

# The Bioregional Flow Funding Playbook

A Guide for Bioregional Communities Creating Their Own Flow Funds

*Published by Kinship Earth | Q1 2026*

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## A Note Before You Begin

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This playbook is shared with intention. It is a living document, offered to communities ready to transform how resources move in their bioregions.

If you are reading this, it is because you expressed interest, filled out our intake form, and had a conversation with Kinship Earth's Executive Director, Sydney Griffith, or another member of our leadership team.

Flow funding is built on trust and relationship - and so is how we share this work. This model is powerful, and we want to ensure it is taken up by those who are aligned with its spirit: trust, community sovereignty, ecological care, and accountability to life.

Our team is available to you beyond this document. Kinship Earth is here to walk alongside you as you build.

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## 1. About Kinship Earth

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### Who We Are

Kinship Earth is a private foundation (501c3) stewarding **Flow Funding** - a participatory, trust-based grantmaking model that moves unrestricted resources directly to grassroots leaders and bioregional organizing groups. No grant applications. Minimal reporting. Grounded in trust and in the wisdom of those closest to their communities' needs.

**Website:** [kinshipearth.org](http://kinshipearth.org) | [flowfunding.org](http://flowfunding.org)

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## Our Origin Story

Kinship Earth was founded in 2021 by **Stephen Gomes, Susan Davis Moora, and Walter Moora** with a vision to catalyze planetary regeneration by transforming how philanthropy functions. The roots run deeper: in the early 1990s, **Marion Rockefeller Weber** gave Susan Davis Moora one of the first-ever flow funding grants - a seed that would grow for decades before finding its fullest expression through Kinship Earth.

In 2024, **Sydney Griffith** was brought on as Executive Director to lead the organization's pivot to embracing Flow Funding as its focus. Syd brought years of direct experience supporting 50+ land-based projects, deep relationships across her Northeast bioregion (in Turtle Island), and a clear vision for how trust-based capital could be scaled without being co-opted.

Since that pivot, Kinship Earth has raised over **\$800,000** and deployed **\$370,000** in unrestricted flow funding grants to **23 Flow Funders** across **12+ bioregions** globally - including in Cascadia, the Northeast of Turtle Island, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, Guatemala, East Africa, and beyond.

## Our Track Record

Milestone	Date
Kinship Earth founded	May 2021
Flow Fund officially launched	June 2024
Flow Funding Cohort 1 launched; first Community of Practice begins	October 2024
Flow Funding Cohort 2 launched	February 2025
Flow Funding Cohort 3 launched	Q1 2026

### EXAMPLES OF IMPACT | Real-world outcomes funded through Kinship Earth's Flow Funding:

- **Food Sovereignty on Reservations:** A Flow Funder purchased a freeze dryer for a reservation so produce and herbs could be preserved through winter - strengthening nutrition, reducing reliance on processed foods, and building long-term community resilience.

- **Protecting Sacred Waters in Minnesota:** A Flow Funder helped prevent toxic mining waste from being dumped in a waterway - protecting sacred waters, uplifting treaty rights, preserving ecosystems, and affirming Indigenous sovereignty.
- **Family Food Security:** A Flow Funder expanded a program teaching families to grow food and raise chickens - creating lasting food security, self-sufficiency, and empowerment.
- **Tumianuma Women's Gardens (Ecuador):** Cultivating permaculture food forests and gardens, as well as cultural exchange, run by local women.
- **The Slim Butte Agricultural Program (Pine Ridge, South Dakota):** Gaining critical winter heating and a truck for food delivery.
- **The East African Coastal Forest Women's Flow Fund:** Supporting 10 women restoring ecosystems across five countries.
- **Regenerate Cascadia:** Piloting 8 landscape hubs across the Cascadia Bioregion that coordinate regeneration and finance at a bioregional scale.

## Why We Are Focused on Bioregionalism

We believe that the convergence of ecological, social, economic, and governance crises cannot be addressed through top-down, centralized solutions. The communities closest to the land, the water, the soil, and to each other are the ones best positioned to heal and steward their places. Bioregional organizing reflects how life actually works - in watersheds, ecosystems, and cultural landscapes - not in the arbitrary lines drawn by political maps.

Kinship Earth is focused on funding bioregional organizing groups because these are the connective tissue of their places. They are the groups of leaders working at the intersection of food sovereignty, housing, ecological restoration, Indigenous rights, disaster preparedness, economic justice, and community health - all at once, all in relationship, all rooted in place.

When you fund bioregional organizing groups, you are not funding a single issue. You are funding the capacity of a community to respond to whatever emerges. That is the most strategic investment we can make.

## 2. What Is Bioregionalism?

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**Bioregionalism** is a philosophy and practice of organizing communities around the natural boundaries of the living systems they inhabit - watersheds, mountain ranges, forests, coastlines, soil types, and cultural landscapes - rather than around political borders, state lines, or national boundaries.

A **bioregion** is a living territory defined by ecological relationships: the path water takes as it moves through a landscape, the species that share an ecosystem, the cultural histories of the people who have lived there, and the patterns of weather, soil, and season that make a place what it is.

