



The Participatory Grantmaking Community Governance Handbook

Version 3.0



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Overview

The Participatory Grantmakers Community (PGMC) is a global collective committed to sharing knowledge and practice to improve participatory grantmaking, encouraging its use and shifting power within philanthropy.

This Handbook is an overview of the Community's Governance structure - a participatory governance model that defines decision-making and operations for the PGMC in alignment with our values.

1. About the PGM Community

1.1 Our Mission

The Participatory Grantmakers Community is a global collective of individuals and organizations interested in sharing knowledge and practice to improve participatory grantmaking and encourage its use within philanthropy.

We support each other through peer-to-peer learning, resource sharing, and advocacy:

- Peer-to-peer learning: Deepening relationships between practitioners of participatory grantmaking
- Resource sharing: Sharing best practices and resources around participatory grantmaking, including examples of what has worked and what hasn't
- Advocacy: Influencing the field of philanthropy to be more transparent, equitable, accountable and democratic.

1.2 Our Vision

We believe that when grantmaking processes are designed and owned by communities themselves, philanthropy will be more effective, democratic, and just.

1.3 Our Values

We believe in self-determination

The concept of self-determination is critical to grantmaking decisions; grants and grant strategies should be determined by the communities served. Self-determination means that people have the right and responsibility to make choices and decisions about their own lives.

We are rooted in values of anti-oppression and equity

Within our community, we are committed to challenging stigma and discrimination including anti-Blackness, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism. We are attentive to histories of colonization, imperialism, violence, and capitalism and a culture of taking and hoarding which has shaped how institutional philanthropy has arrived at where it is today. Our work aims to honor a human rights approach to global issues, and be inclusive of the rights of all people¹.

We value accountability and transparency

¹ What do we mean by "all people"? To provide example, but not meant to be an exhaustive list, people from the global majority, prisoners, workers, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx peoples, LGBTQI+, women and non-binary peoples, refugees, migrants, and stateless peoples, disabled people, sex workers, young people, and other historically marginalized peoples.

We honor and own our mistakes, and value critical feedback. While we are steadfast in our commitment, we know that mistakes, and the process of openly and transparently learning and growing from them, are an inherent part of the work. We recognize that race, equity, access, diversity, and inclusion efforts are evolving and that they require us to learn, adapt, and innovate. The process is the point. We value accountability. We understand that we are not alone in our journey as a community and that circles of feedback and accountability enhance our work, relationships, and trust. We practice “[calling in](#)” each other and aim to actively receive and share constructive critical feedback with our peers, within and outside our community, and to incorporate what we learn, with care, openness and humility.

We move with care, love, and joy

We are engaged in deep, often difficult work where tension is inevitable. In order to thrive in this work, we take time to support each other and celebrate our work. We make time for check-ins, compensate people fairly for their time, and work to create a space of collective care for our communities.

1.4 Who We Are

Members of our Community represent a wide range of actors within philanthropy. This includes people working with or within foundations, funders, and donors who are actively working to transform existing power dynamics to move decision-making authority to communities being served.

2. Our Governance Structure

Our governance is how we choose to collectively organize ourselves, make decisions, share power and responsibilities, and implement those decisions.

We operate under a participatory governance structure that is inspired by our values of self-determination, anti-oppression, accountability, transparency, and care. We draw inspiration for our governance from the movement for workplace democracy and specifically [Worker Self-Directed Nonprofits at the Sustainable Economies Law Center](#).

We also draw inspiration from the [\(Re\)Generative Leadership Framework](#) created by Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano and the [Liberatory Governance Community of Practice at Justice Funders](#), who define Liberatory Governance is a practice of shifting from:

- management to co-stewardship;
- control and compliance to intrinsic motivation and engagement;
- and power-over to power-with.

Our Community's governance structure centers around semi-autonomous **Circles** – internal teams that have clearly-defined areas of responsibility and the power to make certain decisions.



