

Investing in

# Youth



# impact

A toolkit on funding for  
Youth-Led Organisations

**CHOICE** FOR  
YOUTH &  
SEXUALITY

**AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AT**  
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**This short  
toolkit was  
made possible by  
the passionate  
contributions  
of nearly 150  
activists,  
organisations  
and donors.**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## FOREWORD

'Nothing about us, without us', is a slogan we have been hearing a lot in international development for the past years. And rightly so, research has shown that including the beneficiaries in the design, planning and implementation and evaluation of programs leads to a higher impact.

With 1 in 4 persons in the world between 10 – 24 years old (a striking 1.8 billion in total, according to UNFPA!) young people are a key demographic in striving for social change, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). After all, SRHR are not a standalone-issue: they are intricately connected to social-economic disparities, migration and gender inequality, amongst others. In order for all young people to thrive and have the possibility to freely choose over their futures, they must be able to make unimpeded decisions over their SRHR in the present.

Despite facing many obstacles, young people have continued to be drivers for change, igniting critical debate, holding their leaders accountable and standing firm against social injustice. Youth-led organisations are becoming increasingly visible in international, regional and national arenas and young people around the world are standing up to have their voices heard. They're being recognized as key actors and drivers of change in the sexual and reproductive health and rights-field and beyond.

In 2016 CHOICE launched their call to action for more youth-friendly funding. Since then we have seen a rising commitment to include young people in decision-making spaces, programs and

policies. However, too many young people are still dependent on others to include them in the agenda and open doors for them. In order for them to make a sustainable impact on the issues that affect them, they need to have access to lasting support.

Likewise, we have seen many donors and civil society organisations express their interest in building partnerships with youth advocates and youth organisations and capitalizing on the skills, expertise and collective power of youth. However, finding a youth-led organisation that can promise a return on investment, can be hard and time-consuming.

CHOICE wants to connect young people to supporters of their work and start a dialogue on how we, as an international development community, can help them create lasting impact. We also want to help supporters understand and find youth-led organisations that can help them in their mission. We hope this toolkit will offer a hands-on resource to start that conversation.

Let's invest in youth impact, together.



Nathalie Metheuver  
Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

**In 2018, we set off on a journey to understand the experience of youth-led organisations (YLOs) in accessing donor funds. Over a period of three months we gathered the experiences of over 130 dedicated YLOs of all shapes and sizes, working around the world to fulfil the human rights of young people, including their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and on issues such as sexual and gender diversity, gender-based violence, youth livelihoods and mental health, among other themes.**

Through interviews with our researchers and a global survey, each organisation shared their experience of navigating the donor landscape in the hope of raising funds to support their work in a variety of challenging contexts. YLOs shared their experience working directly with donors, and described the barriers they face in fundraising and how they are working to overcome them. We also spoke to 15 major donors working globally to support civil society, asking them to share their experiences funding YLOs and to reflect on what they see as the biggest obstacles to youth-friendly funding.

### **HOW DO WE DEFINE A 'YOUTH-LED' ORGANISATION?**

There is no accepted definition of a youth-led organisation, and the age and level of involvement of youth varies across different contexts. For the purpose of this toolkit, however, we accepted organisations that self-defined as youth-led.

## **BASED ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, THE TOOLKIT HIGHLIGHTS THE EXPERIENCES OF YLOS WHILE NAVIGATING THE DONOR LANDSCAPE.**

### **A SMALL NOTE ON THE TYPES OF FUND-RAISING COVERED IN THIS TOOLKIT:**

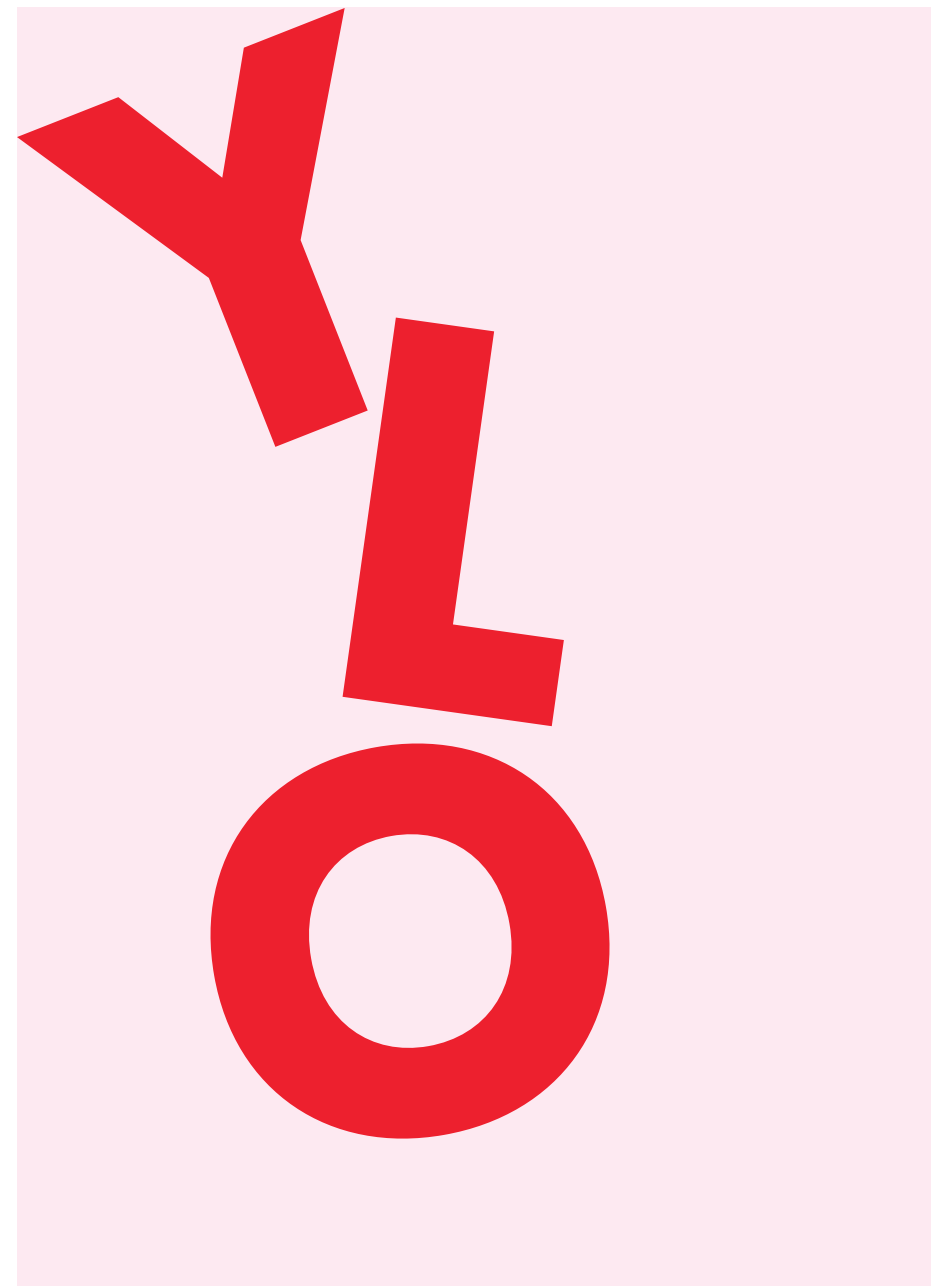
while we acknowledge the importance of using different fundraising strategies, including individual fundraising (gathering donations from private individuals), crowdfunding, company corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, sponsorship and others, this toolkit will not cover these techniques.

