

FOUNDATION GIVING FOR DISABILITY

An Overview of Priorities and Trends

Executive Summary

January 2023



Disability &
Philanthropy
Forum



Foundation Giving For Disability

Report at a Glance

Introduction

- **Disability defined:** Apparent and non-apparent mental, behavioral, and chronic health conditions, as well as physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.
- **Defining disability grantmaking:** Grantmaking by 1,000 of the largest U.S. foundations that explicitly references disability services, supports, and/or social justice and rights initiatives.

Key Findings

- Only 2% of funding supports disability, and most is for services and supports.
- 1/10 of 1% of funding supports disability rights and social justice.
- Only 10 funders give 84% of disability rights and social justice grant dollars.
- 90% of disability funding is focused on the United States.
- Human services and health are the top priorities.
- Few grants focus on intersecting systems of oppression or overlapping identities.

Recommendations

- Engage the perspectives and leadership of disabled people.
- Be intentional about addressing disability.
- Recognize connections to disability in all funding.
- Fund disability inclusion, rights, and justice.
- Sign the Disability Inclusion Pledge and advance the journey toward disability inclusion.

Introduction

U.S. foundations have an urgent opportunity to expand equity and social justice by increasing their focus on disability. One in four adult Americans and an estimated 1 billion people globally experience disability, but foundation funding for disability only represents approximately two cents of every foundation dollar awarded. Meanwhile, disabled people regularly encounter ableism that limits their social and economic prospects, well-being, and human rights.

[Foundation Giving for Disability: Priorities and Trends](#) offers a first-ever, detailed examination of how U.S. foundations focus their support for disability communities, spanning priorities ranging from health to education to arts and culture to sports and recreation. It tracks disability-related funding by 1,000 of the country's largest foundations, based on U.S. focus and global focus.¹ Within these geographies, the report examines funding explicitly for disability rights and social justice and for services and supports for disabled people.

For the purposes of this report, disability is defined broadly. It includes mental, behavioral, and chronic health conditions, as well as physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

Foundation Giving for Disability serves as a resource for understanding the scale and priorities of current support and provides a baseline for measuring changes in funding going forward.²

¹ This report draws on an analysis of data licensed through Candid from the organization's Foundation 1000 data set. The Forum also secured Candid data for several additional disability funders. For the purposes of this report, when we refer to the Foundation 1000, it also includes these funders. The data set consists of grant descriptions that refer to disability and/or to specific conditions. Medical research was excluded from this dataset.

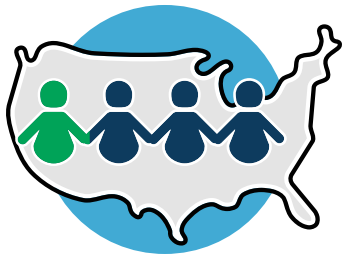
² See the full report's Appendix A: Mapping Foundation Giving for Disability for details on the data set and methodology.

Key Findings

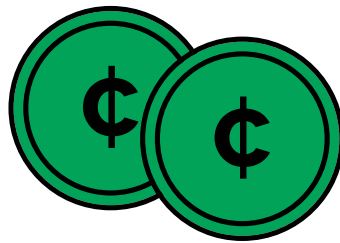
Foundations provide relatively little giving focused on disability.

In 2019, three out of four funders (75%) included in [Candid's](#) Foundation 1000 data set made at least one grant focused on disability. Yet, these funders' 8,605 disability-related grants totaling \$755.1 million represented just 2% of the \$37.2 billion in total giving reported by the Foundation 1000.

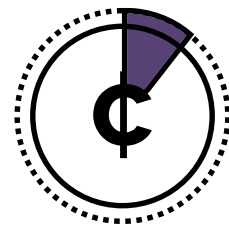
Share of adult Americans currently experiencing disability (26%).



Share of every Foundation 1000 grant dollar focused on disability in 2019 (2¢).



Share of every Foundation 1000 grant dollar focused on **disability rights** and **social justice** in 2019 (0.1¢).



Most foundation funding is consistent with the medical and charity models of disability, focusing on services and supports.

This support often focuses on the assumption that disability needs to be fixed or cured, rather than seeking to eliminate systemic barriers and abolish discrimination toward disabled people. It is also rooted in the assumption that disabled people are unable to participate in decision-making about their own care needs and well-being.

While much of this support may fail to recognize that many disabled people are not seeking to eradicate disability, some service and support grants do recognize disability as a facet of identity and contribute to inclusion and power building.

Within disability services and supports, some grants advance disability inclusion by building disabled peoples' individual power and access.

