

Strategy and Tools to Drive Financial Capital into Community Changemakers

By: Karen Coleman¹ and Nicholas Torres²

¹Executive Director of the Tabor Services Foundation

²Senior Vice President of Education and Philanthropy at Woods System of Care; President of The Network: Towards Unity for Health (TUFH); and Chief Executive Officer of Social Innovations Partners

Keywords: trust-based philanthropy, participatory grantmaking, community changemakers, donor-advised funds, equitable capital access, grassroots innovation, philanthropic infrastructure

Abstract

This article examines the creation and early implementation of the **Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund** as a place-based philanthropic infrastructure designed to close persistent capital access gaps for grassroots community changemakers in Greater Philadelphia. While community-rooted organizations are central drivers of social innovation and equity, they often struggle to access sustained, flexible funding due to structural barriers within traditional philanthropic systems. The Collaborative Fund responds by pairing trust-based philanthropy, participatory grantmaking, and donor-advised fund (DAF) infrastructure to create a durable, low-friction pathway that aligns philanthropic capital with community-defined priorities.

Grounded in equity, inclusion, and community participation, the model blends community-driven sourcing with donor-friendly mechanisms that reduce administrative burden while maintaining accountability and transparency. The article details the Fund's structure, donor participation models, and participatory selection process, illustrating how community endorsement functions as a missing signal in conventional grantmaking. It further outlines a practical "strategy stack" for replication, emphasizing multi-year unrestricted funding, portfolio-based diligence, co-investment partnerships, and right-sized reporting. The article concludes that strengthening philanthropic infrastructure—rather than merely increasing grant dollars—is essential to scaling grassroots innovation and building resilient, community-led ecosystems capable of sustaining long-term social change.

Introduction

Community changemakers—grassroots organizations rooted in lived experience—are essential engines of social innovation and equity. Yet, they face persistent challenges in accessing sustained and flexible capital from traditional philanthropic and investment systems. The Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund was created to bridge this gap in Greater Philadelphia by building new philanthropic infrastructure that honors equity, inclusion, and community-based participation.¹

At its core, the Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund seeks to ensure that changemakers—often small, community-embedded nonprofits—are resourced not as

afterthoughts but as central drivers of systemic change. This strategy reflects a broader shift in philanthropy toward trust-based forms of capital that prioritize flexibility, agency, and long-term collaboration.² Trust-based philanthropy has increasingly emphasized multi-year, unrestricted funding as a practical way to strengthen organizational stability and enable innovation—especially for smaller organizations navigating volatile revenue cycles.³

Philadelphia’s nonprofit ecosystem makes the case for this infrastructure approach. Nonprofits are a major economic and social force in the city, collectively reporting tens of billions of dollars in revenue in their most recent filings, and playing outsized roles in employment, neighborhood vitality, and public service delivery.⁴ At the same time, regional surveys show nonprofits are under strain, experiencing rising demand, staffing pressures, and constrained flexible funding—conditions that disproportionately affect smaller, community-rooted organizations.⁵ The Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund was designed to respond to that reality: build a durable bridge between philanthropic capital and the grassroots organizations most proximate to community needs.

Purpose and Vision: Closing the Capital Access Gap

The Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund was created to bridge a persistent funding gap: grassroots organizations in Philadelphia often struggle to access the kind of sustained, flexible capital that allows them to stabilize, plan, and scale. Many operate with lean teams, limited fundraising infrastructure, and few reserves—yet deliver high-impact services and advocacy for historically marginalized communities.¹

The Tabor Services Foundation and Collaborative Fund’s vision is to build a new philanthropic “on-ramp” that expands who can be seen, trusted, and resourced. Rather than replicating a traditional grantmaking pipeline—one that can privilege application-writing capacity and existing relationships—the Fund aims to broaden the front door and then provide a credible pathway for donors to act on community-defined priorities.

Practically, that means coupling two ideas that too rarely travel together: (1) community-driven intelligence about which organizations are trusted and effective; and (2) donor-friendly infrastructure that reduces friction, supports compliance, and makes it easy to contribute capital in a way that is both accountable and equitable. This is how the Collaborative Fund strengthens the broader social innovation ecosystem—not by replacing existing philanthropy, but by expanding and diversifying it.

Founding and Structure: Donor-Advised Fund Infrastructure as a Civic Tool

The Collaborative Fund idea was seeded by the Patricia Kind Family Foundation and then adopted by the Tabor Services Foundation, whose mission centers on racial and economic justice in Philadelphia and encourages practical community solutions, capacity building, and mission-aligned investing.⁶ Rather than building a new standalone institution from scratch, the Fund operates through a donor-advised fund (DAF) structure administered by the National Philanthropic Trust (NPT).⁷

DAFs are charitable giving vehicles administered by public charities. Donors contribute assets, receive an immediate tax deduction (subject to applicable rules), and then recommend grants to qualified charitable organizations over time.⁸ In this model, NPT provides financial administration, legal and compliance infrastructure, and grant processing support—allowing the Collaborative Fund to function efficiently without creating its own back-office systems.

