

# Building on Trust

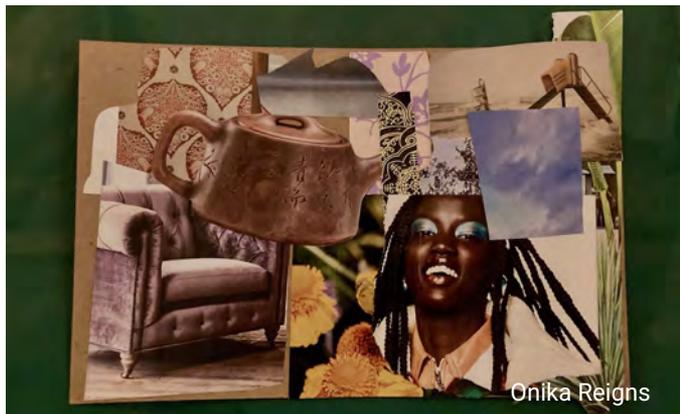
Our Process of Cultivating  
Relationships of Reciprocity

2024

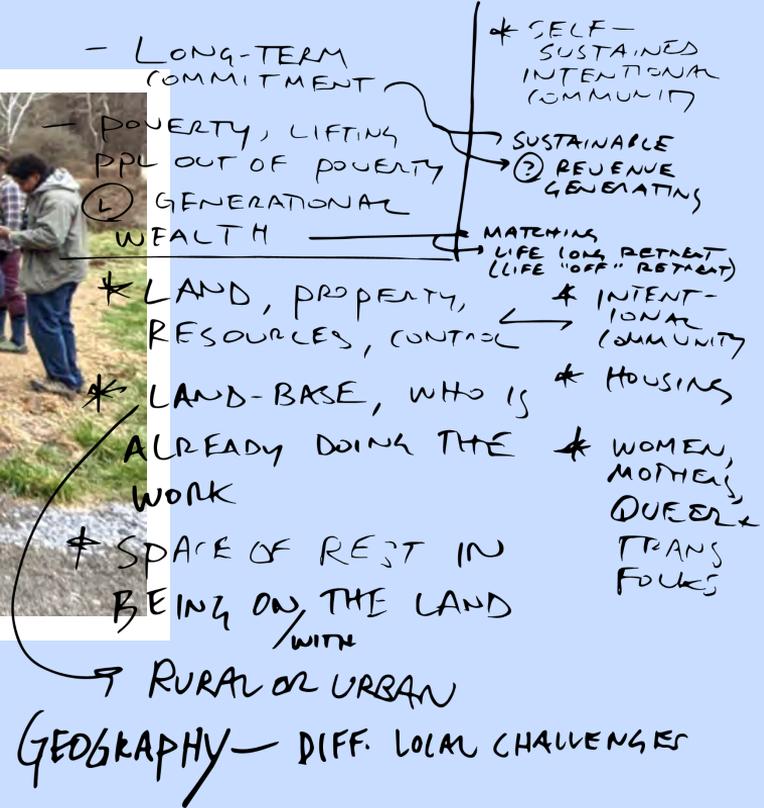




LIBERATION WANTS NOTHING  
BUT FOR LIBERATION — FOR YOU.  
FOR ALL  
FAL — FRAMEWORK & LIBERATION



# Our Opportunity



Through community-led processes, we are learning to grow and move at the speed of trust\*. We are committed to the idea of "trying something" toward liberation and continuing to share about these experiences, as our community members guide the way.

\*Concept penned by adrienne maree brown in Emergent Strategy

*“Liberated relationships are one of the ways we actually create abundant justice, the understanding that there is enough attention, care, resource, and connection for all of us to access belonging, to be in our dignity, and to be safe in community.”*

—adrienne maree brown, **EMERGENT STRATEGY**

AN ANTIDOTE  
TO THE TOXIC  
MYTH OF  
INDIVIDUALISM

*Opportunity Fund is a private foundation committed to supporting organizations and initiatives focused on the arts and social and economic justice in Pittsburgh and beyond.*

— (OF)  
LEVERAGE  
INTERNAL  
WORK OF  
FOUNDATION

## Dear Friends,

We are humbled by the deep, impactful, and caring relationships we build and maintain with our grant partners and community members. As we seek to learn more about what is needed and how we can best put our resources to work in support of our mission, we are intentionally exploring how we continue to build our partnerships and apply our values in the approach to everything we do.

As a private foundation, our primary role is to redistribute wealth and resources, but often foundations exert power to influence program work and mandate how resources are spent. At the Opportunity Fund, we are rethinking how to live into our most appropriate role.

Trust is key to building strong relationships and, in turn, being in community. Our aspiration is to nurture reciprocal relationships with our partners and community members.