### **WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?**

First and foremost, this toolkit is for the benefit of YLOs looking to access funds and learn more about how to build a fundraising strategy. Youth-serving non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with YLOs will also find the toolkit useful in understanding the issues experienced by their partners or grantees. Finally, this toolkit is also useful for donors to get better insight into the experiences of YLOs, as well as which models and best practices make funding more accessible and youth friendly.

### **WHAT'S IN THE TOOLKIT?**

Based on the research findings, the toolkit highlights the experiences of YLOs while navigating the donor landscape. It provides an insight into the barriers that YLOs face in fundraising, from the YLOs' and the donors' perspectives and tips on overcoming them. It also provides an insight into what donors are doing well and how they can do even better to support the work of YLOs. Finally, the toolkit provides a checklist on how organisations can create a fundraising strategy; and some resources that can help you on this journey!



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# The donor landscape

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## WHAT IS THE 'DONOR LANDSCAPE'?

Throughout this toolkit, we refer to the 'donor landscape', by this we mean the group of organisations that provide financial and technical support to individuals, civil society organisations, research bodies and think tanks, among others, to help them tackle specific societal and political issues. While these "donors" or "funders" can come in many forms, in this toolkit we primarily refer to private and institutional donors. The different types of donors and forms of collaboration are constantly evolving, here is some basic information that will help you understand this complex landscape.

### NEED SOME EXTRA HELP?

We added a glossary with common terms and phrases used in fundraising [at the back of this toolkit!](#)

**Private donors** are independent organisations set up for charitable purposes either by an individual (e.g. Open Society Foundations), a group of activists (e.g. FCAM - Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres), a family (e.g. Oak Foundation) or a company (e.g. Ford Foundation or IKEA Foundation). Private donors fund a variety of different issues and each have their own ways of grant-making and working with grantees. For example, FRIDA, the young feminist fund, was set up by a group of activists in 2011 and works primarily with grassroots and youth-led organisations. Family-led foundations are very diverse in their ways of working, some use youth-friendly funding models – see the donor models section for more details – and some do not. In general, corporate foundations have more 'traditional' ways of working. This means they tend to work more from a top-down approach, have stricter requirements for grantees and can thus be harder to access for grassroots and youth-led organisations.

**Institutional donors** are funding bodies set up by states, for example, the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), or by institutions such as the European Union (EU) or the United Nations (UN). Institutional donors often have strict financial guidelines and mostly provide large grants to well established NGOs and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), for example, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Oxfam. Institutional donors tend to have strict reporting requirements for grantees and cannot provide extensive support or technical guidance during the granting period due to their limited staff capacity. For these reasons, institutional donors don't traditionally provide direct support to small NGOs, grassroots organisations, or newly formed youth-led organisations.

**Intermediaries or re-granting bodies** are organisations that take on a mediating position between the "big" donor and smaller organisations. They receive donations from, for example, large private or institutional

donors and divide this into smaller grants, making this funding more accessible for smaller or more informal organisations. In general, intermediary bodies also have specialised knowledge and skills which they can use to strengthen the capacity of their grantees, which private or institutional donors may not be able to provide. Donors also often use intermediaries as a way to work on new topics or to reach specific target groups. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands provides funds to 'Voice', a grant facility run by Hivos and Oxfam Novib that provides small grants to grassroots organisations. This gives these large institutional and private donors the opportunity to indirectly support a diversity of organisations that they would not normally be able to, due to the limitations described above.

**Public charities** are similar to private donors, however, instead of receiving their funds from a single source, as is often the case with private donors, they receive their funding from the general public, or 'supporters'. Since they are dependent on private donations, private charities usually only fund organisations that work on the issues which their supporters find important, to ensure that they keep donating money. Public charities normally conduct a variety of activities in addition to grant-making, including campaigning and implementing projects within their target communities. Comic Relief in the UK is an example of a public charity.

