



# “Our People Deserve This”

A story of the Black-led  
Movement Fund’s journey  
to Participatory  
Grantmaking

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**“We're trying to move money to  
dismantle anti-Blackness and to create  
a future where we're leaving none of  
our kin behind.”**

**- BLMF Staff**

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# An Introduction

The practice of participatory grantmaking (PGM) is not a strictly outlined process. Indeed, many organizations that use participatory grantmaking do it in different ways. In 2021 when Julia Beatty, the director of the Black-led Movement Fund (BLMF), began envisioning a switch to PGM, she knew her team would have a lot of choices to make.

The story of BLMF's transition to PGM centers lived and learned experiences while containing themes of relationship-building and reflection. Lived and learned experiences shift us from a practice of solely valuing expertise gained from formal education and rather reminds us that expertise is gained through a variety of life experiences. Hence, you will see that the BLMF team, the support ecosystem, and the committee members bring an abundance of lived and learned experiences related to distributing resources around the Black movement and community power building ecosystem. Throughout this process, the BLMF staff have formed and honored relationships with their grantees, colleagues, contractors, and ultimately themselves.

When Patricia Hill Collins discusses intersectionality, she notes that it requires a certain level of self-reflexiveness. She suggests that as we move through spaces and experiences, that we must consider not just the way others engage but also how we engage -- urging us to consider our positionality as we move through the world. The BLMF team is composed of individuals who, were they not staff, could have served on the PGM committee at some point in their histories. This connectedness to the work they do and the community they do it within is noteworthy especially as most literature on PGM neglects to discuss the potential for overlapping identities. Regardless of the overlap in identity, the BLMF staff are intentional in de-centering themselves in this process because being staffed within the funding agency inherently comes with power.



# Methodology

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recount the fund's transition to participatory grantmaking.

In response to the continued violence against Black people in the U.S., the Black-led Movement Fund received a significant increase in funding support. This increase in budget coupled with growing trust with donors provided the opportunity to envision a transition to participatory grantmaking. This transition was guided by a mission to expand their reach and distribute their funding budget further across the Black organizing community. In the end, BLMF disbursed \$6 million to 30 organizations with the support of a 8 person committee.

## Data

To learn about the fund's journey to participatory grantmaking, we conducted documentation reviews, learning conversations with involved stakeholders, and a meaning-making session to interpret findings.

## Approach

We analyzed the data to highlight themes related to the experiences of the various actors involved in the Black-led Movement Fund's first iteration of participatory grantmaking. We found that the primary actors are often the Black-led Movement Fund staff, participatory grantmaking committee members, movement and organizing community, and Borealis Philanthropy as the encompassing organization.

We organized our findings by identifying the ways the various actors benefited from the process as well as the successes and growth edges.

## Key Terminology

**BLMF** - Black-led Movement Fund

**PGM** - Participatory Grantmaking

**Borealis** - Borealis Philanthropy (the organization)



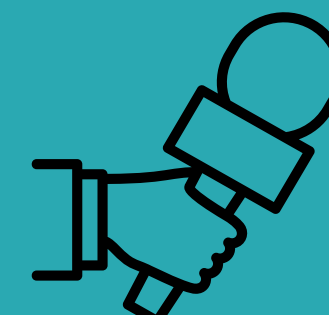
### Documentation

A review of items spanning from the start of PGM planning and design to sending out award letters to new grantee partners.



