

Inside Philanthropy



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for
Reproductive
Health, Rights
and Justice

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy.

AUTHOR: Becky Tolson

EDITOR: Michael Hamill Remaley

COPY EDITOR: Chris Packham

GRAPHICS & DESIGN: Sue-Lynn Moses

Additional thanks to Dawn Wolfe for editorial review.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The landscape for reproductive health, rights and justice work in the U.S. has become much more difficult, but also re-energized, now that the Supreme Court, in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, overturned the precedents set in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* that had guaranteed the right to abortion nationwide. Advocates for reproductive rights and bodily autonomy more generally face intensifying efforts at the state level to strip away rights.

Those on the front lines of reproductive health, rights and justice work at the local, state and national levels had been speaking out about the real possibility of this eventuality for a long time. Defenders of reproductive rights urge philanthropy to respond not just to the current crisis but to invest proactively for the long term in the organizations and movements that are best positioned to protect and expand access to reproductive health, rights and justice for the communities most impacted – rural and low-income people, Black, Indigenous and other women of color, transgender and gender nonconforming people, immigrants and migrants, people with disabilities and young people.

Some actors in mainstream reproductive health and rights philanthropy have historically shied away from funding abortion-specific work, and abortion funds in particular have received a small proportion of support within the reproductive rights field. Reproductive justice activists, organizations and funders have provided an important framework for protecting and strengthening access to abortion, while at the same time recognizing and seeking to address the broader range of structural barriers faced by women of color and other marginalized communities.

To advance the funding environment for this field, fundraisers must understand:

Who's Giving

- Large private and family foundations like Ford, Buffett, Hewlett and Packard continue to provide the most funding for reproductive health and rights organizations.
- Intermediary funders like Groundswell, Ms. Foundation for Women, and Third Wave Fund are increasingly visible and influential due to their focus on, and experience with, supporting power-building among grassroots groups within the reproductive justice and allied movements.
- Donor partnerships are also providing important support to groups working at the intersections of reproductive, racial, gender and economic justice, including the Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity, the Proteus Fund's Rights, Faith and Democracy Collaborative, Borealis Philanthropy's Fund for Trans Generations, and the Culture Change Fund of the Women's Foundation of California.

Who's Getting

- Organizations receiving the largest amount of funding include a mix of research, legal and policy advocacy organizations, and reproductive health service providers, but they are largely national-level organizations. They include groups like the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood.
- While funding national-level work remains important for many donors, there is an increasing emphasis on addressing chronic philanthropic under-investment in grassroots groups and coalitions working at the state and local levels, particularly those representing and led by Black and Indigenous women, trans and gender nonconforming people of color and immigrants. Many of them are highlighted throughout this brief.

The Big Issues & Funding Trends

- In interviews conducted before the official release of the Dobbs decision, leaders in the field and funders supporting reproductive health, rights and justice were preparing to deal with the dire ramifications of unfavorable Supreme Court rulings on abortion. They underline as critically important supporting civic engagement, grassroots organizing and alliance-building, particularly among communities most impacted by current policies and legislation at the state and local levels.
- Experts on funding for this area identify other major issues: Directing more funds to state-level work; supporting birth justice; increasing access to self-managed abortion (or medication abortion); increasing health insurance coverage for all forms of reproductive healthcare; addressing lack of safety, trauma and burnout in the field; and creating narrative change and winning “hearts and minds” in the broader public.
- Some of the funding strategies and trends that experts agree are important in the current context include: increasing support for community-rooted intermediaries; greater distribution of resources via general operating support; deployment of rapid-response funds; investments in long-range leadership development; and impact investing.

Equity in the Sector

- An increasing number of funders are establishing a reproductive justice and equity framework as an organizing principle for their funding and work. This includes recognizing the inextricable link between lack of access to reproductive healthcare, structural racism and poverty.
- However, there is still a lack of adequate investment in organizations led by and serving women and girls of color, trans people, immigrants and other groups disproportionately impacted by racist and discriminatory laws and policies.

The challenges to reproductive health, rights and justice are unprecedented, but the movement is strong, resilient and creative. Now is the moment for philanthropy to go beyond the usual cycles of “boom and bust” funding, with sustained, scaled investments for the long term. Grassroots groups on the front lines require more resources from philanthropy – particularly long-term flexible funding that enables big picture thinking and work. And they need funders to be visible and vocal partners in their support in the current context.

More work is needed to shift the narrative and focus around reproductive rights beyond legal access to the broader set of structural issues that impact whether people – particularly women of color, low-income women, immigrants and migrants, people with disabilities, trans and gender nonconforming people – are able to access high-quality, comprehensive reproductive health services.

Place-based grantmaking is essential, particularly in geographies like the U.S. South, which have been historically overlooked by philanthropy. An intersectional lens is also critical. Reproductive justice is inextricably linked to racial, economic, immigrant, gender and other forms of justice, and the most effective organizations and funders are investing in and doing work that recognizes this intersectionality. The field must increase resources directed to groups representing and led by communities that are most impacted by and best positioned to address reproductive health disparities and restrictive laws and policies.

Introduction

The landscape for reproductive health, rights and justice work in the U.S. has grown increasingly contested and challenging, with intensifying efforts to strip away reproductive freedom at the state level. According to the Guttmacher Institute, as of June 2021, [561 abortion restrictions](#) had been introduced across 47 states since January of 2021 alone. Over the past two years, COVID has exacerbated pre-existing barriers to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare for vulnerable communities and populations. Many conservative states seized the opportunity to limit access further – particularly to abortion – through emergency restrictions on travel and suspension or closure of “non-essential” providers and services. Racial disparities in maternal health have only deepened during COVID. And grabbing all the headlines: the the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* overturning the precedent set by *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

Experts interviewed for this brief noted that there tend to be cycles of “boom and bust” funding in reproductive health, rights and justice philanthropy, with a crisis mode of funding that rarely translates into the type of sustained, scaled investments needed for the long term. They emphasized that now is the time to go big, bold and deep: Sheena Johnson, senior director of grantmaking at the Groundswell Fund, said, “Fund us like you want us to win. If you have an endowment and you care about these issues, you should be giving organizations no less than six figures a year.”

This issue brief provides an overview of who has been funding reproductive health, rights and

justice in the United States, the types of work and organizations being funded, key strategies used by funders, ways in which funders and the groups they support are centering racial and gender equity in their work, and an analysis of key opportunities, challenges and gaps in funding. It is based on analysis of existing resources and literature, including other Inside Philanthropy articles, key research reports, foundation and organization websites and publications, as well as a series of interviews with funders and experts in the reproductive health, rights and justice space, and data available from Candid.

While some may debate the parameters and definitions of what constitutes “reproductive justice,” this brief takes as its starting point a description used by [SisterSong](#), a national, multi-ethnic reproductive justice collective: “SisterSong defines reproductive justice as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities... Abortion access is critical, but women of color and other marginalized women also often have difficulty accessing contraception, comprehensive sex education, STI prevention and care, alternative birth options, adequate prenatal and pregnancy care, domestic violence assistance, adequate wages to support our families, safe homes, and so much more.”

Funders of reproductive justice prioritize support to organizations led by women and girls of color and other groups disproportionately impacted by racist and discriminatory laws and policies. They recognize the imperative to address the inextricable links between lack of access to quality reproductive healthcare, poverty and structural racism.