2.1 Accountability Circle

Purpose: Decision making body set up to center the voices of those the community aims to serve (community-led funders) and ensure alignment with the PGMC's core mission and values. Our goal is for the PGMC's mission and values to be in alignment with community-led funders' needs and goals, and that our work is in service to them.

Makeup specification:

- Five to seven members
- All members must represent "Community-Led Funders"²
- A majority of the Circle's members must be from the [global majority (BIPOC) and other 'ethnic minorities' as self-identified in an individual's context
- We strive for a diverse group that brings a breadth of knowledge and expertise both in terms of lived experience, but also in terms of practiced and learnt expertise
- We strive for a wide geographical representation

Decision-Making Domain:

- Adopting or changing the mission, values or vision
- Approving annual budget and strategy
- Approving amendments to governance, policy, and creating new circles and their purpose and authority
- Approving major new partnerships or programming
- Approving mid-year changes to the budget that are over 5% of the annual budget or £5,000
- Approving HR policies and procedures, job descriptions, and consultant contractual terms
- Champion the community in the wider field, be a speaker on behalf of the community at events, etc.

Commitment:

- Commitment agreement - 6 hours a year for quarterly 90 min. meetings, 6 hours a year for review of questions and asynchronous decision making, commitment to participate in one other circle up to 6 hours a year, potential other miscellaneous optional commitments to represent the community at events, support recruitment, when appropriate.
- 2 year minimum term (previously 1-year minimum term) and can renew for a total of 3 terms, up to 6 years maximum.

Pay:

² By represent, we mean anyone connected with the organization, including staff board, advisors, community members engaged with the organization, etc. We encourage people to apply who are engaged in their community beyond the work of the organization. We are defining community-led organizations as organizations where every part of the organization has community representation and decision making power, from staff, to leadership and board.

- AC members are paid according to our [community pay policy](#), approximately £900 a year based on estimated time commitment of 18-20 hours a year.

Circle Membership & Selection Process:

- New Accountability Circle members are decided via two processes:
 - An open call for new Accountability Circle members, or
 - Members can invite/nominate potential new members that align with the criteria
- In both cases potential new members go through a review process to ensure alignment with [our criteria](#)
 - Ideally, every 4 years 40% of the organizations are new and ideally 60% stay the same for continuity
 - At least every 4 years there needs to be an open application process to ensure other funds have a chance to be engaged

Voting Members

The current term's membership (for September 2022-September 2024) is:

Name	Organization	Geography
Arianne Shaffer	Kindle Project	Americas - Toronto
Callum Pethick	Blagrave Trust	Europe - London
Coco Jervis	Mama Cash	Europe - Amsterdam
Gabrielle Bailey	Purposeful/CRIF	Americas - Barbados
Stella Kawira	Red Umbrella Fund	SS Africa - Nairobi
Theophilus Odaudu	Disability Rights Fund	SS Africa - Lagos
Yasmin Farah	Camden Giving	Europe - London

Circle Coach: Currently Kelley Buhles & Gloria Mugabekazi are the Circle Coaches and attend AC meetings to act as a bridge between the AC and GSD circle, and also serve as facilitators.

Gratitude for our former Accountability Circle Members:

- Colleen Jankovic - Rawa Fund
- Mariana Reyes - YYPN
- Mark Greer II - Transforming Power Fund

2.2 Getting Sh*t Done (GSD) Circle

Purpose: Consultants are hired by the Accountability Circle to run day to day operations for the PGM Community.

