



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**RESOURCING  
TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE  
IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER**



In 2020, the world saw the urgency  
of what we've always known:  
**in order to reimagine oppressive  
systems, we must support the  
people most impacted  
by those systems.**



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# 2020 In Review

In a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings affirming that Black Lives Matter, it has become abundantly clear that grassroots leaders saved this country from an authoritarian takeover by organizing and energizing voters in all 50 states. **THAT** is the power of progressive community organizing and civic engagement.

In response to the challenges of 2020, **Borealis quickly scaled up our early investments in movement groups led by Black and Indigenous, Queer, and Trans People of Color.** Their long-held vision for radical change sparked the largest protest movement in U.S. history after the devastating police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many more.

As people filled the streets in protest, our ten collaborative funds made **\$2.4 million rapid response grants to 160 organizations between May and July** to address urgent needs related to the pandemic and racial justice. We also welcomed 40 new funders committed to addressing the inequities facing so many of our communities.

Internally, we bid farewell to Magui Rubalcava Shulman, our former President, and Rickke Mananzala, our former Vice President of Programs.

Our work did not miss a beat. Too often, organizations working for a truly multiracial democracy have been historically underfunded by philanthropy. However, where some funders see risk, we see catalysts for liberation. In just six years, **Borealis Philanthropy has made a total of \$78.4 million in grants.**

In 2020, we more than doubled our previous year's grantmaking, moving \$29 million, a majority of which are POC and women-led. We begin 2021 with more resources than ever before, including multi-year commitments for future grantmaking.

# Introducing Our President



**Dear friends,**

Like many of you, I had the opportunity to witness Borealis Philanthropy navigate 2020 and admire their impact from the outside. Last year was challenging for all of philanthropy, but this team met multiple crises by ramping up their support to grassroots groups on the ground fighting for us all. And they did it while internally working to strengthen their own organization.

I'm proud to be joining them as the new president of Borealis Philanthropy, and I am excited to bring my experience and outlook to the dynamic mix of talent that this organization already has. As a leader, my first priority is to facilitate connections between people, places, and information; I see this as an important function as Borealis continues to build a bridge between philanthropy and the defining social justice movements of our lifetime. Since 2015, this organization has helped donors connect with their own values and use that self-knowledge to make decisions about where they can contribute resources. Facilitating these kinds of connections is the Borealis superpower.

The past year of developments in our sector has made me optimistic about how much more impact Borealis can make with this unique power. As we welcome new funders to the field who were shaken to action by the uprisings and calls for justice amplified this past year, we have an opportunity to open up space for even more people to see themselves in this critical work. Borealis has helped both institutional and individual donors find their footing in issue areas that were new to them, from disability justice to community safety to trans and queer rights. And there is still so much more we can do.

What comes next is a much needed period of stabilizing and strengthening our work. As we transition out of crisis response, our commitment is to our programmatic work and to providing the resources that grantee partners need to be successful. We are actively choosing to tend to our communities out of hope rather than fear. It is an empowering place to be, and we are looking forward to taking the journey with you.

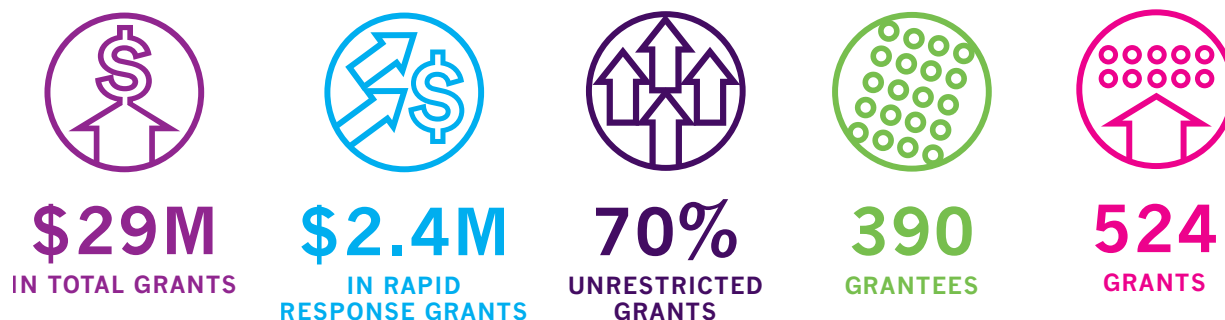
**In community,**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amoretta Morris".