Not all the reproductive health and rights funders and organizations represented in the data and highlighted in this brief explicitly identify as “reproductive justice funders and organizations.” However, an increasing number of them are taking steps to use a reproductive justice and equity framework as an organizing principle for their funding and their work. This shift in thinking and action, including addressing racism in philanthropic and organizational processes and practices, is ongoing within the field, and it is discussed further in this brief.

The Lay of the Land

Who's Giving

As noted in the IP State of American Philanthropy 2021 report on [Giving for Women and Girls](#), funding for nonprofits focused on reproductive health and rights issues is led most prominently by private and family foundations. According to Candid,¹ the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation is the largest institutional funder in this area, with grants totaling \$838.2 million during the period 2014–2018. While not all data from 2019–2021 is complete, this dynamic seems consistent in the post-2018 period as well.

Other “heavy-hitter” private funders, in terms of the size and duration of their investments in reproductive health and rights include the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, the JPB Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Public intermediary funders, while not having the same level of resources as larger private funders, have been increasingly visible and influential in ongoing efforts to increase resources to groups led by and working with women and girls of color, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities on the front lines of the fight for reproductive, gender, economic and other forms of justice.

Prominent intermediaries include Groundswell Fund, Ms. Foundation for Women, and Third Wave Fund. Borealis Philanthropy, New Venture Fund and the Proteus Fund are other examples of intermediaries supporting reproductive justice work through fiscal sponsorship, dedicated donor-advised funds and donor collaboratives. A number of private and family foundations have provided significant funding to intermediaries in recent

years in recognition of their deep relationships with and commitment to grassroots groups doing intersectional work at the state and local levels especially. The Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity, covered in greater detail in this brief's Perspectives on Equity section, is a noteworthy and relatively new funding effort housed at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors with multiple contributing donors.

Women's funds and community foundations also play an important role across the United States in shining a light on and funding work to address the deep disparities in access to high-quality reproductive healthcare and maternal health for women of color in particular.

Donor-advised funds (DAFs) are a source of considerable funding for reproductive rights and health work. During the period 2014–2018, Fidelity Charitable, the nation's largest for-profit manager of donor-advised funds, provided \$36.6 million in grants for reproductive rights organizations. DAFs are also major funders of anti-abortion work, which is covered separately.

While some corporate philanthropy supports areas of reproductive health, they largely shy away from direct funding of reproductive rights work, particularly around access to abortion.

According to a report from the Center for Women's Philanthropy, “[The Women and Girls Index 2020: Measuring Giving to Women's and Girls' Causes](#),” “Reproductive health organizations experienced a tremendous increase in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017. At 85.2%, total growth in philanthropic support for these organizations far surpassed that of women's and girls' organizations overall during this time.” This may be attributed to

increased attention to threats to reproductive freedom before and after the 2016 presidential election.

10 Institutional Funders to Know: Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Collaborative for Gender + Reproductive Equity

David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Ford Foundation

Groundswell Fund

Libra Foundation

Ms. Foundation for Women

Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation

Third Wave Fund

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

At the same time, as noted in Inside Philanthropy’s “Giving for Women and Girls,” this funding, while increasing, still represents a small proportion of overall philanthropic giving in the United States. In 2018, total funding for women and girls, including for reproductive health and rights, was just 1.35% of all domestic philanthropy.

The intensification of efforts to eviscerate already restricted reproductive freedom in states like Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana, and the Supreme Court’s earth-shattering Dobbs decision, is already galvanizing increased funding for reproductive health, rights and justice among institutional and individual donors. Comprehensive data is not yet available to support this, but a [recent IP article](#) highlighted the influx of funding to reproductive rights organizations from individual sources in the weeks since Texas SB-8 went into effect. Examples include the Abortion

Care Network, which raised \$40,000 from 375 donors in one week to support independent abortion providers, and the nationwide organization Plan C, which received more than \$50,000 in online donations from over 500 donors in just three days for its work to support people with information about self-managed abortions, including by using prescribed medication ordered online.

However, as highlighted in IP’s “[How Philanthropy Fell Short in Protecting Abortion Rights—and What It Can Do Now](#),” and by experts interviewed for this brief, there are not enough funders to meet the magnitude of this moment. Tamara Kreinin of the Packard Foundation told us “a lot of funders are talking about leaving the field.”

Donors Seeking to Curtail Reproductive Care.

A number of those interviewed also emphasized that the scale of funding available for groups working to protect and expand access to reproductive health, rights and justice is dwarfed by the investments made over many years by donors and groups seeking to limit or eliminate access to contraception and abortion at the state level in the United States. Tracking of that funding is difficult, given that many of the donors are low-profile by design, and much of the giving is done through donor-advised funds and other vehicles with limited transparency.

IP’s [recent coverage](#) highlights a number of the top anti-abortion funders. The National Christian Foundation is a leading funder of conservative and Christian causes, including the anti-abortion movement, and is one of the largest DAF managers in the country, disbursing \$1.7 billion in 2018. The Knights of Columbus, a global Catholic fraternal service order with membership limited to

practicing Catholic men, is another key funder of anti-abortion work, having spent almost \$50 million over the past 10 years on ultrasound machines in “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs), facilities that offer pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, but also seek to dissuade pregnant people from getting abortions.

Although not investing at the scale of those conservative donors listed above, corporations and community foundations have also played a role in funding work that restricts access to reproductive health services, including abortion. In some cases, the same community foundations and corporations that fund anti-abortion work also fund reproductive health and rights groups. With corporations, such funding is usually via employee-matching funds, and with community foundations, it is usually through DAFs.

A Sludge report from 2019 identified funders who contributed during the period 2013–2017 to groups involved in writing, lobbying on, and otherwise promoting at least one of the abortion ban bills passed in the U.S. in 2019. Among those that contributed more than \$100,000 were the Tulsa Community Foundation, California Community Foundation, Greater Houston Community Foundation and San Diego Foundation. Community foundations typically do not disaggregate the funds they distribute from DAFs and from their own discretionary/program funds.

During the Trump administration, federal government family planning funding was a boon for anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers due to the administration’s domestic “gag rule” denying Title X funding for clinics providing information about or referral to abortion services. Although the Biden administration has since reversed these restrictions

and affirmed its commitment to “restore access to equitable, affordable, client-centered, quality family planning services,” CPCs are still benefiting. [One report](#) indicates that the Obria Group, which operates 48 anti-choice “clinics,” or “crisis pregnancy centers” in California, was awarded up to \$5.1 million over three years in Title X funds from the Trump administration through 2022. Many state legislatures include funding for CPCs in their budgets, and in some cases, [divert federal welfare funds](#) for this purpose.

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August 2020 Survey

“[There needs to be] a greater emphasis on reproductive justice, philanthropic support and solutions for addressing high drug prices, and the pandemic/economy’s impact on public and community health care.”

—Fundraiser, San Francisco, California

Who’s Getting

According to IP’s analysis of Candid¹ data using the funding filter of reproductive health and rights (Candid does not track funding for reproductive justice as a separate category), Planned Parenthood Federation of America was by far the largest single recipient of funding in the years 2014–2018, at just over \$406 million. This volume of contributions coincides with the Trump administration’s efforts to defund it, a period when the organization was in the crosshairs of conservative attacks. Available Candid data shows a significant decrease in overall funding for PPFA totaling \$31 million.