This approach is particularly useful for collaborative vehicles because it makes it possible to accept diverse contributions (including complex assets) and to move funds quickly and compliantly. The broader DAF ecosystem has scaled significantly in recent years, with DAF sponsors collectively managing hundreds of billions in charitable assets and facilitating tens of billions in annual grantmaking—evidence of both donor demand and operational maturity.⁹ For the Collaborative Fund, the point is not the vehicle itself; it is what the vehicle enables: low-friction aggregation of philanthropic capital into a place-based strategy.

Donor Participation Models: Blending Autonomy with Collective Power

The Collaborative Fund offers two participation pathways designed to meet donors where they are while still strengthening collective outcomes.

First, the Fund supports a controlled capital model: foundations or donors invest a portion of their annual giving—often described as 1–5 percent—while retaining decision authority over final grants. This model is especially valuable for institutions that need alignment with existing program strategies or board requirements, but still want access to a community-validated pipeline of grassroots partners.

Second, the Fund offers a collaborative portfolio model: donors participate in a community-driven process that curates and selects organizations for funding. This model converts individual donor intent into shared power—pooling contributions and using transparent selection methods to create a credible, equity-centered portfolio.

Together, these options create an on-ramp for a broad range of funders—from large foundations seeking a tested deal-flow of grassroots organizations, to individuals and networks seeking a structured way to invest locally with confidence.

Community-Driven Selection: Participatory Grantmaking as a Tool for Equity

A distinguishing feature of the Collaborative Fund is its community-driven selection process, which uses public nominations and community input to identify trusted changemakers. In its inaugural cycle, approximately 200 nominations yielded a finalist portfolio of roughly 70 organizations spanning the five-county Philadelphia region.¹

This approach aligns with participatory grantmaking: a set of practices in which community members or other stakeholders play a material role in funding decisions, shifting power closer to lived experience.¹⁰ Evidence reviews and field studies suggest participatory models can

strengthen legitimacy, broaden networks, and surface organizations that traditional pipelines overlook—while also requiring clear process design, facilitation, and transparency to ensure equity and effectiveness.¹¹

The Collaborative Fund’s nomination-and-voting structure functions as a “marketplace of trust.” It does not claim to be a perfect proxy for impact, but it does produce a signal that is often missing in traditional philanthropy: community endorsement. By combining this signal with basic due diligence and donor-facing portfolio visibility, the Fund offers a practical mechanism for equity and transparency—two ingredients that help unlock capital at scale.

Institutionalization and Growth: Building a Durable Home at Tabor Services Foundation

To formalize operations and expand reach, the Collaborative Fund served as an inspiration to Tabor Services Foundation, a public charity established in January 2025 to provide meaningful support to community-focused organizations that uplift vulnerable communities, families, and individuals across the Greater Delaware Valley.¹² Tabor’s strategy emphasizes thought leadership, co-investment partnerships, and targeted grants for nonprofit human services organizations—an alignment that reinforces the Collaborative Fund’s long-term sustainability.¹³

Institutionalizing the Fund within an operational home matters for three reasons. First, it creates continuity across funding cycles—reducing the risk that the Fund is treated as a one-time campaign rather than a durable pipeline. Second, it provides governance and accountability infrastructure, including responsible stewardship of donor intent and compliance. Third, it expands fundraising capacity and convening power, allowing the Fund to pool resources from foundations, individuals, and networks across the region.

This is the step that turns an initiative into an institution: building repeatable processes, consistent communication, and credible accountability that invites more capital to participate over time.

Tools to Drive More Capital to Changemakers: A Practical Strategy Stack

To accelerate capital into community changemakers—and to do so in a way that is equitable, scalable, and sustainable—the Collaborative Fund’s model suggests a practical strategy stack that other regions can replicate.

Tool 1: Multi-year, unrestricted general operating support as the default. Trust-based philanthropy emphasizes multi-year, unrestricted funding because it enables long-term planning, reduces administrative burden, and supports organizations in adapting to changing needs.³ For grassroots organizations, these are not preferences—they are prerequisites for stability.

Tool 2: Portfolio-based due diligence and shared learning. Rather than asking every small nonprofit to repeatedly explain itself to every donor, a curated portfolio can consolidate basic diligence and present organizations in a consistent format. This reduces friction for donors and reduces transaction costs for organizations.