**PRESIDENT, BOREALIS PHILANTHROPY**

# Our Impact

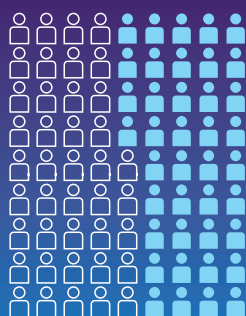
## We Scaled Up to Meet the Need



Two New Funds  
Made Their First Grants



Total Giving, Number of Grants, and Fundraising All **DOUBLED**



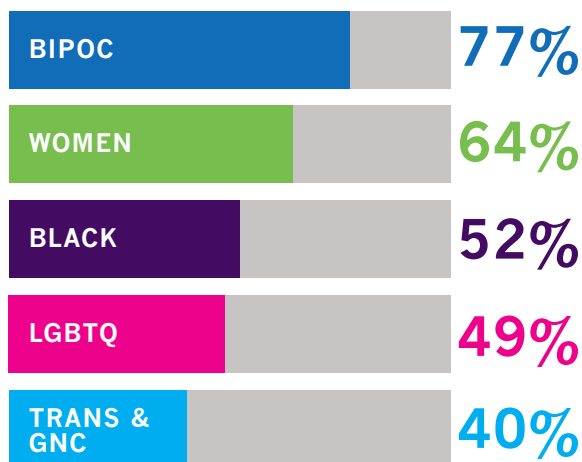
**40**  
NEW FUNDING  
PARTNERS



**\$50M**  
TOTAL REVENUE

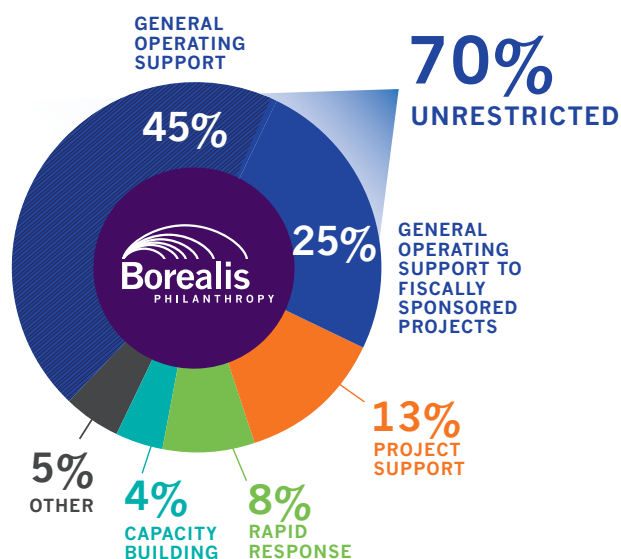
\$14M FOR FUTURE USE

## Grantee Demographics

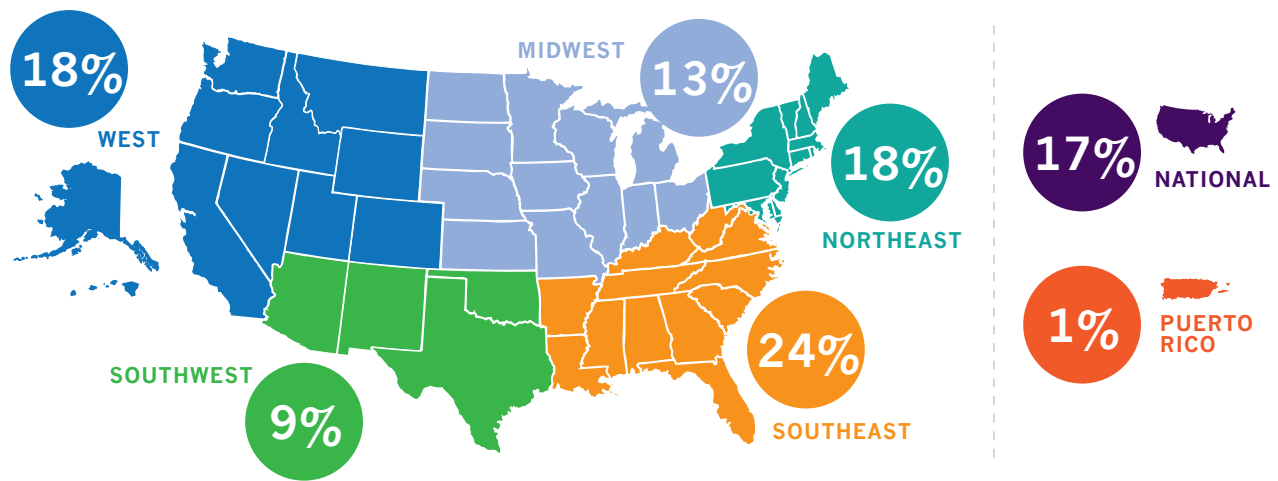


These figures reflect the leadership of our 390 grantees.  
**Black** is the largest share of **BIPOC** (Black Indigenous People of Color)  
**Trans & Gender Non-Conforming** is the largest share of **LGBTQ**

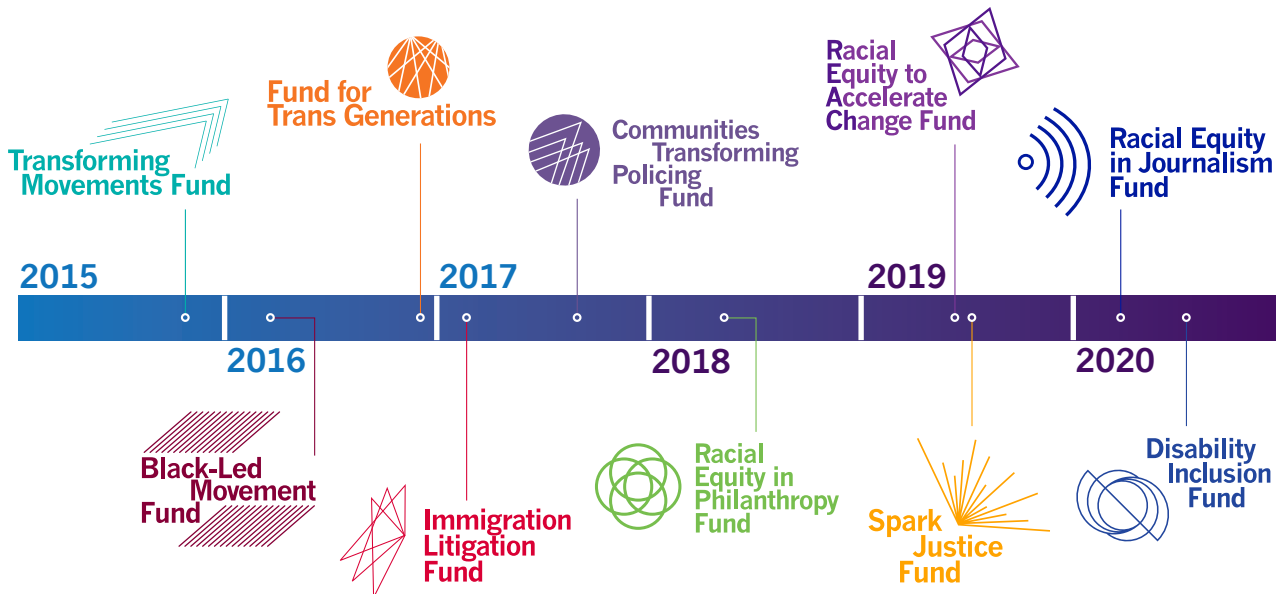
## Our Grants Were Flexible & Layered



## We Supported Grassroots Groups in Every Region



## Ten Collaborative Funds Launched in Six Years



**Borealis has Given \$78.4 Million Since Inception**

All figures are based on unaudited financials for 2020

**TO OUR DONORS:** None of this giving is possible without you. Borealis' funders are committed to radical change, and there's no moment that proves that more than this one. During a time when other philanthropic entities pulled funding or took a "wait and see" approach, you became part of the change we all need.