Bioregionalism invites us to ask: *What does this place need? Who is already tending it? How can we organize ourselves in ways that honor the wholeness of where we live?*

### Core Principles of Bioregionalism

- **Place-based identity:** Belonging to a bioregion means being in relationship with a living landscape - not just occupying geography
- **Ecological boundaries over political ones:** Organizing around watersheds, ecosystems, and natural patterns creates coherence that political borders cannot
- **Indigenous wisdom and sovereignty:** Indigenous peoples have practiced bioregional stewardship for millennia; bioregionalism centers their knowledge and rights
- **Interconnection of challenges:** Food, water, housing, economy, culture, ecology, justice - in a given bioregion - are not separate issues but one living system
- **Decentralized governance:** Each bioregion self-governs according to its own needs, culture, and ecology - no one-size-fits-all model
- **Regeneration over extraction:** A bioregional worldview sees humans as participants in the health of living systems, not as managers of resources

Bioregionalism is not a replacement for governments but a living complement to them - a distributed, place-based layer of care rooted in land, culture, trust, and relationship.

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## 3. Why Bioregional Organizing Groups Matter

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A **bioregional organizing group** is a group of leaders working together across sectors and disciplines within their bioregion - addressing food sovereignty, ecological restoration, housing, economic justice, disaster preparedness, cultural preservation, health, Indigenous rights, and more. They are not single-issue organizations. They are the relational fabric that holds a community together.

### Why They Are the Ideal Unit to Fund

- **They see a bigger picture.** Because they work across issues, bioregional organizing groups can understand how the challenges in their community are interconnected - and they respond accordingly.
- **They are trusted.** These are leaders who live in their communities, have long-standing relationships, and are accountable to their neighbors, not to distant institutions.
- **They are responsive.** When a crisis hits - a wildfire, a flood, a factory closure, an eviction wave - bioregional organizing groups are on the ground, already connected, already moving. They do not need to wait for a grant cycle.
- **They are efficient.** Grassroots groups operating on less than \$50,000 per year consistently deliver more effective, responsive, and cost-efficient results than large intermediary organizations. Yet they remain the most underfunded.
- **They build lasting capacity.** Funding bioregional organizing groups does not just solve today's problem - it strengthens the community's ability to respond to whatever comes next.

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## 4. What Is Flow Funding?

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The term "**Flow Funding**" was originally created by **Marion Rockefeller Weber**, a pioneer in trust-based philanthropy and a visionary who understood that money, like water, needs to flow to where it is needed - not be dammed up in endowments and bureaucratic structures.

We are deeply grateful to have Marion Rockefeller Weber as a Kinship Earth Advisor. Her wisdom, pioneering spirit, and decades of commitment to transforming philanthropy are foundational to everything this playbook represents. She showed us what was possible before most of the philanthropic world was ready to listen.

## Flow Funding in Simple Terms

Imagine a river. Traditional philanthropy builds dams - holding resources back, releasing them in controlled trickles, attaching conditions to every drop. Flow funding removes the dams. It trusts the river to find its path. It trusts the communities downstream to know what they need.

In practice, this means:

- **No grant applications.** Community leaders are identified and invited through trusted relationships.
- **Unrestricted capital.** Flow Funders decide how, when, and where to move resources based on what their communities actually need.
- **Minimal reporting.** Lightweight, story-based accountability replaces cumbersome compliance paperwork.
- **Self-perpetuating networks.** Each cohort of Flow Funders recommends the next, creating a growing web of trust-based capital flow.

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## 5. The Systemic Problems with Traditional Philanthropy

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Before we go further into how to build your own Flow Fund, it is important to name clearly what is broken about the current system - because Flow Funding is not an alternative to philanthropy. It is philanthropy redesigned for the moment we are in.

### The Issues

**1. Capital is locked up, not flowing.** Foundations are legally required to distribute only approximately 5% of assets annually - and many distribute only around 7%. That means 93% or more of philanthropic capital sits in endowments, invested in the very systems (fossil fuels, extractive industries, real estate speculation) that cause the problems philanthropy claims to solve.

**2. Grant applications burden the people doing the work.** Grassroots leaders - the people closest to their communities' needs - spend countless hours finding grants, writing proposals, conforming to foundation priorities, and filling out reports. This pulls them away from the work that matters. The application process itself is a gatekeeping mechanism that favors well-resourced organizations with professional grant writers over small, effective community groups.

**3. Foundations control decisions that communities should make.** Most traditional grants come with restrictions: you must spend the money on this program, in this timeframe, toward these outcomes. This enforces conformity to what foundations think communities need – not what communities actually need. It removes agency from the people closest to the ground.

**4. The most effective actors are the most underfunded.** Grassroots organizations operating on less than \$50,000 per year consistently deliver more effective, responsive, and cost-efficient solutions than large NGOs and intermediary organizations. Yet they remain the most underfunded segment of the nonprofit ecosystem. The system is structurally designed to funnel money toward overhead, brand recognition, and institutional size - not toward impact.