Planned Parenthood Action Fund, the organization’s 501(c)(4) arm, received another \$56 million for its work in 2014–2018. The next-largest total amount of funding, \$157 million, went to the National Abortion Federation, the professional

association of abortion providers in the U.S. and Canada. Most of that funding went to NAF's toll-free, multilingual hotline for abortion referrals and financial assistance in the U.S. and Canada.

Other major grant recipients during this period included the Center for Reproductive Rights at \$90.9 million, the Guttmacher Institute at \$82.6 million, the Society of Family Planning at almost \$60 million, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, which received \$80 million, including funding for the Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity, which is described in greater detail in the "Perspectives on Equity" section of this report.

Other large grant recipients are Upstream USA, which received \$46 million for its work providing training and technical assistance to state-level health clinics on equitable access to contraception, and South Carolina-based New Morning Foundation, which received \$42.5 million for its

work to support sexual and reproductive health education and access to affordable, reproductive health services, including running the largest statewide birth control access program in the Southeast, Choose Well. Notably, New Morning Foundation is the only state-based organization among Candid's data for the largest recipients of private institutional giving.

When shifting the Candid funding filter to reproductive rights only, other significant grant recipients receiving over \$20 million each include the Groundswell Fund, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice, Naral Pro-Choice American Foundation, National Institute of Reproductive Health, Ibis Reproductive Health, Inc., and Physicians for Reproductive Health.

Perhaps reflecting a recognition of the growing need for funding communications, narrative and culture change (which is discussed further under Funder Trends and Strategies), Rewire, a nonprofit media organization covering issues related to abortion, contraception, birthing and maternity, race, law and policy, politics and LGBTQ+ communities, received a total of \$18 million in funding.

In 2021, the landscape of reproductive health, rights and justice is filled with organizations doing effective and creative work at the national, state and local levels. The admittedly subjective list below cannot do justice to them all. It focuses on the type of work, communities and organizations that have been historically underfunded by organized philanthropy, although an increasing number of funders—as highlighted throughout this brief—recognize that they are key to the field and at a time of unprecedented challenges. This includes coalitional cross-movement work; women of color,

10 Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice Grantees to Watch

Afiya Center

All*Above All

Avow Texas

Forward Together

If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

National Network of Abortion Funds

Plan C

Sister Song

URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender and Equity

LGBTQ+ and youth-led organizations; place-based work at the state and local levels, and reproductive health services and advocacy that addresses the particular barriers faced by marginalized communities. Other notable groups are described further throughout this brief.

Who’s Getting from Anti-Abortion Funders

As noted above, anti-abortion funding is notable for its lack of transparency. Among the big recipients are crisis pregnancy centers. According to [IP analysis](#), the biggest money for anti-abortion activities goes to groups engaged in legal advocacy and research to influence abortion-related regulations at the state level up to the Supreme Court. These groups include Americans United for Life, Concerned Women for America, and the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), an umbrella organization for far-right legal groups active in supporting state-level abortion bans.

Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

The field of reproductive health, rights and justice in the United States is quite diverse in terms of the types of organizations, areas of focus for their work, populations, and geographies that they serve. Candid data shows that the top five funding priorities in 2014–2018 within the broad category of reproductive health and rights were family planning, maternal and perinatal health, reproductive rights, abortion and sexuality education. While this is helpful for understanding the composition of the field and types of work being funded generally, the reality is that many reproductive rights, health, and justice organizations are working in multiple, overlapping areas that cut across these categories and beyond. Total funding in these five priority areas, however, reveals the under-resourcing of abortion and sexuality education-related work.

Organizations receiving the largest amount of funding are a mix of research, legal and policy advocacy organizations, and reproductive health service providers, but they are largely national-level organizations. Grassroots groups working at the state and local levels, particularly those representing and led by Black and Indigenous women, trans and non-binary people of color and immigrants have historically struggled for attention and resources from mainstream funders. There are many examples of groups doing highly effective, collaborative organizing and advocacy work at the intersection of racial, gender, reproductive, immigrant and economic justice. A few of note among many include the Texas-based Afiya Center, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, and New Mexico-based Bold Futures (formerly known as Young Women United).

Subject	Amount Funded
Family Planning	\$1.53B
Maternal & Perinatal Health	\$1.34B
Reproductive Rights	\$876.26M
Abortion	\$286.59M
Sexual Education	\$222.49M

Source: Candid

Although some funders, like Packard, Ms. Foundation for Women, Ford and Groundswell, have directed investments toward groups in under-resourced geographic areas where reproductive health disparities are most profound, work in the U.S. South remains extremely underfunded. For example, the [National Center for Responsive Philanthropy](#) found that between 2014 and 2018, only 3% of foundation funding for reproductive rights went to organizations in Texas. In recent

years, and particularly in the wake of SB-8, there are signs that funders are finally taking notice and identifying ways to increase resources for intersectional, place-based work.

According to a [recent fact sheet](#) by the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy’s Movement Investment Project, between 2015 and 2019, nearly \$912 million in foundation funding was directed to reproductive rights issues, but only 20% was explicitly designated for abortion rights and services; less than 3% was specifically designated for abortion funds. The top 20 recipients of reproductive rights funding are all national organizations, and abortion funds operating at the state and local levels rely on five primary funders for 74% of their philanthropic support.

Ms. Foundation’s landmark 2020 report, [“Pocket Change—How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less,”](#) reveals that funding to women and girls of color-led organizations remains disproportionately low relative to their leadership role in working to advance equity and justice in reproductive healthcare and beyond. However, in the current political and social context, more philanthropic and media attention is being directed to collaborative, intersectional work by organizations led by women and girls of color and coalitions like SisterSong—Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective; All Above All*; Spark—Reproductive Justice NOW, which centers Black women and queer and trans people of color in its work; and youth-led organizations like URGE—Unite for Reproductive and Gender Justice.

Other types of nonprofit organizations and coalitions receiving funding include those representing constituencies that serve as important allies and public voices supporting evidence-based

and rights-based reproductive and sexual healthcare. They include organizations like Medical Students for Choice, Law Students for Choice, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice.

The Big Issues and Beyond

Funders interviewed for this brief described this moment as “unprecedented” for reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy in the United States. They highlighted the connection between efforts to restrict access to abortion and contraception, as well as criminalization of pregnancy outcomes, with voter suppression and overarching threats to our democratic institutions.

Dealing with the immediate and long-term ramifications of the SCOTUS Dobbs decision. Supporting civic engagement, grassroots organizing and alliance building, particularly among communities most impacted by current policies and legislation at the state and local levels, was underlined as critically important in the “post-Roe” world. Republicans’ success in packing the Supreme Court, state and local courts and legislatures with individuals opposing reproductive rights and justice was the result of an explicit strategy of the well-funded anti-reproductive-rights movement over many decades. Erin Matson, co-founder and executive director of the direct action and organizing group Reproaction, said that anti-abortion activists now “hold the chessboard, and we need to fight back with a long-term vision and bolder plan of our own.”

Directing More Resources to Local Abortion Funds. As noted above, between 2015 and 2019, only 3% of the \$913 million in funding for reproductive health and rights went to abortion

funds. A [recent emergency call](#) convened by the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy, Funders for Reproductive Equity, and other philanthropy-serving organizations highlighted the tremendous need for funders to step up and support local abortion funds and other grassroots groups at the state level—not just in this current crisis moment, but for the long term. On the call, Rosann Mariappuram of [Jane’s Due Process](#) reminded funders that “abortion funds are advocates and storytellers, as well as service providers. You are investing in policy change at the state level—we are the fight right now.”

