

FUNDING THE MOVEMENT: Occupy and Beyond

[Note: This document represents an initial and continuously evolving collection of thoughts on ways grantmakers can support the Occupy Moment. It of course contains only a small percentage of the important Occupy-related efforts being undertaken in the US and around the world, especially at local levels, and funders interested in providing support will need to research the approaches and organizations most suitable for them. We hope, however, that even this initial and partial list provides a sense of the breadth, depth and diversity of the grassroots response, and can help strengthen our collective and individual commitment to support this movement and this moment.]

Since the inception of Occupy Wall Street, funders have expressed a desire to support and engage in this moment. Determining the best way to do so is complex. There are dangers in flooding any organization, much less a decentralized social movement, with financial resources too quickly. And yet, to sustain this movement for the long term, support is certainly needed.

After speaking with a number of foundation colleagues, members of the Occupy movement and to activists and organizers who have been working in this field for decades, there are a number of approaches that funders can take to participate responsibly in this moment.

To begin, we would like to repost these thoughts from our friends at [Quixote Foundation](#):

However well intended, foundations are extensions of the outsized wealth and power enjoyed by our country's "1%." So what, besides going [beyond 5%](#), can we do to stand with the 99%? Here are some ideas:

- Demonstrate at an Occupy site. [Post our stories](#). If you're wealthy, identify yourself as such. Say why you support a fair tax system even if it costs you more money.
- Support organizations that help the Occupy movement. The [National Lawyers Guild](#) links demonstrators with free emergency legal help. [Ruckus Society](#) provides training. The [Funders Committee for Civic Participation](#) can connect grantmakers with nonprofits helping in many ways, including sustained action on issues like corporate political power; and [Resource Generation](#) works with both individuals and foundations to generate social change.
- Support those who make the movement visible when big media looks the other way. [Mother Jones](#) covers [Occupy demonstrations](#) and gives practical information for engaging through events like [Bank Transfer Day](#). Resources like the [Center for Media Justice](#) and [MAG-NET](#) ensure we can hear stories not covered by corporate news. Media Democracy Fund contributes money, strategy, and connection for the work these groups do.

- Align our investments with our missions. [Renewal](#) is exceptionally smart about activating whole portfolios for social benefit, and [PRI Makers Network](#) fills in the how-tos.
- Look into whether our giving practices truly promote equity over the long term. Perspectives from the [Center for Social Inclusion](#) and [Kirwan Institute](#) help explain how well-meaning actions can unintentionally reinforce structural racism and systemic poverty.
- Confront our organizations' wealth, age and income gaps. To collaborate honestly we need to acknowledge that some workplace issues have deep roots in unequal wealth and power.
- Redistribute influence. We can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with grassroots activists and organizations, and use our positions to open doors for them.
- Speak simply. Replace philanthropy's euphemisms like "high net worth individuals" and "people living in poverty" with "rich" and "poor." Our country's blunt reality is hiding behind those extra syllables. If we want to fix it, we should be willing to say its name.
- Spend our entire endowments. Put our organizations' existence on the table when planning change strategy. If it's possible to prevent long-term problems by spending everything now, why stay in business to solve them in the future?

1. KEEPING THE FLAME BURING: FUNDING OCCUPY DIRECTLY

Many individuals around the country who want to contribute to this moment are doing so directly by sending small donations to the encampments. This is critical, as the encampments are the inspiration and heart of this moment. If donors want to fund Occupy directly, options include:

- Focusing on smaller encampments around the country that are receiving less media attention ([See Occupy Together](#)).
- [OccupyWallSt.org/donate](#) contains information on needs and how to contribute to 15 Occupations around the country, a list of causes in the Occupy Wall Street movement that are accepting donations, activist collectives doing support work and more.
- [Kickstarter Occupy](#) – Over 40 projects, some of which have been fully funded, many more of which have not, seeking support to document, celebrate and build the movement.

- [Occupy Wish List](#): This website lists specific material needs of many encampments around the country.
- OWS' fiscal sponsor, the [Alliance for Global Justice](#). AfGJ will help grow the Occupy Movement and help it move to the next step by supporting a largely self-organized, social forum-type meeting space for people in occupations all over the country to share challenges and solutions ranging from feeding and housing, to dealing with local governments and police forces, to discussing additional venues and support. A host Occupy would provide logistics, with AfGJ supporting fundraising and outreach.

New funding (separate from that contributed for OWS itself) will be needed to help subsidize transportation, food and meeting space, publicity/outreach, and some housing. Contact AfGJ's [Chuck Kaufman](#) for more information.

2. LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURAL AND MOVEMENT-BUILDING SUPPORT:

Funding Community Organizations Engaging with Occupy

By funding community organizations that are engaging with Occupations, donors can contribute to building a grassroots infrastructure that builds on years of community organizing and can help sustain this as a national and long-term movement.

Community-based and grassroots organizations around the country are contributing to the movement by offering trainings and teach-ins. They are helping with outreach, bringing the movement into communities that have not yet been involved. They are offering experienced organizers who have worked for decades on issues of economic and social justice. And they provide a way to sustain the momentum of the movement, carrying it through existing channels of people, organizations, and resources, for the long haul. A more thorough explanation of the reasoning behind this approach can be found below.

A Special Opportunity: In the upcoming months, a number of meetings will bring together occupiers and grassroots activists from around the country to encounter one another face to face and to broaden efforts to forge stronger linkages with grassroots organizers and networks. These efforts will be highly significant as the building of relationships is critical to sustaining change.

In this vein, the [National Planning Committee of the US Social Forum](#) is having conversations about how the USSF process throughout 2012 can support conversations between the occupy movement, the grassroots organizing sector and others. The NPC will meet in early January 2012 to define the organizing process for local and regional social forums, Peoples Movement Assemblies, and potentially a third USSF.

In addition, an international meeting is also tentatively planned for March in Tunisia, to bring

together representatives of “people's occupations” in conjunction with the [Maghreb Social Forum](#). [Mark](#) with The Funders Network on Transforming the Global Economy and [Leah](#) with the Sister Fund are following these events closely; contact them if you would like more information about these initiatives as they evolve.

There are many local and national networks and organizations doing this work, and international efforts either or directly linked to the Occupy moment. What is offered here is certainly nothing near a comprehensive list, but a sampling of groups that are actively engaged and would benefit from the ability to allocate more staff time to this movement. In going this route, we suggest that funders take care to collaborate with the organizations they are interested in funding and offer a long-term or phased strategy to support organizations over time as the movement unfolds.

International Opportunities

- [May First/People Link](#), an international network of over 600 members, offers free memberships to Occupy groups and are hosting [nearly 50 occupy movement websites from around the world](#), including [occupytogether.org](#), [occupiedwallstreetjournal.com](#), [occupyhamburg.org](#), and [www.occupy4iran.org](#). May First/People Link network currently includes many international members, who, like all members, receive direct support for their online communications needs. Soon, MF/PL will become a truly bi-national organization through its merge with a sister-group, LaNeta, in order to better support grassroots movements in the global south by ensuring the continued security and control of LaNeta members' websites, emails, and email lists. MF/PL will grow its 600-member-strong network by another 150 organizations, who are all based in Mexico, and transition into a bilingual organization in December 2011.
- Members of the [Niger Delta Citizens and Budget Platform](#) work on human rights, environmental justice advocacy, development, women rights, peace building, and are at the Occupy Nigeria movement that is now being fomented in response to the impending removal of the fuel subsidy, which will increase costs, dramatically impacting women and small businesses. Since the federal government hasn't invested in electrification even cities like Port Harcourt run on generators. Local folks will be hard pressed to buy fuel for their generators.
- Organizers of the [Maghreb Social Forum](#), working together with the communications team of the World Social Forum, is organizing the communications of the WSF 2013 locally in Egypt, regionally in North Africa and the Middle East, and internationally. The core goal of our work is to transform this global moment, helping us reach our potential as truly mass and inclusive movements. Support can be provided through the [WSF Donor Advised Fund](#) at the Tides Foundation.
- Friends of the Earth International has worked for decades to challenge economic policies that negatively impact the 99%, including at the nexus of the environment, societal impacts and human rights. [Environmental Rights Action](#) is the hub through

which many of the independent and critical grassroots groups across the Delta gained their first experience, creating a network of organizations on the ground with shared values and a shared worldview.