**5. Indigenous communities are systematically excluded.** Indigenous peoples protect approximately 80% of the world's biodiversity but receive less than 1% of climate finance. This is not an oversight; it is a structural feature of a system that routes resources through intermediaries and institutions rather than to the communities doing the actual work of planetary stewardship.

**6. Philanthropy is organized by issue silos, not by living systems.** Traditional philanthropy funds "education" or "environment" or "health" as separate categories. But in a bioregion, these are not separate issues. Food sovereignty is health is economy is ecology is culture. Siloed funding fragments the very interconnections that communities need to strengthen.

**7. Political boundaries replace ecological ones.** Grants are typically organized by country, state, or county - not by watershed, ecosystem, or cultural landscape. This creates artificial divisions that undermine the ability of communities to organize around the living systems they actually share.

**8. Power dynamics are embedded in the structure.** The traditional philanthropic model positions the donor as the decision-maker and the community as the recipient. This power dynamic, no matter how well-intentioned, reproduces the very inequities that philanthropy aims to address.

## 6. How Flow Funding Addresses These Problems

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Systemic Problem	How Flow Funding Responds
Capital locked in endowments	Flow Funding moves unrestricted capital directly and immediately to communities
Application burden on grassroots leaders	Invitation-driven; no applications, no proposals, no grant writing
Foundation-controlled decisions	Community leaders control how, when, and where capital moves
Most effective actors underfunded	Specifically designed to reach grassroots leaders and small organizing groups
Indigenous communities excluded	Bioregional organizing centers Indigenous sovereignty and wisdom
Issue silos	Organized by bioregion, not by issue area; funding is intersectional
Political boundaries	Organized around natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes
Embedded power dynamics	Trust-based, relational; governed by accountability to community and life, not donor preference

Flow Funding is not a workaround. It is a redesign. It replaces the architecture of traditional philanthropy with one built on trust, relationship, and the recognition that those closest to the work know best how resources should move.

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## 7. How Flow Funding Works at Kinship Earth: The Four-Step Cycle

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Flow Funding operates as a repeatable, durable cycle - not a one-off intervention:

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## Step 1: Identify Trusted Community Leaders

Kinship Earth, guided by its Flow Fund Advisors, leadership team, and existing Flow Funders with deep bioregional ties, identifies trusted community leaders, nonprofits, and bioregional organizing groups. If they accept the invitation, they become **Flow Funders** and receive unrestricted funds to deploy in service of their communities.

**Key principles:** - Identification is relationship-based, not application-based - Flow Fund Advisors are themselves trusted community leaders with direct knowledge of their bioregions - Existing Flow Funders can recommend new candidates, creating a decentralized identification process

## Step 2: Deploy Resources

Flow Funders decide how, when, and where to move resources based on emergent community needs – without submitting applications or asking permission. The capital is unrestricted. The trust is real.

**Key principles:** - No restrictions on how funds are used - Community leaders know their communities' needs better than any foundation - Funding can respond in real-time to emergent needs - not on a grant cycle timeline

## Step 3: Lightweight Reporting and Impact Stories

Flow Funders share basic reports and are invited to share stories of impact. This model replaces cumbersome compliance with relational accountability. The purpose of reporting is mutual learning and storytelling.

**Key principles:** - Simple reporting forms, not lengthy compliance documents - Story-based accountability creates a narrative of impact that serves the whole movement - Reporting is an invitation, not a burden

## Step 4: Recommend the Next Cohort

Flow Funders recommend the next cohort of trusted community leaders, creating a self-perpetuating network governed by trust and accountability to life. Each cycle expands the web of relationships and resources.

**Key principles:** - The network grows through trust, not through institutional expansion - Each Flow Funder becomes a node of connection and stewardship - The system is designed to scale without centralizing

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## 8. Creating Your Own Bioregional Flow Fund

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This is the heart of the playbook. Kinship Earth's long-term vision is not only to continue practice Flow Funding and bioegional-focused Flow Funding, it is to help bioregional communities create their own unique, place-based Flow Funds that attract local wealth and beyond (unrestricted capital) and flow it in service of their communities.

Your bioregional Flow Fund will reflect your place, your people, your relationships, your needs. This playbook provides the framework, and you provide the life.

### Phase 1: Foundation-Building

#### 1.1 Convene Your Core Group

Gather the people in your bioregion who are already doing the work - the connectors, the organizers, the land stewards, the community leaders, the elders, the youth. This is not about creating a new organization from scratch; it is about recognizing the relationships and leadership that already exist and giving them a shared structure for moving resources.

Questions to ask: - Who are the most trusted leaders in our bioregion? - Who is already moving resources informally - through mutual aid, shared labor, in-kind support? - Who bridges different communities, sectors, and generations? - Who holds deep relationships with this land and its people?

#### 1.2 Define Your Bioregion

Name the living territory your Flow Fund will serve. This is not about drawing a line on a map – it is about recognizing the ecological and cultural relationships that define your place.