In the near term, there are enormous practical needs for women who are seeking or being denied abortion care because of the Texas ban and other restrictive policies in neighboring states, including travel, lodging and childcare support for women traveling to other regions for care.

Communicating the Imperative of “Birth Justice.” Funders are paying more attention to birth justice as a critical component of reproductive justice work. This is because of deep, long-standing disparities in reproductive healthcare and health outcomes for women of color; maternal mortality rates for Black women are four to five times that of white women. Additionally, abortion bans endanger women, essentially forcing them to give

birth against their will. [Birth justice work](#) includes supporting community-based health centers and clinics that provide marginalized communities with culturally congruent care; training, supporting and organizing midwives, doulas, lactation consultants and other healthcare providers of color; and advocating for policies that improve birth outcomes such as Medicaid reimbursement for midwifery and doula services, implicit bias training for providers, and decriminalization of pregnancy and birthing choices.

Increasing Access to Self-Managed Abortion.

As restrictions on abortion care in clinic settings proliferate, efforts to protect and expand the availability of abortion pills by mail and telehealth, which became more prevalent during COVID lockdowns, are increasingly important. Despite overwhelming evidence of the safety and effectiveness of medication abortion, laws and regulations restricting access remain in place. Increasingly, anti-abortion activists have directed their attention to restricting these medications, particularly for those who are most impacted by abortion bans in their states.

In December of 2021, Texas [passed a law](#) that adds penalties of jail time and a fine of up to \$10,000 for anyone who prescribes pills for medication

Advocate Spotlight



Established in 1992, Provide partners with health and social service providers to build more equitable and accessible healthcare systems. Focusing on unintended pregnancy and abortion, the organization “envision(s) a healthcare system that cares for the whole person with dignity and respect, and where workers have the tools and support to offer the best care to their clients.” Provide supporters include the Horizons Foundation, Hopewell Fund and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

abortions through telehealth or the mail. Funding is needed to support groups providing information and assistance to those seeking medication abortions, as well as advocacy for the loosening of legal and regulatory restrictions on access. The fact that the FDA [finally loosened](#) these restrictions in December of 2021 is a welcome development, but does not address the increase in punitive state-level legislation as noted above. Funding for groups like If/When/How and National Advocates for Pregnant Women, which provide legal support for people who are criminalized for seeking medication abortion or for their pregnancy outcomes, remains critical in the current environment, as well.

Ensuring Health Insurance Coverage for Reproductive Healthcare. There is great need to ensure that people—particularly women of color, LGBTQ+, immigrant and low-income people—have access to health insurance that includes high-quality, comprehensive reproductive healthcare without stigma and bias. For example, grassroots groups like Raising Women’s Voices-New York and I Have a Voice-West Virginia, advocate for coverage of the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion and contraception, and work to ensure that eligibility, enrollment and consumer assistance policies and programs are user-friendly for diverse groups of women seeking to obtain health coverage through state insurance exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, [immigrant women](#) face particular obstacles in accessing health insurance and sexual and reproductive health services. As one example among many, while some pregnant immigrants qualify for Medicaid coverage for labor and delivery, this coverage often does not extend to prenatal care. Guttmacher and other groups like the National Latina Institute for

Reproductive Justice and National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum continue to advocate for the passage of the HEAL Act, which would eliminate many of the current health insurance restrictions and exclusions for immigrants, undocumented people and DACA recipients.

Support for organizing and advocacy to overturn the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal funds for abortion and disproportionately impacts women of color, low-income women and other vulnerable groups, remains critical, as well.

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“The South is held hostage by policies and laws that keep us in the 19th Century. Philanthropy has the power to help us change this, but the investment must be made now. We no longer have the luxury of waiting.”

—Fundraiser, Birmingham, Alabama

Addressing Lack of Safety, Trauma and Burnout in the Field. Another area of increased concern and attention is the health, safety and well-being of reproductive health, rights and justice activists, particularly movement leaders, grassroots organizers and health providers, who have been on the front lines of this work for years. The level of resources available to address ongoing trauma and burn-out is not commensurate with need. As Sheena Johnson, senior director of grantmaking at Groundswell Fund, said, “There is high turnover in this space (both reproductive justice funders and the organizations they support)—it is a hard environment. Groundswell is looking at how to address state violence day to day, but also to create capacity to take care of ourselves.” This includes healing justice, work around self-managed abortions, and support of abortion funds, among other issues.

Winning the War for Hearts and Minds.

Investing to a greater degree in narrative and culture change is another area that funders and activists see as critical. Leah Pryor-Lease, director of the Proteus Fund's Rights, Faith and Democracy Collaborative, says, "Even though it seems slower, especially in times of crisis, I see it as 'sticky' work that helps create sustainable, long-term, hearts-and-minds culture change that is as essential as policy and legislative efforts."

Initiative Spotlight SHEcovery™ fueled by cfw

The Chicago Foundation for Women established the SHEcovery initiative to address the systemic gender and racial inequities faced by women of color, front-line workers, single-parent-headed households, immigrants and domestic workers, which have only deepened during the pandemic. To date, CFW has awarded \$3.2 million through nearly 250 grants to support women, girls, trans and gender-non-binary individuals across Chicago. It is committed to raising an additional \$11 million to strengthen and support movements working on intersecting issues such as job loss, health inequities and gender-based violence.

Some donors are supporting culture change work as part of their own grantmaking to reproductive, racial and gender justice organizations, and others are collaborating and creating dedicated funds focused in this area. One example is the California Gender Justice Funders Network's \$10 million [Culture Change Fund](#), housed within the Women's Foundation of California, which supports efforts to change how the broader public understands and thinks about a range of issues, including maternal health, contraception and abortion. One of its grantees, for example, is the nonprofit news

organization Prism, led by journalists of color, which seeks to center in its reporting the experience of people most impacted by injustice, including around access to abortion and other aspects of reproductive healthcare.

Other examples of nonprofits seeking to reframe and draw attention to reproductive health, rights and justice issues through culture change and media work include Abortion Access Front, a team of comedians, writers and producers that uses humor to destigmatize abortion, creating videos and social content to educate people about discriminatory abortion laws that disproportionately impact the poor and people of color; Ultraviolet, a feminist platform to drive culture and political change through digital organizing and campaigns; and The 19th News, an independent, nonprofit newsroom reporting on gender, politics and policy, including abortion.

Funder Strategies & Trends

Most reproductive health, rights and justice funders use a mix of funding strategies, including support for national advocacy, strategic litigation, research, state-level organizing, leadership development, and increasingly, resourcing of cross-movement and alliance-building work. This latter strategy is often deployed by individual funders through support for donor collaboratives.

Supporting Community Rooted

Intermediaries. Larger private funders are also, in many cases, directing resources to public intermediary funders who are closer to grassroots groups and better able to support them with a mix of participatory grantmaking, capacity strengthening, and leadership development from a movement-building, power-shifting perspective. Intermediary funders are also better able to provide

rapid-response funding, a strategy that was critical in the initial months of COVID-19. This has remained important as grassroots groups will be operating in emergency “survival” mode for the foreseeable future due to a confluence of the continued pandemic and drastic restrictions in access to abortion and other reproductive healthcare services at the state level.

