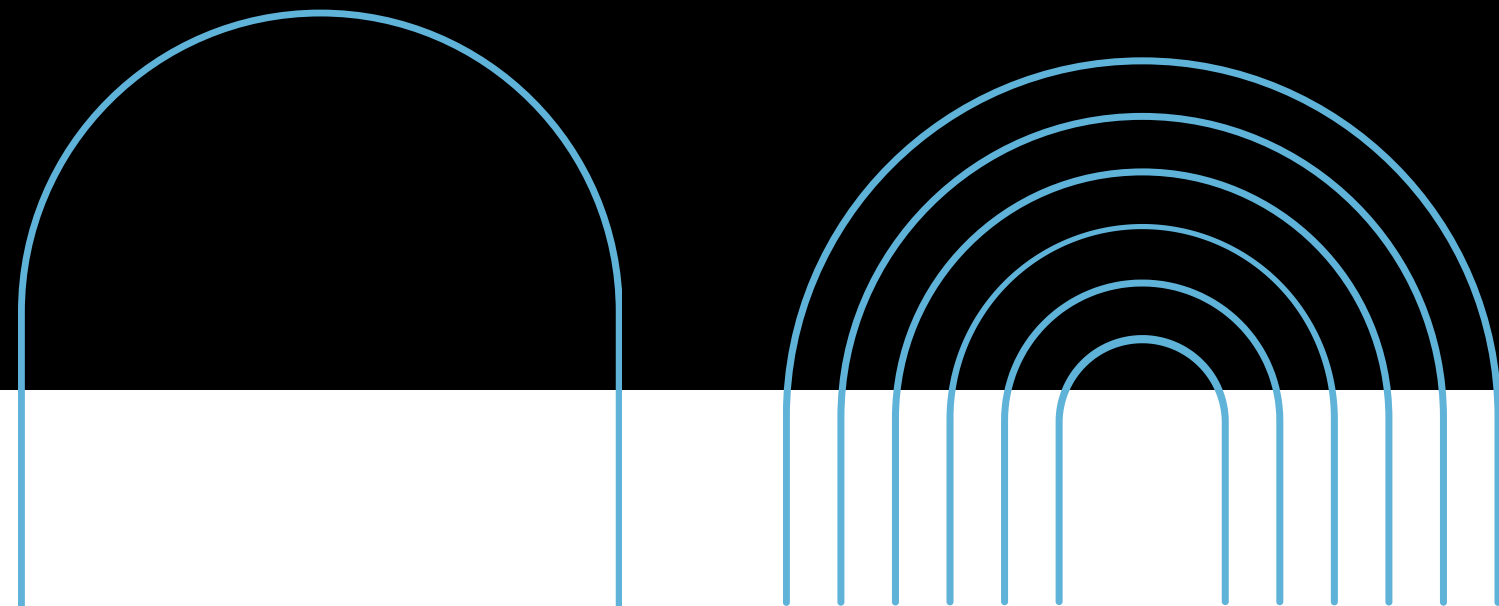


# FROM POWER TO PARTNERSHIP:

*Exploring Participatory Grantmaking in  
Rural Communities*

*By: Limitless Horizons*





Limitless Horizons equips mission-driven leaders with the tools, insights, and strategies they need to drive systems change—through expert training, hands-on coaching, and consulting that delivers results.



Krysta Grangeno, MS

ICF-Certified Life, Leadership & Executive Coach  
Sr. Consultant | Systems Strategist | Leadership Coach



