



Orientation to Intermediary Organizations Relevant to LGBTI Programming

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Intermediaries are organizations that raise and distribute resources. They vary in size, geography, function, thematic expertise and mission. Intermediaries include NGOs, public grantmaking foundations (such as community foundations and women’s funds), and even for-profit companies. Some are rooted in international development, while others are rooted in social movements and/or the philanthropic/grantmaking sector.

Some intermediaries fulfill primarily a program implementation role (“**implementing intermediaries**”) while others fulfill a primarily a re-granting role (“**re-granting intermediaries**”). Implementing intermediaries may disburse financial or other resources as part of the programming, but implementing a broader program in partnership with various actors is the central focus of their role (perhaps involving training, convening, research, capacity building, etc.). Re-granting intermediaries may also implement various grant programming, but providing financial support via grants to other organizations or individuals is the core of their role.

This practice of providing funding to an intermediary in order for it to make many smaller resource disbursements is one of the most common, and commonly critiqued, rationales for working with intermediaries. One critical driver this practice relates to practicalities of grant size. For example, it is extremely difficult for some development agencies to give a grant smaller than a couple hundred thousand dollars, Euros or pounds. A similar size dynamic apply to private/non-governmental donors, wherein a donor may not have the mandate or capacity to direct and monitor five small grants in a country or region as opposed to one larger one. Giving one larger grant to an intermediary partner organization is often the best and only option available to get those resources approved for disbursement.

Governments, multi-lateral agencies and private/non-governmental philanthropy work in partnership with intermediaries to convey resources and provide support to other groups when they need or want to:

- Disburse financial and/or other resources — often, an intermediary receives a large pool of resources with the intent that the pool be distributed in smaller, more targeted allocations (often “subgrants”);
- Place development and management of an initiative in external hands;
- Manage or mitigate risk for potentially controversial grants, including grants the donor cannot make directly because of legal or normative constraints;

- Benefit from the intermediary's LGBTI specific grantmaking and/or capacity building experience;
- Identify where they can most effectively support LGBTI rights by benefitting from the intermediary's knowledge of the field, including insight on broader funding and programmatic trends in the LGBTI field;
- Benefit from the intermediary's understanding of the local or regional political, economic, cultural and/or legal context;
- Benefit from the intermediary's LGBTI grantmaking and partnership practice already in place;
- Benefit from the intermediary's ability to flexibly respond to emerging opportunities and/or challenges in the field;
- Work in communities where the donor lacks meaningful connection; and/or
- Acquire credibility by associating with an expert.

The following are some of the key characteristics of intermediaries that are relevant when exploring which partnership model might be most effective and align with desired impact:

- **Issue and population expertise:** To what degree is the intermediary familiar with LGBTI issues generally, and do they have particular expertise with specific population subsets of L, G, B, T, and/or I communities? How reflective of this expertise is the intermediary's staff or board?
- **Field expertise:** Intermediaries have specific field expertise. This may include, but is not limited to, international development, service delivery, advocacy/organizing, working in emergency or conflict zone settings, etc. Is the field expertise of the intermediary aligned with the needs of the initiative?
- **Functional expertise:** This type of expertise derives from the core function of the intermediary. Examples might include expertise on specific topics like regrants/philanthropy, financial or legal oversight, monitoring and evaluation, managing security concerns, etc. Is the functional expertise of the intermediary aligned with the needs of the initiative?
- **Programmatic expertise:** If there is a programmatic aspect in addition to re-granting, what experience and expertise does the implementing intermediary have in delivering effective programs? Whose priorities drive these programs?
- **Capacity:** If the scale of funding and/or the partnership is large then the intermediary organization will need to have the internal capacity and infrastructure to effectively manage this funding and deliver on the partnership. Is the capacity of the intermediary aligned with needs of the initiative?
- **Flexibility:** Can the intermediary adapt and move as quickly as the movement contexts in which it is working, while still remaining accountable to stakeholders? Does the intermediary and the project/program/grant have both the strategic mandate and technical structure to allow for flexibility and adaptation when necessary? What experience does the intermediary have in designing flexibility into programming/grants and brokering sustainable aspects of those programs/grants with their donors?
- **Closeness to Global North funders:** Some intermediaries are chosen because of their access to, and relationships with, the original funder. For example, in the US, Washington DC-based intermediary agencies have regular meetings with and access to

US government-driven funding sources in a way that those outside of Washington often do not. Other intermediaries may have strong networks among development agency field offices and embassies, which like donor capitals, can be critical access points for resources. Do the intermediaries with greater access to resource centers also have access to the diversity of work in the field that may face significant geographic, linguistic, and other barriers?

- **Closeness to impacted communities:** How close, both geographically and in terms of relationship, is the intermediary to the impacted community? Is the relationship indigenous or locally-rooted, or is it more international in nature? Is the intermediary a new or established presence in a community? If the intermediary is relatively removed from a local context, how are they informed by local community agendas?
- **Accountability:** To whom is the organization accountable -- to community members, to a board/trustees, to taxpayers in a country, to financial investors/owners, and/or to grantees on the ground? How clear and effective are the organization's accountability mechanisms? Where do accountability mechanisms exist – can a partner in one country hold a partner or intermediary in another country accountable? Are the accountability mechanisms one-way or multidirectional?
- **Representation:** This is related to the characteristic of both “closeness to impacted communities” and “accountability” but can also be evaluated separately. How is the decision-making that governs the project or programming structured, and what role do various actors have in it (community members, funders, experts, etc.)?
- **Values and methodology:** What values underpin the intermediary's approach to re-granting and implementation? How will their approach enable the positive impact of the groups on the ground? How does the intermediary think about power and transparency in its relationships with groups on the ground?
- **Added Value and Alignment:** Does this project, programming (including regranting), etc. “fit” into the broader work of the organization? Does it align with both the mission of the organization and the identified needs and operative strategies of the community it seeks to serve? Does the programming complement other indigenous advocacy work, provide opportunities for peer learning, knowledge sharing? If the project/program/grant pulls the organization away from its core strategy or mission, does it fully resource and enable this stretch?
- **Track Record of Sustainability:** How will the relationships, knowledge, expertise, political/institutional/cultural achievements, and other outputs and outcomes of the initiative be sustained after the foreseeable funding cycle is over? What experience does the intermediary have in designing sustainable programs/grants and brokering sustainable aspects of the programming/grants with their donors?

About this Document

This document has been drafted by the [Global Philanthropy Project](#) as a work in progress to help facilitate field discussions around the role of intermediary organizations. GPP will revise this document based on feedback periodically.