### Interviews

5 PGM Committee Members  
3 BLMF Staff  
5 Additional Supporters



### Meaning-Making Session

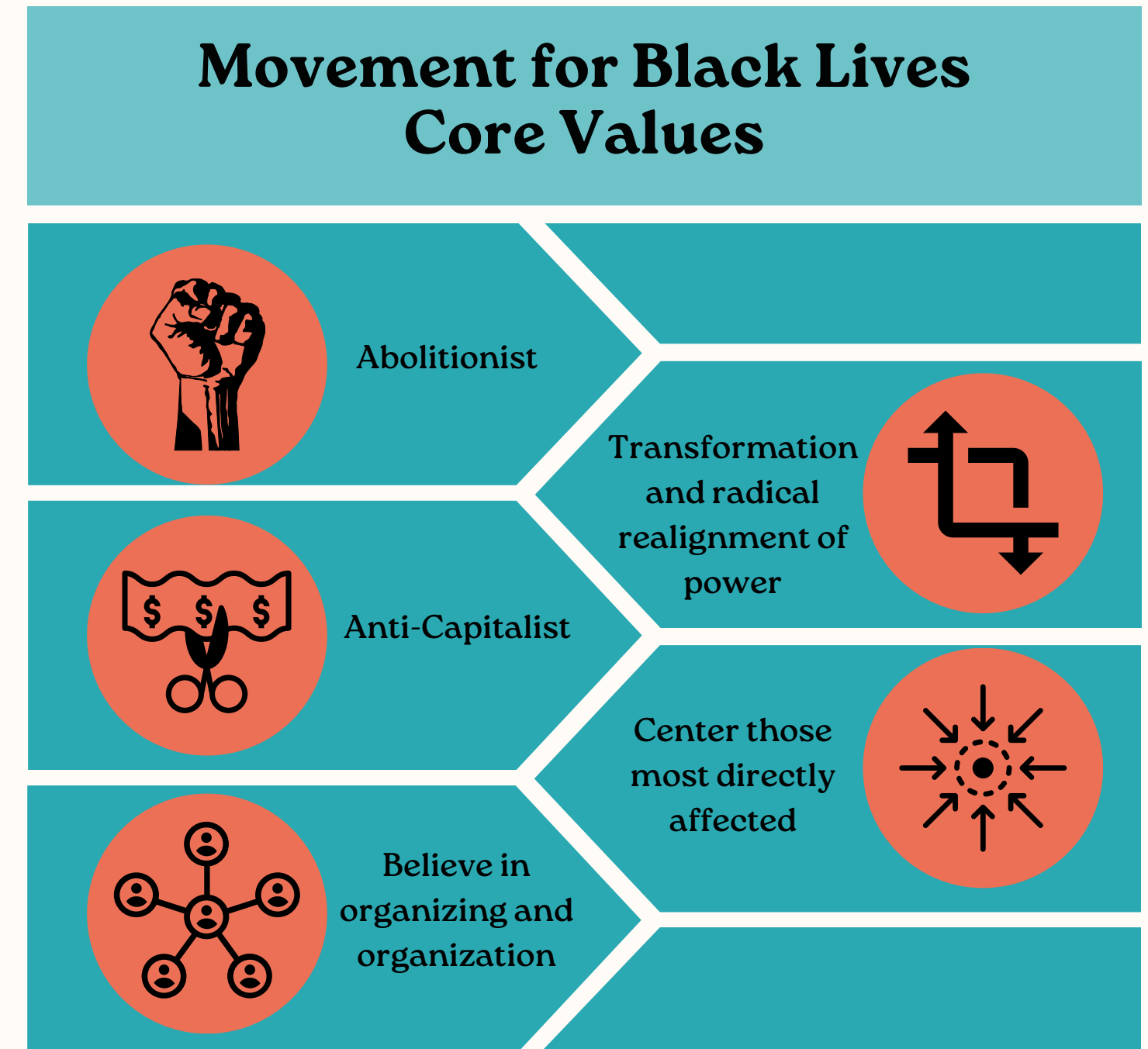
One session with 3 BLMF Staff members present to add context and interpret findings.