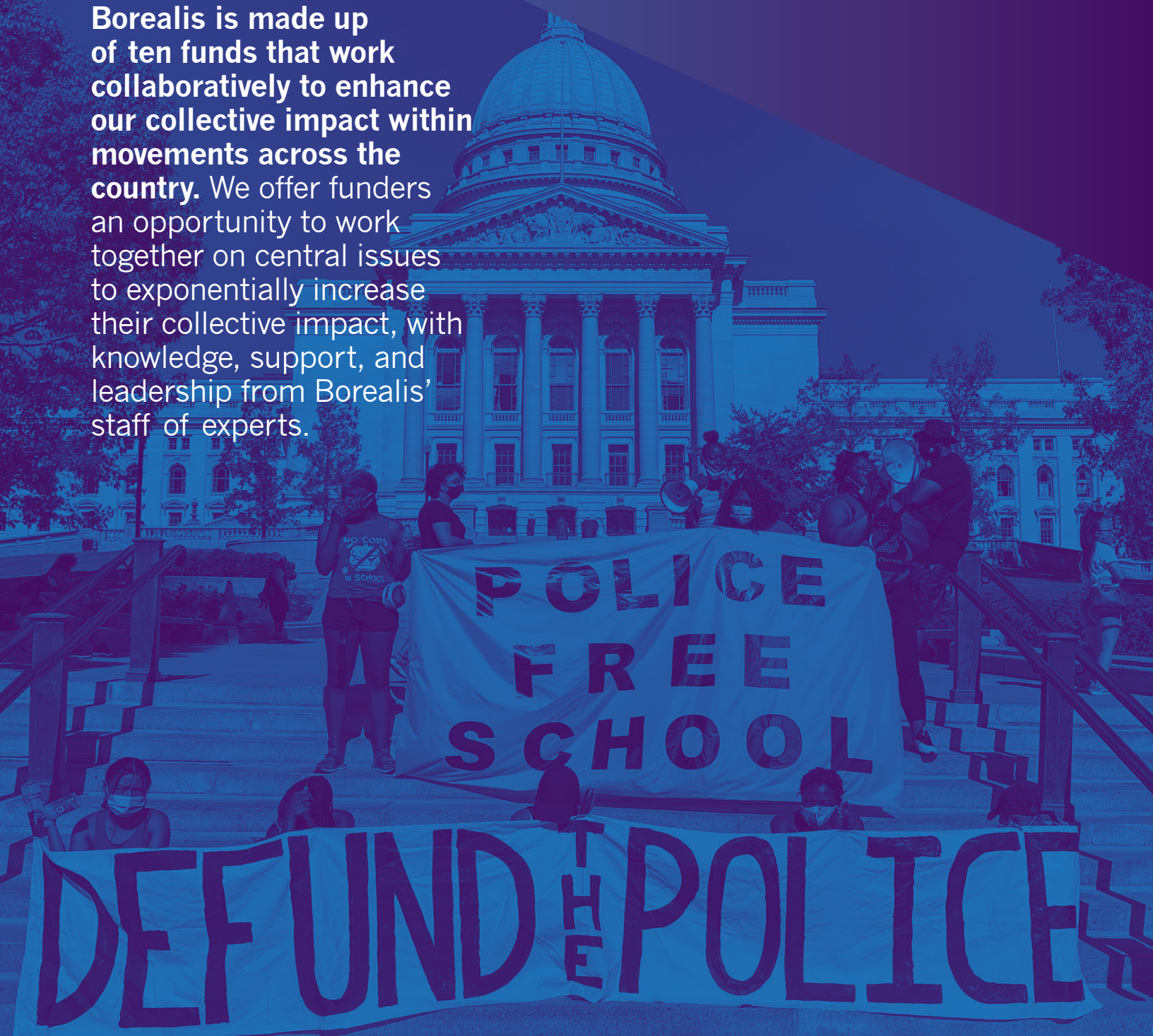
**AND TO OUR GRANTEES:** Your incredible commitment to organizing for transformational change is reshaping the country before our eyes. Your campaigns and strategies are winning. We are incredibly proud to be in this fight with you, and we can't wait to push onward.