Opportunity Fund has awarded over  
**1,059** grants in arts and social &  
economic justice 2015-2023

*Opportunity Fund is a private foundation committed to supporting organizations and initiatives focused on the arts and social and economic justice in Pittsburgh and beyond.*

### How do we plan to build trust?

- Adapt our grant funding programs toward multi-year and general operating funding models.
- Continue enhancing accessibility to our grant opportunities.
- Honor our commitment to fund Respite for Black Womxn, a body of work that includes retreats, direct funding, and community input.

### Why do these changes matter?

- Adjusting our grant funding prioritizes trust, relationship, and a deep understanding that those affected know best how to allocate funds.

We have created this process book to highlight details of this shift and commitment to *try something* and to evolve at each step of the way. We invite you to join us on this journey as co-participants learning, and leaning into the community-led solutions that emerge, together.

**We invite you to ponder these big questions with us, engage, and Build Trusting Relationships Together.**

*ACROSS all  
our relationships*

# TRUST-BASED PHILANTHROPY

— LEAVING  
THE ROOM  
(WHEN)

We honor the work that has come before us to clarify, understand, and share the concept of trust-based philanthropy, led by the [Trust-Based Philanthropy Project](#). We seek to apply that framework to our mission and grantmaking.



## Historical Context

The history and current manifestation of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy in our society plays a significant role in shaping the way philanthropy acts in the world today. Wealth and resources have been concentrated in the hands of predominantly white individuals and institutions through systems of exploitation and marginalization that benefit the few at the expense of the many. Philanthropy has been used as a way for the wealthy to control and shape the social landscape, often perpetuating inequities and power imbalances. While much of philanthropy is entered into with good intentions, it continues to control the resources it distributes, further consolidating power and influence.

As we seek to question and dismantle systems of oppression, it is important to acknowledge the racialized historical context that has given rise to philanthropy, so that we can work toward building a more just and empowering system of resource redistribution.

### Definition(s)

#### Opportunity \

*noun*

Chance to make something possible, to birth something into existence, to try something.

#### Philanthropy \

*noun*

Rooted in love of humankind, a system that redistributes and rebalances wealth, power, and resources.

#### Trust \

*verb*

To believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.

#### Trust-based Philanthropy \

*noun*

A charitable approach that reimagines the relationships between donors, nonprofits and communities to rebalance power and decision making.

Connect  
+  
Understand.  
8

## Values In Practice

Along with many organizations, [2020 and the racial reckoning that occurred across the country](#) was an influential time and served as a catalyst to more deeply align with our values of diversity, equity, and combating injustice, particularly all forms of anti-Blackness. We needed to change ourselves so that, when the moment passed, we would move forward transformed. We created actionable manifestations of our values in the form of [public commitments](#).

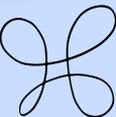
Integrating these commitments and values into Opportunity Fund's systems and programs meant changing key practices. We transitioned grant funding to include more:

- Funding to general operating support
- Multi-year funding for organizations
- Flexible deadlines for applications
- Video components for Letters of Intent
- Community panels
- Direct staff support

From 2019 to 2023, Opportunity Fund **increased its annual funding for Black-led organizations from**

**28%**  
*to*  
**51%**

*[Table featured on pg. 18](#)*



## Type of Support

Percent of Total \$ Awarded Each Year



In the spirit of trust-based philanthropy, **Opportunity Fund has increased its general operating support to 82%** of all funding in 2023 up **from only 17%** in 2016.

The intention of this change is to ease burdensome restrictions on grantees, allowing for more autonomous decision-making. We believe that those doing the work know best where to spend resources.

In the process of applying values to our work more deeply, we also evaluate *who* we fund. In an effort to truly consider the best way to support justice and liberation through resource redistribution.

Black womxn in our network shared their need for rest\*. As a result,

**the Board earmarked \$450,000 to support the community-led design process** to further this essential work.

We increased our funding support for BIPOC-led organizations **from 30% to 59% of total funding from 2019 to 2023.**

*[Table featured on slide 18.](#)*

We increased our funding support for organizations serving BIPOC communities **from 37% to 61% of total funding from 2019 to 2023.**

*[Table featured on slide 19.](#)*

\*Respite for Black Womxn is the resulting body of work that includes retreats, direct funding, and community input. The spelling of 'womxn' is intended to include all people who identify as women, including trans people.

## Our Intention

To release control and embrace the opportunity for **reciprocal relationships**.

Opportunity Fund was shaped in the values of our founder, Gerri Kay, an ardent supporter of justice, love, and access in the arts. The values we've developed in her legacy are our North Star and a source of the foundation's strength. Our values continue to guide use as we embrace trust-based philanthropy.

We recognize that the funds our foundation has access to are part of an oppressive historical and modern-day system of wealth that has wielded power in harmful ways. In awareness of our power, our guide is the alignment of resources with just and liberatory solutions imagined and led by people and communities who do not have the same access to resources.