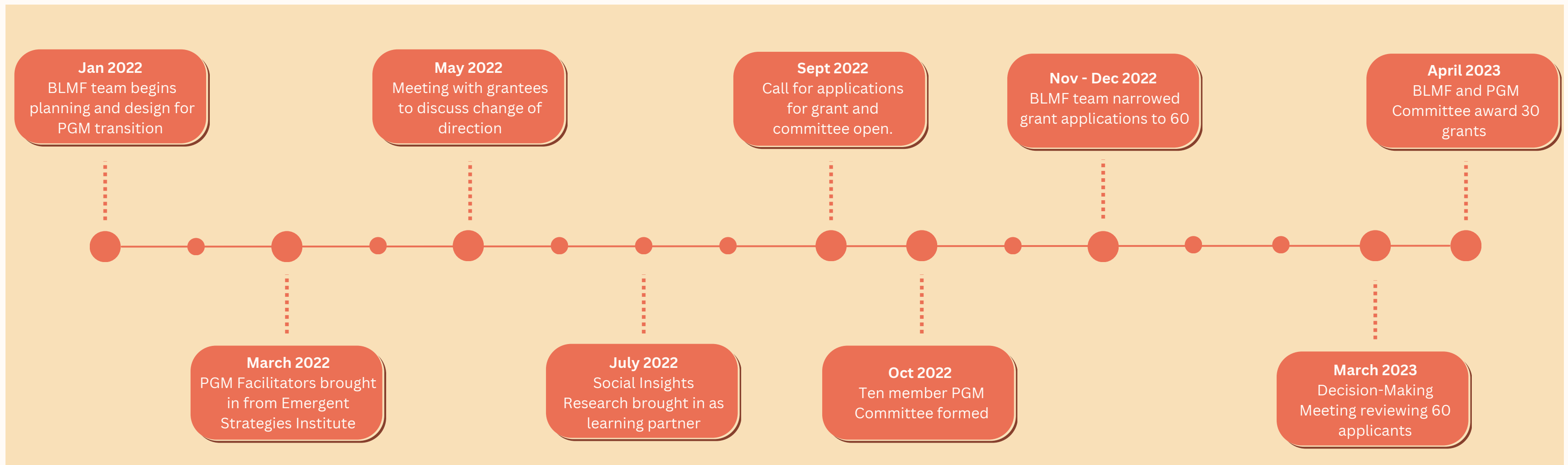
# Timeline

At the start of this work, Julia Beatty, Director of BLMF, found that there was sparse support from donors following the murder of Mike Brown, increasing awareness of the violence against Palestine, and emergence of the Movement for Black lives. So although the initial goal of the BLMF was to provide multi-year funding to a collective of organizations, for six years they provided annual grants. In response, she worked steadily to build relationships with donors and pursue fundraising opportunities.

In 2021, funding increased following the highly publicized murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. The increase in money coupled with the deeper relationships with funders that the team had developed provided an opportune time for BLMF to expand their reach and try out a participatory grantmaking approach. While the potential to transition to PGM was exciting for the growing BLMF team, they recognized that they had plenty to learn. The team set out to learn more about how other funds were doing PGM and plan a process that distributed power and resources further around the Black movement and power building communities.

Within Borealis Philanthropy, there are 8 other funds; three of them were already doing some version of PGM. [Disability Inclusion Fund, Fund for Trans Generations, Communities for transforming Policing] The BLMF team began having focused conversations with representatives from the Borealis funds using PGM (at Borealis and beyond) and Charles Long (Movement for Black Lives). These conversations catalyzed a plan on who and how to engage various important stakeholders including grantees and a PGM consultant, Katy Love.





Building up and into these relationships led to the fund receiving invaluable support from the ecosystem of philanthropy and community around them. By January 2022, the BLMF began planning their process by identifying what felt central to them. In March, they contacted facilitators from the former Emergent Strategy Institute. The facilitators provided support for the planning and facilitation of multiple processes including an important meeting with grantees in May of 2022. In this meeting, the BLMF team shared with grantees their planned change of direction and asked for input around what ideal committee members and grantees for the fund were like.

