

Mainstreaming resource for grantmakers

What do we mean by mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming or “funding for inclusion” is a grantmaking strategy that seeks to move a marginalized issue from the fringe to the core of the human rights agenda. In the broadest sense, mainstreaming is about inclusion; it is about opening the door for everyone to participate in the programs that human rights funders support. In a narrower sense, mainstreaming is about getting your issue into the mainstream of the human rights agenda.

What does mainstreaming look like?

There isn't any one, ideal way, to implement a mainstreaming funding strategy. Instead, donors have a diverse choice of grantmaking tools. Choosing the strategy that fits best with your grantmaking institution may depend on Board/donor philosophy, grantmaking budget, program staff capacity and knowledge, and the maturity of the field in which you are working. Below is a menu of tactics that donors can use to operationalize mainstreaming within their work:

1. **Fund powerful, more socially accepted groups to advocate for the rights of more marginalized groups**, demystifying these issues, and thereby increasing their visibility and legitimacy. An example might be to fund a large multi-issue human rights group to address a marginalized issue, such as sex workers rights.
2. **Fund marginalized groups to assert leadership over a more “mainstream” issue**. An example might be LGBT groups advocating for immigrant rights or a disability rights group joining an advocacy campaign around education;
3. **Advocate that other grantmakers (either within or outside your organization) include marginalized populations** within their grantmaking. Some examples include establishing IHRFG working groups to educate other donors or publishing a donor guide about how to make funding more inclusive;
4. **Support programs and projects that cut across issues** and connect marginalized groups with more mainstream organizations. An example might be to fund a voting rights project between a disability rights group and an NGO focused on getting out the vote;
5. **Facilitate networking between marginalized groups and mainstream groups**. An example might be supporting a field convening to bring diverse organizations together;
6. **Establish an internal grantmaking philosophy and approach to programming that advances inclusion** of marginalized populations within “non-identity” specific grantmaking; An example might be asking how mainstream women’s human rights groups are incorporating women with disabilities into their project; and
7. **Advocate that grantees adopt an inclusive approach to their work** that isn't just “open to all” but intentionally invites participation from marginalized groups. An example might be including a section of your applications that asks *all* grantees to explain how their programming is inclusive of marginalized communities.

What are the stages of mainstreaming a marginalized issue?