[DOWNLOAD IMPACT POSTER >](#)



# 2020 Impact Report: Borealis Funds in Review

**Borealis is made up of ten funds that work collaboratively to enhance our collective impact within movements across the country.** We offer funders an opportunity to work together on central issues to exponentially increase their collective impact, with knowledge, support, and leadership from Borealis' staff of experts.







## Black-Led Movement Fund

**BLMF** supports the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) so that it can better shape policy agendas for Black communities, create alternatives to institutions that have been harmful to Black people, and build local Black community power.

In existence since 2016, BLMF has gone from the smallest donor collaborative at Borealis to the second largest of Borealis' 10 collaborative funds. With the support of 15 new donors, in 2020 BLMF drastically increased its grantmaking to prioritize organizations and leaders from smaller and emergent organizations, namely grassroots organizing led by Black women and Black LGBTQ folk, with half of the groups resourced based in the South.

“In philanthropy, we’ve gotten the question all mixed up. We center ourselves around what we want to know about the work, rather than asking our partners on the ground, who we’re funding, what is it that you need to know? What can we help you and support you in measuring so that you feel like you’re learning along the way?”

— JULIA BEATTY, DIRECTOR,  
BLACK-LED MOVEMENT FUND

### BLACK-LED MOVEMENT FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$5.4 million**  
in grants

**\$437,000**  
in rapid response  
funding

**600%**  
increase in  
grantmaking  
from 2019

**76**  
grantees



## Communities Transforming Policing Fund

**CTPF** resources local communities impacted by deadly and discriminatory policing practices to build power, increase police accountability and transparency, and redefine safety by advocating for investment in community-based programs and services as alternatives to police, jails, and prisons.

CTPF doubled down on providing rapid response support to groups organizing, building power, and providing mutual aid during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also made sure to continue providing support to groups strengthening or launching invest/divest budget campaigns in response to the racial justice uprisings against police violence.

“If you want to support folks in this moment, don’t just fund now for one year while police violence is at the top of everyone’s mind. Fund it next year and the year after that when there’s backlash from police unions and white supremacists, or when there’s a moment around implementation. That’s really critical.”

— JEREE THOMAS, SENIOR DIRECTOR,  
CJI INITIATIVES

### COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMING POLICING FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$2.7 million**  
in grants

**67%**  
increase in  
grantmaking  
from 2019

**31**  
grantees





**DIF** supports U.S.-based groups run by and for people with disabilities to lead transformational change. The Disability Inclusion Fund takes a participatory approach to grantmaking. Because of their lived experiences as people with disabilities who are Black, Indigenous People of Color, our grantmaking advocates understand that there are many ways to support disability justice, and that we need leaders who live those connections to lead the way.

2020 was DIF's first year in action, and this fund is already making an impact. Early in the pandemic, DIF knew that people with disabilities, particularly people of color with disabilities, would be disproportionately affected by COVID-19. To address this, the Fund immediately released rapid response funding to 15 organizations across the country. In preparation for its first round of funding in December, DIF welcomed seven advocates onto their grantmaking committee, who are all people of color with disabilities fighting for a more inclusive future.

**“ This means so much to us at this time—I can’t begin to express our appreciation. This is the kind of affirmation that, even in this challenging world situation, will lift us up to continue to build, with you, a vision of the world that is inclusive, just, and compassionate without limits. With overwhelming gratitude and immense hope for the future. ”**

**— TERESA THUMAN, PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SOUND THEATRE COMPANY**

## DISABILITY INCLUSION FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$2.2 million**  
in grants

**\$225,000**  
in rapid response  
funding

**32**  
grantees





## Fund for Trans Generations



**FTG** invests in trans-led organizing to support a future where transgender, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary people live with freedom, safety, and self-determination.

When the COVID-19 pandemic first struck, FTG moved quickly to support its 53 grantees with rapid response grants to meet the pressing needs of trans communities of color, including mutual aid efforts, medical services, and healing and grief support. In 2020, FTG also focused financially on supporting BIPOC TGNC communities amidst the racial justice uprisings for Black lives. This included **\$2 million** raised from Mackenzie Scott, the largest grant in history of the fund.