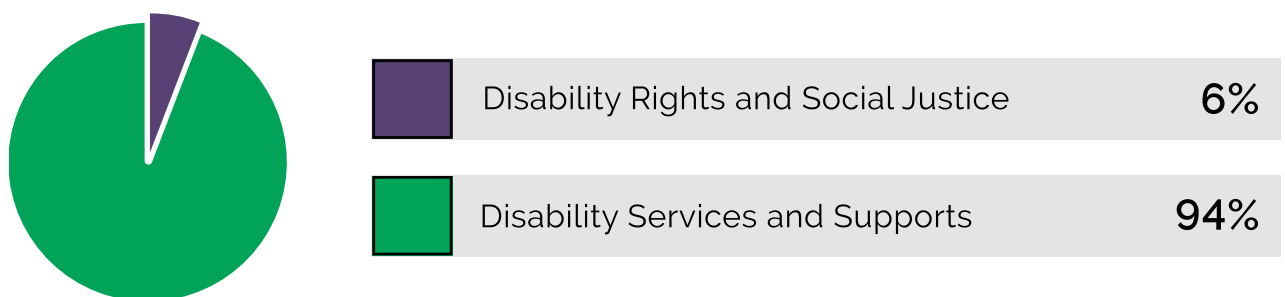
Examples of recent grants that leverage individual power and access with the aim of ensuring the full participation of people with disabilities in society include awards to:

- Commission, create, and perform contemporary dance that is developed through the collaboration of dancers with and without physical disabilities.
- Provide support for people with developmental disabilities in their efforts to make choices about their lives and participate in community life.

Foundation support for disability rights and social justice that follows a “social model” of disability is a tiny portion of overall Foundation 1000 funding.

The social model of disability asserts that society places physical and attitudinal barriers in front of people with disabilities, preventing them from full participation. In 2019, the Foundation 1000 directed just 6.4% of its domestic and global disability giving for efforts to advance systems-level social change for disabled people, or 0.1% of total Foundation 1000 giving.

Activity focus of Foundation 1000 giving for disability in 2019.



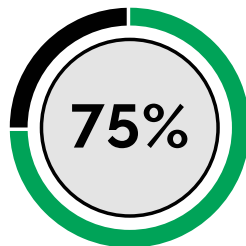
Examples of philanthropic support for disability rights and social justice that aims to challenge systemic ableism and support disabled people's access and legal rights include:

- Advancing the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities in areas of legal capacity, community living, freedom from torture and ill treatment, political participation, and access to justice.
- Supporting civil rights advocacy by community residents with disabilities.

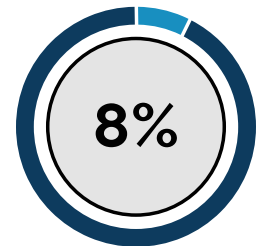
Top disability funders account for a disproportionate share of disability rights and social justice giving.

While 758 of the Foundation 1000 grantmakers made at least one grant focused on disability, only 83 gave for disability rights and social justice, either in the United States or globally. In 2019, the top 10 funders alone provided more than four out of five grant dollars (84%) for disability rights and social justice.

Share of Foundation 1000 funders making at least one grant focused on disability in 2019 (75%).



Share of Foundation 1000 funders making at least one U.S.-focused grant for disability rights and social justice in 2019 (8%).