**Collaborative funds** are collaborative initiatives by donors created in order to increase their impact and reach by combining their funds and other resources. Collaborative funds, for example the 'HER Voice fund' or the 'With and For Girls Collective', are usually initiated by a group of donors (both private and institutional) that identify a gap in funding on a specific issue, either globally or in a specific country or region.

Some of these collaborative funds can become a separate organisation, or are managed primarily by just one of the founding donors. For example, the 'With and For Girls Collective', which supports the work of girl-led and girl-focused organisations, is primarily managed by the Stars Foundation, but is founded and funded by the Stars Foundation, NoVo Foundation, FRIDA, Nike Foundation, Comic Relief, Global Fund for Children, Mama Cash, EMpower and Plan International. On the other hand, the 'HER Voice fund', set up to support the meaningful engagement of adolescents and young women, is made up of funds donated by the Global Fund and managed by two implementing organisations - SHRH Africa Trust and Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS Service Organisations - this way, the funds are managed by groups close to the issues, able to reach the target group and be most effective on the ground.

***NOT EVERY DONOR  
MATCHES WITH EVERY TYPE  
OF ORGANISATION - TRY TO  
FIND YOUR BEST MATCH.***

### **TYPE OF SUPPORT**

The support provided by these different types of donors can come in a variety of forms. Some provide project grants, which is funding for a specific project or activity – once the project or activity is completed the funding stops. Core funds can be used to cover organisational costs such as staff time, rent, office supplies, IT equipment etc. Un-earmarked funds are not designated or set aside for a specific purpose and can be used both for organisational and project costs. Other forms of support can include capacity building and training in the form of workshops or coaching for an organisation.

### **ACCESSING FUNDING**

The process for accessing the different types of funding described above varies per donor. For example, donors like Mama Cash and Amplify Change will put open calls for proposals online which any organisation meeting the listed requirements can apply for, while some identify new grantees through a network of experts on the ground (e.g. NoVo Foundation and Packard Foundation), or through partners (e.g. Firelight Foundation), and others use a combination of these techniques. In general, the funding provided by institutional donors is more difficult to access for smaller organisations, because the grants offered are usually for quite large amounts and the requirements can be quite strict.

**‘In general,  
the funding pro-  
vided by insti-  
tutional donors  
is more difficult to  
access for smaller  
organisations.’**

**– The YP Foundation, India**

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# YLOs and access to funds

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## YLOS AND ACCESS TO FUNDS

Across all the 130 YLOs interviewed and surveyed, experiences in navigating the donor landscape are mixed: for some, they have been positive, for others, less so.

However, both YLOs and donors agree that YLOs face unique barriers when it comes to fundraising. Despite this, YLOs are some of the most passionate, energetic and impactful entities in social justice movements around the world and they are overcoming those barriers. This section provides an overview of some of the internal and external barriers YLOs face in accessing funding, as well as tips on how to overcome them and examples of YLOs who are doing just that!

### THE DONOR LANDSCAPE – WHAT ARE THE EXTERNAL BARRIERS

While some donors have taken steps to make their funding more 'youth friendly' (please also see our 'youth-friendly donor models on page 38), over half of the YLOs that we spoke to believed that there is a fundamental lack of accessible funding for youth-led initiatives. **The following were identified as the main barriers in accessing funding:**

**Funding for youth issues.** Most donors select a range of social issues and even geographical regions that they provide funding for. In practice this means that YLOs sometimes feel that donors are not prioritizing the problems that are the most pressing in their communities, and can struggle to find donors that are interested in funding youth issues. In this sense, there can be a very real discrepancy in the agendas of donors and YLOs working on the ground.

**Donor transparency.** Many YLOs find it difficult to understand what donors fund and how they can reach them. This is especially true in the Caribbean region, for example, which is not seen as a high priority location for many donors, for reasons that are unclear to the YLOs from the region. Issues with accessibility are also caused by the fact that some donors are purposely not very visible, for example, they do not have a detailed website and don't openly communicate about their funding activities. This lack of transparency can be due to a variety of reasons, for example, some donors who work on controversial or sensitive issues want to avoid criticism or backlash. Other donors might only have limited funds and capacity available, and want to avoid encouraging too many applications.

**Type of Funding.** The type of funding that is offered by donors is also a barrier for youth-led organisations. It is difficult for YLOs to receive core or un-earmarked funds, and the grants that they do receive often put a limit on how much can be spent on staff and/or administration costs (sometimes only 10–20%), or the funds may only be used for a

“over half of the YLOs that we spoke to believed that there is a fundamental lack of accessible funding for youth-led initiatives”

specific project. This makes it difficult for the grantee to build capacity over time and to scale-up activities.

### FUNDING REQUIREMENTS.

Many organisations, especially smaller and more informal ones find it hard to meet the conditions for obtaining donor funds. **The most common requirements include:**

- legal registration of the organisation (*often at least three years*);
- clear governance structures;
- a bank account;
- a budget above or below a certain amount;
- have previously received donor funding;
- appropriate financial controls;
- financial audits.

At times, when applying for and receiving donor funds, YLOs like SERAC-Bangladesh, have felt that some donors don't fully understand their unique nature and the context they work in. According to SERAC, this is often due to the number and type of requirements that accompany the grant, for example, requiring three financial audits and strict organisational structures, which can cause issues for newly formed YLOs. For those donors that do recognise these differences, YLOs describe how they have been able to build relationships over time and prove their impact despite having different structures and experiences than non-YLOs.