Makeup specification:

- Role details defined and agreed on by the Accountability Circle - each consultant will have their own contract with responsibilities outlined in detail.
- Goes through formal hiring process as outlined by the HR Circle

Decision-Making Domain:

- Approval on budget changes under <£5,000
- Approving budget decisions that are within the annual approved budget
- Approving decisions around Program design and execution in alignment with the strategic priorities provided by the Accountability Circle
- Approve RFP & hiring Ad hoc consultants (translators, website, designers)
- External communications strategy
- Listserv Moderation building off of our [Listerv Moderation Guidelines](#) and [Process](#)

Pay/commitment:

- Pay in line with our community pay structure
- Commitment outlined in contract

Voting Members

Name	Organization	Geography
Gloria Mugabekazi	Consultant	Kampala, Uganda
Kelley Buhles	Consultant	Basel, CH
Catherine Dempsey	Consultant	London, UK

Circle Coach: Kelley Buhles

2.3 HR Circle

Purpose

The HR Circle was set up to support the hiring and governance of the PGM community.

Makeup:

Made up of both GSD and Accountability Circle members

Decision-Making Domain

- Managing [Hiring Process & Policies](#)
- Oversees Hiring Panel which has delegated authority to decide who is hired
- Producing and managing other policies and procedures related to people and wellbeing.
- Managing and approving the PGM [authorities document](#) - informing AC when updated
- Handling appraisals and any arising conflicts between people.
- Co-creating and stewarding commitment agreements.
- Producing governance recommendations for Accountability Circle deliberation and approval

Pay/Commitment:

Pay in line with our community pay structure. 1 year commitment up to 6 hours a year, with the option to extend the hours based on community needs, with approval based on budgetary impact.

Voting Members

Name	Organization	Geography
Gloria Mugabekazi	Consultant	Kampala, Uganda
Kelley Buhles	Consultant	Basel, CH
Coco Jervis	Mama Cash	Amsterdam, NL
Callum Pethick	Blagrave Trust	London, UK
Natasha Friend	Camden Giving	London, UK
Theophilus Odaudu	Disability Rights Fund	SS Africa - Lagos
Catherine Dempsey	Consultant	London, UK

Circle Coach: Kelley Buhles

2.4 Fundraising Circle

Purpose:

Provides advisory support to GSD Circle related to fundraising

Makeup:

Accountability Circle Members and GSD Circle Members

Decision Making Domain:

This circle provides advisory support, introductions and connections, to further the communities fundraising efforts. This circle does not have any formal decision making authority.

Pay/Commitment:

Pay in alignment with community pay structure. 1 year commitment up to 6 hours a year.

Name	Organization	Geography
Ben Wrobel	Proximate	Connecticut, USA
Gloria Mugabekazi	Consultant	Kampala, Uganda
Kelley Buhles	Consultant	Basel, CH
Catherine Dempsey	Consultant	London, UK
Emily Sullivan	Purposeful	Basel, CH
Arianne Shaffer	Kindle Project	Toronto, Canada
Coco Jervis	Mama Cash	Amsterdam, NL

Circle Coach: Catherine Dempsey

3. How Circles Function

3.1 Circle Purpose & Authority

Every Circle has a purpose, goals and decision-making domain, which outlines their activities and what they have the authority to make decisions about.

Once established by the Accountability Circle, Circles are empowered to define and distribute Circle roles, create projects or working groups, and otherwise set internal priorities, in alignment with the overall priorities of the Community.

3.2 Circle Coach

Coordinating everything within an individual circle is the Circle Coach. The Coach is responsible for ensuring that the Circle furthers its purpose and scope of work.

Responsibilities include:

- scheduling meetings at a frequency determined by the circle

- keeping track of voting members
- tracking against Circle budget
- ensuring notes are taken and decisions are documented
- Commit to sharing information back with the Accountability & GSD Circles

Circle coaches are decided voluntarily. Anyone can become a circle coach but must commit to the responsibilities outlined, and must have participated in at least 2 circle meetings prior to becoming Circle Coach.

Additional information for Circle Coaches can be found in [Appendix 1: Circle Coach Handbook](#).

3.3 Decision Making & Voting

Consensus Process

Decisions are made inside a Circle using consensus decision making, meaning everyone should agree or stand aside in order for a proposal to move forward.

A proposal should be offered to the circle for consent. There can be a discussion around it and a chance to gather input and answer clarifying questions. Adjustment to the proposal can be made and the group can test for consensus. When it seems like there is general alignment a consensus vote can be called.