Social Insights was contracted as a learning partner in July and launched in September to assist with reflection. Also in September 2022, after nearly a year of planning and learning conversations, BLMF released their call for

grant proposals and opened their application for committee members. From this busy month, 40 committee member applications were received by the time the application closed in October. The 10 person committee was chosen near the end of October after application review and discussion with Nikki Brown Booker of DIF and Charles Long of M4BL. The committee was onboarded with a discussion of the history of the fund and the goals of the grantmaking on December 1st.

During November and December, the BLMF staff elected to do a first cut of the applications. This was the first time that BLMF had done an open call for grantee applications; they received over 350 applications. In order to have time to translate the chosen applications they rigorously and quickly narrowed the application pool to 60. Some applications were cut due to not meeting qualifications such as being Black-led.

A photograph of several paper cutouts of human figures in various shades of brown and black, arranged in a circle and holding hands. The cutouts are set against a light-colored, textured background, possibly a piece of paper or fabric. The lighting creates soft shadows on the surface below the cutouts.

# Timeline

In January 2023, the BLMF team went on a work retreat to do some internal reflection and planning. They conducted a process of plus and delta to review what things had gone well (plus) and what things they would change in the future (delta). Come mid-January the committee members participated in political education and an overview of the upcoming process.

Properly onboarded, committee members were given access to salesforce where they would be able to access the applications. Disappointingly, during decision-making the BLMF team was told that the Borealis board would need to approve the selections that the committee would make. The BLMF team shared this shift with the committee.

Discouraged but not out, the committee members continued their engagement with the process. The BLMF team worked to check-in with committee members. Come March, 8 committee members engaged with the decision-making process. Through this four day virtual process, the committee members presented, discussed, and voted on all 60 applicants, selecting 30 to be awarded.

The Borealis Board approved the selected grantees and they were announced via a press release on April 17, 2023. The PGM committee had successfully disbursed \$6 million to Black-led organizations working to build movement and community power.

The way that the BLMF team has built relationships and created a praxis of reflection has created a pathway towards continued growth with support. At various points throughout this process, the BLMF team has prioritized reflection with their work retreats, focused meetings, conversations with community and grantee partners, facilitated workshops, and contracting of us, Social Insights Research, to help capture their process. Leaning further into this praxis of reflection, we share findings from our study below- highlighting the primary gains associated with this transition to PGM, what was successful, and where there are growth edges.



# PGM Process Gains

“I feel super proud that we envisioned this thing and we did it. I’m just really proud. It’s great. From the perspective of a black person, we get to send a message that our people deserve this.” - BLMF staff

When embarking on their journey to participatory grantmaking, the BLMF staff wanted to increase the benefits of philanthropy while reducing the harms. Through our analysis, we find that the gains related to the transition to PGM are widespread.

We find that Borealis and the BLMF were able to:

- Expand alignment with their values
- Democratize their grantmaking process
- Practice deeper commitment and trust in community
- Extend their reach
- Increase their credibility

## Borealis Philanthropy

The BLMF is nested within Borealis Philanthropy along with eight other funds. Through its connection to the funds, Borealis Philanthropy benefits by way of its nested funds’ activities.

Borealis Philanthropy seeks to resource communities and shift power. In providing a space where funds may use participatory grantmaking, Borealis Philanthropy is able to be in greater alignment with their values around shifting power and deeper their commitment to communities.

They are also able to resources a broader breadth of community through the expansion of the fund’s network through the committee members. By broadening their spread of resources positively through the fund and its related committee members, they increase their credibility. **As such, communities may recognize Borealis Philanthropy as a whole as a place that supports community work in a way that engages community members.**

## Black-led Movement Fund

In turn these things are true for the fund as well. The fund designed and committed to a participatory grantmaking approach to be in alignment with their values around trusting and investing in movement and community power building. **They recognized that the plight of anti-Blackness is an issue of power and resolved to attend to some of the power imbalance in philanthropy. As such, they devoted themselves to trusting the very communities they hope to resource by inviting them more deeply into a democratized version of grantmaking.** In doing so, they were able to learn more about organizations than they would have independently of the committee. They also learned about the organizations that the committee members hailed from which may not have been known before. Similar to the larger organization, the fund increases the positive impact and interactions it has with the community in turn increasing their credibility in the ecosystem.