“With this funding, **TRANScending Women** members were able to access direct assistance in the form of meals to hundreds of **Black TGNC folx**: the people hardest hit by the pandemic but most neglected by traditional relief efforts.”

— **WENDI COOPER, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, TRANSCENDING WOMEN**

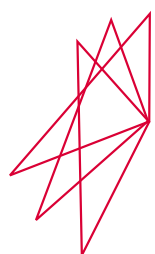
### FUND FOR TRANS GENERATIONS 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$2.2 million**  
in grants

**\$762,000**  
in rapid response  
funding including

**\$500,000**  
in a COVID-19 Rapid  
Response Fund

**109**  
grantees



## Immigration Litigation Fund

**ILF** supports impact litigation to ensure that the nation's immigration enforcement system is fair, is humane, and prioritizes the civil and human rights of those vulnerable to deportation or exclusion.

ILF continued to challenge ongoing federal efforts to dismantle the nation's asylum and refugee systems and end programs providing legal status for DACA youth and those with Temporary Protected Status. ILF released all of its funding in one grant cycle in 2020, responding to the explosion of litigation and the concern that the previous presidential administration would unleash more harsh immigration policies in the lead up to the November 2020 election.

**“A society is only as good as its laws and those who defend them. Kudos to the ILF, Borealis, and the many amazing grantees who daily take on this important work.”**

— KYLE REIS, CHAIRMAN,  
REIS FOUNDATION

## IMMIGRATION LITIGATION FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

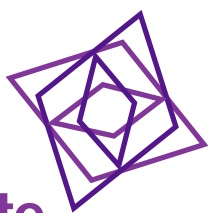
**\$2.05 million**  
in grants

**45**  
grantees





## Racial Equity to Accelerate Change Fund



**The REACH Fund** invests in racial equity practitioners with expertise in working with the nonprofit sector on internal organizational racial equity transformation. Grant partners deepen and scale their practices and do organizational development work with nonprofits of their choosing.

In light of COVID, REACH grantees pivoted to virtual client work. In many cases, grantee partners expanded the number of people that they were able to impact. Since the racial reckoning beginning in June 2020, grantee partners have been inundated with requests for work and are mostly at capacity to fulfill the demand of nonprofits interested in embarking on internal racial equity work.

“We are able to have conversations with potential clients and in those conversations do our level best to determine authentic readiness. Because for a lot of organizations, this has become really performative: check the box, and write a statement, and use the buzzwords. We’re really interested in change that becomes cellular to an organization, through the people, through the relationships, and through the systems.”

— QUETA GONZALEZ,  
CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### RACIAL EQUITY TO ACCELERATE CHANGE FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$1.46 million**  
in grants

**14**  
grantees





**REJ** invests in news organizations led by and for people of color. The Fund bolsters a strong, diverse, and independent media sector that increases civic engagement for communities of color by reaching them with vital, relevant information.

In 2020, REJ and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press launched a partnership to expand pro bono legal support for independent journalists and news organizations that produce news and information for communities of color across the country. The REJ Fund also forged a new partnership with the American Press Institute (API) to help news organizations led by and for people of color become more sustainable by serving niche audiences in their communities, resulting in a new Listening & Sustainability Lab.

“ I am endlessly moved by the way journalists of color showed up for their communities in 2020. It is critical that we continue to invest in efforts like the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund to ensure these journalists have the support they need. Their work is essential to building equitable journalism that represents and serves all communities. ”

— LEA TRUSTY, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE,  
DEMOCRACY FUND

## RACIAL EQUITY IN JOURNALISM FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$2.4 million**  
in grants

**27**  
grantees





## Racial Equity in Philanthropy Fund

**REP** responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by swiftly making \$1.4 million in one-time general operating grants to all of our REP grantee partners. In February 2020, REP held a 3-day convening with 19 grant partners in Tucson, AZ, allowing them to deepen their relationships with one another. REP also developed Racial Equity in Philanthropy Workspace, a virtual workspace for grantees to share resources, stories, and questions.