To determine consensus, we use a process called Fist-to-Five Voting. This process is designed to allow people to express their opinion in an open and transparent way, while encouraging forward momentum.

When someone chooses to put a proposal on the table for a vote, all Circle members present at the meeting will vote on a scale of 0 to 5:

Virtual Fist to 5

0- Veto

1- I see major issues we need to resolve

2- I see minor issues we need to resolve now

3 - I see minor issues we can resolve later

4 - I am fine with this as it is

5 - I love this and will champion it

Proposals with all 3s or higher have consensus to move forward.

If anyone votes a 1-2 then the proposal needs to be modified in order to gain consensus. If anyone votes a zero then the issue will be laid down. The person voting zero is expected to explain their reasoning.

- At least 3 Voting Members of a Circle need to vote in order for any decision to be approved.
- At least 5 Voting Members of the Accountability Circle need to vote in order for any decision to be approved.

Another helpful visual resource for consensus decision making processes can be found on the [Neighborhood Anarchists Facilitation tools](#) page.

Making Decisions without all Voting Members present

Because we often do not have all Voting Members present at a meeting when decisions need to be made, below is our process for obtaining consent from absent members, and for how to move decisions forward in the absence of Voting Members.

Circles do a consent round without the absent circle member(s) and then finalize the decision once the member adds their consent via Slack or email, etc. If there is no response within 3 business days, the assumption is that the absent person consents.

If a Voting member has an objection to a decision that was made in their absence, that member will communicate that objection to the circle leader within 3 business days of the meeting. The member who was absent and the Circle Coach will co-determine the process for resolving the objection.

Asynchronous Voting

When decisions need to be made between meetings, we use an Asynchronous Voting process, using this [Asynchronous Proposal Template](#), that is circulated by email. It follows the same decision making process as outlined above.

Safety & Anonymous Voting

If any Voting Member ever feels unsafe, or unable to express their disagreement in a voting situation, they can go to the HR Circle, who pay attention to conflict resolution and circle health to request an anonymous voting process. If needed, this can be done retroactively for votes that have already taken place, however the concerned party must make this request within 3 business days of the vote.

3.5 Meeting Values & Process

Each Circle can decide for themselves the frequency and how they want to run meetings; however, the following items are required for all meetings:

- Circle Coach responsibilities:
 - make sure notes from previous sessions are accessible
 - ensure notes are taken and document the decisions made
 - document the attendance and track Voting Members eligibility
 - ensure that any decisions made are shared with the AC and GSD circles
- Meeting Norms:
 - Open Agendas: all attendees are invited to add items and proposals to the agenda
 - Circle Speaking Process: Proposals and discussion are done in a series of circles, which means that everyone knows they will have a space to be heard. Go through the circle multiple times, so each person doesn't feel like they need to say everything they can possibly think of before the next person goes. This prevents unhealthy power dynamics from creeping in.
- Make Space for Joy: do personal check ins, silly dances, etc. as needed

In addition, we are aware that meetings without clear power sharing structures in place can make space for traditional power dynamics to show up. We aim to continue to bring power sharing structures to our meeting norms.

Governance Handbook Review and Approval Process

Updates and changes to governance are drafted by the HR Circle and approved by the Accountability Circle.

Appendix 1: Circle Coach Handbook

Circle Coach Responsibilities:

The Coach is responsible for ensuring that the Circle furthers its purpose and scope of work. It is not the responsibility of the Circle Coach to do all of the work, but it is their responsibility to report back to the AC and GSD group if the purpose and scope of work is not getting done, and why, for example lack of resources.

