

Change, Not Charity

The Foundation Center defines social justice philanthropy as "the granting to nonprofit organizations that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically, and socially"?

Rarely do philanthropic choices present an easy "either/or." Still, the Foundation for Change looks to support strategies that push toward the "change" end of the spectrum. What kind of work do you support with your philanthropic giving?

	Social SERVICE (aka "charity")	Social CHANGE (aka "change")
1	More Direct—person to person	Less Direct—people to power
2	Short-term—Meets an immediate need	Long-term—Prevents needs in the future
3	Primarily improves the lives of individuals.....	Improves entire communities / populations
4	Addresses symptoms—the effects of injustice.....	Addresses the root causes of social problems
5	"Mops up messes"	"Prevents messes"
6	Private, individual acts	Public, collective actions
7	Maintains the status quo / no systemic change	Alters institutions, political structures, laws, attitudes, behavior
8	Reactive (after the fact)	Pro-active (anticipatory)
9	"Top-down" approach	"Bottom-up" approach
10	One person or group helping another	One or more groups empowering themselves
11	Experts are researchers, scholars, staff, etc.	Experts are those most directly impacted by social problems
12	Action: One gives / Another receives	Action: People organize, educate, agitate, & mobilize
13	Disenfranchised / oppressed people remain unheard	Voices of disenfranchised / oppressed people are amplified
14	Power relationships remain the same	Power balance is altered—strength in numbers
15	Usually done by lone individuals or organizations	Usually done by collaborative efforts
16	Work is rarely controversial, political, or marginalized	Work is often controversial, political, or marginalized
17	Work often ends when those who started it quit doing it	Work continues long after those who started it quit doing it
18	Involves little or no conflict	Often involves extreme conflicts
19	Outcomes can be easily predicted—likely results are obvious.....	Outcomes involve more uncertainty, less predictability
20	Rarely disrupts "business as usual"	Often disrupts "business as usual"
21	Keeps people disconnected	Builds democratic organizations of the formerly unorganized
22	Can create dependency—a vicious cycle	Can create self-sufficiency
23	Keeps the rich rich and the poor poor	Works to close the gap between rich & poor
24	Focuses on <i>what is</i>	Focuses on <i>what could be</i>

Models of Social Change

(from our partner organization, [McKenzie River Gathering Foundation](#))

Advocacy: Characterized by a core of activists working on behalf of a larger constituency, generally as its representatives or publicly identified leaders. Often, though by no means always, this core utilizes highly specialized and/or professional skills (i.e., legal or media training) to benefit a community or advance an issue. Most advocacy work includes an educational component for its constituency, adversarial powers and/or the general public. Some organizations whose work is principally characterized by advocacy may at times activate their constituencies for direct action, mobilization or other kinds of social change tactics.

Community Development: An approach to social change that focuses on developing self-reliant cultural, political and economic institutions within disenfranchised communities, as well as raising the material standard of living for members of those communities. Examples include mutual aid associations, community development corporations, coops, and cultural preservation projects.

Cultural Work: Cultural workers recognize that people are cultural (as well as political, social, etc.) beings and that culture is a tremendously powerful force in people's lives. Cultural work seeks to advance social change struggles through cultural "media," such as theater, painting, music, art, dance, film/video, radio, etc.

Direct Action: Direct action is a tactic that involves direct, and often militant, confrontation with "authorities" to demand concessions. Direct action deliberately disrupts "business as usual" (sometimes, though by no means always, employing civil disobedience), partly to protest the injustices of the status quo. Frequently a series of "escalating" direct action events are employed as part of a larger campaign. After each rejection by "authorities" of activists' requests/demands for justice, the next action escalates in level of disruption and militancy. The purpose is both to demonstrate that authorities were given the opportunity to respond to "calm and reasonable" requests for justice before activists became "militant and unreasonable," and to radicalize constituents by having them experience the unwillingness of power to concede anything, however just or reasonable, without a contest. Direct action activities may include sit-ins, rallies, strikes, blockades.

Mobilization: A model of social change work where "hot" issues determine the activities and agenda, often in response to a crisis. Agenda and action are generally planned by staff and leaders, who mobilize a large member/donor base for mass demonstrations, smaller actions or educational/fundraising events. Often this kind of work is single-issue. Examples include CAUSMIME's opposition to the Gulf War and NARRAL's mobilization against anti-choice Supreme Court rulings.

Movement Research: Research that is either directly applicable to a campaign (e.g., identifying targets, handles, constituencies) or furthers the analytical capacity of social change organizations. Involves well-developed relationships between researchers and other social change activists so that research is well-grounded in the needs of the community.

Organizing: An approach to social change that makes demands on authorities and social institutions through the collective action of a constituency. Organizing builds power in disenfranchised communities to contest the forces that keep them disenfranchised. Emphasis is on building democratic organizations of the formerly unorganized to wage campaigns that win concrete changes. Organizing is constituency oriented, i.e., issues/agenda are arrived at by organizers with their constituency.

Public Education: Work that informs the general public, or strategic sectors of that public, about injustices and offers information, analysis, and strategies for action. Examples include alternative media (radio, film/video, newspapers, magazines, etc.), speaking tours, newsletters, books, television, classes, seminars, workshops, conferences, and leafletting.

Resources for Social Change: Projects or programs that build the capacity of social change groups. Examples include technical assistance, providing facilities to social change groups, etc. Often this work is done by what are called "intermediary organizations," social change groups whose primary constituency is other social change groups, rather than any particular community.

Social Service with a Social Change Component: It is sometimes unclear where to draw the line between what is social service and what is social change. In addition, some projects traditionally defined as social service have a clear, identifiable and important social change component.