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- [Friends of the Earth International](#) (FOEI), a global federation of environmental rights advocacy groups, has said that they will stand by the Nigerian people to protest against any form of continued socio-economic, political and environmental injustice inline with the Occupy protests in some parts of the world. The global group which is Chaired by Nigeria's Nnimmo Bassey says that FOEI will rally around citizen groups anywhere in the world rising against any form of injustice, and the [FOEI is in support of the Occupy protests](#) and called for environmental activists and organizations around the world to join the movement to demand radical system change.
- [“We are the Solution: Celebrating Family Farming in Africa”](#) is a campaign led by African farmers to address the food crisis. The initiative, which is continent-wide, involves rural women’s associations, community leaders, and farmer federations in an effort to improve, promote, and share traditional agricultural knowledge and practices in the face of land grabs by international investors and corporate interests under the guise of feeding the world.
- Inspired by the Arab Spring, youth in Palestine have begun heavily organizing in the communities of the West Bank since May 2011, and [“Stand in Solidarity with Occupy Protesters.”](#) Using online communications and media, the popular movement against the Wall and settlements has begun to engage and benefit from youth organizing. Youth that protest on the streets of Palestine are faced with repression not only from Israeli authorities, but from the National Palestinian Authority as well. Yet through social media trainings and communications support, their voices continue to be heard beyond the Wall and in solidarity with the Occupy movements around the world.

National Alliances and Organizations

- **Ruckus Society** – Helping convene a [national training and capacity-building project](#) for the Occupations, to assess needs on the ground, provide trainings for occupy activists in nonviolent direct action, strategic planning, facilitation, legal/know your rights, media and more, while helping developing local and national action strategies to propel the movement forward.
- **Alliance of Community Trainers** – [Mentoring and organizing trainings](#) in many cities, working in collaboration with many other trainer networks and organizations including Ruckus to build best practices, provide trainer support and gather common training materials and resources to support the growing occupy movement. Wrote an [Open Letter to the Occupy Movement: Why We Need Agreements](#).
- **Grassroots Global Justice Alliance** – GGJ is organizing to move money from the military

budget to local economic projects based on people's needs, taking delegations to international high-level climate negotiations to stop false climate solutions, and fighting for access to clean air and water and land in indigenous and communities of color. The Alliance is [connecting the Occupy momentum to international encampment movements](#) by encouraging members to collaborate with occupy sites on key global days of action, including [1000 Durban for Climate Justice](#) with La Via Campesina. Created a [Tumblr site](#) to document campaigns from organized communities, in order to provide examples of demands that communities have been articulating, building and fighting for for decades. GGJ is mobilizing member organizations to [engage in the encampments](#) in ways that will boost the momentum of the occupy movement and of grassroots organizing.

- **Queers for Economic Justice - QEJ** is building a national coalition of progressive, grassroots LGBT organizations who make economic and racial justice central to their work. They have worked to organize a queer presence at OWS in New York City.
- **Jobs with Justice** - Linking labor groups to Occupy, acting as liaisons between local government and protestors, training and educating activists, helping to secure material support (e.g. port-a-potties, sound equipment, food, etc.), [helping local Occupy groups develop specific demands](#).
- **National Domestic Workers Alliance** – Organizing in solidarity with OWS [for power, respect and fair labor standards](#).
- **National People's Action** - Supporting Occupy movements across the mid-West; organizes [Make Wall Street Pay](#), and co-founded the [New Bottom Line](#) to bring together community, labor and other allies to hold Wall Street and the Big Banks accountable for fixing the mess they've made of the housing market and economy.
- **Peoples Movement Assembly (PMA)** - Strongly aligned with the US Social Forum and anchored by [Project South](#) and the [Southwest Workers Union](#), the Peoples Movement Assembly process has been used by grassroots social movements across the US to develop collective analysis and political positions and to design [coordinated action plans on local, regional, and national fronts](#). Two organizers on the national PMA Coordination Team spent a month visiting Occupy sites from New York to Atlanta in order to connect to key organizers and to build solidarity between the Occupy movement and other US social movements. The PMA Coordination Team will continue to support the Occupy movement by providing [facilitation and organizing resources](#), documenting and promoting neighborhood assemblies and occupy actions on the [PMA website](#), and working with the OWS tech team to build communications and IT infrastructure for national movement building.
- **Right to the City Alliance and City Life/Vida Urbana** (Boston, member of RTTC Alliance) – Together with Occupy Boston, labor unions, immigrant rights groups and other grassroots organizations, [mobilized 3,000 people](#) to target Bank of America and residents fighting

foreclosure took direct action to close Bank of America.

