating grantee partners without inviting them to evaluate you as a funder/donor.*
- Responding with defensiveness or punitive measures when grantees offer feedback.*
- An institutional tendency to distance yourself from grantee partners facing backlash, state repression, or reputational risk.*
- Acknowledging some past harms, but failing to engage in institutional learning and systemic change to prevent future harms.*
- Failing to identify ways that you can intervene to prevent harm or identify opportunities for deeper internal reflection and political education when grantee partners are at risk of being cut for political reasons.*

them, pressure them to self-censor, and/or defund them.

- Monitoring grantee partners' public communications for violations of frequently opaque and inconsistently applied guidelines and expectations.
- Conducting investigations into grantee partners behind closed doors, often only involving partners when it comes time to inform them of an irreversible decision.



6. Demonstrating context and crisis sensitivity

LIBERATORY			HARMFUL
<p>Practicing context and crisis awareness and providing responsive support</p>	<p><i>How to get there</i></p>	<p><i>What's holding you back</i></p>	<p>Effective denial of political realities via rigid grantmaking practices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency resources are available for when (not if) grantee partners need to adapt, especially in response to sudden emergencies or crises, over and above the resources offered for their ongoing work. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently monitoring political context so that you can offer legal, security, or rapid-response resources proactively. <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis response is further coordinated through collective funder approaches that leverage resources to act quickly and in alignment with community needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Increase awareness of grantee partners' context and needs, and experiment with dedicating a portion of your grantmaking budget to responsive support.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seek out peers who offer robust crisis and rapid-response resources. How do they do it? Are there opportunities to pool resources?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Research and explore how you can start to offer emergency/crisis support, whether by opening a stream for crisis funding or connecting grantees to existing legal, security, and/or rapid response resources in the field.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Offering limited or inconsistent emergency resources for grantee partners facing precarious or oppressive local conditions.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Relying on grantee partners to provide education about the political context in which they operate</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>An inability or an unwillingness to adapt practice, even when learning of mismatch between context and grantmaking.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The belief that shifts in strategy or changes to activities during a grant period indicate a lack of accountability or a failure to plan properly.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Little to no ongoing learning alongside grantee partners, and/or reliance on outside "expert" analysis to interpret the political context in which grantee partners operate. <input type="checkbox"/> When approached by grantee partners with emergent needs, defaulting to doubt that additional support is needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Providing little or no room for grantmaking to adapt to changing circumstances, effectively compelling grantee partners to present a false picture of their realities if they wish to continue receiving funds.