# PGM Process Gains

“I also run a participatory grantmaking program through my day job so it's been interesting to see the other side- another group of people who are doing a similar thing. Because I run it, I've never been a part of one, so I'm seeing both sides of it right now.” - 2023 Committee Member

## Committee Members

Previous literature on PGM suggests mutual benefits in the PGM process. As such, the BLMF PGM committee members note the following benefits:

- Experience having their work valued
- Practice with generative conflict
- Education about philanthropy and PGM
- Learning about other justice experiments/projects

### Experience having their work valued

While the literature on PGM suggests that compensating committee members is optional, the BLMF considers it an essential part of the work. Hence, committee members engaged with the decision-making process were compensated for their time. **Paying the members for their time, expertise, and experience expresses that those things are valuable and appreciated in the process.**

Symbolically, committee members' inclusion in the PGM process conveyed the value of their expertise. **Above and beyond that, members expressed feeling supported which indicated that their engagement was important and *deserved* support.**

## Practice with generative conflict

Another benefit that was commonly mentioned was being able to practice generative conflict in a space conducive to it.

THE WILDFIRE PROJECT DEFINES GENERATIVE CONFLICT AS BEING ABLE TO “ENGAGE CONFLICT IN WAYS THAT GENERATE MORE POSSIBILITIES, GREATER CONNECTION, AND FULLER EXPRESSION, INSTEAD OF SHUTTING THOSE THINGS DOWN. THIS INCLUDES BOTH MOVING PAST CONFLICT AVOIDANCE AND UNHEALTHY ATTACHMENT TO CONFLICT.”

The directly involved committee members, facilitators, and staff suggest that conflict occurred and it was generative. They learned about each other and themselves and were able to process various perspectives related to the potential grantees and the decision-making process. **Having the opportunity to engage in generative conflict appeared to be something they could take into other spaces to deepen their relationship with healthy conflict.**

*Importantly, not all conflicts felt generative to all participants in the process. This is discussed under BLMF growth edge number 3.*

# PGM Process Gains

“We had a full lunch because they gave us a giftcard to get lunch with. And I love that..” - 2023 Committee Member

## Committee Members Cont.

### Education about philanthropy and PGM

As commonly noted in the literature, committee members were able to learn more about philanthropy broadly and PGM specifically. Perhaps surprisingly multiple committee members had some experience with PGM including as funders in other spaces. Regardless of their previous experience, most noted appreciating the space to discuss grantmaking.

For example, some appreciated learning that grantmaking is not inherently about deciding who deserves money but is rather about where money is most beneficial in the funding areas of the philanthropies in that moment. **For some members who also seek grants, this helped them frame their personal experiences with being denied. For committee members involved in funding projects, they expressed the usefulness of learning from another PGM process.**

“I was a contender for the Black-led Movement Fund and I didn't get it. And I feel so much better, because I know that the process was diligent. And I know we didn't get it, because it [the process] was. It didn't even hurt me at all and I'm not sad.” - 2023 Committee Member

## Learning about other justice experiments/projects

Last of the benefits that will be noted here, is that committee members shared a deep gratitude for being able to learn about the work being done around the nation. In addition to learning from the applicants, committee members also learned about the organizations of the other members. This connectedness to the work was meaningful and inspiring.