Tool 3: Right-sized reporting and outcome learning. Smaller organizations often face disproportionate reporting burdens relative to grant size. Trust-based and participatory approaches encourage funders to simplify paperwork and focus on learning and improvement rather than compliance theater.²

Tool 4: Co-investment partnerships that layer capital. When multiple funders align behind a portfolio, they can coordinate not only grant dollars but also capacity-building support, technical assistance, and introductions to additional capital sources. Co-investment increases the probability that organizations can sustain impact beyond a single grant cycle.

Tool 5: Leveraging DAF accessibility while addressing transparency concerns. DAFs are widely used and can increase access to philanthropy; at the same time, DAF growth has prompted policy debate about payout rates, transparency, and how quickly funds reach operating nonprofits.¹⁴ A collaborative vehicle can address this by setting clear expectations for grantmaking cadence, publishing portfolio information, and normalizing timely distributions.

Tool 6: Community-powered sourcing to diversify who gets seen. Public nominations and community validation increase the likelihood that grassroots organizations—especially those led by people of color or embedded in disinvested neighborhoods—are surfaced and resourced. Participatory processes are not self-executing; they require facilitation and guardrails, but they can materially widen the aperture of philanthropy.¹⁰

Measuring Success: What to Track as the Fund Scales

Scaling the Collaborative Fund should not be measured only in dollars deployed. A changemaker capital strategy also needs ecosystem indicators that reflect equity, durability, and community value.

First, track the share of funds delivered as multi-year, unrestricted support; second, track the diversity of organizations reached (including size, geography, and leadership demographics where appropriate and consented); third, track donor retention and repeat participation; and fourth, track organizational stability indicators such as cash reserves, staff retention, and improved fundraising capacity—areas that flexible capital can strengthen over time.⁵

Finally, track ecosystem effects: whether organizations are forming collaborations, whether new co-investors join, and whether community trust in philanthropic processes increases. These are harder metrics, but they reflect the Fund's core purpose: not merely writing checks, but strengthening the civic infrastructure that allows grassroots solutions to flourish.

Conclusion: A Civic Finance Pathway for Grassroots Innovation

Driving financial capital into community changemakers requires more than good intentions. It requires infrastructure that reduces friction, tools that prioritize flexibility, and processes that shift decision-making closer to lived experience.

The Collaborative Fund brings these elements together: donor-advised fund infrastructure for efficiency; dual participation models to meet donors where they are; a participatory pipeline to surface trusted grassroots leaders; and an institutional home at Tabor Services Foundation to ensure sustainability.^{1,12}

In a region where nonprofits are both essential and under strain, and where communities continue to innovate despite constrained capital, the Collaborative Fund offers a practical roadmap: align capital with community voice, make flexible funding the default, and build the shared infrastructure that allows changemakers to lead.^{4,5}

Endnotes

1. Greater Philadelphia Social Innovation Awards, “Impact Fund,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.philadelphiainnovationawards.com/impact-fund>.
2. National Philanthropic Trust, “Trust-Based Philanthropy: A Primer for Donors,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.nptrust.org/philanthropic-resources/philanthropist/trust-based-philanthropy-a-primer-for-donors/>.
3. Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, “Multi-Year, Unrestricted Funding,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/multi-year-unrestricted-funding>.
4. The Pew Charitable Trusts, “Nonprofits Make Major Contributions to Philadelphia’s Economy,” published July 2025, <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2025/07/nonprofits-make-major-contributions-to-philadelphias-economy>.
5. Nonprofit Finance Fund, “Essential, Enduring, and Under Strain: Greater Philadelphia’s Nonprofit Sector in 2025,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://nff.org/wp-content/uploads/NFF-2025-Survey-Report-Philly.pdf>.
6. The Patricia Kind Family Foundation, “Our Mission,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://pkindfamilyfoundation.org/>.
7. National Philanthropic Trust, “About National Philanthropic Trust,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.nptrust.org/>.
8. Internal Revenue Service, “Donor-Advised Funds,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/donor-advised-funds>.
9. National Philanthropic Trust, *2024 Donor-Advised Fund Report* (National Philanthropic Trust, 2024), <https://www.nptrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-DAF-Report-NPT.pdf>.
10. Claire Boyd et al., “Participatory Grantmaking,” in *Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals* (Springer, 2025), https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-3-319-99675-2_9723-1.
11. Centre for Effective Philanthropy and Impact (CEI), *Participatory Grant-making: Building the Evidence* (2024), https://www.ceiglobal.org/sites/default/files/uploads/files/Participatory%20grantmaking%20-%20Building%20the%20evidence_finalreport.pdf.
12. Tabor Services Foundation, “Home,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://taborservicesfoundation.org/>.
13. Tabor Services Foundation, “Strategy,” accessed January 15, 2026, <https://taborservicesfoundation.org/strategy/>.
14. Joyce Beebe, “Do Donor-Advised Funds Need More Regulation?” Baker Institute for Public Policy, published 2024, <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/do-donor-advised-funds-need-more-regulation>.