Consider: - What watershed(s) do you share? - What ecosystems connect your communities? - What cultural histories and practices define this place? - What challenges do you share that cross political boundaries? - What name does this place already have - or what name wants to emerge?

#### 1.3 Map What Is Happening and Where

Before you can flow resources effectively, you need to understand the landscape of work already underway in your bioregion:

- What organizations, projects, and leaders are active?
- What are the most pressing needs and the brightest opportunities?
- Where are resources already flowing, and where are the gaps?

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- What relationships exist between the people and groups in your bioregion?
  - Where are there fractures, conflicts, or unhealed relationships that need attention?

This mapping process is itself a form of community building. Done well, it strengthens relationships, surfaces hidden knowledge, and creates shared understanding.

#### **1.4 Heal Fractures and Build Trust**

This step is often overlooked but is essential. Most bioregions carry unresolved conflicts – between organizations competing for the same scarce resources, between communities with different priorities, between newcomers and long-time residents, between Indigenous peoples and settler communities.

A Flow Fund cannot function in a landscape of distrust. Before you can flow resources, you may need to invest in healing – facilitated conversations, community meals, shared work days, conflict mediation, truth-telling circles, or simply showing up consistently over time.

This is not a prerequisite that must be “completed” before you begin. It is an ongoing practice woven into the life of your Flow Fund.

### **Phase 2: Structural Design**

#### **2.1 Choose Your Entity Structure**

Your bioregional Flow Fund needs a legal home. Options include:

- **Independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit** - Full autonomy and ability to receive tax-deductible donations directly. Requires board formation, articles of incorporation, IRS application, and ongoing compliance.
- **Fiscal sponsorship** - Partner with an existing 501(c)(3) that holds funds on your behalf while you maintain program control. Lower administrative burden and faster launch. Kinship Earth may be able to serve as fiscal sponsor or connect you with one.
- **Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) partnership** - Work with a community foundation or DAF sponsor to create a fund that can receive and deploy resources with donor advisory support.
- **Hybrid model** - Start with fiscal sponsorship and transition to independent status as your fund grows.

Kinship Earth can provide guidance and connect you with legal support to determine the right structure for your community. See [Section 9: Legal Considerations](#) for more detail.

#### **2.2 Design Your Flow Funding Process**

Adapt the four-step cycle to your bioregion:

- **How will you identify Flow Funders?** Who in your core group has the relationships and trust to identify the right community leaders? How will you ensure diverse representation across your bioregion?
- **How will you deploy funds?** What is your process for getting unrestricted capital into the hands of Flow Funders? How quickly can you move? What is your minimum and maximum grant size?
- **How will you practice accountability?** What reporting process honors both transparency and trust? How will you share impact stories? How will your Community of Practice function?
- **How will Flow Funders recommend the next cohort?** What is the process for nominations? How will you evaluate and onboard new Flow Funders?

### 2.3 Establish a Community of Practice

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a space where your Flow Funders, leadership team, and (optionally) donors come together for shared learning, mutual support, and collective growth. Kinship Earth launched its first CoP in October 2024 and has found it to be an essential element of the model.

Your CoP might include:

- Regular gatherings (virtual or in-person) for Flow Funders to share what they are learning
- Peer support for navigating challenges
- Storytelling sessions where Flow Funders share impact narratives
- Feedback loops where the community shapes the fund's evolution
- Opportunities for donors to hear directly from community leaders (if appropriate and invited)

## Phase 3: Fundraising and Capital Attraction

### 3.1 Attract Local Wealth

Your bioregion contains wealth - financial and otherwise. The first capital for your Flow Fund should ideally come from within your bioregion, because:

- Local donors understand local needs
- Local investment builds local ownership and pride
- Relationships with local donors can be deeper and more durable
- It demonstrates community confidence to outside funders

Sources of local capital:

- Individual donors within your bioregion
- Local businesses aligned with your values
- Community foundations
- Local family foundations
- Faith communities
- Land-based wealth (farmers, landowners, timber families)
- Alumni networks of local institutions

### **3.2 Attract Capital from Beyond**

Once your Flow Fund has local roots and a track record, you can attract unrestricted capital from beyond your bioregion:

- National and international foundations aligned with trust-based philanthropy
- Family offices seeking direct community impact
- Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) looking for participatory models
- High-net-worth individuals drawn to bioregional work
- Kinship Earth (which may be able to financially seed your Flow Fund)
- Aligned philanthropic networks and giving circles

### **3.3 Make the Case**

Your case for support should communicate:

- The unique needs and opportunities of your bioregion
- The leaders and communities your Flow Fund serves
- Your track record (even if early, tells the story of what your community has already accomplished)
- How Flow Funding is different from traditional philanthropy and why it works
- What donors' capital will make possible – in concrete, human terms
- The accountability and learning structures you have in place

See [Section 12: Storytelling as Fundraising](#) for more.

## **Phase 4: Launch and Iterate**

### **4.1 Start Small**

You do not need to raise a million dollars to begin. Start with whatever capital you can gather and deploy it to your first cohort of Flow Funders. Even small amounts of unrestricted capital deployed through trust can be transformative – and the experience of your first cycle will teach you more than any playbook.