Andrew Shaughnessy, MPH, MA  
Owner | Principal Consultant

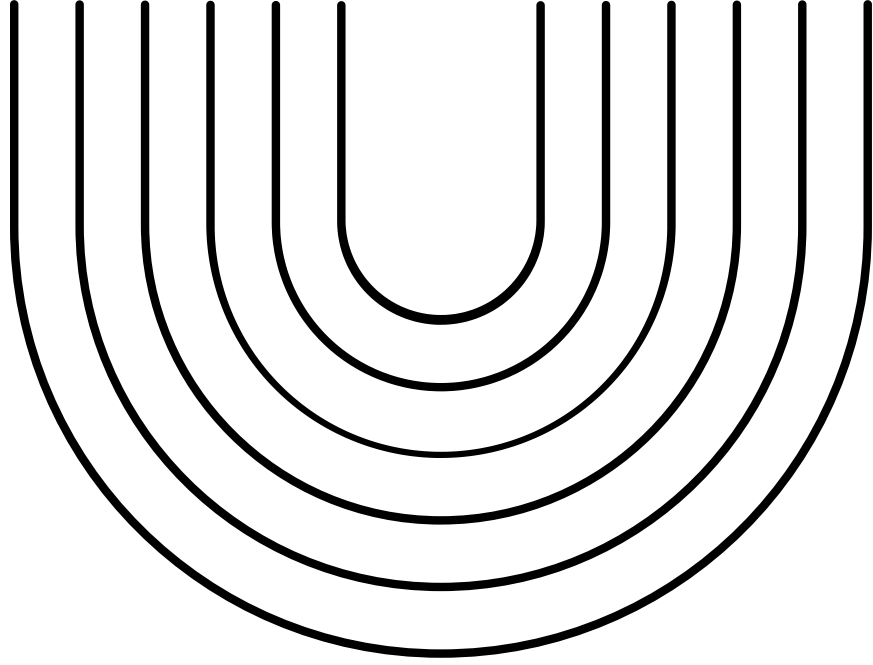


Lakesha Robinson, MSW  
Sr. Consultant | Youth & Family Systems Strategist



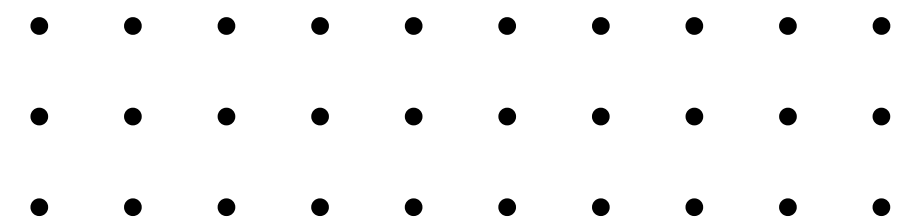
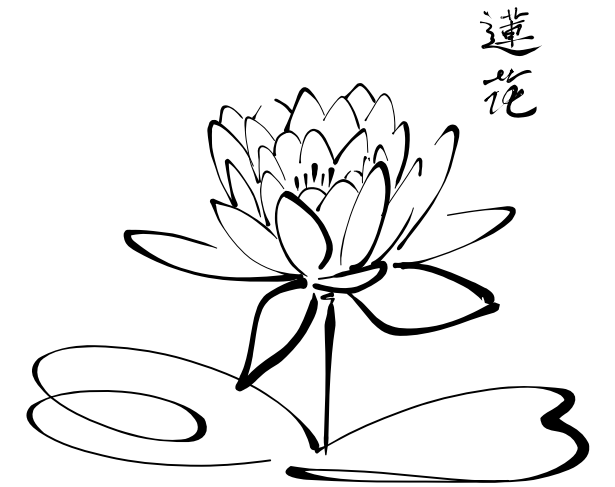
Becky Long, Campaign Coordinator





# SESSION INTENTION

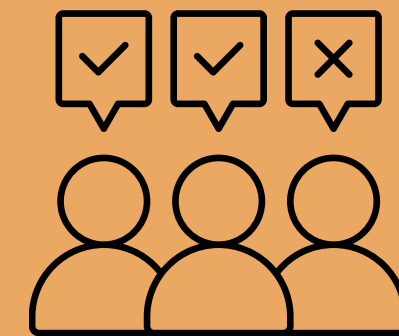
- Create a shared understanding of participatory grantmaking
- Ground the concept in real-world examples
- Learn from one another across rural contexts
- Explore what this could look like in your own community



# STRAW POLL!

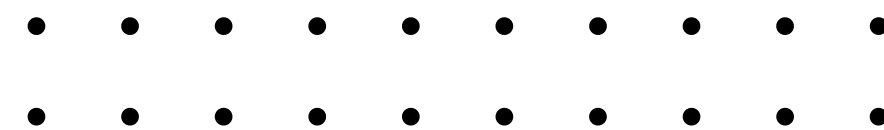
## What is your familiarity with participatory grantmaking?

