

BUZZER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

MAY 2026

Q: The co-creation process was introduced to the Buzz network as a way for Footprint to shift from seeing equity not only as a WHAT (grants) but practicing it as a WAY (co-creation, share power, build connections and trust). Do you think this co-creation/community-led effort is a way to put equity into practice?

A: 100% - Yes

Q: In your opinion, should Footprint keep investing in this model of community-led work in philanthropy?

A: 90% - Yes, 10% - Maybe

Q: As the foundation considers how to continue to share decision-making power beyond the current family-only board, what approach feels most effective to you?

A: 45% - Create a **shared decision-making group** where family and non-family members make funding decisions together

28% - **Make the expanded Buzz's role a permanent program** of Footprint to institutionalize its decision-making power

Q: If work with the Buzz continues after 2027, would you like to be involved?

A: 50% - Yes, 43% - Maybe

Q: Given your current involvement in the Buzz, what is working well for you? Are there any additional needs you have that would make your involvement easier?

A: Answers re: **working well** include: meeting regularly with set times, option for virtual meetings, stipends are appreciated, reigniting the Buzz trips, continued learning, supportive network, working in teams, being part of a different model that includes community voice in meaningful ways.

Answers re: **additional needs** include: more frequent communication across teams, more financial support to address nonprofit capacity, access to information via a Buzz website, help with overall work-life balance, more hours in the day!

Q: Given the current and expanded work of the Buzz, what is your vision for it in the next 4 or more years? What does success look like?

A: Themes included:

- expanding the Buzz network with more trips
- seeing Buzzers ascend to leadership positions in the community
- Buzzers are engaged in initiatives and giving for the foundation
- Footprint doubles down on this model that has been developed
- shifting the narrative and culture around local philanthropy
- Buzz participates in and leads equity and diversity discussions
- shared learning
- emphasis on well-being
- greater impact in social justice and policy change
- a high-functioning land trust
- another big idea
- strengthening the work that already exists
- the next iteration around issue selection will likely be a lighter lift since the values and basic framework are already in place
- additional financial commitment
- Buzz becomes a think-tank
- more Buzzers get funding to work together
- the unintended outcomes are the most interesting

Q: What is your hope and desire for the future of The Buzz?

A: 80% - The current work coming out of the Buzz Vision and Framework **continues beyond 2027** by renewing Footprint's financial investment.

Q: Is there anything else we should know about your past and future thoughts about The Buzz?

- A:**
- The Montgomery trip changed my life. I hope the Buzz trips are maintained and remain a core funded program of the foundation. So many times, the "and that", one more program, one more project tendency can erode what began as pure mysterious and magical.
 - I still consider it to be one of the most impactful initiatives I've ever been involved with. Thank you so much for creating this opportunity and for bravely thinking AND acting "outside the box." It's often said that "Everybody wants 'better,' but nobody wants different." Y'all, however, have clearly both aspired to "better" AND been willing to risk "different."
 - I am so grateful that I've been involved in the Buzz since the beginning and love how it has morphed into what it has become. Consensus decision making is time consuming and requires patience but when creating new systems, the means has to mirror the intended results.

- I'd recommend focusing on what's needed to support the programs we've committed to and hold our partners accountable to doing what they've agreed to. Years go by fast. Momentum and accountability can produce wondrous things. The folks we said we'd serve need us to be intentional.
- I absolutely love and appreciate the Vision of Footprint. In this season, it is more important than ever.
- I am concerned that the original drive/energy of The Buzz is diminishing. I wonder if there are folks still involved because of the proximity to funding for their orgs or if there is a genuine interest in change in Chattanooga through an equity lens. The current climate of our country isn't making room for equity. Although the heart for racial equity exists in The Buzz I am unsure whether the courage to stand for it is there. It is easy to say it until it's time to use your voice at the table. The way Buzz Charlotte supported one another (even making gifts!) was really really refreshing and gives me hope for the next generation of The Buzz
- I greatly appreciate the spirit of adventure involved in doing something new and not knowing exactly what the conclusions may be. I said it on a call recently but I want to make sure that no one loses sight of the fact that we made it through a difficult and time-consuming process, and much of what's been developed can continue with only minor changes as needed in the future. I want to ensure we're not scaring people away by suggesting we'll always be in this high-stress, time-intensive building phase. We're right on the cusp of executing, and then it should only get easier as we learn and iterate.
- Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this. It is an honor and a privilege. I don't take my role in the Buzz lightly and I look forward to our continued growth as we co-create together.
- The relationships that were built through the Buzz are still relationships that are important in my daily work. I think this is a truly valuable aspect.
- Given the current political climate, I have become more cautious and, at times, more cynical about conversations around equity. If we are being honest, many equity conversations are rooted first and foremost in the historic and ongoing harm done to Black people. My own deeper awakening around Black history has also shaped how I see this work. That does not mean I do not value the Buzz. I do. I value the relationships, the conversations, the access, and the attempt to do

philanthropy differently. But I also believe we have to be honest about the larger power dynamic. As long as Black-led organizations and communities are dependent on foundations for survival, we are still operating within a structure where power is not fully ours. My hope is that the Buzz can help move the conversation beyond charity and access to real ownership, self-determination, and long-term community power. For me, equity is not just about receiving funding. It is about building a future where Black communities have the resources, institutions, land, leadership, and economic power to sustain ourselves without always having to ask permission or wait for someone else to decide what we deserve. So my past and future thoughts about the Buzz are both appreciative and challenging. I appreciate what has been created, but I also hope the work continues to push deeper — toward truth, transparency, shared power, and ultimately liberation.

- I love that Footprint has tried something new, given community members sometimes life changing experiences, and then have given us resources to and a challenge to make our community better. As someone who loves sociology I think it's great, and I'm excited to keep in the work and make Chattanooga a better place.