“It really opened my eyes to the work that is happening across this country by people that are doing it for pennies, but it's making a difference in their communities. **So to witness that was remarkable. And to learn about other organizations across the country that are actually trying to fight back against a system of oppression, a system that was not created, designed, and implemented with that in mind and they are actually making headway.**”

- 2023 Committee Member



# PGM Process Gains

## Community

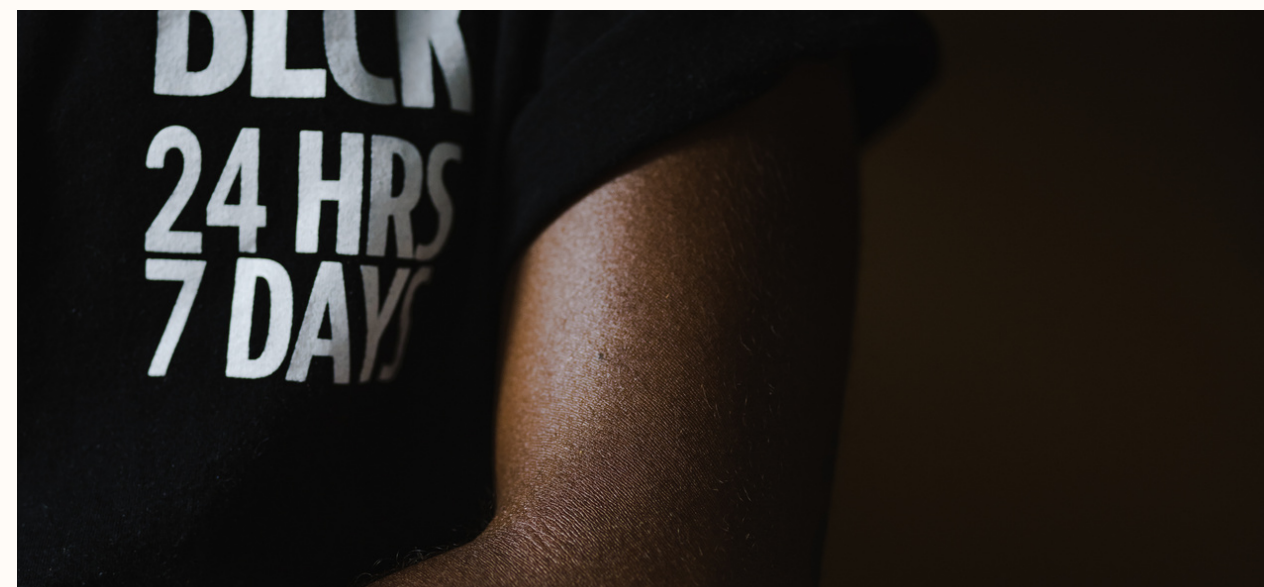
In PGM, the desire is to bring the community into the grantmaking process. While this engagement should strengthen the grantmaking process and better meet the goals of the fund, it should also directly benefit the community.

We found that the community benefited in two primary ways

- Building additional touchpoints with philanthropy and funders
- Experience more impact through more community vetted projects being funded

With more community members involved as committee members and grants being distributed even further around the community, more people are engaging with philanthropy. Receiving a grant is often not merely a process of receiving funds. **The BLMF grantee partners are now part of a network that is continuing to develop.**

Additionally, by funding projects reviewed by committee members, the community could experience added benefit due to the thought and knowledge put into the decision-making and the breadth of organizations creating news ways to support community. While not all organizations will have their intended impact, many will. **The distinctive knowledges of community members can contribute to a more impactful grantee portfolio.**



# Lessons Learned

Gains were experienced across the ecosystem of the BLMF PGM process. And yet, as with many transitions, it is an iterative process.

To support BLMF's further development of its PGM process and the work that people are doing in other spaces, we now turn to considering practices that were successful and where there are growth edges.

**While we conclude that BLMF's transition to PGM was a beneficial process, we recognize places for intentionality and improvement.**



# Lessons Learned

## Borealis Philanthropy

Borealis Philanthropy contains nine funds dedicated to supporting movements across the nation. On its website Borealis names its mission as:

“Our grantmaking centers the wisdom and experiences of those who are most impacted by injustice and gives them the support and space to bring innovation, creativity, and impact on the issues they’re working to change. We strive to give multi-year, unrestricted funding, provide capacity building support, and rapid response funding.”