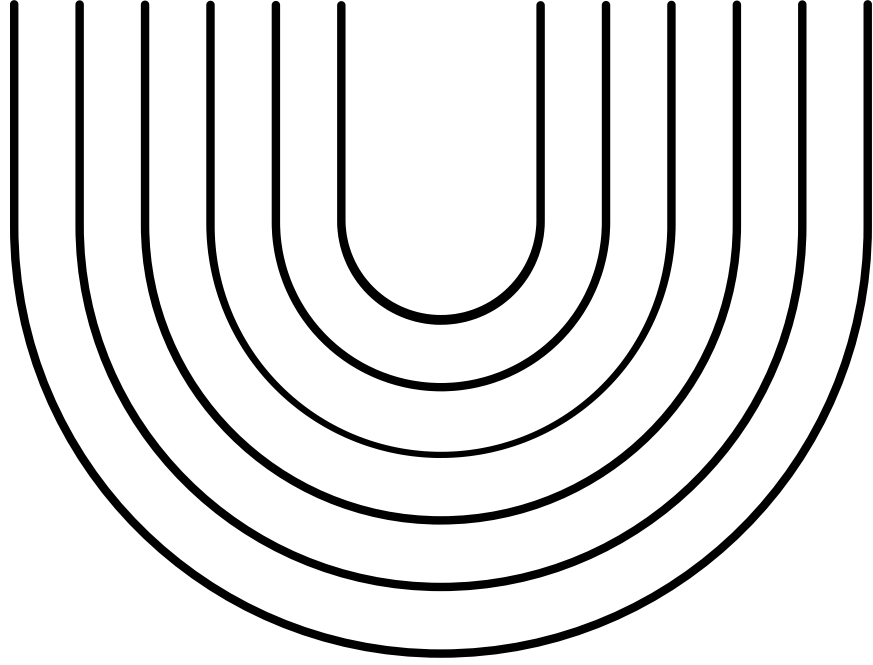
- *I've never heard of it before today*
- *I've heard of it but am not using it*
- *We are exploring it internally*
- *We are actively using participatory approaches*



Follow-up:

**Where does participation already show up in your work?**





# WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING?

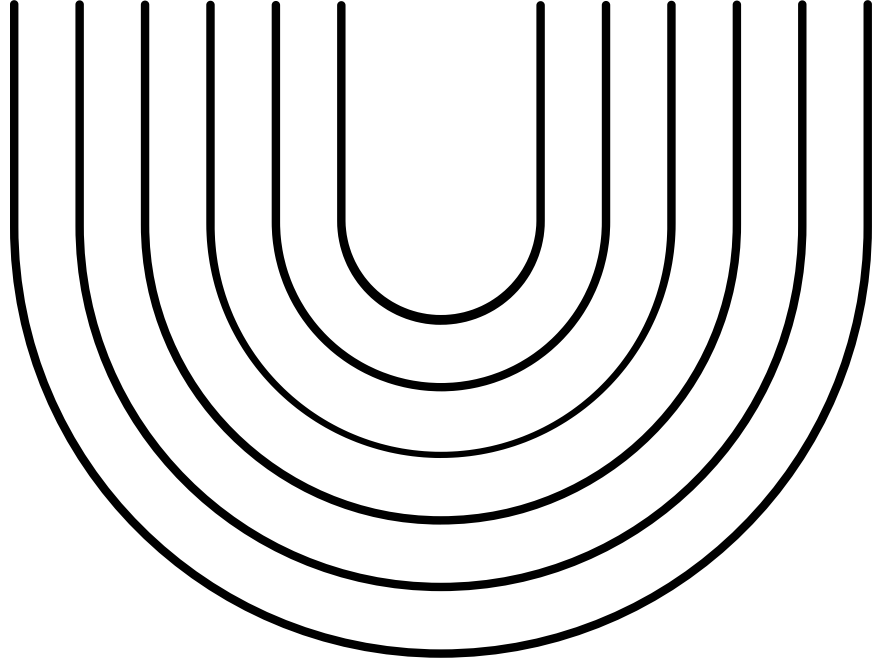
Participatory grantmaking is a philanthropic approach in which **the people most affected by an issue are actively involved in decisions about how funding is allocated**, helping to shape priorities, processes, and outcomes.