— GROWING AS  
A MODEL —

### Opportunity Fund Values

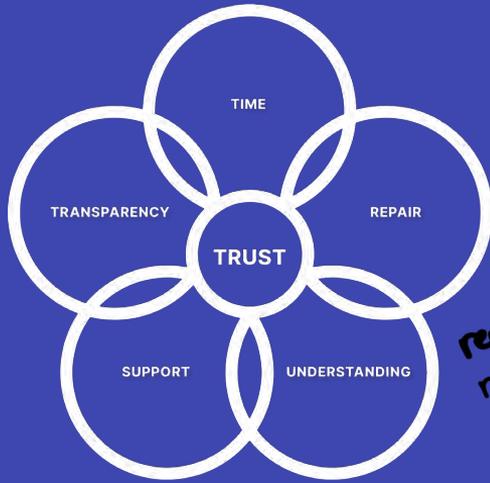
- We focus on the strengths of our partners
- Communities have their own, unique values
- Progressive values
- Take risks, smartly
- The arts and artists have precious value
- Special interest in artists, productions and arts organizations that challenge
- Give to make a big difference
- Diversity and equity make us all stronger
- To understand the centrality of anti-Blackness in all forms of injustice demands action



## Building toward T.R.U.S.T.

When we say we're shifting our focus to trust-based philanthropy, we mean that this shift is informed by recent years of community conversation and input, program tweaks, board and team conversations, and a practice of trying to align our values with our work more and more.

Simply put, this work has been happening in ways big and small. What we're excited to share now is our public commitment to aspiring toward trust-based philanthropy. With this commitment we humbly invite input, healthy conflict, and important conversations and actions around accountability.



*repair-actions  
making space for moving forward*

# Building toward T.R.U.S.T.

We are proud of the work and impact that Opportunity Fund has supported over the years. This shift toward trust-based philanthropy is not so much a sea change for our organization, but rather an opportunity to make the implicit of how we think and operate, explicit as a commitment.

## Time \ *noun*

The indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole. Dedicated to an experience, person, or community to communicate meaning, value, and care.

## Repair \ *noun*

A healing process held in deep care undergirded by the commitment to make things right; building a culture rooted in truth, relationship, and release.

## Understanding \ *noun*

Sympathetically aware of other people's feelings; tolerant and forgiving. Caring about the wellbeing and liberation of others.

## Support \ *verb*

Bear all or part of the weight of; hold up. Give assistance to, provide scaffolding for someone or something.

## Transparency \ *noun*

The quality of being easy to perceive or detect. The quality of allowing light through to illuminate what's underneath; exposing truths to be distinctly seen.

# GRANT PARTNERSHIPS

The work and effectiveness of the Opportunity Fund has always hinged on our relationships. These relationships help us consistently evaluate what is working, what's not, what matters to our community, and how we can be better partners and a better organization. *IT UP*



## Grant Partnerships

### ARTS

We support the creation, development, production, and presentation of art. We fund small to midsize arts organizations. Our arts funding focuses on performance and visual arts organizations that support imaginative and unique art forms that boldly share the artists' unique voice. Performance refers to theater, dance, music, with particular focus on chamber music and jazz. Visual arts focuses on the field of craft, as related to materiality.

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Our Social and Economic Justice grantmaking supports organizations and initiatives working towards a more just and liberated society. We prioritize both project-based funding that address the root causes of social and economic injustice and seek to create systemic change, and also organizations that address safety net issues like social services, tangible aid, housing, transportation, and more. The core populations we focus our funding on are organizations led by and/or serving Black/African American/African descent and LGBTQ+ people.

Since 2015 through 2023 the Opportunity Fund has granted a total of:

**\$6,328,849**

**to Arts organizations  
and projects**

**\$8,921,198**

**to Social and  
Economic Justice  
organizations  
and initiatives**

## Grant Partnerships

### MEASURING ACCOUNTABILITY

As we continue to shift towards a more trust-based approach to grantmaking, we will continue to track our progress and tell the story of how we are reconsidering resource distribution. By tracking and analyzing this data, we can better understand the impact of our grantmaking programs and work towards more effective and empowering resource distribution.

SCALE / DEPTH

We are particularly interested in expanding our funding to initiatives that are led by and/or serve Black communities and LGBTQ+ community members.

We also offer multi-year grants, flex deadlines, and aim for a relatively simple application process to reduce barriers to funding, allowing organizations to focus on their work.