Increasing General Operating Support. The provision of multi-year, general operating support remains the gold-standard strategy for supporting chronically under-resourced reproductive health, rights and justice organizations that need unrestricted funding to respond flexibly and effectively to a rapidly changing context at the national, state and local levels. While much more needs to be done to shift funders toward general operating support as the default for the groups they back, there is anecdotal evidence that an increasing number of reproductive health, rights and justice funders are moving in this direction. One influential example is Ford Foundation’s explicit [commitment](#) and shift to multi-year general operating support and accompanying capacity-strengthening for grantee partners across its grantmaking portfolio.

Rapid-Response Funds. As noted above, COVID underscored the importance of rapid funding to groups on the ground, and some funders have looked for opportunities to continue deploying this strategy for the longer term. Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund (RRF) is one prominent example. It provides fast funding to grassroots organizations led by women of color, trans people of color and low-income women and trans people in critical, unexpected, fights to protect and advance reproductive and social justice. It focuses on funding multi-issue organizing work in states and

communities that are under-resourced. Its grants range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and can be used for a variety of immediate needs, including a strategic organizing response to a public attack or a community crisis, or a response to an unforeseen legislative or policy development, among others.

Fund Spotlight



GROUNDSWELL
FUND

The Catalyst Fund at Groundswell supports grassroots organizations advancing equitable reproductive justice policy and system-wide change. The fund focuses on groups led by women of color, low-income women and transgender people. According to Groundswell, it pays particular funding attention to organizations building intersectional alliances between reproductive equity movements and other social justice causes such as labor rights and environmental rights.

In 2020, the Rapid Response Fund moved over \$1.3 million to 145 organizations across the United States. According to Sheena Johnson, senior director of grantmaking, groups receiving grants through the Rapid Response Fund are then often able to access Groundswell’s other funding streams, including the Catalyst Fund, which provides grants and capacity-building support to organizations building cross-movement alliances between reproductive justice efforts and other social justice organizations, and includes matching grants to bolster organizations’ efforts to raise new money from other sources.

Other notable examples of rapid-response funding mechanisms include the Third Wave Fund’s Mobilize Power Fund for direct action, community

mobilizing and healing justice that supports the leadership of young women of color, trans, non-binary, queer, and intersex youth under 35 in social movements, as well as the Relief and Resilience Fund of the California Women's Foundation, which provides quick infusions of funds to community-based grantees, including groups like California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, the California Abortion Alliance, and the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom.

Long-Range Leadership Development. Experts IP interviewed also emphasized the importance of supporting leadership development and ensuring a sustainable pipeline of leaders working in partnership with one another. One example is the [National Fellowship for Leaders in Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice](#) of the Rockwood Institute, in partnership with Funders for Reproductive Equity. Youth leadership is especially critical, given that youth, particularly BIPOC and trans and non-binary young people, are most impacted by restrictions in access to abortion, contraception and other aspects of reproductive and sexual healthcare. They are also at the forefront of grassroots organizing around intersecting challenges and opportunities in advancing racial, gender, reproductive, immigrant and economic justice. The Third Wave Fund's [Grow Power Fund](#) provides a leading example of how philanthropy can make long-term investments in the leadership and self-determination of young women, and trans and queer youth. Through this fund, emerging youth-led organizations with budgets under \$200,000 are provided with up to six years of holistic support inclusive of general operating support, capacity-building resources, organizational development coaching and annual convenings.

Impact Investing. A few funders are beginning to use impact investing as a strategy to address inequities in reproductive healthcare. One example is Rhia Ventures, which includes a wholly owned venture capital fund that makes direct investments in early and growth-stage companies driving innovation, access and equity in reproductive and maternal health. Its work also includes strengthening and influencing corporate engagement in access to high-quality reproductive healthcare, with particular attention to racial disparities.

Another example is the Tara Health Foundation, which uses a hybrid model of grants and investments. It leverages 100% of assets toward its mission of "improving the health and well-being of women and girls through the creative use of philanthropic capital," including reproductive and maternal healthcare. Dr Ruth Haber established the \$80 million spend-down foundation in 2014 with an aim to use both grantmaking and impact investments to strengthen access to reproductive healthcare. Examples of investments made by the foundation, as described on its website, include support for the Texas-based healthcare provider Whole Women's Health (WWH), which has been forced to open and close its clinics since 2013 due to predatory legislation targeting abortion providers. Tara Health provided WWH with the means to refinance the organization's debt, reducing interest rates from as much as 25% to as low as 3%. It also gave an unrestricted grant to its nonprofit sister organization, Whole Woman's Health Alliance, to reopen its flagship clinic in Austin, Texas. Tara Health's investment approach enabled WWH to redeploy capital that would otherwise be spent on high-interest debt financing toward critically needed reproductive health services.

Also note the foundation’s investment in an effort to make contraceptive pills available over the counter in the U.S. via Cadence Health, a healthcare startup with a mission to make birth control pills affordable and accessible to all women who need them, regardless of barriers such as insurance status. An estimated 30 million users would benefit if the pills were available without a prescription, including women without insurance or with limited insurance. Cadence is now seeking federal approval for a combined oral contraceptive pill that is both safe and popular. Tara Health purchased a convertible note and acquired equity in Cadence, allowing it to support a for-profit business model with a social mission to improve contraceptive access in the U.S. Tara Health Foundation believes the company has the potential to dramatically disrupt the U.S. contraceptives market by finally making contraceptive pills affordable and accessible for all.

Perspectives on Equity

In the wake of the racial justice protests of 2020, funders are recognizing the centrality of racism and racial disparities in access to reproductive health, rights and justice to a degree greater than ever before. The devastating and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the health, lives and safety of BIPOC communities has also become central to the discussion of reproductive health.

An [open letter to philanthropy](#) organized by Groundswell Fund and pledged by dozens of foundations and individual major donors including Ms. Foundation, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, Chicago Foundation for Women, New York Women’s Foundation, Women’s Foundation of California and Libra Foundation, asked funders to commit to concrete actions to advance racial justice in the reproductive field. This includes increasing

general support funding to women-of-color-led reproductive justice organizations, including transgender women of color; increasing the percentage of their funding invested in women-of-color-led organizations; and committing to funding work focused on addressing race-based reproductive health disparities.

Program Spotlight



Latinas 4RJ is a program of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) and currently has chapters in Los Angeles and San Diego.

Latinas4RJ helps develop Latina/x leaders in multiple areas, including reproductive justice, abortion care and access, and civic engagement. Member chapters are open to all non-binary, womxn-identified, gender non-conforming, trans, genderqueer, and cisgender Latinas/xs .

It remains an open question whether a critical mass of philanthropic actors will make the long-term structural changes that are necessary to embed racial and gender justice principles in their work and in the priorities they set for grantmaking. However, there are promising signs as highlighted throughout this paper that funders and organizations they support are heeding the call to do things differently.

One encouraging example is Funders for Reproductive Equity’s establishment of a five-year initiative to strengthen racial equity and inclusion among its membership and beyond. It includes developing collaborative strategies to secure additional funding for women-of-color-led reproductive justice organizations, which have

been historically and chronically underfunded, despite their leadership role in building and sustaining the movement.



The Rights Faith and Democracy Collaborative (RFDC) was established in 2017 with an initial focus on bringing together the LGBTQ+ equality and reproductive justice movements for cross-movement organizing. Recognizing that the weaponizing of religion and misuse of religious refusals and exemptions is a shared threat to marginalized communities of color and LGBTQ+ people, the RFDC acknowledges and highlights the important role that faith plays in many of these communities, particularly in the U.S. South and Midwest. It supports work that includes and partners with progressive faith leaders and faith-based organizations in advancing reproductive, racial, LGBTQ+ and economic justice.

The Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity (CGRE)—a partnership among donors including the Ford Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, JPB Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, and Acton Family Giving, and housed at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors—is another major initiative working toward racial equity in the field. The collaborative seeks to raise \$100 million in new funding annually to support transformational work and leaders, with a focus on Georgia, Michigan, New Mexico and Texas. It supports movement-building and civic engagement with particular attention to low-income women, women of color, trans and non-binary people; projects increasing access to high-quality

reproductive healthcare, including contraception, sexual health services, and abortion services, and initiatives supporting judicial independence and legal strategies that advance gender and reproductive equity.

In recognition of the importance of supporting work that addresses the barriers that marginalized and criminalized people face in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare, some funders have provided resources to groups working with immigrant communities. Immigrants and undocumented people in particular face enormous challenges due to lack of insurance, restrictions on travel, and lack of access to information and services. Ford, Hewlett, Packard and Groundswell are among the donors that have supported groups like the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice and All* Above All, whose work includes an immigration-justice focus. This includes supporting driver's licenses and municipal IDs for undocumented immigrants and migrants, which lower their barriers to healthcare access; and ensuring that pregnant people held in immigrant and migrant detention have access to the full range of reproductive healthcare, including prenatal care, postpartum treatment and abortion care.

In general, however, foundation funding for local groups representing immigrant communities remains disproportionately low. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's 2020 report, "[Won't You Be My Neighbor](#)," showed, for example, that while 16% of Texas is foreign-born, only 0.7% of local funding is directed toward the immigrant and refugee community.

Ms. Foundation for Women's 2020 report on funding for women and girls of color, referenced earlier in this brief, revealed that less than 3% of a

total \$350 million in foundation resources for women and girls was allocated for Indigenous women. As a result, Ms. Foundation and the Collaborative for Gender and Racial Equity in 2021 convened Indigenous women leaders to identify and document vital funding needs for Indigenous women, followed by an assessment of the Indigenous women’s reproductive justice funding landscape. The convening and **assessment** make it clear that philanthropy has much work to do in order to break the institutional patterns that underpin the lack of investment in reproductive health, rights and justice for Indigenous women. Recommendations include the establishment of a funding mechanism/platform for Indigenous women’s reproductive justice, multi-year investment in training and capacity-strengthening of Indigenous reproductive justice leaders, and support for a native-led reproductive justice organization, which does not currently exist.

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“No matter what philanthropy does, the growing and now entrenched inequality affects so many aspects of peoples lives that we are always trying to catch up. Philanthropy may be able to find a cure for a disease, or create a grew technology to help the poor, but until we can work with governments to manage inequality we will be always be playing catch up”

—Foundation professional, United States

A Closer Look at Funder Types

Private Foundations

Among other large, private funders are the Ford Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. But the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation is by far the largest private funder of reproductive healthcare in the United States, having made \$832.8 million in grants between 2014 and 2018, and a total of about \$1.5 billion between 2003 and 2018. It has made an outsized impact through its support of services, advocacy, policy and research on access to contraception and abortion, among other areas of reproductive healthcare. While it does not publicize widely, and specifically does not talk publicly about its funding of abortion, STBF supports a diverse range of grantees and strategies, including major abortion rights advocates and reproductive healthcare providers with strong institutional capacity, policy-focused research projects, frontline grassroots abortion advocates, and more.

As detailed in its [recent strategy evaluation](#), between 2017 and 2020, the Ford Foundation's Advancing Reproductive and Gender Justice program made 123 grants to 66 organizations, totaling approximately \$59 million, supporting efforts to guarantee that all women—particularly women of color, low-income women, gender nonconforming/non-binary people, and rural women—have the ability to choose whether to have a child and when, to give birth safely, and to raise children in a healthy, thriving environment. This included providing multi-year, general operating grants to reproductive rights and justice and gender justice organizations; funding regional and state-level organizations that center reproductive justice;

and providing communications research and other data to reproductive justice organizations and their allies. Notable grants in 2021 include \$1.2 million to In Our Own Voice-National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda and \$1.7 million to New Venture Fund for the All* Above All Reproductive Justice Coalition.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation supports a range of reproductive health, rights and justice groups with an emphasis on youth power and leadership. Through its U.S. Reproductive Health and Rights program, it has provided approximately \$10 million annually to organizations working to increase access to and use of contraception, prevent unintended pregnancy and ensure access to abortion. In 2018, it initiated a three-year, \$3 million grantmaking initiative focused on supporting youth-led organizations to expand spaces and opportunities for young people to lead, mobilize and engage on reproductive rights, health and justice as stand-alone issues or as they intersect with other issues affecting them. Notable grants in 2021 included \$300,000 for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, \$2.5 million for Groundswell Fund, and \$2 million for the Guttmacher Institute.

The Packard Foundation's U.S. Reproductive Health program supports efforts to expand comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for youth, improve the quality and reach of voluntary contraception services and ensure that women receive quality abortion care by supporting advocacy in targeted states and addressing the clinic and provider shortages. It funds national organizations, but also has a focus and long engagement in the U.S. South, particularly Mississippi and Louisiana. In 2021, in response to

grantee partners' request for additional investments in power-building and civic engagement among BIPOC communities, low-income and/or rural communities, its

Reproductive Health program issued a request for proposals for up to \$1 million for work in this area, in addition to its other long-term organizational investments. Examples of organizations funded in 2021 include a \$250,000 grant to The Lighthouse Black Girl Projects to support Beyond the Ballot, a project that is invested in political education programs to shift the reproductive justice narrative and raise civic engagement conversations in Mississippi.

More details on foundation activities to support reproductive health, rights and justice work with a particular focus on abortion can be found in IP's other [reporting](#) on this topic.

Corporate Funders

Corporate philanthropy does not generally figure prominently in the revenue streams of reproductive health, rights and justice nonprofits in the United States—especially for organizations working toward full access to abortion. IP's [reporting](#) highlights that from 2003–2018, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation gave approximately \$1.2 million for reproductive healthcare, including to Planned Parenthood, with GE, Pfizer, Prudential and Liberty

Mutual Foundations giving less than \$1 million each in this area. Companies whose corporate giving programs supported abortion include Microsoft, Maritz and Voqal.

There are examples of corporate programs addressing reproductive health issues, such as the \$500 million [Merck for Mothers](#) global initiative, which expanded its work in the United States starting in 2018 in recognition of the stark racial disparities in maternal mortality for Black women. The initiative's Safe Childbirth Cities program partners with community-based organizations providing integrated care models in which community health workers and doulas support high-risk women throughout pregnancy and the post-partum period. Another example is Bayer's funding of the [Cover Her](#) hotline of the National Women's Law Center, which assists women who have questions about the Affordable Care Act's coverage of birth control and other preventive services, or who are having problems securing contraceptive coverage with no cost-sharing, as is required by law.

As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen corporate support for policies and programs that increase access to comprehensive reproductive health, Rhia Ventures published a 2020 report funded by the Tara Health Foundation, "[Hidden Value: The](#)

Grantee Spotlight



The Guttmacher Institute advocates for progressive and evidence based sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) worldwide. Founded in 1968 as the Center for Family Planning Program Development, Guttmacher is now the leading research institution in the SRHR space. It receives widespread support from foundations and institutional donors including the Ford, Gates, and Packard foundations, as well as Arnold Ventures and the Society for Family Planning.