**Due to the networks we have established, we have been fortunate to find youth friendly donors that are principled and aligned with our thematic work. One foundation that was exiting our region connected us to another foundation which allowed us to scale up our activities. While the competition can be high, once you create that relationship, donors can see the change over time, letting us build their trust in our work.'**

**– The YP Foundation, India**



**‘YLOs are  
some of the  
most passionate,  
energetic and im-  
pactful entities  
in social justice  
movements around  
the world.’**

## INTERNAL BARRIERS FACED BY YLOS

Youth-led organisations can face a variety of issues when fundraising, which range from not having staff or volunteer capacity, limited knowledge about the donor landscape, or working in contexts or on topics where funding is limited. The following are the biggest issues they face in fundraising, from the perspective of both YLOs themselves and donors.

### TIP BEFORE STARTING TO WRITE...

Before responding to a request for proposals, or a request for a concept note from a donor, take the time to think about the language and tone that should be used. First, it is important to read the donor's website and understand what the donor offers in terms of grants and support, and what kinds of projects they have funded in the past. We would also recommend taking a good look at what the donor's strategy and vision for the world is, so that you can demonstrate clearly in your proposal how your work contributes to this.

**Proposal writing and understanding the technical language.** Many YLOs reported that writing the proposal is the biggest challenge they face when fundraising. This is often due to the technical language that is used in requests for proposals (RFPs), and which is required when applying. This is compounded by the fact that many YLOs are not applying in their first language. Furthermore, many find it difficult to understand what level of information they need to provide to get their point across without giving away their ideas. The most daunting aspect of proposal writing is the budgeting, especially for organisations that have not managed funds before – this is often the area where YLOs appreciate expert guidance from donors.

**Visibility.** Finding the time and resources to build a website, or even a social media following can be challenging. This is especially true for those who focus on working directly in their own community and don't necessarily require a website or social media presence for this work. However, this can cause an issue when trying to fundraise, as donors and potential partners are unable to identify your organisation

and understand the impact it is having. Youth Partnership Uganda, a youth-led community-based organisation in West Uganda, notice the impact of not having a website as donors question their existence, but in order to create the website – they require funds.

### TIP BUILDING A BRAND IS AN ESSENTIAL WAY TO BECOME NOTICED BY POTENTIAL FUNDERS.

Try to become known as a youth-led organisation working on your specific issue. This can be done by partnering with more visible organisations who can help you build your network by connecting you with other potential partners and donors. They may also be able to communicate the work you're doing on their website and social media platforms. Investing in creating a social media presence for your own organisations is also very important. Allocating some time every week to building this presence on key platforms is an investment worth making. When you meet potential donors, you can then direct them to these platforms.

**Networking.** According to the European Youth Forum, the largest umbrella of youth-led organisations in Europe, only 20% of their members have a fundraising strategy. Gaining a thorough understanding of the donor landscape, and especially which donors adopt youth-friendly practices, takes time, knowledge and capacity. Often donors are not visible, so organisations can end up feeling that they cannot connect with donors who are willing to fund their causes. Of those YLOs we spoke to, 60% reported that they struggle with networking, which reduces their visibility and limits their ability to fundraise effectively. Gabrielle Bailey, a Youth and Gender Rights Advocate working in Barbados, emphasises the importance of networking and asking other organisations to recommend you to donors that don't advertise calls for applications. However, understanding how and where to network also involves considerable knowledge, access, time and resources to attend international conferences and events, luxuries which some youth-led organisations don't have. Furthermore, asking for funds can be a daunting task for even the most experienced organisations, and



donors have found that YLOs can lack confidence when fundraising. Some donors suggest that it is their job to make the process open and comfortable for the potential grantee, to give them confidence and enthusiasm for what can at times be a difficult process.

**Reporting Burden.** Many donors have quite strict reporting requirements, which include semi-annual and annual narrative reports, regular financial reporting, audits, and working with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks that use very technical language. Smaller or more informal YLOs who do not have dedicated staff working on administration, M&E, or finance, can feel overwhelmed by these requirements, and often do not have the capacity to provide in-depth reporting on their work.

Donors report that it can be challenging to give YLOs the sustainable support they need to meet these requirements. The Packard Foundation, for example, provide support for YLOs that is usually short term (3-12 months) with the intent to build capacity, their support is