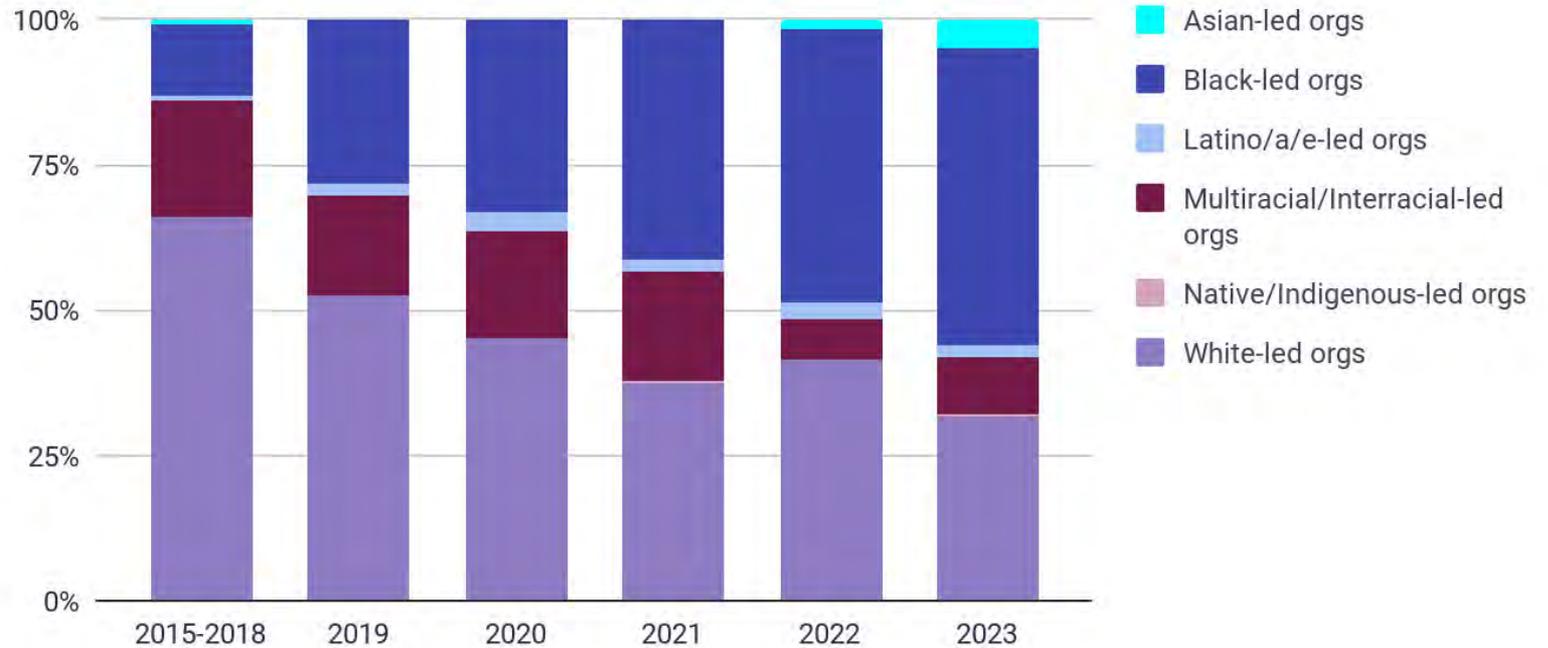
### A Relational Approach

Authentic relationships with our partners are essential to our mission. To this end, we:

- Prioritize meeting with grant partners and their teams and supporting them through the grant application process
- Provide transparency, general operating support
- Utilize a community panel process for decision-making