Responsibilities:

- scheduling meetings at a frequency determined by the circle,
- keeping track of attendance and Voting Members,
- ensuring notes are taken and previous meeting notes are accessible

- ensuring decisions are documented,
- sharing decisions made with the AC and/or GSD Circle
- Understanding and tracking the Circle annual budget

Being the communication link between their Circle and the AC or GSD Circle for:

- Decisions made
- Questions from the group
- Proposals that go beyond the scope of the group

How to Set up a Vote:

Votes can happen in two ways:

- During a Zoom meeting - the Circle Coach verbally announces the topic at hand, and Voting Members share their number verbally or in the Zoom chat
- Via the [asynchronous proposal](#) process

Facilitation

Here is a link to a great [resource on facilitation](#) from the neighborhood anarchists group.

Appendix 2: Conflict Resolution Policy

Conflict resolution policy

In participatory grantmaking conflict is both healthy and inevitable, it is a part of how we change the status quo. How we deal with it in alignment with our community values, matters.

As Circle members, we consider these values associated with conflict and strive to resolve conflict directly with those involved:

- We engage in conflict for the sake of building deeper unity.
- We are honest and direct while holding compassion.
- We each take responsibility for our own feelings and actions, and seek deeper understanding by asking questions and engaging in learning.
- We consider our settings and take note when a meeting may or may not be the container to hold what we need to bring. We ask, what is the right space and who are the right people for this concern?

Conflicts that cannot be resolved independently, may be escalated to the HR Circle to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Actions the HR Circle may take include, but are not limited to:

- Appointing someone external of the Community Of Practice to mediate a solution.

- If the conflict is caused by actions or attitudes that don't align with [Our Values](#), then they may ask a member of a circle to resign.
- Creating a safe space for people impacted by the conflict.

Where conflicts occur within the community at spaces that we facilitate, including zoom sessions, slack, google groups or mentoring, facilitators should be prepared to challenge conflicts that do not align to Our Values. Any conflicts that arise in community spaces should be shared with the HR Circle for them to manage on a case-by-case basis. Actions they may take include, but are not limited to:

- Appointing someone external of the Community Of Practice to mediate a solution.
- If the conflict is caused by actions or attitudes that don't align with Our Values, then they may ask a member of the community to leave the community.
- Creating a safe space for people impacted by the conflict.

Appendix 3: Voting Member Process for open circles

The guidelines for voting members currently don't apply to any circle. In the future if we decide to create more permeable circle, we can use this process for determining voting members.

Every Circle has a roster of voting members – Circle regulars who maintain a minimum level of engagement with meetings and therefore have the authority to vote.

Circles are meant to be open, transparent and permeable. Anyone in the Community is invited to sit in on a meeting of any Circle they find interesting. If you want to be a voting member of a Circle, however, you need to go through two levels of onboarding.

Level 1: Onboard onto the Circle. You can do this by contacting the Circle Coach and telling them you want to participate. They will give you the information you need (including this Handbook) and then invite you to join the next Circle meeting. This process may be more or less formal, depending on the Circle Coach

Level 2: Becoming a voting member. New Circle members receive voting privileges after attending their first meeting. Afterwards, you remain a voting member until you miss 3 consecutive meetings, at which point you need to attend 2 of 3 consecutive meetings to vote again.

Circle Coaches have the discretion to make exceptions to these rules in the “spirit” of Community; for example, if a Voting Member goes on parental leave or requires a temporary leave and misses consecutive meetings, they can be granted voting privileges upon return.

Circle Coaches are responsible for managing conflict within their Circle, and if necessary bringing conflicts that can't be resolved in the group to HR Circle. More information is available in the [Appendix 1: Circle Coach Handbook](#).

Appendix 4: (Re)Generative Leadership Framework

We draw inspiration from the [\(Re\)Generative Leadership Framework](#) created by Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano and the [Liberatory Governance Community of Practice at Justice Funders](#), who define Liberatory Governance is a practice of shifting from:

- management to co-stewardship;
- control and compliance to intrinsic motivation and engagement;
- and power-over to power-with.

This framework has four key components:

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Operationalized Values
- Intrinsic Motivation (Self-determination)
- Flourishing (Well-being)