[Business Case for Reproductive Health.](#)” It highlights that “companies that provide strong coverage across the range of reproductive health needs (contraception, abortion, maternal healthcare, parental leave policies, and more) are better positioned to attract and retain employees, build a strong pipeline of talent, and deliver on diversity and inclusion goals. These strengths can contribute to stronger bottom-line performance, while helping companies prepare for increased scrutiny from stakeholders.”

ProgramSpotlight



The David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s Reproductive Health Program is committed to providing and promoting high quality sexual and reproductive services and information. Focusing on engaging women and young people, Packard supports nonprofits working in the fields of quality comprehensive sexual education, voluntary contraception, abortion care, and strengthening service delivery. It also supports organizations building partnerships with sexual and reproductive health and rights research advocacy organizations.

In the wake of the passage of SB-8 in Texas, there was some modest indication that companies were paying greater attention to this issue. Marc Benioff, the CEO of Salesforce, announced that he would relocate any employees who experience difficulties in accessing the reproductive health services they need, including abortion; Uber and Lyft indicated that they would pay the legal fees of any drivers sued for transporting people to abortion providers; and Shar Dubey, the CEO of Match, [committed](#) to establishing a fund to cover the cost of abortions for employees out of state.

Funders interviewed for this report note that more could and should be done to encourage corporations and corporate philanthropy to support reproductive rights and justice work proactively and publicly, in addition to reactive efforts to mitigate the harm of laws and policies already passed. This is especially so, given the corporate sector’s increasingly visible and vocal support of connected issues such as racial justice, transgender rights, immigrant rights and voter rights. According to Leah Pryor-Lease of the Proteus Fund, “We, as funders, need to support more corporate accountability work, tracking not just what businesses say, but what they actually do.” She emphasized that corporate voices are extremely important for state-level change.

Community Foundations

Community foundations and women’s funds housed within community foundations play a significant role in supporting geographically focused reproductive health, rights and justice work. As noted in IP’s [Giving for Women and Girls](#) brief, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation – the largest community foundation in the world – is a consistent contributor to reproductive health and rights, at approximately \$3 million annually, although it is difficult to disaggregate how much of that funding comes from staff-led grantmaking and how much from the massive number of donor-advised funds the foundation manages.

Other top givers include the Philadelphia Foundation, Foundation for the Carolinas, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Women’s Fund of Greater Omaha, the Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina, and the New York Community Trust. All of these community foundations also likely distribute the bulk of their

giving in this area through donor-advised fund distributions rather than from public health grantmaking initiatives.

Women's funds and foundations have increased their attention and commitment to resourcing intersectional reproductive justice work that is led by and focused on the needs of marginalized and criminalized communities, including transgender women of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities and young people. Leading examples include the Chicago Women's Foundation which, in addition to the initiative highlighted on page 25, has funded numerous cutting-edge projects through its Catalyst Reproductive Justice fund. An example from 2020 was its support of the Chicago Freedom School's Project HealUs, which activates and prepares young people of color who identify as female/femme/trans/non-binary to explore, engage and expand the work of the reproductive justice movement within their communities. Another example is Women's Foundation California, which runs a number of multi-issue grantmaking programs, including its Community Power Fund, which is focused on economic security, health and safety, including support for organizations working to address pay equity, affordable child care, workplace protections, access to education, gender-based violence, criminal justice reform, reproductive health and justice, and environmental health and justice.

Major Donors

Most trackable giving from major individuals for reproductive health and rights is channeled through their philanthropic foundations, including the Buffett and Gates Foundations, as discussed in the private funders section above. As noted in IP's [reporting](#), in the wake of her divorce from Bill Gates, Melinda French Gates has signaled her

intention to continue making substantial investments in gender equity and reproductive health work, either through Pivotal Ventures, an LLC that she established in 2015 to "help develop and implement innovative solutions to problems affecting U.S. women and families," or through another philanthropic vehicle. It is unclear, though, whether she will fund reproductive rights and justice at a significant level, given that the Gates Foundation has steered clear of direct funding of abortion rights and access work to date.

Major Donor Spotlight: Melinda French Gates



In 2021, Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott gave a combined \$40 million to projects "focused on advancing gender equality in tech, higher education, minority communities and caregiving." In 2019, she made a \$1 billion investment to support gender equity through her company Pivotal Ventures. Areas of focus for the company include women in technology, women in public office, women and girls of color, paid family medical leave, caregiving and adolescent mental health.

MacKenzie Scott is another high-profile individual donor who has already demonstrated her interest in and commitment to funding groups that are working at the intersections of racial, reproductive and gender justice, among other areas. Among the recipients of the over \$8 billion in [donations](#) she made in 2020–21 are Groundswell Fund, National Women's Law Center, and Forward Together. While Scott has been criticized for the secrecy

of her process and mechanisms for funding groups, she has notably prioritized giving larger amounts of unrestricted funding to groups and issues that have historically been underfunded—something institutional philanthropy has struggled to put into practice in past years.

Collaborative Fund Spotlight



The Culture Change Fund is a \$10 million effort of Blue Shield of California Foundation, The California Endowment, Women’s Foundation of California, and Philanthropy California. It is also supported by a number of institutional funders including the Compton, General Service, and Hewlett foundations. Recent fund grantees include Girls & Womxn of Color Collaborative, She the People, and the Transgender Law Center.

The Libra Foundation, established by the Pritzker family in 2011, is highly visible as a funder of grassroots justice movements led by and for marginalized communities of color. Through its gender justice program, it has made substantial investments in reproductive justice coalitions and intermediary funders. In 2020, grants included \$850,000 for Groundswell Fund, \$400,000 for the Third Wave Fund, \$800,000 for Forward Together, and \$950,000 for the Women’s Foundation of California.

Examples of more recent donors to reproductive health, rights and justice work include the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, which has established a new program for gender and reproductive equity, and Acton Family Giving. Both have made key investments in the Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity.

The Women Donors Network (WDN) serves as a prominent convener and coordinator of wealthy progressive individual women donors. It has several collaborative funds, including the [Opportunity and Equality for All Impact Collective](#), which, in 2020, made a total of \$1.15 million in grants, of which \$540,000 funded reproductive justice work by the If/When/How Legal Defense Fund and the Miscarriage and Abortion Hotline.

Intermediaries & Associations

Funders for Reproductive Equity serves as a primary affinity group for donors working in the field of reproductive health, rights and justice. The Women’s Funding Network, a membership-based organization of women’s foundations and funds is also active in highlighting, convening and creating space for shared learning around reproductive health, rights and justice issues.

Geographically focused associations of note include the Southeastern Alliance for Reproductive Equity (SEARE), a southern regional partnership established by SisterSong, Spark Reproductive Justice NOW!, Women’s Rights and Empowerment Network, and Healthy and Free Tennessee, which works to align reproductive rights, health and justice organizations serving diverse communities in the Southeast, as well as the California Gender Justice Funders Network. All of these organizations serve as shared spaces for joint strategizing, advocacy, capacity-building and research and knowledge building, but—with the exception of the California Gender Justice Funders Network—do not distribute funds to other nonprofits. The California Gender Justice Funders Network has four grantmaking funds—including the Culture Change Fund described under the Big Issues and Beyond, and the Relief and Resiliency Fund, described under Funder Strategies.