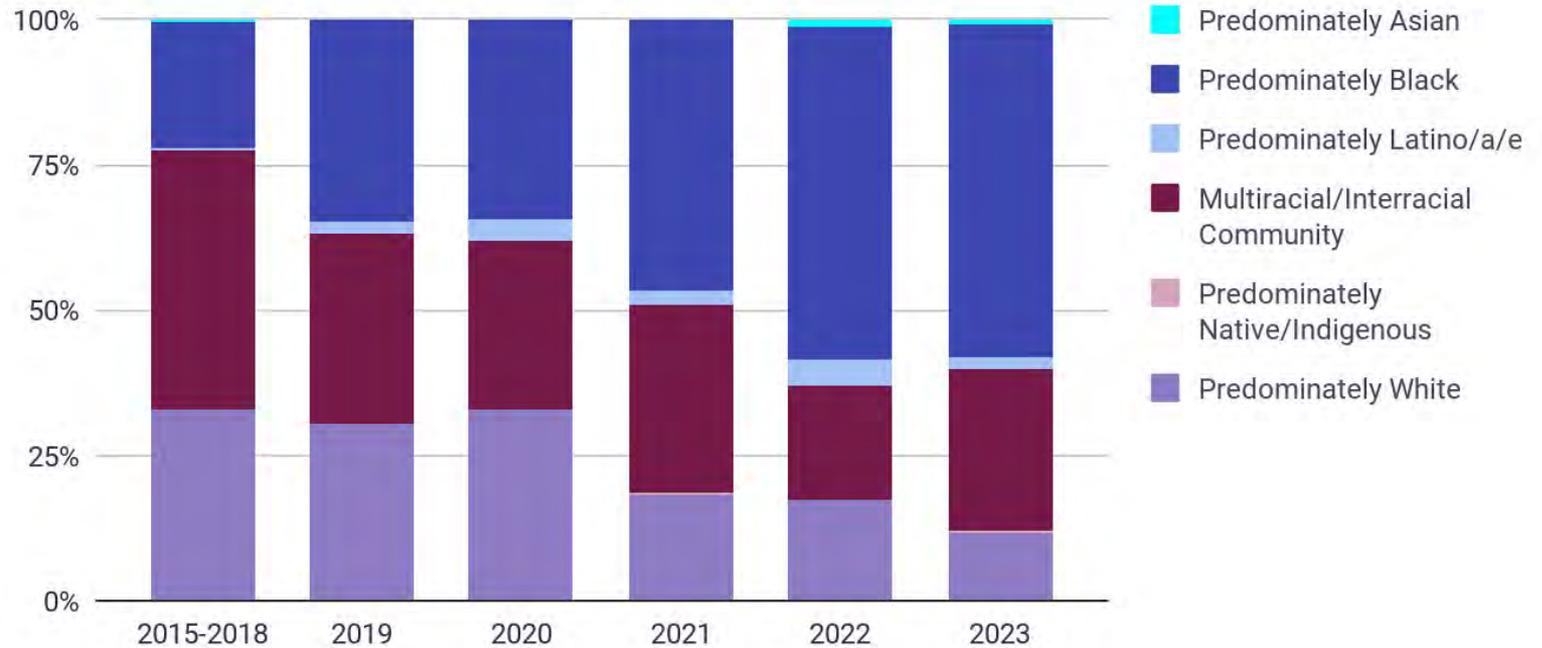
## All Grants by Leadership

### Percent of Total \$ Awarded Each Year



## All Grants by Community Served

### Percent of Total \$ Awarded Each Year



# Arts

Grant Partnerships





## Women of Visions

**LOCATION** Pittsburgh

**FUNDING INFORMATION** Two grants / One was a 3-year commitment / Total funding of \$50,000

*“Each time I’ve experienced a Women of Visions exhibition, I can feel the past, present, and future through the intergenerational artists themselves and through their work which often spans time. In Women of Visions 40th anniversary exhibition, Amanda Awanjo wrote, ‘To write, paint, or otherwise create oneself into a world that seeks to limit and erase you is a radical and future-making act.’”*

—Ti Wilhelm, OPPORTUNITY FUND



### MISSION

To promote the arts, culture, and history of women of African descent by helping each other to excel as artists and to grow professionally through exhibitions, community collaboration, educational programming, and other progressive opportunities.

### BACKGROUND

Co-founded in 1981, by a diverse group of African American women in Pittsburgh, Women of Visions Inc. is the longest-running collective of Black women visual artists in the United States. Women of Visions is a longstanding and vibrant collective of excellent craft artists, aligning with our funding priority of craft in the arts. Women of Visions has nurtured some of Pittsburgh's most significant artists over decades, presenting over 100 exhibitions and programs.



## Chamber Music Pittsburgh

**LOCATION** Pittsburgh

**FUNDING INFORMATION** Seven grants / Total funding of \$125,000

*“I have experienced breathless moments at Chamber Music Pittsburgh concerts: marveling at the daring precision that musicians can achieve in intimate, exposed dialogue with each other to collectively interpret an expressive world that a composer created out of nothing, 'simply' by writing notes a page.”*

— Jake Goodman, **OPPORTUNITY FUND**



### MISSION

Founded in 1961, Chamber Music Pittsburgh's mission is to present world-class chamber music ensembles and soloists, promising emerging artists, and innovative programs; and to foster an appreciation for chamber music in the Pittsburgh community by offering educational programs and experiences.

### BACKGROUND

CMP is an organization that has always been actively engaged in efforts to honor and expand the legacies and new artistic creations of chamber music. Their MainStage series features and celebrates a wide range of chamber ensembles of the highest caliber, exposing the Pittsburgh community to superb artists and performances.

## Data Update

At Opportunity Fund, we are committed to using data tools to gain a deeper understanding of our progress and to hold ourselves accountable to our stated commitments. The story that data tells is essential in guiding our decision-making and ensuring that we are creating meaningful impact in the communities our partners serve. By leveraging data tools to support our grantmaking practices, we are continually improving our efforts.