**TIP DO YOUR RESEARCH AND NETWORK EFFICIENTLY.**

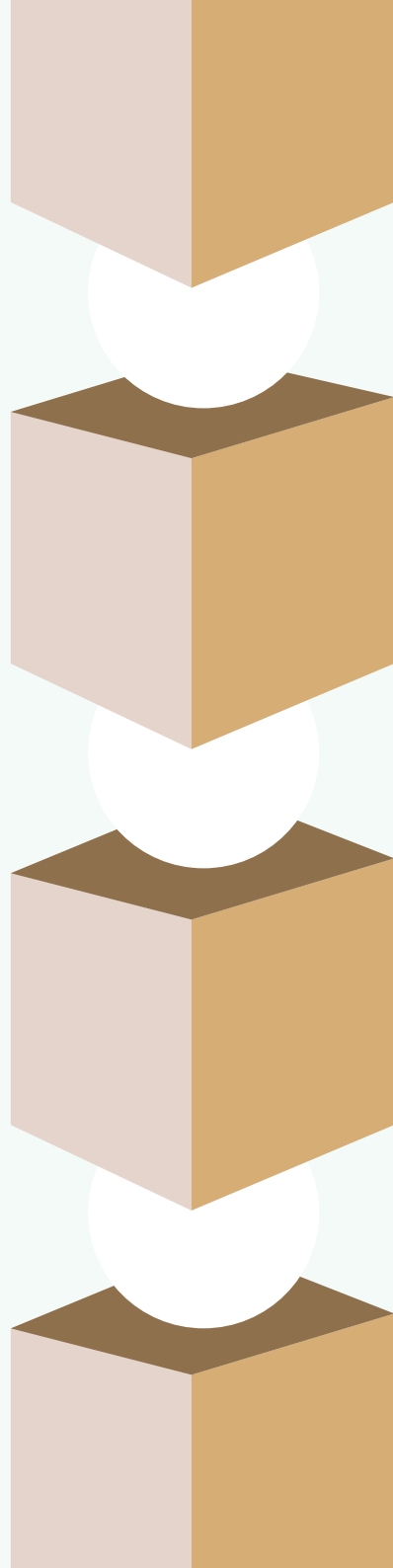
A core element of fundraising involves understanding the landscape: what donors are out there, which one's fund which issues, which ones are youth-friendly, how they are accessed etc. Finding this information can help you to understand how to use your time and resources in the most efficient way. For example, it can be helpful to plan your fundraising strategically by first mapping a small group of donors that best match your work and your needs, and then focus your networking efforts on this small group. Once you have narrowed down your pool of interesting donors, try to find out who the key persons within this organization are, and see if there are opportunities to meet with them (e.g. events or conferences). If possible, see if you can use your connections with other NGOs and donors to support your networking, e.g. by sharing contact information, finding out what events they will be attending etc.

**It can be helpful to plan your fundraising strategically by first mapping a small group of donors that best match your work and your needs, and then focus your networking efforts on this small group!**

competitive as YLOs need to be able to articulate a need and a plan. It is essential that the donor and the YLO work together from the beginning to understand what the right support looks like. While there is an expectation that donors may not be willing, or simply don't have the time, to have an open conversation with their grantees, this is not the case with all donors – as we will see in the next section.

**TIP BUILD THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS.**

We recommend doing research to identify the right donor that matches your organisation. One way to do this is to connect with their current and former grantees. Try to find out as much as possible, especially regarding the type of support they can provide. When building a relationship with the donor, be strong on communicating the needs of your organisation, and work together with the donor to see how you can be supported. It can be difficult to understand how to articulate your points to a potential donor, especially if the conversation is in your second or third language. A key tip is to create an elevator pitch which is short and to the point. This pitch should include (1) what your organisation does, (2) your objectives and long-term vision, and (3) what you need to get there. Learning this off by heart, helps you to prepare and become comfortable and confident when talking to donors. Learning this by heart helps you to prepare and become comfortable and confident when talking to donors.



'[We] improve our governance structure, prepare reports, audit accounts and continue training on donor engagements and building partnerships.'  
- *Youth Advocates, Ghana*

'...networking with donor organisations and corporations...'  
- *Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament*

## Overcoming the barriers

**YLOs are resilient, and they work hard at overcoming the barriers they face by joining networks, training, improving their organisations, becoming more visible and diversifying their funding.**

'... reaching out to adults who are passionate about our work and asking them to assist us with proposal writing and understanding the donor landscape.'  
- *Copper Rose, Zambia*

'We have also worked on utilising social media to reflect the work we do and document beneficiary experiences digitally, among other things.'  
- *My Age, Zimbabwe*

'We haven't [overcome the barriers], but I'd say we're on track to overcoming them by continuing to operate on a shoestring budget just to show donors what we've got, what we can do, and that we can be relied on to accept donations.'  
- *International Youth Alliance for Family Planning*

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# Youth friendly donor models

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## YOUTH FRIENDLY DONOR MODELS: DEEPEN YOUR YOUTH INVESTMENT

Of the YLOs that took part in the research who have received funding from private, public, or institutional donors, two-thirds reported having a positive experience. Factors that contributed to these positive experiences included feeling that donors trusted YLOs to set their own agenda, feeling listened to and taken seriously, giving YLOs time to implement activities without pressure, providing a space to learn. Furthermore, YLOs particularly appreciated it when donors also provided capacity strengthening and technical assistance, in particular sharing tools and best practices on monitoring and evaluation and project management.

Their experiences show that when donors work together with YLOs to make their grant-making more accessible, they are able to grow as organisations and strengthen the impact of their work. **Our research identified the following models as best practices in providing youth-friendly funding:**

### Specific grants for YLOs (and others).

Donors like Mama Cash are committed to providing funding to a wide range of organisations, including YLOs and informal or unregistered groups of activists. To ensure that they meet the needs of these groups, they have created a special set of funds which are usually smaller in size, more flexible and include funding for core support. Mama Cash has made sure to sit down with their grantees, to ensure the application and reporting requirements do not over-burden them, and that they are integrating capacity strengthening and support along the way. Grantees like Trans and Intersex Africa, describe how Mama Cash use easily understandable language and don't have excessive reporting expectations, which helps to build a positive relationship with grantees.

# OPEN CALLS FOR YLO'S

'They have trust in us, they take our issues seriously, relate to our situation and understand the capacity of YLOs. In terms of reporting, they use easily understandable language and they don't have massive expectations, being happy with the little changes we make, but most of all, they don't judge us or tell us what to do.'

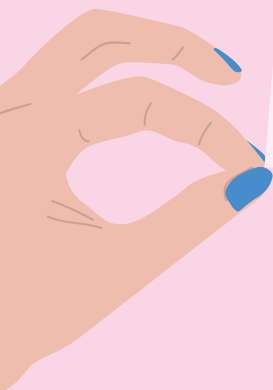
-Trans and Intersex Africa on Mama Cash

### Reducing the application burden.

Traditional application procedures are often extensive and require technical knowledge and expertise to produce a competitive proposal. Many YLOs and other grassroots groups and organisations can struggle to understand what is exactly being asked of them, and may find it difficult to get their point across. NoVo Foundation is using a model that allows grantees to answer some of their more difficult application questions over the phone. This way of working allows grantees to better express their ideas and gives space for follow-up questions. The notes of these calls are then used to fill out any missing information in the application.