It is based on the principle that **those closest to the issues hold valuable expertise** and should have a meaningful role in directing resources intended to benefit their communities.

*“Funders need to let go... Participation is not just about making grant decisions. It’s about re-thinking your role as a funder on a daily basis, and seeking community participation in all layers of our work.”*

— Dennis van Wanrooij, Red Umbrella Fund





# WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING?

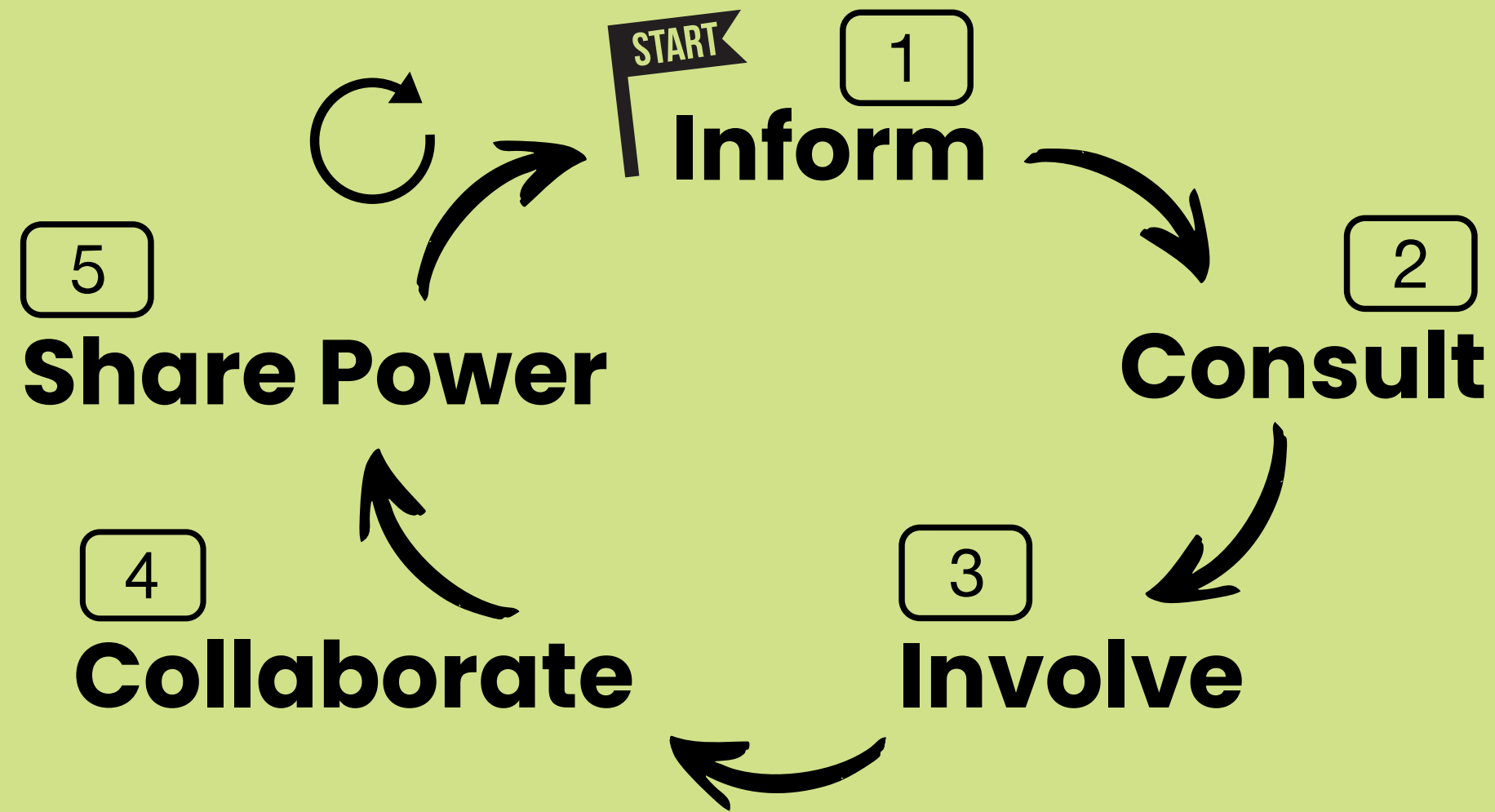
## **What this can look like in rural philanthropy:**