- **Southerners on New Ground** - [SONG](#) is a membership-based, Southern regional organization made up of working class, people of color, immigrants, and rural LGBTQ people. They vision a world where the 3rd shift factory worker and the drag queen at the bar down the block see their lives as connected and are working together for liberation.
- **Take Back the Land** – A national network of organizations dedicated to elevating housing to the level of a human right and securing community control over land, [working to create popular mobilization](#) to protest against evictions and foreclosures.
- **The Institute for Policy Studies** is producing fact sheets and has an excellent website on inequality ([inequality.org](#)), and is mobilizing people behind fair ways to tax Wall Street, corporations and the wealthy ([www.other98%.com](#)); 2. IPS is working on a transformative vision of shifting from a speculative Wall Street to a green Main Street economy (see [www.neweconomyworkinggroup.org](#)); 3. America is not broke, and IPS is producing a study on Monday that lays out over \$800 billion in new revenues that can come from fairly taxing Wall Street, the wealthy, corporations, and pollution, and by cutting military spending ([www.ips-dc.org](#)).

Local Organizations:

- **CAAV** – Based in NYC and organizing Asian Communities, [CAAV](#), a member of GGJ Alliance, has participated in OWS marches, held teach-ins, and is joining in actions with Occupy Wall Street around gentrification and evictions.
- **Causa Justa/Just Cause** – (San Francisco and Oakland, member of GGJ Alliance and RTTC Alliance) Led a large action to “Foreclose on Wall Street West” in the Bay Area, working to bridge across organizing sectors to create a collaboration between white direct action networks, base-building groups in communities of color, labor unions and organized workers, and the San Francisco encampment. [The action mobilized 1,000 people](#) and shut down Wells Fargo Bank for 5 hours.
- **Chinese Progressive Association** – (San Francisco, member of GGJ Alliance) Held the [first teach-in on the Occupy movement](#) in a community of color in the Bay Area, and is lifting up the voices of Chinese immigrants by posting their “We Are the 99%” stories in Chinese .
- **Community Voices Heard** – CVH is a member organization of low-income people, predominantly women with experience on welfare, building power in New York City and State to [improve the lives of our families and communities](#). CAAV helped organize a massive labor/community march in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street, and has begun a series of teach-ins at OWS about Participatory Budgeting in NYC.
- **Families United for Racial and Economic Justice (FUREE)** – (New York) [Promoted the Move](#)

[Your Money campaign](#), encouraging people to remove their money from big banks and into credit unions.

- **Rural Organizing Project** – (Oregon) Supports rural and small town occupations. Has created resources for “[How to Occupy](#)” including guides for outreach and holding General Assemblies.
- **Solidarity NY** – The [SolidarityNYC Project](#) is collectively directed by a committed group of activists, artists, and community members, that connects, supports, and [promotes New York City’s solidarity economy, working closely with](#) GEO (Grassroots Economic Organizing) Collective, the New Economy Network, and the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network.
- **Organizing Upgrade** - is [providing a space](#) where radical organizers who are rooted in long-term organizing work in poor and working class communities and communities of color can dialogue about our work to build relationships with the Occupy movement.
- **Vermont Workers Center** - As part of the Global Day of Action in solidarity with the Occupy Movement, more than 1000 people marched all over Vermont. This was mobilization with an organizing mission - we canvassed hundreds of doors beforehand and afterwards for the [Put People First campaign](#) to get Vermont lawmakers to make economic and social policies put people, not corporations first.
- **Wayside Center for Popular Education** - (Virginia and broader Southeast) Wayside is a popular education center providing training, rural retreat space, and long term movement building capacity for organizers and communities in the South. Wayside has been providing political education and strategy training to Virginia encampments. www.waysidecenter.org"
- **The Labor/Community Strategy Center** – A center for regional, national and international movement-building has been [working to support](#) Occupy LA.

3. TACKLING THE ISSUES

Money and Politics

A central message that is resonating in this moment is that corporations have too much power. Supporting this movement can take the form of funding organizations that are working to break the tie between corporations and the government. Many of these organizations are in touch with the Occupy encampments, where “Corporations are not People” is a constant refrain. But they are also working on a local, state, and national levels to push forward specific pieces of legislation around the influence of corporations in elections and campaigns.

- **Free Speech for People** – A campaign proposing a [Constitutional Amendment to end corporate personhood](#) and overturn Citizen’s United, using a grassroots, transpartisan strategy.

- **Move to Amend** – A progressive [effort to get money out of politics](#) through a Constitutional Amendment asserting that money is not speech.
- The **Funders Collaborative on Civic Participation** is placing special emphasis on money and politics as a key issue, and will feature the Occupy movement and the opportunities that it presents at two sessions at its December 6-8th [FCCP Winter Convening](#) in DC.
- **Fund For The Republic**, the grantmaking arm of the new national organization, [United Republic \(UR\)](#). Formerly known as Democracy Fund, UR is an ambitious enterprise focused on a singular assertion: Democracy is not for sale.