In keeping with the growing emphasis on collaboration across fields and support of cross-movement building to address shared challenges, other funder affinity groups play an important role in sharing information, learning and strategies around justice and equity for marginalized communities impacted by discriminatory policies and disparities in access to reproductive healthcare –including, but not limited to, Funders for LGBTQ Issues, Funders Concerned About AIDS, Funders for Justice, Native Americans in Philanthropy, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy and Funders Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

In addition, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy’s Movement Investment Project has been active in efforts to highlight where and how philanthropy can do better to support reproductive and gender-justice work, including access to abortion services, birth justice, doula support and comprehensive sex education, among other areas.

Collaborative funds housed within intermediary funders are an important mechanism for investment in reproductive health, rights and justice, particularly as they can leverage the resources of funders interested in supporting intersectional work on racial, gender, economic, immigrant and climate justice. Examples include the Collaborative for Gender and Racial Equity as described in the “Perspectives on Equity” section, Groundswell’s Catalyst Fund, Proteus Fund’s Rights, Faith and Democracy Collaborative, described below, and Borealis Philanthropy’s Fund for Trans Generations and Fund for Emerging LGBTQ Leaders of Color, among others.

Project Spotlight



Chicago Freedom School’s Project HealUs is a 10-week curriculum led by young people of color ages 14 to 20. The program focuses on the history of the reproductive justice movement and includes topics such as misogyny, reproductive planning, and rape culture awareness. Chicago Freedom School provides Project HealUs leaders with meals, Chicago Transit Authority cards, and a \$300 stipend.

An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

Funders and experts interviewed for this brief said that while the challenges for the reproductive rights, health and justice movement are unprecedented, groups within the movement and across allied movements are strong, resilient and creative, and are able to respond to the current moment proactively as well as reactively. Even amidst the unprecedented surge in repressive anti-abortion laws across the country, grassroots groups and national-level organizations are key players in successful [legislative and regulatory efforts](#) to protect access to reproductive healthcare. Rocio Córdoba of Funders for Reproductive Equity said, “It is exciting to see the growth of the reproductive justice movement. They are organizing communities, developing civic engagement strategies, and developing cultural narratives around reproductive health, rights and justice that elevate the communities they represent.”

There is an opportunity to use the power of this moment, when there is widespread outrage over the SCOTUS decision and unpopular anti-abortion legislation being pushed in many states, to expand and deepen the base-building and organizing work at the state and local levels that is central to efforts to protect and expand access to reproductive health, rights and justice for all people. Experts we spoke to highlighted youth and women-of-color-led organizing and advocacy as critically important and in need of greater investment.

There is also the challenge and opportunity to continue shifting the narrative and focus around reproductive rights beyond legal access to the broader set of structural issues that impact whether people—particularly women of color, low-income women, immigrants, people with disabilities, trans

and non-binary people — are able to access high-quality, comprehensive reproductive health services. This includes, but is not limited to, abortion, and must encompass a continuum of care that enables people to exercise their full rights to decide when and whether to have a child, to give birth safely, and to raise their children in a healthy, safe and thriving environment.

More culture-change work is needed, including greater attention to strategies that meaningfully engage influential faith leaders and faith communities. Leah Pryor-Lease, director of the Democracy, Faith and Rights Collaborative at the Proteus Fund notes that progressive funders are still grappling with their relationship with faith-based organizations and leaders, tending to view them as “targets” as opposed to partners in culture change, organizing, and advocacy around reproductive rights and justice.

While some funders support work at the intersection of disability rights and reproductive justice, this is an important aspect of cross-movement building that deserves greater attention, particularly given that the anti-abortion movement has actively used [ongoing debates](#) about fetal impairment as a legal basis for abortion as a wedge issue between the disability rights and reproductive rights movements. More resourcing of collaborative work around shared principles of bodily autonomy and freedom from reproductive coercion is needed.

The Trump administration’s domestic “gag rule” denied Title X family planning funds to organizations providing or referring clients to abortion services, including Planned Parenthood

and independent clinics, forcing many to exit the program and/or close. With the rescinding of the rule by the Biden administration, there is renewed opportunity to push for greater access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health services with government and private resources, including comprehensive contraceptive coverage. Some funders, like Packard, are collaborating with grantee partners and other donors in states like Louisiana and Mississippi to figure out how to provide high-quality contraceptive care without provider bias to all those who want it.

As noted throughout this brief, to do the work required to address these challenges and opportunities, groups on the front lines require more resources from philanthropy—particularly, long-term, flexible funding—and they need funders to be visible and vocal partners in their support in the current context. As Dr. Ghazaleh Moayed of the Texas-based Pegasus Health Justice Center [says](#), “We need bold funding from funders who are not afraid to fund civil disobedience and are not afraid to fund actions that maybe could get them in trouble.”

While support for national-level organizations doing research, advocacy and litigation remains critical, a greater investment in place-based grantmaking is needed in the current context. Tamara Kreinin, Director of the Packard Foundation’s Reproductive Health Program, which supports groups based in the U.S. South, as well as national level work, recommends a “both/and” approach to funding. She also cautions that “[funders] oftentimes rush to a crisis, but we need to shift our thinking and start building for the long term.”

Just as the groups they support have engaged increasingly in cross-movement work, so, too, have reproductive health, rights and justice funders become more intersectional and collaborative in working together within their field and with allied funders, most notably racial and gender-justice donors. Leah Pryor-Lease of the Proteus Fund says, “I have seen more funder collaboration in the past few years, and we are partnering in deeper ways that are less transactional.”

At the same time, funders and the groups they support have expressed concern about the lack of time and resources, particularly during the pandemic, to develop a shared longer-term vision and plan that moves beyond “putting out fires.” Organizations need multi-year operating support to create the space for the bigger-picture strategies required in the current context and in the future. Sheena Johnson of Groundswell says donors, in turn, need to “step back and talk more about how to fund the reproductive justice movement long term at the scale it needs.”

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“As long as philanthropy remains focused upon filling the leaks in the dam of society and supporting the functioning of systems that were created to extract, concentrate and diminish life, they will fail to rise to the opportunities of this era where the very foundations upon which our modern civilization has been built have been laid bare. Philanthropy should become emboldened to lead at the edges of what is possible, not constrained by what it feels is right or limited to filling the gaps and unmet needs left behind by a society functioning, as it was intended to.”

—Foundation professional, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Resources for Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Funding

Reports & Data Sets:

[2021 Midyear Report—Gaining Ground: Proactive Reproductive Health and Rights Legislation in the States.](#) (July 9, 2021). National Institute for Reproductive Health.

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[Women and Girls Index 2020: Measuring Giving to Women’s and Girls’ Causes.](#) (December 2020). IUPUI Women's Philanthropy Institute, Lilly FAMilly School of Philanthropy.

Websites & Individual Pages with Key Information:

[David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#)

[Fundors for Reproductive Equity](#)

[Groundswell Fund](#)

[Proteus Fund Rights, Democracy and Faith Collaborative](#)

[Reproaction](#)

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Erin Matson, Executive Director, Reproaction

Leah Pryor-Lease, Program Director, Rights, Faith and Democracy Collaborative, Proteus Fund

¹Based on available grantmaker data from Candid. Excludes federal funding and funding by higher education institutions

²Based on available grant recipient data from Candid. Excludes government organizations.

Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. This brief was originally posted to Inside Philanthropy in November 2020. It has not yet been updated. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.org.