Other strategies to reduce the application burden include allowing grant applications to be submitted in different languages to ensure that more organisations can be competitive. Categories of grants should be created solely for new organisations and/or YLOs working on the ground in communities, so that they are not competing against far more experienced organisations with different needs. Consider if there is a possibility for these grants to be open to applications from unregistered organisations and those that don't have formal structures or financial audits.

# FLEXIBLE



## Participatory grant making.

Donors including Amplify Change, FCAM (Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres) and 'The With and For Girls Collective' are allocating grants with the support of the grantees themselves. For example, FCAM believes that the young women are the ones who are best at selecting the proposals that will benefit them. They now invite applications through an open call, anonymise the grant applications, and send them back to the current and potential grantees themselves to select the grantees they believe are worth funding.

## Flexible reporting.

Reporting to donors is an obstacle for all organisations, and can often need a full-time staff member to complete. YLOs report that some donors are allowing the grantee to lead this process. Instead of requiring in-depth reports, they take into account the capacity of the organisation and work with them to help them identify their impact, or allow them to use annual reports, for example, to show the impact they've made.

## Making connections.

YLOs have also been able to receive additional funding thanks to recommendations given by their current donors. For example, when MacArthur was changing its investment strategy, they actively worked with The YP Foundation to connect them with other donors who focused on similar issues. The 'With and For Girls Collective' sees it as an essential aspect of the grant that during the lifetime of the granting period, they give their grantees opportunities to meet with other donors to potentially receive further funds.



## Provide sustainable support.

Our research shows that YLOs appreciate receiving sustained support from donors. This support can take many forms, for example, ensuring that YLOs can access core and un-earmarked funding, as well as multi-year grants, as opposed to only project-oriented funds. Other donors ensure that 20% of the grant is set aside for capacity strengthening of the grantees, so that donors can really invest in the sustainability of YLOs.



**Intermediary support.**

For donors who do not have the capacity to provide technical assistance and support to their grantees, intermediaries or re-granting bodies can present a good solution. For example, ISDAO, an activist-led West African LGBTQ fund, was created by a group of West African activists as a way to provide LGBTQ+ organisations in the region with an accessible source of funding that meets their needs. ISDAO is aimed at strengthening and supporting the LGBTQ+ movement in West Africa, by increasing and diversifying the funds available to LGBT organisations and adopting a flexible approach to grant making. Providing funds through locally or regionally driven entities like ISDAO can give donors the opportunity to invest in grassroots organisations that don't meet 'traditional' funding requirements.

**WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE,  
WILL HELP DONORS ACHIEVE IMPACT.**

Truly believing in youth leadership means acknowledging them as key drivers of change and their right to political participation. With over half of the world's population under the age of 25, donors are investing more and more in young people and their rights, however, young people and youth-led organisations are rarely included in decision-making processes that shape the development sector. Research shows that interventions and programs that empower young people, build their agency and teach advocacy skills improve the effectiveness of interventions aimed at adolescent sexual and reproductive health. We believe these recommendations should also extend to funding bodies. Empowering youth-led organisations will lead to more equitable partnerships and, ultimately, greater results for funders in achieving the change they wish to see in the world.

**For donors who do not have the capacity to provide technical assistance and support to their grantees, intermediaries or re-granting bodies can present a good solution.**

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# A checklist for building your fundraising strategy

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# A CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING YOUR FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

Are you fundraising or planning to fundraise? Use this checklist to help build your fundraising strategy!

## 1. DO RESEARCH:

- 1.1. Identify the donors that work in your country
- 1.2. Identify the donors that invest in the themes you work on
- 1.3. Identify the donors that are youth friendly or accessible for your type of organisation (e.g. a donor that is focussed on grassroots or women and girl-led groups and organisations)
- 1.4. Research the type of fundraising other (similar) organisations are doing, and what donors they work with: it might introduce you to new donors you are not familiar with yet

## 2. LOOK INTERNALLY:

- 2.1. Plan a team meeting to clearly identify your fundraising goals, linking this directly with your organisational strategy
- 2.2. Brainstorm on how you will fundraise – is it through grants or do you need to use additional techniques like crowd funding?
- 2.3. Together, consider what staff and volunteer hours are available and how tasks can be allocated
- 2.4. Identify what skills are needed in your team to be successful in fundraising and how you can gain these
- 2.5. Build your evidence-base: create documents that demonstrate your impact and approach such as best practices and track records, these documents will come in handy when applying for grants and speaking to donors
- 2.6. Plan monthly meetings to build your strategy and discuss progress towards realising it

## 3. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL DONORS:

- 3.1. Identify up to five donors to start targeting
- 3.2. Gather information on who they are, how to access their funds, how to make contact with them, who their current grantees are, what kinds of projects they fund, and what is needed when applying for funds

**4. Applying for calls:**

- 4.1.** When identifying calls for proposals, use your multi-annual strategy or vision and make sure the calls have added value towards achieving your goals as an organisation
- 4.2.** Get advice from partner organisations, former grantees, or the donor themselves on what is needed for the application process and how best to approach it
- 4.3.** Use the resources in the resource list of this toolkit to help create your theory of change, project design and Monitoring & Evaluation plan