Creating Alternatives: Climate Justice and Sustainability

While in many ways this is a movement of resistance to the financialization of the economy and the corrupting influence of money in politics, it is also a movement that is based on the belief that another world is possible, that there are alternative ways of structuring our society and communities. Central to supporting alternatives is attention to environmental sustainability and climate solutions that are real, and just.

There are many organizations that are leading the way to support grassroots climate efforts that are real, and just. In the spirit of the short documentary co-produced with FNTG and Kontent Films ([Where We Live: The New Face of Climate Activism](#)), Solidago Foundation is setting up a mechanism to support and to collaboratively connect grantmakers around investing in this work. Funders interested in joining others in support of building this initiative can contact [Sarah Christiansen at Solidago](#).

A few Responses from within Philanthropy

- The Funding Exchange has established a Rapid Response Fund to provide quick financial resources to meet emergency needs. They are [now collecting donations](#) that will be delivered immediately to the Wall Street Protest movement.
- A number of funds, such as [North Star Fund](#), the [Funding Exchange](#) and the [Social Justice Fund](#), have built strong relationships with grantees and are actively supporting them as they engage in this moment.
- The [Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing](#) is fully engaged in efforts to support youth in these efforts. They and other philanthropic initiatives are all ready and able to take in and redistribute contributions to community organizations on the ground.
- [Resource Generation](#) working with [Wealth for the Common Good](#) created the blog: [We are the 1 percent. We stand with the 99 percent](#), which has a [take action](#) section.

- Confluence Philanthropy's [Carry the Cash Campaign](#) is collecting pledges from Foundations and Donors who will move cash assets to community banks, community development finance institutions, credit unions, and guaranteed nonprofit loan programs as participants in the Campaign. Their goal is to collect and move \$50 million by spring 2012.

And finally (for now...):

A Funders Network Alliance In Support of Grassroots Organizing and Movement-Building

Since the current crisis began unfolding in 2007, institutional funding for progressive grassroots organizing has steadily declined, even as new grassroots organizations, practices, leaders and alliances offer concrete evidence of being able to lead the process of deep transformation needed. Inspired by increasingly dynamic community organizing and movement-building in the US and around the world, a set of funder networks are coming together to increase resources to the grassroots organizing sector – base-building organizations, their networks and their NGO and other allies.

This effort emerges out of the context of [funder/movement discussions](#) organized over a number of years by the [Funders Network on Transforming the Global Economy](#) (FNTG) within the US and World Social Forum process and similar spaces. It is modeling the decade-long experience of the [Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing](#) (FCYO) to help legitimize and bring new funding into the youth organizing sector, informed by movement leaders and funders. And it will incorporate tools and approaches being developed by the [Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace](#) to expand dialogue and learning among funders around the world. Over the past four decades, thousands of community-based organizations have taken root and grown throughout the globe, responding to local needs, though anchored in core values -- democracy, food sovereignty, immigrant rights, workers rights, racial and gender justice. This grassroots sector represents something new within the wider social justice ecosystem, distinguished from other community organizing efforts or policy and advocacy organizations in a number of key ways:

- It is rooted in and accountable to the **frontline communities directly impacted by the issues addressed.**
- It **builds local power**, developing endogenous leadership, membership bases, and institutions, promoting genuine participation and democracy in organizations.
- It is **linked trans-locally and internationally**, and building international linkages remains central to its strategies and culture.
- **It connects individual and societal transformation**, seeking deeper social change over more limited transactional political goals, and evolving the theory and practice of how individual and broader social transformation are intertwined and inextricable.

- It is **beginning to contend for power at scale beyond the local**, waging more offensive campaigns, building progressive political movements independent of major political parties, engaging in electoral organizing as a strategy to build new bases and power.
- It **develops new kinds of alliances and regional, national and international vehicles** to build political strength between organizations and movements, bridge issue silos, allow for greater policy impacts, and begin to build the infrastructure required for mass social movements.
- It is **pioneering innovation and experimentation** in organizing method, leadership development training, sustainability models, and organizational form- from a recognition that new vehicles have to be imagined in order to respond to contemporary conditions.

Working closely with others within the funder community, efforts within this emerging funder network alliance aim to combine with other programs and initiatives to make philanthropy's collective efforts in support of these new grassroots movements and organizing strategies greater than the sum of our individual parts.

Contact [Karen Zellermyer](#) (Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace), [Supriya Pillai](#) (Fundators' Collaborative on Youth Organizing) or [Mark Randazzo](#) (FNTG) for more information about this initiative, and efforts to support long term organizing and movement-building work.