As a reflection of some of these values, four of the nine funds in Borealis use a participatory grantmaking model which directly engages people close to the funds’ focal issues.



Here we found it useful to sort the information by actors again. You will notice that Borealis is considered distinctively from BLMF. This is because the organization has processes that are established without the fund’s full input. Additionally, the fund operates within the organization but uses a certain level of autonomy to develop its processes. Importantly, committee members also noted this distinction by distinguishing between their experiences with the Borealis organization and the fund. You will also notice that the community is not considered a distinctive group here.

## Areas of Success

### 1 Provided a place to Network

Borealis provided a place for BLMF to network. Through this network, BLMF conducted learning conversations with the three funds already using PGM. **They gathered recommendations, gained a larger environment for recruitment, and learned models for doing this work.**

They also received a referral to consult with an experienced participatory grantmaker. **During the implementation process, representatives from other Borealis funds helped review committee member applications contributing their learned and lived expertise to the process.**

### 2 Shifted with funds’ transitions

Additionally, it is noteworthy that Borealis Philanthropy followed the lead of some of its funds in 2022 by adopting a theory of change that values sharing power with the organizing community. This shift cannot be taken for granted as with many institutions, philanthropy is enmeshed in tradition.

# Lessons Learned

## Growth Edges

### 1 Space for less oversight and greater autonomy

Borealis provided support for funds to use PGM; however, during the process it shifted its previous stance to require board approval of all committee approved choices.

**According to one committee member this means that the committee did not do grantmaking; they did a less empowered form of decision-making.**

Another committee member considered this a flex or demonstration of institutional control and dreamed about what is possible with full buy-in. (see next page)

### 2 Space to build more accessible internal processes

In addition, **fund representatives found it necessary to outsource support for their PGM process as the options offered by the organization were insufficient or costly.** For example, for material translation in support of BLMF's mission towards language justice, the Borealis resources had an extensive wait time.

### 3 Space to investigate the balance between trust and due diligence

Lastly, **some of Borealis' requests for information add additional burden to the process of obtaining funding disproportionately for under-resourced organizations.** These requirements could impede award due to capacity rather than capability. An example of this required information are detailed budgets. The timings of these requests can amplify the challenge with some additional materials being requested post decision-making just ahead of the award.

“[Considering a different PGM process] I would call that grantmaking. But in this case, you're just decision-makers, until we come up with some other term. Grant making doesn't feel true... **we weren't grantmakers if we weren't actually the final call on who gets funded.**”

-2023 Committee Member

“Power says, ‘let's do participatory grantmaking’ and power revokes. Your freedom to do so- it's all in their [funders] hands to decide and they can do it in real time.

And they [Borealis] did it. But then I wanna just say in Borealis's defense, it is most likely they're gonna go with our recommendations. I think they probably already have, but it still doesn't feel good to do that like casual flex....

My hopes are that the organizations can be trusted to do it... that the funders can be trusted to do it... that they're principled- they don't wield their power in the wrong ways. They let the process happen and don't do those flexes at the end.

Because if they do, if those organizations shift to this, I think we're gonna find that our movement is gonna be more equitably funded.

Organizations are gonna have to actually do the the real work instead of just having the perspective that ‘I know who to hobnob with at this conference and so I'm gonna get some money.’ But instead, I actually have to do the real work; I have to really show up in my application.”

- 2023 PGM Committee Member



# BLMF

## Areas of Success

### Curated a Black and Trans/NGC/Queer committee


The BLMF composed a committee that centered the most marginalized of the community they seek to serve, Black movement and community power builders. According to the fund this included Black Trans/non-gender conforming/queer people.