### **4.2 Document and Share**

From the beginning, document your process, your learnings, and your stories. This serves three purposes:

1. **Internal learning** - It helps your community understand what is working and what needs to change

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- 2. Fundraising** - Impact stories are your most powerful tool for attracting future capital
- 3. Movement building** - Your experience contributes to the broader bioregional Flow Funding movement and helps other communities learn from your journey

#### 4.3 Iterate

After your first cycle, gather your core group, your Flow Funders, and your community to reflect:

- What worked? What did not?
- Where did trust strengthen? Where did it strain?
- What did we learn about our bioregion that we did not know before?
- How should we adapt our process for the next cycle?
- Who should be at the table who is not yet?

Flow Funding is a living system. It is designed to evolve.

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## 9. Legal Considerations and Entity Structure

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Establishing a bioregional Flow Fund involves legal and financial structures that must be set up correctly. Here is what you need to know.

### Entity Options

Structure	Pros	Cons	Best For
<b>Independent</b>	Full autonomy; can receive tax-deductible donations; own governance	Requires IRS application (can take 3-12 months); ongoing compliance; board requirements	Established groups ready for long-term institutional presence
<b>501(c)(3)</b>			

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Structure	Pros	Cons	Best For
<b>Fiscal Sponsorship</b>	Fast setup; lower admin burden; shared compliance	Less autonomy; sponsor takes a fee (typically 5-10%); dependent on sponsor relationship	New groups wanting to launch quickly and focus on the work
<b>DAF Partnership</b>	Can start immediately; donor benefits; flexible	Donor retains advisory control; limited to grants to qualified nonprofits	Groups with aligned donor relationships
<b>Hybrid</b>	Start fast, grow into independence	Requires transition planning	Groups that want to begin now and formalize later

## Key Legal Requirements

- **Compliance with IRS regulations** for tax-exempt organizations (if forming a 501(c)(3))
- **State registration** for charitable solicitation (varies by state)
- **Grant agreements** between your Flow Fund and Flow Funders (can be simple; templates provided)
- **Financial record-keeping** and annual reporting (Form 990 for 501(c)(3) organizations)
- **Conflict of interest policies** to maintain integrity
- **Insurance** (general liability; directors and officers)

## Kinship Earth Legal Support

Kinship Earth can help your community navigate these decisions by:

- Connecting you with attorneys experienced in nonprofit formation and trust-based philanthropy
- Sharing template documents (agreements, policies, bylaws)
- Potentially serving as fiscal sponsor during your startup phase
- Advising on compliance requirements and best practices

## 10. Governance and Decision-Making

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How your Flow Fund makes decisions is as important as how it moves money. Flow Funding is built on trust - and trust requires clear, fair, transparent governance.

### Recommended Governance Layers

1. **Stewardship Circle / Board** - Provides oversight, ensures legal compliance, holds fiduciary responsibility, and stewards the long-term vision of the Flow Fund
2. **Flow Fund Advisors** - Trusted community leaders who identify and recommend Flow Funder candidates; they hold deep bioregional relationships and on-the-ground knowledge
3. **Flow Funders** - Community leaders and organizing groups who receive and deploy unrestricted funds; they participate in the Community of Practice and recommend the next cohort
4. **Community of Practice** - Shared learning space for Flow Funders, leadership, and (optionally) donors

### Decision-Making Principles

- **Decisions should be made by those closest to the impact.** Flow Funders decide how to deploy funds. Flow Fund Advisors decide who to recommend. The Stewardship Circle provides oversight without micromanaging.
- **Consent over consensus.** Perfect agreement is not required; what matters is that no one has a reasoned, fundamental objection.
- **Transparency is non-negotiable.** Decisions, financials, and processes should be visible to the community.
- **Rotate leadership.** Avoid concentrating power in a small group over time. Build governance structures that invite new voices and perspectives.
- **Tend to power dynamics.** Be intentional about whose voices are centered, who is in the room, and who is making decisions. This is especially important in bioregions with histories of displacement, colonization, or economic inequality.

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## Accountability Without Bureaucracy

Flow Funding is not “no accountability.” It is a different kind of accountability – one rooted in relationship, story, and community rather than in compliance paperwork and outcome metrics. Your governance structure should reflect this balance: enough structure to maintain trust and transparency, without so much that it recreates the bureaucratic burdens Flow Funding is designed to eliminate.

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## 11. Attracting Capital: Local Wealth and Beyond

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Your bioregional Flow Fund exists to attract unrestricted capital – from within your bioregion and beyond – and to flow it in service of your communities. Here is how to think about fundraising.