**5. Make sure you're visible:**

- 5.1.** Make sure donors are able to find you: do you have a website or social media? What information is on there, and is it what donors would like to see?
- 5.2.** Write a pitch – make sure you are able to explain in a short and concise way what your organisation does, what your goals are, and what support you need
- 5.3.** Map for each donor how they identify their grantees, for example, this could be through local offices or experts – initiate contact with them through email, by phone or at events
- 5.4.** Take every opportunity to meet with donors, partners or focal points and deliver your pitch, ask for their contact details, and set a reminder to follow up with them and continue to build these relationships over time

**EVALUATION TEAM: WHAT COULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY AND HOW CAN YOU INTEGRATE THESE INSIGHTS INTO YOUR STRATEGY?**

**6. Be patient:**

**Fundraising can be a long and hard process with many disappointments along the way. Try to create learning moments from your unsuccessful attempts:**

- 6.1.** Try to get feedback, if possible, from the donor on why they rejected your proposal
- 6.2.** Evaluate within your team: what could you have done differently and how can you integrate these insights into your strategy?
- 6.3.** Document your work: store all the proposals – also the unsuccessful ones – in one central place and come back to them: you might be able to use it for another proposal with a few tweaks

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**Glossary: a list  
of common terms  
and phrases used  
in fundraising  
for YLOs**

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# GLOSSARY: A LIST OF COMMON TERMS AND PHRASES USED IN FUNDRAISING FOR YLOS

## **Basket fund**

An autonomous organisation, managed jointly by a group of donors. A basket fund will have specific purposes, modes of disbursement and accountability mechanisms and a limited time frame.

## **Best practices**

a working method or set of working methods that is officially accepted as being the best to use in a particular business or industry, usually described formally and in detail

## **CBO**

Community-based organisation

## **CSR**

Corporate-social responsibility

## **Collaborative funds**

collaborative initiatives by donors created in order to increase their impact and reach by combining their funds and other resources.

## **Concept Note**

a short expression (often no longer than one or two pages) of your idea for a project.

## **Core funding**

funding to cover organisational costs such as staff time, rent, office supplies, IT equipment etc.,

## **Donor Landscape**

the group of organisations that provide financial and technical support to individuals, civil society organisations, research bodies and think tanks, among others, to help them tackle specific societal and political issues.

## **Fundraising strategy**

a document where you state what your organisation's fundraising goals are both in the long run and for shorter periods of time (e.g. quarterly or annual goals), what methods you will use to achieve them and what investment you will make in terms of capacity to reach them

## **Institutional Donor**

funding bodies set up by states or by institutions such as the European Union or the United Nations.

## **In-kind donation**

a donation of goods and services instead of a sum of money

## **Intermediaries or re-granting bodies**

organisations that take on a mediating position between the "big" donor and smaller organisations. They receive donations from, for example, large private or institutional donors and divide this grant into smaller grants for e.g. grassroots organisations.

## **(I)NGO**

International non-governmental organisation

## **MOU**

Memorandum of Understanding: a non-binding agreement between two or more parties outlining the terms and details of an understanding, including each parties' requirements and responsibilities. An MOU is often the first stage in the formation of a formal contract.

## **Multilateral fund**

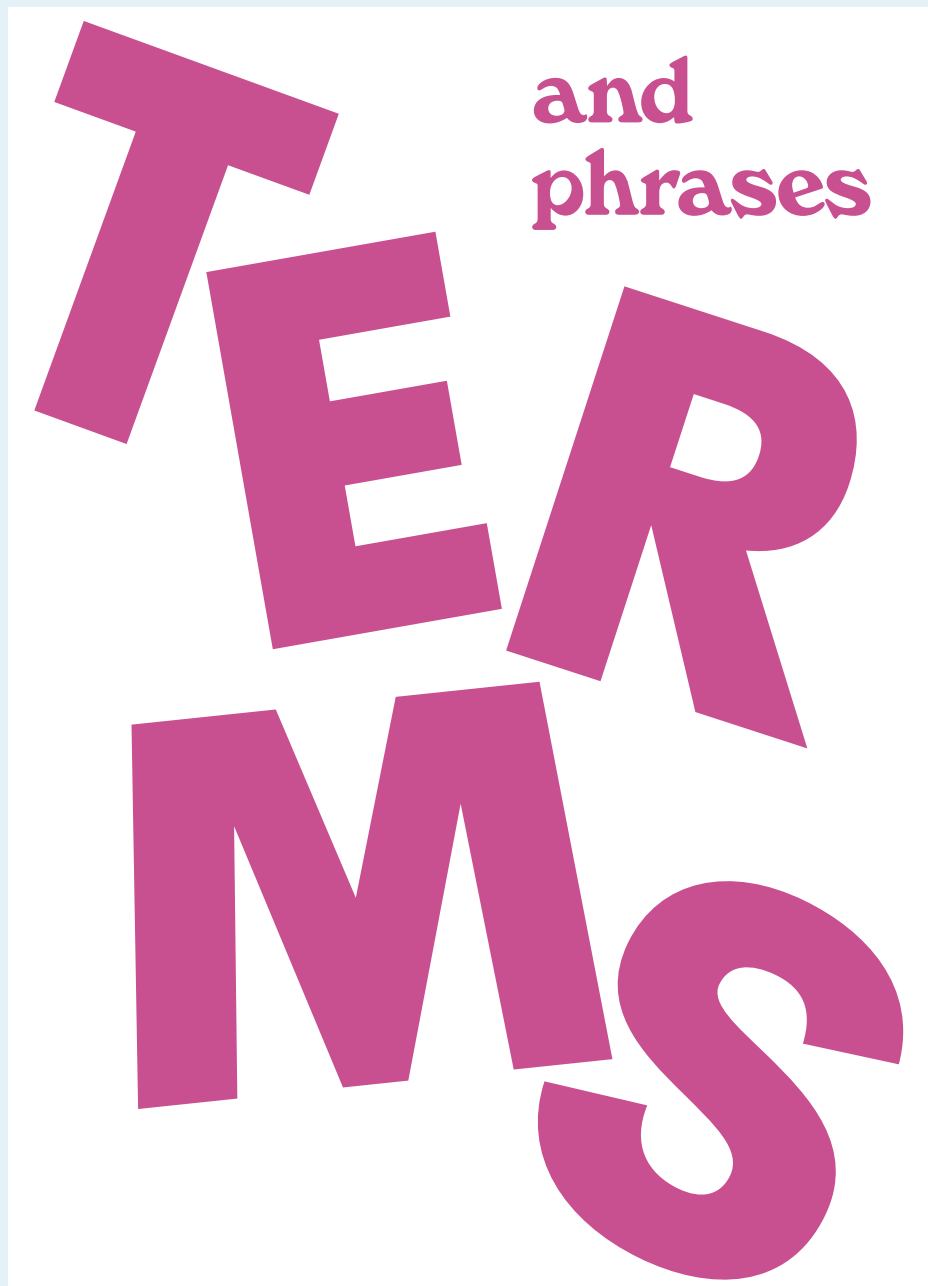
a fund supported by multiple governmental donors e.g. the Global Financing Facility