We pride ourselves on funding arts in a way that values artists' craft and creative expression. We fund a specific range of art forms, supporting their creation, development, performance, and presentation

— PRESENCE/  
ABSENCE

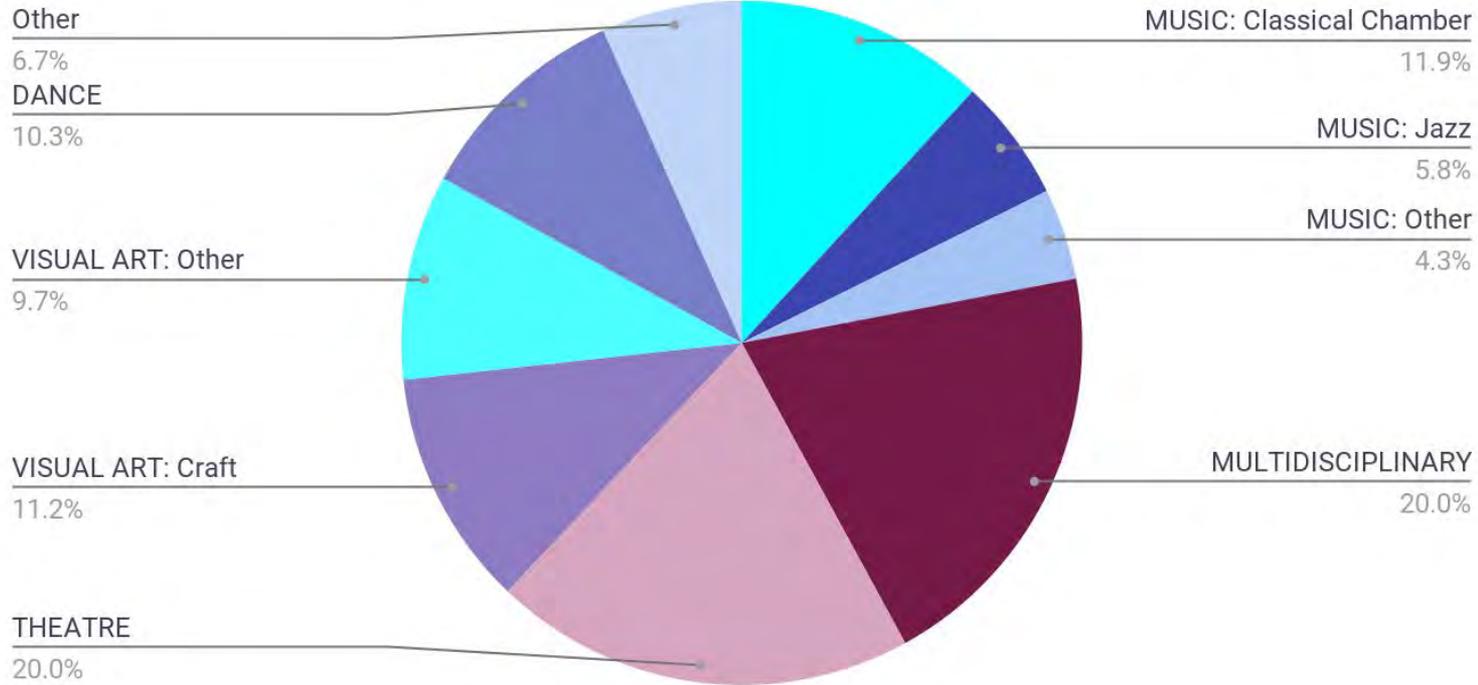
### Room to Grow

Opportunity Fund is committed to expanding funding in our grant areas and beyond to Black and LGBTQ+ communities. We recognize there is a lack of funding for many other communities including:

- People with disabilities
- Native American or Indigenous people
- Asian American and Pacific Islanders

As we continue to grow, deepen, and measure our work, we will include a lens on these communities in our analysis to best track our funding in both the arts and social and economic justice.

## Arts Subcategories



# Social + Economic Justice

Grant Partnerships





## Abolitionist Law Center

**LOCATION** Offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Statewide work in Pennsylvania

**FUNDING INFORMATION** Six grants / Total funding of \$112,500

*“The Abolitionist Law Center is one part of a precious statewide ecosystem deeply rooted in the Black Liberation movement of the 1970’s. The ALC started about 10 years ago with The Human Rights Coalition (HRC) at SCI Greene with Russell Maroon Shoatz (RIP), Andre “Shabaka” Gay, and Robert Saleem Holbrook, and grew out of HRC’s work, throughout the PA Department of Corrections. When I think about the ALC, I hear the lyrics of a powerful song, ‘Well I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom.’”*

—yvette shipman, OPPORTUNITY FUND



## MISSION

The Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) is a public interest law firm inspired by the struggle of political and politicized prisoners, and organized for the purpose of abolishing class and race based mass incarceration in the United States.

## BACKGROUND

ALC was founded in Pittsburgh in 2013 by two activists-turned-attorneys working in close collaboration with incarcerated people in the PA state prison system (and their families and support networks) whose agency, ideas, and self-determination were then, and remain today, central drivers of the project. ALC litigates on behalf of people whose human rights have been violated in prison, educates the general public about the evils of mass incarceration, and works to develop a mass movement against the American punishment system by building alliances and nurturing solidarity across social divisions.



