

AS THE SOUTH GROWS

Between 2011 and 2015, foundations nationwide invested 56 cents per person in the South for every dollar per person they invested nationally. And they provided 30 cents per person for structural change work in the South for every dollar per person nationally.

It is hard for Southern leaders, especially those at the vanguard of social change work in their communities, to reconcile the reality of a region full of innovative and effective social change networks with the long-standing dearth of resources to support their work.

The soil for growing exciting solutions to national problems is deep and fertile in the South; the seeds are present, and foundation staff haven't turned on the water. It's time to open the spigot.

Because the South is and has often been the proving ground for some of the nation's most regressive public policies and rhetoric, choosing not to invest in Southern structural change work puts marginalized people across the country in harm's way. Wages are too low to support working families in the Midwest because of anti-labor legislation exported from Southern states. Cities and states in the Southwest model their systemic harassment of

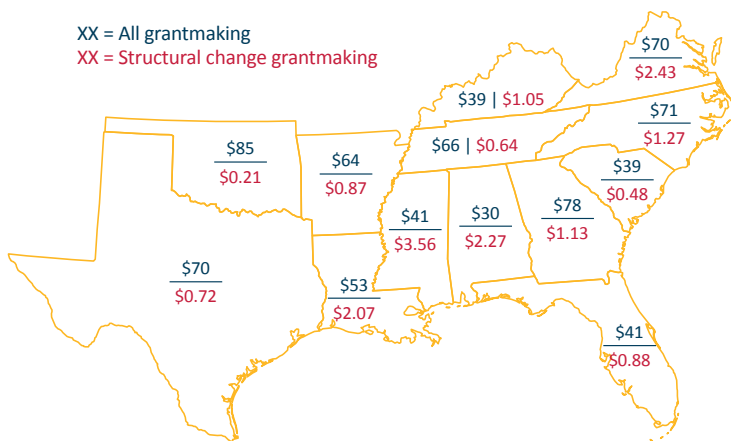
immigrants on policies and practices pushed by a powerful minority of Southern elected officials. The road to a more equitable future nationally runs through the South.

Southern leadership understands the twists and turns that lie on the road ahead. These leaders understand how we, as a nation, can find our way to a better, more just future because they've won a better future for themselves and their families again and again against stacked odds. Today's movements for justice and equity are putting down deep roots at the intersections of gender, race, class, sexual identity and immigration status across the South.

Southern organizers understand how to operate in an environment where money for their work can be scarce, but where reciprocal communal support has sustained their communities for centuries. They also understand how to move safely and strategically in a region where the threat of economic, social and even physical retribution is still real. They are equipped to teach and lead their allies across the country in a vision that can win against forces of division, obfuscation and oppression. Southern organizations and the networks they comprise have all of this. What they don't have so much of is philanthropic support to turn vision and skill into larger-scale change.

Grantmaking per capita per year, 2011-2015

XX = All grantmaking
XX = Structural change grantmaking



HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Repair broken relationships and redistribute money and power.

High-capacity Southern social change networks exist across the region. And change for the better is possible.

executive summary

And yet, as the funding data show, the resources to drive that change have not found their way into Southern hands. Ultimately, our conversations with grassroots Southern activists, Southern family and community foundation staff and large national foundation staff point to a simple factor behind that dearth of funding that is nonetheless exceptionally difficult to change: trust.

Foundation staff and trustees – national and Southern – do not trust Southern leadership, especially when that leadership is by women – especially Black women – people of color, poor people, LGBTQ people and immigrants. They don't trust that it is possible to move the needle on stubborn challenges in the South, and they don't trust that a dollar spent on amplifying the voices of those with the least wealth and power in the South is a smart way to better the day-to-day living conditions in Southern communities. Funder staff and trustees do not trust that Southern grassroots networks understand how to use scarce resources effectively to win big victories. They don't trust Southern leadership enough to trust them when they say they need time, space and resources to heal before they return to the frontlines.

Likewise, many grassroots leaders in the South do not trust philanthropy, even when foundation staff and donors have the best intent. Philanthropic resources can be a powerful tool for long-term change; in the South (and in other historically under-invested places), however, many community organizations have written off philanthropy. Some have been burned by foundation staff who promise the world and do not deliver; some have been frustrated for too long by foundation staff's inability to work effectively in the region. Broken relationships and mistrust are left in the wake of decades of philanthropic misadventures.

The most promising way to overcome this lack of trust between philanthropy and grassroots Southern leadership is to build relationships. And to do this, grantmakers need to:

- ***Find out what's broken.***
- ***Put relationship-building front and center in your grantmaking strategy.***
- ***Shift power and resources to Southern leadership.***

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW TO JUMP-START YOUR HIGH-IMPACT GRANTMAKING IN THE SOUTH

1. Re-evaluate your institution's administrative processes and requirements to allow for different definitions of capacity, success and risk better suited to the Southern grassroots context.
2. Reach out to those foundations in the South already funding structural change work.
3. Invest in grassroots civic engagement infrastructure now.
4. Take a risk and be ready to learn from the outcome.
5. Join Grantmakers for Southern Progress.
6. Hire Southerners – especially Southerners with backgrounds in grassroots organizing and with a race and gender equity lens.
7. Deepen your capacity to integrate a racial and gender equity lens into your grantmaking that is in the context of the South.
8. If you're already moving money to Southern-led structural change work, organize your philanthropic peers to do the same.