## **Private donor**

independent organisations set up for charitable purposes either by an individual, a group of activists, a family, or a company.

## **Project grants**

funding for a specific project or activity. Once the project or activity is completed the funding stops.

**RFPs**

Request for proposals

**Seed grant**

an (often small) grant to pilot or kick-start a new project, organisation or collaboration aimed at innovation

**SRHR**

Sexual reproductive health and rights

**Track record**

a document showcasing the body of work your organisation has done. These could have a thematic or geographical focus e.g. your track record of working on LGBTIQ+ issues or of working in West Africa.

**Value propositions**

a clear statement of the added value of interaction with your organisation. A good value proposition clearly answers the question: what does a donor get in return for investing your organisation?

**Un-earmarked funding**

unding that is not designated or set aside for a specific purpose and can be used both for organisational and project costs.

**YLO**

Youth-led organisation

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# Resources

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# RESOURCES

## DEVELOPING PROPOSALS AND STRATEGIES

Fundraising for Change, Global Fund for Women, <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-Fundraising-Handbook.pdf>

Grassroots Fundraising Guide, Friendship Ambassadors Foundation. <https://www.youthassembly.nyc/fundraising-guide/>

How to write amazing fundraising appeals, Network for Good. <http://www.fundraising123.org/files/How%20To%20Write%20Amazing%20Fundraising%20Appeals.pdf>

Learn to raise funds and mobilise support! Free online courses on local fundraising, Change the Game Academy. <https://www.change-thegameacademy.org>

Resource Mobilization Toolkit, Frida the Young Feminist Fund. <https://youngfeministfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FRIDA-RM-Toolkit-2017.pdf>

Writing a funding proposal, Civicus. <https://www.civicus.org/documents/toolkits/Writing%20a%20funding%20proposal.pdf>

## SETTING AND MEASURING YOUR GOALS

Evaluation Handbook, W.K.Kellog Foundation. <http://ww2.wkkf.org/digital/evaluationguide/view.html>

How to work with a theory of change, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality. <https://www.youthdoit.org/assets/Uploads/ToC-Guidelines.pdf>

How to write goals and SMART objectives for your grant proposals, Joanne Fritz. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/writing-goals-for-grant-proposal-2501951>

How to talk about non-profit impact from inputs to outcomes, Joanne Fritz. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact-what-s-the-difference-2502227>

UNESCO Project Planner, UNESCO. <https://en.unesco.org/youth/toptips>

## COMMUNICATING YOUR IMPACT

Building a communications strategy in 8 steps, Dance4Life. <https://dance4life.com/toolkits/building-a-communications-strategy-in-8-steps/>

User Guides Series of PDFs and Videos on Theory of Change, application writing, monitoring, project design and communications, Amplify Change. <https://amplifychange.org/tools-guides/user-guides/>

Social Media Guide, Dance4Life. <https://dance4life.com/toolkits/so-me-guide/>

Strengthening your organisational capacity

Building partnerships map, DIY Toolkit. <https://diytoolkit.org/tools/building-partnerships-map-2/>

Dealing with Turn Over, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality. <https://www.youthdoit.org/themes/meaningful-youth-participation/dealing-with-turnover/>

The feminist organisational development tool, African Feminist Forum. <http://awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Feminist-Organisational-Development-Tool-English.pdf?176cb0>

Youth-led organisations and SRHR: a step by step guide to creating sustainable youth-led organisations working on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality and Youth Coalition. <https://www.youthdoit.org/assets/Uploads/youthguide-final.pdf>

Youth leadership: recommendations for sustainability. CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Advocates for Youth, Aids 2031, GYCA, World Aids Campaign, Youth R.I.S.E and Youth Coalition. [https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage//advfy/documents/youth\\_sustainability.pdf](https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage//advfy/documents/youth_sustainability.pdf)

#### CHECK OUT OTHER RESOURCES!

Do you want to learn more about MYP, youth-led advocacy, or SRHR in general? On our website you can find many more resources on our resourcehub: [www.youthdoit.org](http://www.youthdoit.org).



**Or learn more about our organisation at  
[www.choiceforyouth.org](http://www.choiceforyouth.org).**

**Do you have additional questions?  
Or any feedback on this toolkit?  
Please contact us at CHOICE!**

**AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AT**

*[www.youthdoit.org](http://www.youthdoit.org)*

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