- Local residents helping identify top community priorities (e.g., childcare, transportation, senior services)
- Trusted community members serving on grant review committees alongside staff or board members
- Youth councils helping design and recommend funding for youth-focused grants
- Partnering with local organizations or informal leaders to co-create a small grant fund for a specific issue
- Inviting grantees and community members to help define what success looks like in a rural context

***Participatory grantmaking is not one model, it is a set of practices that shift power in philanthropy***



# A SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION

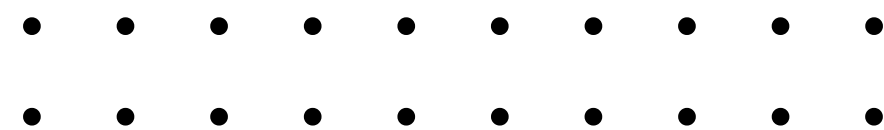


Many organizations already operate in the **Inform** or **Consult** range

Participatory grantmaking pushes toward **Collaboration** and **Shared Power**

**Key insight:**

The goal is not perfection, it is intentional movement along the spectrum





# **SOUTH AFRICA: SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE PARTICIPATORY JUSTICE FUND**

## **What it is:**

A participatory fund supporting grassroots social justice organizations.

## **How it works:**

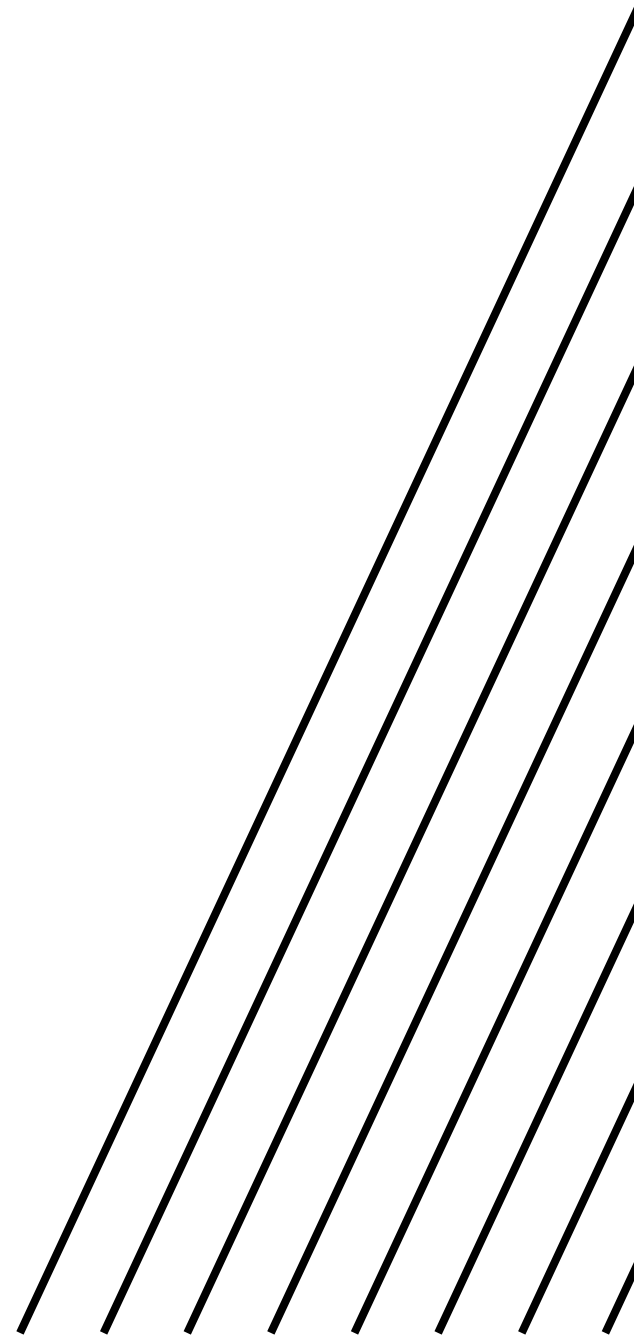
- Activists and community leaders **review and decide on grant allocations**
- Applicants may also participate in the **decision-making process**
- Focus on **transparency and peer-based assessment**