### Principles of Flow Fund Fundraising

- 1. Lead with relationship, not with asks.** Before you ask for money, invest in relationships. People give to people they trust, to communities they feel connected to, to visions they have helped shape. Invite potential donors into your bioregion – physically and emotionally – before you invite them to give.
- 2. Unrestricted capital is the goal.** The power of Flow Funding is that capital moves without restrictions. When fundraising, be clear about this: donors are giving into a trust-based system, not funding a specific program. This requires a different kind of donor – one willing to cede control. Find those donors and cultivate them deeply.
- 3. Tell your story.** Your bioregion has a story. Your community has a story. Your Flow Funders have stories. These stories are your most powerful fundraising tool. See [Section 12](#) for a full treatment.
- 4. Demonstrate trust in action.** The most compelling case for Flow Funding is seeing it work. As you deploy your first grants, document the impact. Share it widely. Let the results speak.
- 5. Build a diversified base.** Do not rely on a single large donor. Aim for a mix of local individual donors, regional foundations, aligned family offices, and national funders. Diversity of funding sources creates resilience.

### Donor Cultivation Pathway

- 1. Identify** - Who in your bioregion and network has the resources and values to support flow funding?
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2. **Educate** - Share the Flow Funding model, the problems with traditional philanthropy, and your bioregion's story
  3. **Invite** - Bring them into relationship with your community – events, site visits, conversations, Community of Practice gatherings
  4. **Ask** - Make a specific, clear ask aligned with their capacity and interests
  5. **Steward** - After giving, keep donors connected to impact through stories, reports, and ongoing relationship
  6. **Deepen** - Over time, invite donors into greater participation, larger gifts, and introductions to their networks
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## 12. Storytelling as Fundraising

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**Telling your story is one of the most important things your bioregional community can do – not just for fundraising, but for the bioregional movement itself.**

Kinship Earth is actively helping bioregional communities tell their stories, because we believe that:

- **Stories are how people connect to place.** When a donor reads about a Flow Funder who bought a freeze dryer for a reservation to preserve winter food, they are not just reading about a purchase – they are connecting to a community, a land, a living system.
- **Stories build the case for bioregionalism.** Every story from every bioregion strengthens the movement as a whole. When funders hear what is happening in Cascadia and Colombia and the Northeast and Jamaica, they begin to understand that bioregional organizing is not a niche idea – it is a global phenomenon.
- **Stories equip communities to fundraise for themselves.** When your community can tell its own story clearly, compellingly, and authentically, you are not dependent on someone else to make your case. You are empowered.
- **Stories create accountability through visibility.** When Flow Funders share stories of impact, it creates a form of accountability that is more meaningful than any compliance report.

### Storytelling Frameworks

Kinship Earth provides storytelling frameworks as part of the tools and templates offered with this playbook. Here are core principles:

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**Tell the story of your bioregion:** - What is this place? What makes it unique? - What are the challenges your communities face? - What is already being done? Who are the leaders? - What would be possible with more resources flowing?

**Tell the story of your Flow Funders:** - Who are they? What do they care about? - What did they do with the funds they received? - What impact did it have - on people, on land, on the wider community? - What did they learn?

**Tell the story of change:** - What was the situation before Flow Funding? - What happened when unrestricted capital arrived? - What is different now? - What is possible next?

**Formats to consider:** - Written impact stories (1-2 pages) - Short video testimonials (2-5 minutes) - Photo essays documenting community impact - Audio stories and podcast episodes - Social media narratives - Presentations for donor audiences - Community-produced media

Kinship Earth may be able to offer direct storytelling support to your community – including help with narrative development, content production, and media strategy. See [Section 15](#).

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## 13. The Bioregional Activation Series

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Kinship Earth is co-creating, with its partners, a **Bioregional Activation Series** – a program designed to help bioregional communities prepare to create their own Flow Funds.

### What the Activation Series Is

The Bioregional Activation Series is a facilitated, multi-session experience that brings together leaders within a bioregion to:

- **Build and deepen relationships** among leaders who may be working in proximity but not yet in coordination
  - **Map what is happening and where** - surfacing the organizations, projects, leaders, resources, and gaps in the bioregion
  - **Heal fractures and address conflicts** that may be preventing effective collaboration
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- **Clarify needs and opportunities** - identifying where resources are most needed and where the brightest possibilities exist
- **Prepare for Flow Funding** - building the relational infrastructure, shared understanding, and governance readiness needed to create and steward a bioregional Flow Fund

## Why It Matters

Creating a Flow Fund is a financial and a relational exercise. Before capital can flow effectively through trust-based channels, the trust itself must exist. The Bioregional Activation Series creates the conditions for that trust.

Communities that go through the Activation Series are better prepared to:

- Identify the right Flow Funders
- Make wise collective decisions about resource allocation
- Navigate disagreements and competing priorities
- Tell their story to funders and the broader movement
- Launch their Flow Fund with a strong relational foundation

## This Program Needs Your Support

The Bioregional Activation Series is a program that Kinship Earth is currently raising funds to support and expand. If you are a donor, funder, or foundation reading this and you see the value in preparing communities to create their own Flow Funds, we invite you to contribute to making this program available to more bioregions.

## Adding Value to Existing Events

If your bioregion already has gatherings, congresses, convenings, or events that bring leaders together, the Bioregional Activation Series can also be adapted to add value to what you are already doing – rather than creating something from scratch. We can co-design activation sessions, workshops, or breakout experiences that weave into your existing rhythms.