THE COMMUNITY TABLE

## Hill District Consensus Group

**LOCATION** The Hill District of Pittsburgh

**FUNDING INFORMATION** Three grants / Total funding of \$44,600

*“Radical Collective Care. Yes, that’s what comes to mind when I think about the HDCG. The HDCG remains a catalyst for preservation and dignity for the future of the Hill District. They also have a reputable model that is so true to community that it could be advanced in any metropolis area that is in the recovery process. Elder Carl Redwood and Sister Carol Hardeman know the history of the Hill District and serve as a bridge and protectors for the residents of the Hill District.”*

—yvette shipman, OPPORTUNITY FUND



## MISSION

To create effective pathways for intergenerational residents to overcome economic, social, and housing disparities.

## BACKGROUND

The Hill District Consensus Group values working with residents as opposed to working within a closed door, unilaterally top-down firm that lacks the lived experience to benefit them. They believe in forming strategic alliances with residents to ensure their outcomes will be capable of winning long-term solutions since their mission and goals cannot be achieved without them. HDCG also collaborates with like-minded people and groups to help problem-solve their community peoples' toughest challenges, which requires bold and innovative people that can work together in new and creative ways.



**Pittsburghers for  
Public Transit**

## Pittsburghers for Public Transit

**LOCATION** Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and Statewide work in Pennsylvania

**FUNDING INFORMATION** Five grants / Total funding of \$125,000

*“There are folks who might prefer that PPT not have a seat at the proverbial table where decisions are made that affect riders. Well, I’ve seen PPT remind these folks that, as riders, a table that is meant to be set for them must also be set by them. They meet power with power, and win remarkable progress toward realizing a just policy-oriented vision for public”*

—Jake Goodman, **OPPORTUNITY FUND**



## MISSION

Pittsburghers for Public Transit (PPT) is a grassroots union of transit riders, workers and neighbors. Together we organize for an expanded, affordable and accessible public transit system that meets all needs, with no communities left behind.

## BACKGROUND

PPT is a powerful and effective organization that often achieves its ambitious goals. In terms of transit policy, they are leading the way. Now working across the state. Because PPT speaks truth to power, some in power do not love PPT. Their advocacy has caused high ranking government officials to shun them and castigate others who sign onto their campaigns, and has caused some funders to end their support.

## Data Update

Over the years, our funding of Social and Economic Justice organizations and initiatives has grown and transformed to best meet the realities of our changing world and understandings. This funding area continues to be an important one to expand not only the intention to prioritize Black and LGBTQ-*serving* organizations, but to prioritize Black and LGBTQ-*led* organizations who are designing solutions to address social and economic justice-related challenges.

We are committed to continuing to grow this work, to improving how we're measuring different variables and outcomes related to our grants program, and to weaving compelling and informative data into all our storytelling.