## **Why it matters:**

- Shifts power to those directly engaged in justice work
- Builds solidarity across organizations, not competition
- Strengthens trust in the funding process

## **Key takeaway for funders:**

Participatory models can spark civic engagement and strengthen ecosystems, not just fund individual organizations





# ENGLAND (UK): EDGE FUND

## **What it is:**

A participatory grantmaking fund supporting grassroots movements and marginalized communities.

## **How it works:**

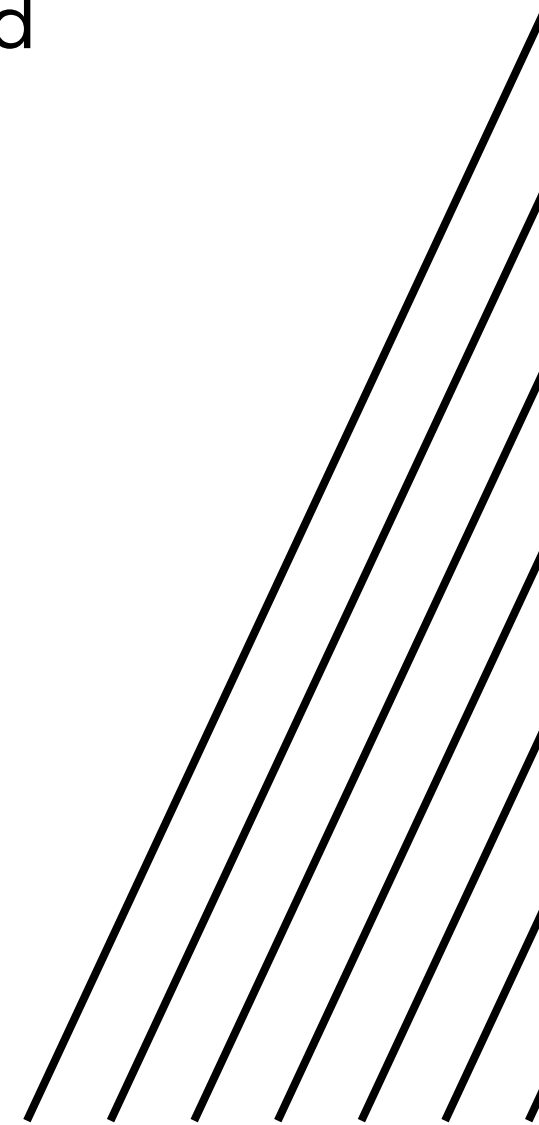
- Applicants and community members collectively review and score proposals
- Decision-making is shared among those affected by the issues
- Grantees can later become decision-makers in future cycles

## **Why it matters:**

- Blurs the line between “funder” and “grantee”
- Builds a community of practice and shared ownership
- Encourages learning and accountability within the group

## **Key takeaway for funders:**

Participation can be iterative. Participants today become leaders tomorrow.