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## 14. Tools and Templates

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Kinship Earth provides bioregional communities receiving this playbook with a set of practical tools and templates to support the creation of their own unique Flow Funds. These include:

## Documents and Forms

Tool	Purpose
<a href="#"><u>Onboarding Form</u></a>	For welcoming and orienting new Flow Funders – capturing their information, bioregional context, and areas of focus
<a href="#"><u>Flow Funder Agreement</u></a>	A simple agreement between your Flow Fund and each Flow Funder, establishing the relationship, expectations, and principles of engagement
<a href="#"><u>Reporting Form</u></a>	A lightweight form for Flow Funders to share basic information about how they deployed funds and the impact they observed
<a href="#"><u>Nomination / Recommendation Form</u></a>	For Flow Funders to recommend the next cohort of trusted community leaders
<a href="#"><u>Storytelling Framework</u></a>	A guide for Flow Funders and communities to capture and share their impact stories
<a href="#"><u>Community of Practice Guide</u></a>	Framework for establishing and facilitating your shared learning community

## Additional Resources

Resource	Purpose
<a href="#"><u>Flow Funder Role and Responsibilities</u></a>	Overview of the Flow Funder role, expectations, and key responsibilities
<a href="#"><u>Criteria for Selecting Flow Funders</u></a>	Guidance on identifying and selecting the right Flow Funders for your bioregion
<a href="#"><u>Core Agreements and Flow Funding Practices</u></a>	Foundational agreements and practices that guide Flow Funding

Resource	Purpose
<a href="#"><b>Individual-to-Individual Giving</b></a>	Guidance on direct individual-to-individual giving within the Flow Funding model
<a href="#"><b>Insights: Domestic vs. International Funding</b></a>	Key considerations for domestic and international Flow Funding efforts
<a href="#"><b>Bioregional Activation Series</b></a>	Framework and guide for the Bioregional Activation Series program

## Legal Templates

Template	Purpose
<a href="#"><b>Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement Template</b></a>	For communities using fiscal sponsorship to launch

*Note: Legal templates are starting points and should be reviewed by an attorney familiar with nonprofit law in your state. Kinship Earth can connect you with legal support.*

## How to Access These Tools

These tools are provided alongside this playbook as part of Kinship Earth's commitment to supporting bioregional communities in creating their own Flow Funds. If you have not yet received these materials, contact Kinship Earth directly.

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## 15. How Kinship Earth Can Support You

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Kinship Earth exists not just to deploy its own capital but to help bioregional communities build their own financial infrastructure. Here is what we can offer:

## Direct Support

- **Hands-on guidance from our team.** We will connect with every community that receives this playbook, to establish a relationship and offer personalized support.
- **Legal support and referrals.** We can connect you with attorneys experienced in nonprofit formation, fiscal sponsorship, and trust-based philanthropy.
- **Template documents and tools.** The forms, agreements, and frameworks described in Section 14 are yours to adapt.
- **Community of Practice participation.** As you launch your Flow Fund, you may be invited to participate in Kinship Earth's broader Community of Practice, connecting with Flow Funders and bioregional leaders around the world.

## Storytelling Support

Kinship Earth is actively helping bioregional communities tell their stories - both to support their own fundraising and to strengthen the narrative of the bioregional movement as a whole. We may be able to offer:

- Narrative development and strategy
- Content production support (written, video, multimedia)
- Connections to media platforms and storytelling networks
- Coaching on how to communicate your bioregion's story to funders

## Bioregional Activation Series

As described in [Section 13](#), Kinship Earth is co-creating a Bioregional Activation Series to help communities prepare for creating their own Flow Funds. We may be able to:

- Co-facilitate an Activation Series in your bioregion
- Co-design activation sessions that integrate with your existing events and gatherings
- Provide facilitation resources, frameworks, and support
- Connect you with other bioregions that have gone through the process

## Financial Seeding

Where possible and as fundraising allows, Kinship Earth may be able to provide initial financial seeding for new bioregional Flow Funds - a first infusion of capital to help you launch your first cycle and demonstrate the model in your community.

## Network and Introductions

Kinship Earth is connected to a growing network of aligned funders, bioregional organizing groups, foundations, and movement partners. When aligned, we can make introductions that support your fundraising and relationship-building efforts.

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## 16. What Is Coming Next: A Playbook for Funders

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This playbook is designed for bioregional communities and organizing groups - the people creating and stewarding Flow Funds on the ground.

**The next playbook we are creating is specifically for family offices, foundations, Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs), and high-net-worth individuals.**

That playbook will:

- Explain what Flow Funding is and why it works, from the perspective of a funder
- Present the evidence base for trust-based, unrestricted, community-directed grantmaking
- Address common concerns and questions from institutional funders
- Provide practical guidance on how to incorporate flow funding into existing philanthropic portfolios
- Encourage funders to commit a portion of their capital toward flow funding efforts
- Share case studies and impact data from Kinship Earth and the emerging network of bioregional Flow Funds
- Outline how foundations can move beyond the 5% minimum distribution and get more capital flowing to communities

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We are already educating family offices, foundations, DAFs, and high-net-worth individuals on how to and why they should practice flow funding. This second playbook will formalize and deepen that education work.