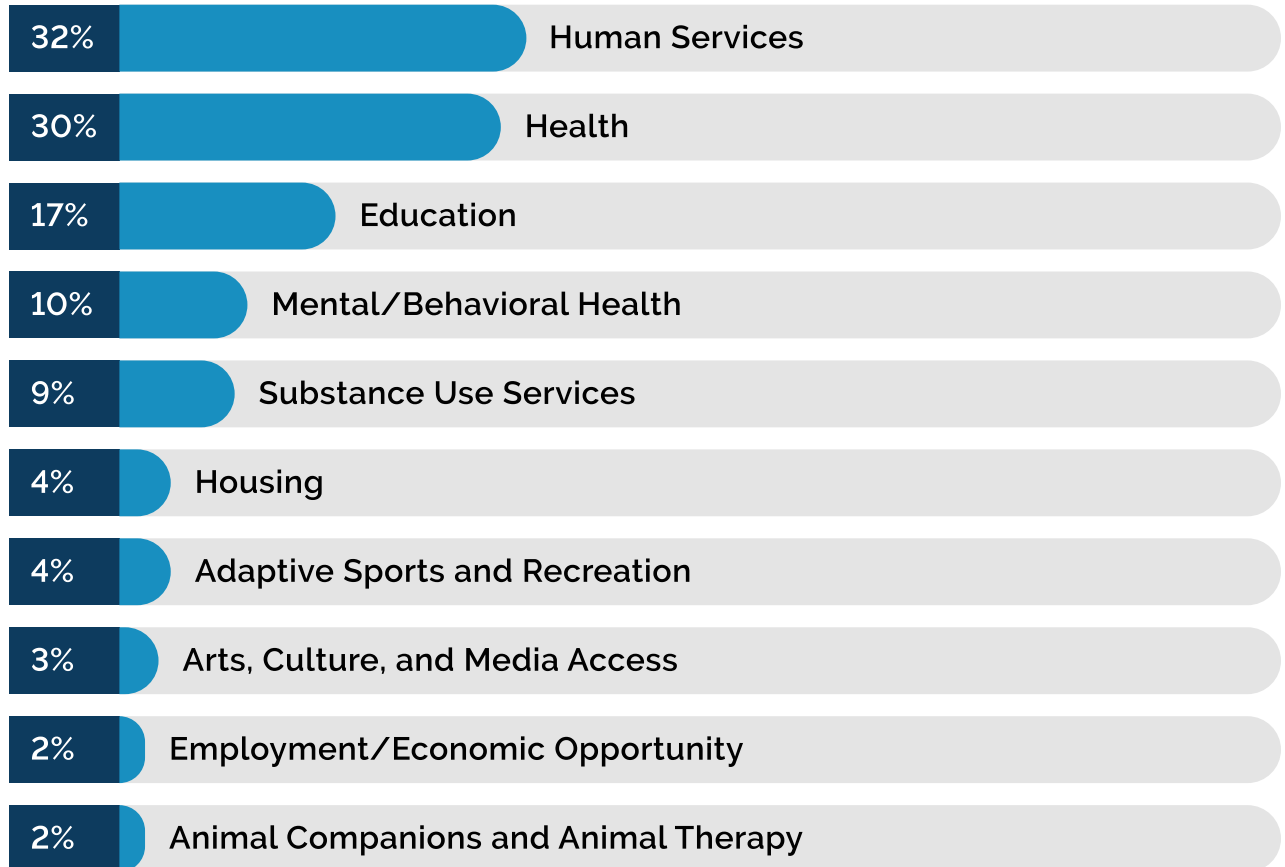


Most foundation funding for disability focuses on the United States.

In 2019, 90% of disability-focused giving by the Foundation 1000 addressed domestic priorities, while only 10% prioritized disability in other countries or globally. However, global giving was far more likely than domestic giving to prioritize disability rights and social justice (28% versus 4%).

Human services and health are top priorities in domestic giving for disability services and supports.

Issue focus of Foundation 1000 domestic giving for disability services and supports in 2019.



Disability funding rarely focuses on intersecting identities, including race, gender, and sexuality.

In 2019, only 5% of domestic-focused and global funding for disability by the Foundation 1000 specified racial and ethnic minorities, 3% focused on women and girls, and less than 1% specified LGBTQ people with disabilities. This suggests that most disability funders have placed limited intentional focus on recognizing that disability cuts across all identity groups and that systems of oppression reinforce and amplify one another.

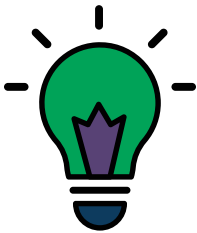
Recommendations

The current scale of foundation investment in disability inclusion, rights, and justice is low. Nonetheless, three-quarters of Foundation 1000 funders demonstrated interest by making at least one disability grant. With intentional action, all funders can move communities toward equity for disabled people by making a commitment to:



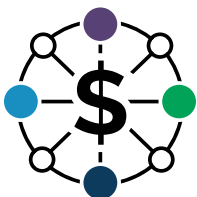
Engage the perspectives and leadership of people with disabilities.

Lasting positive change requires that disabled people inform foundation strategy and lead the initiatives that foundations fund.



Be intentional about addressing disability.

Funders can address the disparities disabled people experience by asking about disability in all of their grants: How will the disability community be served by this grant? Does the prospective grantee have a record of effectively engaging and honoring the leadership of disabled people? What adjustments could be made to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable access to the programs we invest in?



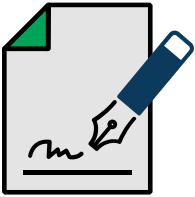
Recognize connections to disability in all funding.

For example, foundations addressing voter access may overlook the challenges some disabled people have in accessing polling places, or housing funders may exclude disabled people if they do not require accessibility as a criteria for their investments. Making the connection between disability and all funding areas could have profound implications for how a foundation structures its grantmaking and reduce the invisibility of people with disabilities.



Fund disability inclusion, rights, and justice.

Funders have an opportunity to support inclusion by funding power-building and accessibility that supports individuals in fully participating in their communities. They can advance systems change by funding disability rights. And they can move toward equity with disability justice grants that center the priorities and leadership of the most historically excluded groups, such as disabled people of color, immigrants and queer people.



Sign the Disability Inclusion Pledge, which offers a road map and benchmarking for the journey toward disability inclusion.

All foundations and philanthropy-serving organizations are welcome, whether they are just starting the journey or are continuing to expand their learning and commitment.

Disability is a social, cultural, political, and personal identity, and a natural part of the human experience. People with disabilities include our neighbors, our teachers, our doctors, our lawyers, our friends, our family members, and ourselves. Good intentions are not enough to ensure social justice for all. It is time to join the growing movement of funders incorporating disability into all aspects of their grantmaking and investing in systemic change led by disabled people.

About the Disability & Philanthropy Forum

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum is an emerging philanthropy-serving organization created by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy to expand philanthropic commitment to disability rights and justice by centering the leadership of the disability community — essential tenets of achieving a more equitable, inclusive future for all. Fiscally sponsored by Proteus Fund.

Learn more, and join us on the journey to inclusion at:

DisabilityPhilanthropy.org



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