



THE FUND FOR THE ME TOO MOVEMENT AND ALLIES:

A Funder-Activist Collaboration

“Me too’ was just two words; it’s two magic words that galvanized the world.”

TARANA BURKE

FOUNDER OF ME TOO INTERNATIONAL



Tarana Burke

OVERVIEW

The Fund for the Me Too Movement and Allies was established in 2018 by New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) in partnership with activist Tarana Burke, the founder of the “me too” Movement, to support leaders, activists, and advocates working to promote healing justice for and uplift the voices of survivors of violence, particularly girls and women of color. Over three years, eight survivor-led organizations received support for their field-building, operations, and program development. As well, NYWF partnered with five women's foundations across the country to expand the reach and impact of The Fund.

Tarana Burke's “me too” movement is, by CREA's definition, a social movement because it is comprised of a group of people, primarily women and girls of color, with the shared experience of sexual violence victimization, who “organize themselves to build their collective power and leadership” and “develop a shared agenda for change”, to end sexual violence, “which they pursue through collective action” of restorative healing justice.¹

The collaboration resulted in a new social movement organization – me too. International – and funding to support seven other grassroots organizations. These organizations, listed to the right, had been doing substantive and innovative work in the field of anti-violence among underserved communities, despite a dearth of philanthropic funding and support for such work. The grants awarded to these eight organizations allowed for the growth and development of numerous programs and initiatives that cultivated healing communities,

The early me too movement supported critical work of grassroots organizations

Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective
Los Angeles, CA

Black Women's Blueprint
New York, NY

DC Rape Crisis Center
Washington, D.C.

Equality Labs
National

FreeFrom
Los Angeles, CA

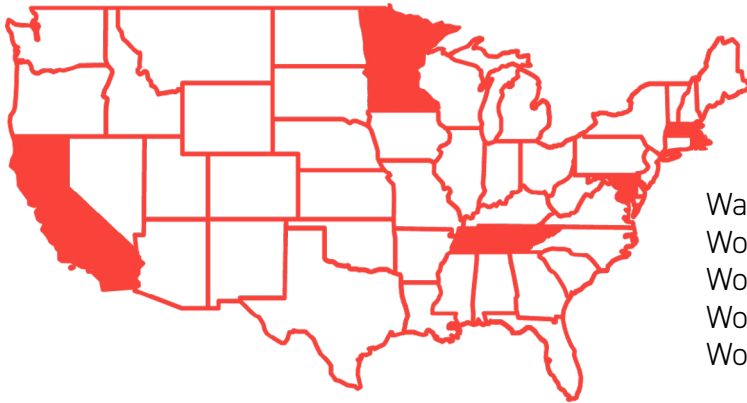
The Firecracker Foundation
Lansing, MI

Violence Intervention Program
New York, NY

¹ Susan Raffo. “Healing Justice: Building Power, Transforming Movements.” Astraea Lesbian Foundation For Justice. Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/astraea.production/app/asset/uploads/2019/05/Astraea-Healing-Justice-Report-2019-v7.pdf>.

built power, and shared knowledge with POC and/or LGBTQ+ survivors across the country. Organizations were able to expand upon their field building efforts, increasing the numbers of trauma-informed service providers in their locale. Further, organizations were able to leverage The Fund to increase their resources, which allowed them to build their organizational capacity and infrastructure.

The Fund also fostered cross-country collaborations with five women's funds, including,



Washington Area Women's Fund
Women's Foundation of Minnesota
Women's Foundation of California
Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis
Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts

By bringing in other women's funds as partners in The Fund, NYWF was able to support organizations working outside New York state. At the same time, other women's funds were able to use matching funds to raise additional money from established donors, as well as to support additional anti-violence work in their communities. These additional investments were well-timed, given the global COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the accessibility of resources and heightened demand for anti-violence services.





KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Below, we share the key lessons drawn from a summative evaluation of The Fund.

FUNDING WITH AN ACTIVIST

1 FOCUS ON FORMING AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP

Direct support must be accompanied by a relationship that is indicative of how funders value a social movement leader as an expert in the movement(s) in which they work. The relationship will, as a result, lend itself to a collaborative partnership, surpassing the more transactional aspects of funder-grantee relationships.

3 DEFER TO THE EXPERT: FOLLOW THE ACTIVIST'S LEAD AND PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS.

Donors can align their actions with their values. This can start with asking for guidance from an individual activist or movement leader about what and how to fund. However, there must also be a genuine respect for the person and the movement(s) they represent, including a willingness to let the activist make substantive decisions about funding, as opposed to serving only in an advisory role.

2 REIMAGINE THE FUNDER-GRANTEE RELATIONSHIP TO NARROW GAPS IN POWER AND TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF RECIPROCITY.

Funders can challenge the inherent power imbalance that inheres in their relationships with grantee organizations. This can look like foregoing traditional reporting processes and prioritizing authentic communication that centers genuine concern and a willingness to help.

4 LET THE FIELD TELL YOU WHEN TO LET GO.

Relationships with activists do not have to take the same form indefinitely. In fact, what donors bring to the table in donor-activist relationships is the capital and connections to support and promote the sustainability of movement(s).

SUPPORTING A NEW ORGANIZATION TO FORM

1 Commit to flexible multiyear grants that are dedicated to general operating support.

Multiyear general operating support is crucial to support activists looking to start new organizations, particularly those that are BIPOC-led and may not receive larger upfront investments from other sources.

3 Stand with leadership through the trials and tribulations of establishing organizational infrastructure.

In building the infrastructure of a nascent organization, support is not merely monetary but relational as well.

2 Actively link leadership with other donors in the philanthropic landscape to ensure sustainability.

Helping a new organization build capacity can take multiple forms, including direct monetary support, as well as making relevant social connections. Donors should not underestimate the power of their endorsement of a nascent organization to their peers, which can further legitimize the organization and its mission.

WORKING WITH DONORS PARTNERS

1 Pay it forward: Prioritize underrepresented organizations and extend flexible funding to donor partners

By reducing reporting requirements and minimizing funding restrictions, donor partners can extend the same flexibility to subgrantees. This is critical for small organizations that experience significant resource constraints.

2 Expand networks: Create donor partnerships to foster new connections between funders and grassroots organizations.

The brokerage of such relationships can create potential future funding streams for smaller organizations.





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