If you are a funder reading this, we want to hear from you. Reach out to Kinship Earth to learn how you can begin practicing flow funding now – before the next playbook is published.

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## 17. Frequently Asked Questions

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**Q: Does our community need to be formally organized to create a Flow Fund?** A: No. You need trusted relationships and a shared commitment to your bioregion. The formal structure (entity type, governance, etc.) can be built as you go. Many Flow Funds start with fiscal sponsorship and formalize later.

**Q: How much money do we need to start?** A: There is no minimum. The power of Flow Funding is in the model, not the dollar amount. Even a few thousand dollars deployed through trust-based channels can demonstrate the model and build momentum. Start with what you have.

**Q: What if there are conflicts or divisions in our community?** A: This is common and expected. Healing fractures is not a prerequisite for starting - it is an ongoing practice woven into the work. Begin where you can, with the relationships that are strong and work towards healing conflict.

**Q: How do we maintain accountability without heavy reporting?** A: Accountability in Flow Funding comes through relationship, not paperwork. Your Community of Practice, storytelling practices, and regular gatherings create the conditions for mutual accountability. The lightweight reporting form shared above captures essential information without burdening Flow Funders. Trust is the mechanism.

**Q: Can we adapt the model to fit our community's culture and needs?** A: Absolutely. This playbook provides a framework, not a formula. Your Flow Fund should reflect your bioregion's unique ecology, culture, relationships, and priorities. We encourage adaptation.

**Q: What is Kinship Earth's relationship to our Flow Fund once we create it?** A: Kinship Earth serves as backbone infrastructure. We offer legal, educational, and relational support. Your Flow Fund is autonomous. You govern it, you make the decisions, you steward the resources. We are here as a partner.

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**Q: Can we receive funding from Kinship Earth to seed our Flow Fund?** A: Where fundraising allows, Kinship Earth may be able to provide initial financial seeding for new bioregional Flow Funds. This is determined on a case-by-case basis, and through relationship. We do not have grant applications and do not accept solicitations for funds.

**Q: What does “unrestricted” mean?** A: It means Flow Funders decide how to use the capital. There are no restrictions on what it can be spent on, no pre-approved budget categories, no line items, so long as the funds are used for educational and / or charitable purposes. If a community leader determines that the most important use of \$5,000 is buying a truck to deliver food, or fixing a roof, or hiring a translator - that is their decision to make.

**Q: How do we handle situations where a Flow Funder misuses funds?** A: This is rare, because the model is built on trust and relationship. Flow Funders are identified by people who know them deeply. If a situation arises, it is handled through conversation - within the Community of Practice. Trust-based does not mean trust-blind; it means that accountability is relational. Every community is encouraged to create its own unique process for handling conflict and misuse of funds.

**Q: We are an Indigenous-led community. How does Flow Funding relate to our governance structures?** A: Flow Funding is designed to honor and center Indigenous governance. Your Flow Fund’s governance should reflect your community’s traditions and decision-making processes. Kinship Earth is committed to supporting Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in all aspects of this work.

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## 18. Closing: An Invitation

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This playbook is an invitation - to reimagine how resources move in your bioregion, to trust the people closest to the work, and to build financial infrastructure that serves life.

The challenges facing our communities and ecosystems are immense. Climate disruption, ecological collapse, economic inequality, displacement, food insecurity, water contamination, cultural erosion - these are not abstract problems. They are lived realities in every bioregion on Earth.

But in every bioregion, there are also people already doing the work. Leaders who know their land, their neighbors, their waterways, their histories. People who show up when the flood comes, when the food runs out, when the community needs to grieve or celebrate or decide together what comes next.

Flow Funding trusts those people. It puts resources in their hands. And it asks them to pass the trust forward.

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Kinship Earth did not invent this idea. Marion Rockefeller Weber planted this seed decades ago. Communities around the world have been practicing mutual aid, reciprocity, and trust-based resource-sharing since long before any of us were here. What we are doing is building the infrastructure for these practices to scale - so that every bioregion can have its own Flow Fund, its own network of trusted leaders, its own capacity to attract and steward capital in service of life.

You are part of that now.

Start where you are. Start with who you trust. Start with what you have. And know that Kinship Earth is here to walk with you.

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**Contact Kinship Earth:** - **Website:** [kinshipearth.org](http://kinshipearth.org) | [flowfunding.org](http://flowfunding.org) - **Executive Director:** Sydney Griffith

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*“We’re trusting those who know the needs of their communities to do the work and to deploy capital however they see fit. That’s what flow funding is.” - Sydney Griffith*

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*This playbook is a living document co-created by the team at Kinship Earth, with input from our partners. It will be updated as we learn, as new bioregional Flow Funds emerge, and as the movement grows. Your feedback, stories, and experiences will shape future versions.*

*Published Q1 2026 | Kinship Earth*