# U.S.A.: NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## What it looks like:

- Local “affiliates” (community teams) help guide funding priorities and investments
- Residents identify what matters most locally and help shape decisions
- Strong emphasis on local ownership and long-term sustainability

## Rural relevance:

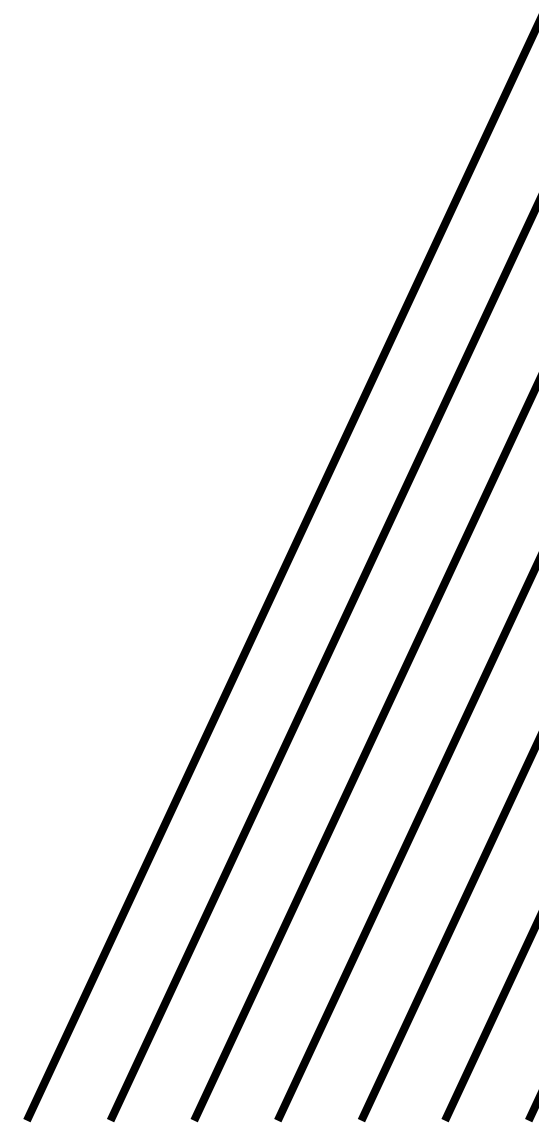
- Designed specifically for small towns and rural places
- Builds leadership in communities with limited formal infrastructure
- Keeps decision-making close to place

## Why it stands out:

- One of the strongest U.S. examples of place-based participatory philanthropy

## Key takeaway:

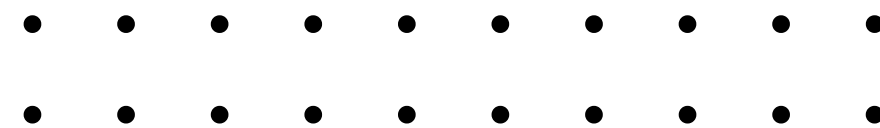
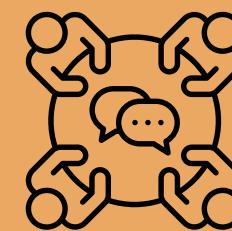
Participation can be embedded in community development, not just grantmaking



# TRANSITION TO DISCUSSION

**Now let's shift from examples to your context.**

There is no single right model,  
the question is what makes sense *to your context*.



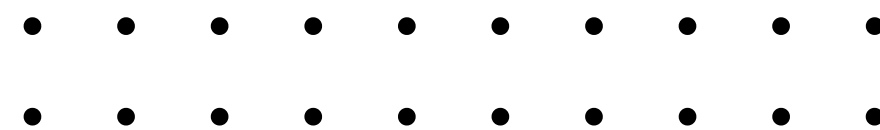
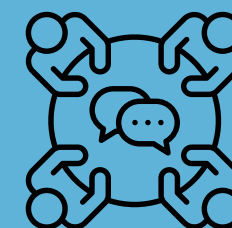
# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