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“ I want the field of philanthropy to remember that the movement for racial equity is still very much embedded in the community. I mean, just look at what we see happening right now—these are communities rising up, mobilizing, and organizing. Communities that decided that we want better, and that we’re going to have better. ”

— DR. CHARLOTTE LEWELLEN WILLIAMS, PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER ON COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS CLINTON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

## RACIAL EQUITY IN PHILANTHROPY FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$1.4 million**  
in general operating  
support

**20**  
grantees



**Spark Justice** resources grassroots organizing groups that are ending money bail and unjust pretrial detention policies.

Spark Justice grantees have intensified their work to bail out people from jail, including protestors who are fighting for racial justice. In response to grantee and movement leaders, Spark Justice has been focused on supporting grassroots groups working to end cash bail, transforming pretrial justice, and building power in the communities most impacted by incarceration.

“Our goal is to create space for visioning — re-imagining what safety and justice needs to look like for our communities and building an anti-poverty platform based on that collective vision. In this political moment, we are focusing squarely on the things our communities need to survive and thrive as we concurrently imagine the world as it should be.”

— TANYA WATKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTHSIDERS ORGANIZED FOR UNITY AND LIBERATION (SOUL) IN CHICAGO

## SPARK JUSTICE FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$2.9 million**  
in grants

**\$667,500**  
in rapid response  
funding

**36**  
grantees





## Transforming Movements Fund

**TMF** supports the bridging role that young LGBTQ leaders play to support movements in becoming more connected, inclusive, and thus more powerful.

In 2020, the fund doubled down on our commitment to our current grantees, many of whom are part of the Movement for Black Lives ecosystem, and others who also organize against the criminalization of marginalized communities. TMF has also been focused on helping cross-movement organizations meet their priorities. Namely, in June, TMF grantee partner Freedom, Inc. saw a successful end to their “No Cops In Schools” Campaigns, when the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education voted unanimously to end their contract with the MPD.

“ [TMF] being thoughtful about providing our funds up front has been really transformational. It let us breathe and re-strategize and re-plan without feeling like we were scrambling with a scarcity mentality. ”

— CHARLENE BENCOMO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
BOLD FUTURES

### TRANSFORMING MOVEMENTS FUND 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

**\$1.18 million**  
in grants

**\$64,545**  
in rapid response  
funding

**26**  
grantees



# Our Recommendations for Funders

We accomplished a lot in 2020, but there is still so much more work to do. We have seen that not only are communities of color leading the way to end systemic racism and violence but doing so saves our very democracy itself. **So, where do we go from here?**

As a philanthropic organization that was explicitly created to listen to, invest in, and build with people building power and change in their communities, we wanted to offer some recommendations to funders as they plan and think about 2021, and how they can use their roles in philanthropic institutions to best center, trust, and serve communities impacted by all forms of injustice.

## 1

**Give directly to Black-led organizations.** We encourage all funders to identify opportunities to support Black-led organizations

under their existing funding priorities AND to increase their overall giving to Black-led groups. (Here is a list of more than 100 of our incredible Black-led grantees that you can support today.)

## 2

**Give early, and for the long-haul.** Emergent grassroots leaders and organizations are rarely recognized by philanthropy, but they

are often the ones building the boldest futures. Invest in smaller, younger, newer organizers whose visions and strategies may be five steps ahead of yours, and provide them with sustained, multi-year funding.

## 3

**Support not just the dreams and visions of grantee partners, but the day-to-day needs they'll have to achieve them.** Capacity building

and general operating support is essential to the health and wellbeing of frontline organizations.

## 4

**Listen to more intersectional Black-led organizations** for a greater understanding of today's events and the complex solutions they propose.

Visit their websites, sign up for their newsletters, and be sure to welcome the voices of queer, trans, disabled, immigrant Black organizers as well.

## 5

**Consider joining one of our collaborative funds** or making a one-time donation. Across our funds, we are a home for funders who believe that

the role of philanthropy should be to move power and resources to communities most impacted by injustice toward a world where all people are free.





Friends and colleagues, there is dreaming to do, work to complete, and a future to build, which starts by standing with and for each other. **We hope you'll join us in moving more resources into BIPOC-led change, and help make 2021 radically different.**



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