

Tracking Funding for Systemic Change

Disabled people are 26% of the U.S. adult population and 15% of the global population. But just 2% of grant dollars awarded by foundations based in the United States goes to disability. And only 0.1% is focused on disability rights and social justice.¹ **It is clear that the biggest gap between current giving and the boldest aspirations of disabled communities is funding for systemic change.**

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum is committed to amplifying the leadership of disabled people in the philanthropic sector and increasing funding for disability inclusion, rights, and justice. The Forum has set a goal. Our aspiration is that by 2028, U.S. Foundations will triple their grantmaking dollars for disability rights and justice. This will require both more funding² and better data to ensure that foundations are meeting this commitment. This guide is one of the tools that the Forum has created to help philanthropy reach this goal.

What is the role of data?

Data is critical to advancements in social justice: it sets a baseline, makes commitments transparent, records change over time, and changes our minds. The data has made clear that the philanthropic sector must recognize the urgent funding gap in rights and justice for disabled people in the United States and globally. We also have an opportunity to record and amplify a changing story about disability.

How can you more accurately track your grant funding for disability rights and justice? How can that information be shared to tell a broader story of change and impact?

1 [Foundation Giving for Disability](#), January 2023. This review examined 2019 giving of the 1000 largest U.S. foundations whose giving is tracked by Candid.

2 As noted in [Foundation Giving for Disability](#), most U.S. funding for disability goes to services and supports. While the Disability & Philanthropy Forum is primarily focused on rights and justice, all funding must grow.

Let's start with grant descriptions:

Philanthropic data collectors, like [Candid](#) and the [Human Rights Funders Network](#), use grant descriptions to tag funding to populations, issues, and approaches. The more detailed your descriptions, the better. If the grant is intended to reach disabled people, clearly indicate that. Then, get more specific. For instance, describe whether the grant is intended to provide services or to address systemic change.

Examples of grants funding systemic change:

Two-year grant to UNABU, the Rwandan National Organization of Women with Disabilities, to advocate for effective access to justice for women and girls with disabilities by ensuring that Isange One-Stop Centres are fully accessible, as committed to by the government at the 2018 Global Disability Summit and in line with CRPD Articles 13 (Access to justice) and 16 (Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse).

One-year grant to the Black Phoenix Organizing Collective, a diverse group of disabled, queer, fat, and addicts, as they apply a disability justice framework to abolition and reproductive justice work with Black communities in Phoenix, Arizona.

Be sure to clarify your definitions:

Grants administration and program staff should all have a shared understanding of the definitions best used to describe and track disability-related funding.

What is disability?

Disability is a social, cultural, political, and personal identity that cuts across all identity groups and yet disproportionately affects women, people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA+ people, and other groups affected by systemic injustices. It can be apparent or non-apparent and can be acquired at any point in a person's life. Disability includes mental, behavioral, and chronic health conditions, and physical, intellectual, developmental, sensory, and learning disabilities.

What does the Disability & Philanthropy Forum mean by funding for systemic change?

To track increases in funding focused on dismantling ableism and the policies and practices that prevent equity for disabled people, the Disability & Philanthropy Forum prioritizes tracking growth in funding for two categories: disability rights and social justice; and disability justice.³

³ Coined in 2005, disability justice includes 10 principles that centers intersectionality and the ways diverse systems of oppression amplify and reinforce one another.

Funding for disability rights and social justice: Recognizes disability as a facet of identity and addresses systems-level change to remove physical and attitudinal barriers to participate in society.	Funding for disability justice: Based on recognizing compounding systems of oppression (e.g., racism, heterosexism, ableism), and centers the leadership of historically excluded disabled people and supports disability-led organizations.
--	--

Use these key questions to identify disability rights and justice funding.

Disability Rights and Social Justice:

- 1** Does this grant support systems-level change that could ensure people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as non-disabled people?

FOR EXAMPLE

- A** Does the grant or grantee organization address issues of access to systems other members of the population have access to, such as public education, public media, or justice systems?

OR

- B** Does the grant/grantee organization aim to address legal rights or advocate for policy change to better protect/promote disability rights?

AND

- 2** Are people with disabilities named actors and/or communities benefiting from this grant or grantee organization?
-

OR

- 3** Does the grant discuss how ableism and other forms of discrimination against disabled people will be addressed, among other systems of oppression?

▶ If you checked yes to either 1.A OR 1.B AND yes to 2 OR 3, this is a grant for disability rights and social justice.

Disability Justice (Learn the [10 principles of disability justice](#))

- 1** Does this grant provide resources for efforts or organizations led by disabled people who have been historically excluded because of other identities, such as race/ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ status, Indigenous status?
-

AND

- 2** Is the grant funding efforts or organizations addressing ableism and the ways it intersects with other forms of oppression?

▶ If you checked yes to 1 AND 2, this is a grant that reflects disability justice principles.

Share your data with Candid and the broader philanthropy and social justice community:

Disabled people all too often encounter significant barriers to accessing philanthropic funding.

As the philanthropic sector continues on our collective learning journey about disability, the field is increasingly recognizing the importance of implementing inclusive practices.

Inclusive data is key. The more funders commit to increased disability rights and justice grantmaking, and record/share data, the better the collective data—and story—will be. **We want to connect.** [Email the Disability & Philanthropy Forum](#) at info@DisabilityPhilanthropy.org and share your inclusive data!

LET'S CHANGE THE STORY

Get involved by visiting our website, the [Disability and Philanthropy Forum](#).
Fiscally sponsored by Proteus Fund.



**Disability &
Philanthropy
Forum**