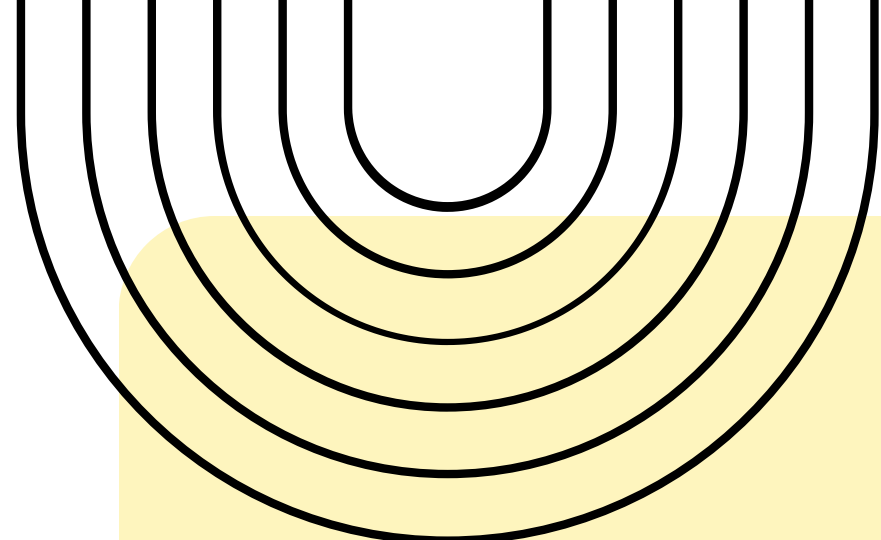
Where does participation already show up in your grantmaking, even informally?

What feels possible in your geographic context right now?

What would need to be true (board, staff, community) to increase participation?

What risks come up, and how might they be mitigated?





# QUESTIONS TO PONDER

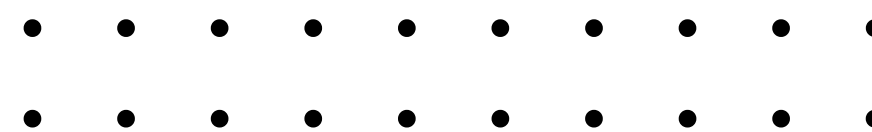
What would it look like to share power in one small way?

Who is closest to the issue, and how are they currently included?

What are we protecting in our current model, and why?

Where could we pilot something new with low risk?

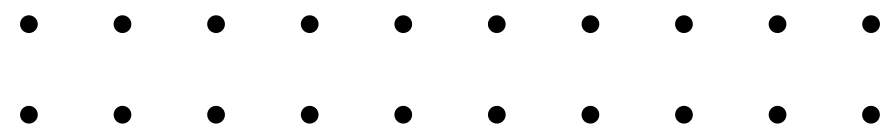
What would success look like if we got this right?

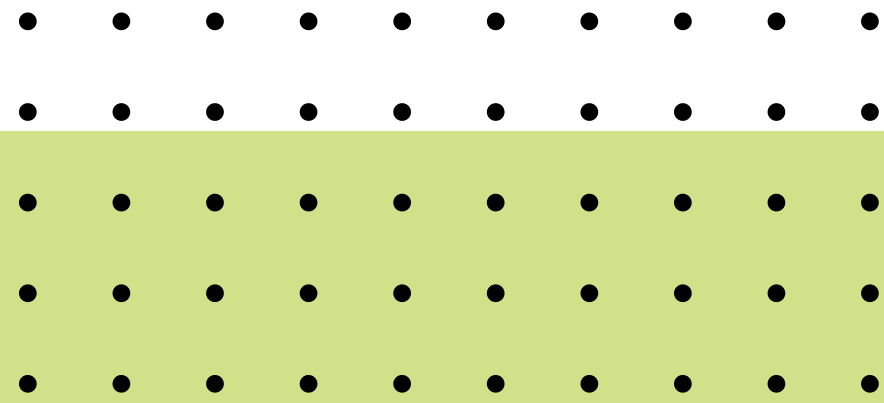


# CLOSING

Participatory grantmaking doesn't start with a new policy, it starts with **curiosity**.

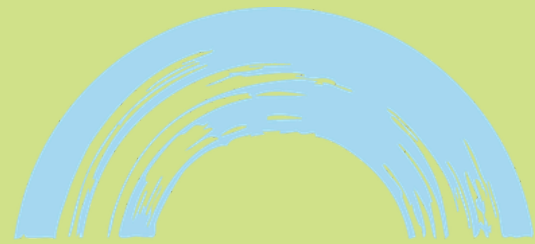
- Start small
- Learn as you go
- Stay rooted in relationships





# THANK YOU

**Do you have any questions?**



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