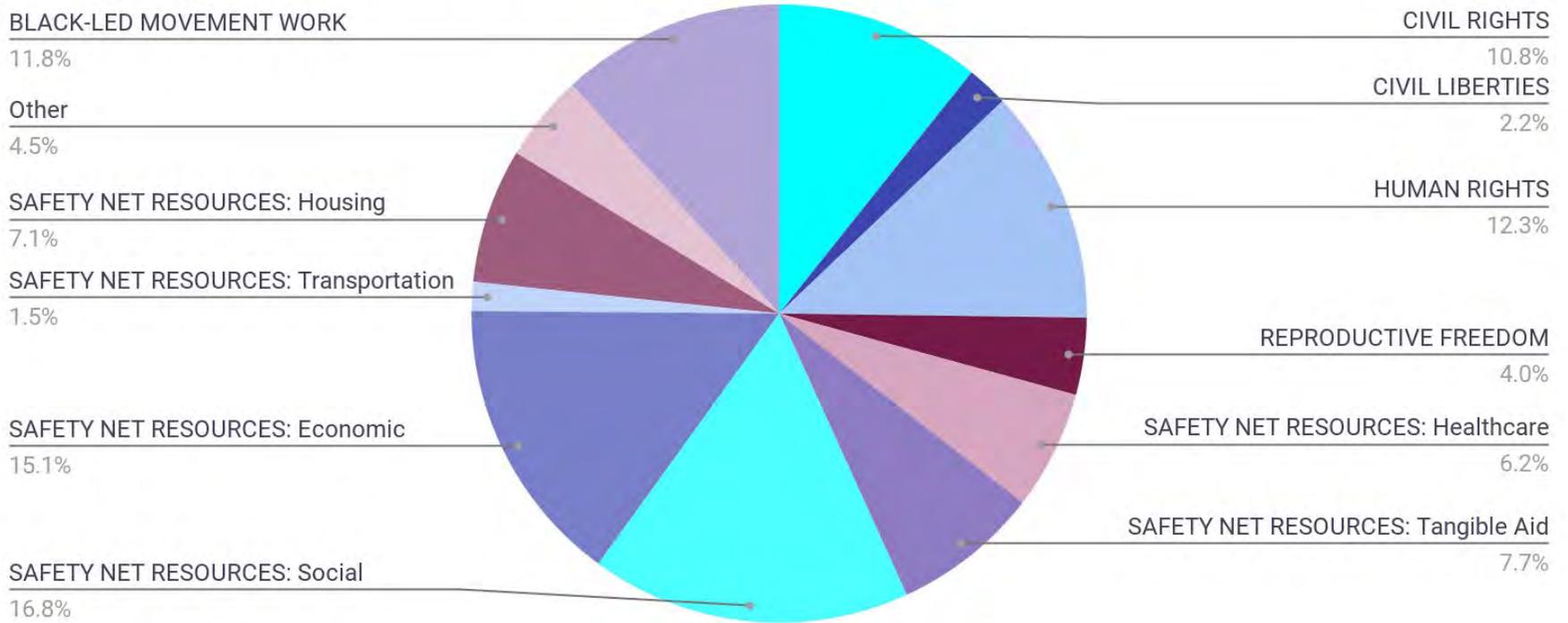
REMOVING  
WEIGHT  
OBSTACLES

### Social & Economic Justice Scope

Opportunity Fund is oriented toward organizations that support systems change. We also invest focus on funding organizations that strengthen the social safety net.

We believe this approach allows us to redistribute funds in a way that acknowledges the pressing needs created by a broken system, while also funding organizations that address those systems changes needed to move into a new reality.

## Social & Economic Justice Subcategories



# OPPORTUNITY FUND TEAM



## Our Team



The work we do at the Opportunity Fund would not be possible without the hard work, creative contributions, and support of our staff and Board. We aspire to integrate the T.R.U.S.T. principles of Time, Repair, Understanding, Support, and Transparency in everything we do.

# Board



Living a life with a strong love ethic, centered on the improvement of my communities, intimately ties me to the Opportunity Fund's vision for change.  
Michael Tikili, SINCE 2020



Medina  
Jackson  
SINCE 2022



Dana  
Bishop Root  
SINCE 2020



Stuart Fisk  
SINCE 2022



I was drawn to the unique qualities of the Opportunity Fund's that make it stand out: truly authentic relationships with community and incorporation of community voices in all parts of the grantmaking process; the willingness to experiment with new ways of using philanthropic resources; and perhaps most importantly, its values are on display in everything it does. The Fund's transparency and inclusion builds trust that enables new possibilities and opportunities with the nonprofit sector that draw attention to societal issues and advocate for change.  
Marge Petruska, SINCE 2020



I came on to Opportunity Fund because of their focus on Black Women. I have known of them for years, received funding from them, know many of the people involved, and trust in their work. I was eager to see the other side of philanthropy, especially one that is actively in a process of decolonizing its protocol.  
Alisha Wormsley, SINCE 2022



The Opportunity Fund does great work to support and elevate individuals, organizations, and communities. I appreciate the transparency of work being done by our staff and the respect given each board member for their individual skills and perspectives. Opportunity Fund lives its values, internally and externally, seeking to operate justly and imagine initiatives that create positive change.  
Idy Goodman, Board President, SINCE 2015

# Looking Ahead

*practices that sustain  
- bring joy  
- bring life*

As we look ahead, we embrace trust-based practices and aspire to redistribute funds, time, and other resources in ways that support a more just, liberated, creative, and connected world. Our commitments for the year ahead include:

Engaging in more trust-based practices in our grantmaking, including exploring how to further apply them to arts grants.

Sharing how our community partners continue to set the direction for us to spend the \$450,000 #r4Blw budget.

Continuing to diversify our grant partner leadership representation and the communities they serve in line with our values.

Expanding the measurement tools we use to ask the important questions that result in data and shift the way we tell our story with transparency, accuracy, and care. All to better nurture relationships with our grant partners, board, and community at large.

# Dedication

Our founder  
**Gerri Kay**



The Opportunity Fund was established upon the death of Gerri Kay to continue her life's work. An advocate for civil rights, social justice and the arts, Gerri consistently extended herself and opportunities to others while living her convictions.

Friends described her as “the most fierce, persistent and focused proponent of civil rights and racial justice I have ever met”, “essential to the flourishing of the arts in Pittsburgh”, and “exceptionally passionate about supporting young or new artists.”

The Opportunity Fund's focus is a reflection of what Gerri cared about. We seek grantees who champion the rights of our communities' diverse citizens, treasure the arts and support the lives of artists, pursue social and economic justice, and proactively provide safety net resources for those in need.

We, in turn, offer our partners the opportunity to take risks to more fully achieve their mission.

We thank Gerri and honor her legacy as we continue to carry it forward.