### Built relationships with peers & community

The fund built and deepened relationships with peers and community. The BLMF has collaborated with other Borealis funds through the learning and early implementation stages. The BLMF also engaged with community members through community discussions with previous grantees to further define their PGM process and with committee members. Via these relationships, BLMF has asked for support with planning and implementing their process.

### Leaned into their values around shifting power

With this committee, the BLMF developed a process that according to committee members engaged them to review and make recommendations about future grantees. While this does not shatter the power structure in and around philanthropy, it does contribute to a shifting of the power.

An illustration featuring several hands of various shades of brown and tan. The hands are holding a large, circular sign with a white center and concentric rings of orange and red. The sign contains a quote in black text. The background is white.

“There's easier ways to work. Somebody brilliant has already figured something out that we could implement and also like. Its just so much easier to do sh\*t together.”

- BLMF staff

# BLMF Growth Edges

“We didn't really identify ourselves in those ways, and so maybe just bringing those pieces of ourselves more explicitly into the space in some way would have been nice.” - 2023 Committee Member

## 1 Space to continue to broaden committee composition and representation

Most of the committee members identified as queer and all were Black. Some members were disabled. **Ideally, people with marginalized identities are able to provide a lens and perspective that can highlight the experiences of people with overlapping identities. The diversity can help better reflect the community being served by the fund.** Still committee members noted some gaps. Specifically, while the committee included trans-members, they were in the minority and some noted that the final grantee portfolio did not include as many of the trans-led organizations as it could have. Perhaps reflecting that cis-members did not always see the same value in the trans-led organizations. Committee members noted that the committee did not include many transmasculine (transmasculine) people as well.

Committee members also recognized that the identities of other participants were not clear to them. Direct experience is valued in these types of spaces. **In agreement with some committee members, we recommend an explicit and voluntary sharing of relevant identities.** Committee members expressed interest in knowing whether other members were disabled, neuroatypical, queer, trans, etc. This voluntary but intentional sharing could support a space where direct experience can be valued and gauged as part of the discussions.



# BLMF Growth Edges



## 2

### Space to add time for deeper decision-making

For this first iteration of the PGM process, BLMF hired facilitators for support. Facilitators contributed in multiple processes (see process summary above) including the decision-making meetings. **For some committee members, they perceived power with the facilitators because of the structured schedule for the meetings which sometimes meant less time for discussion.** At the same time, committee members acknowledged challenges fully engaging with all applications and thus being unprepared for a discussion.

“During the decision making process it felt so rushed when we were going through the ‘Yes,’ ‘no,’ ‘maybe’ process. And Yeah, it was literally, I remember, like 7 min for each application, and we wanted to make sure we spoke about every application which I think is really important. but just like the way it was regimented.

We're constantly strapped for time; that's sort of what it felt like. and it was like ‘sh\*t. Should I say something at all because we're gonna go over the 7 minutes?’”

- 2023 Committee Member

# BLMF Growth Edges

# 3

## Space to deepen curriculum and level setting

In December and January of the BLMF's first PGM process, committee members were welcomed with an orientation and then a philanthropy 101 course and political education. These sessions would benefit from expansion. One committee member noted that due to their immersion in the organizing world, they believed that the political education lesson could have moved deeper.

**This space is also an opportunity to learn more about the other committee members, do level setting, and practice generative conflict.** Learning more about the other committee members lends itself to the growth edge listed above.

**Level setting will help the fund further identify its values and what can be done when values appear to compete.** There were examples of this competition in this inaugural decision-making meeting. Several committee members discussed a situation where it appeared that values around identity and values around abolition were at odds. This discussion while resolved in the space did not feel generative to all members. Ultimately, some members left the space feeling as if not all members shared key values necessary for BLMF's grantmaking. These growth edges reflect the areas of improvement that committee members noted.

Generative conflict can be practiced through planned debate as suggested by a supporter of the implementation. This will help participants feel more prepared to engage in discussion, deepen their understanding of the values of the fund, and get to know one another better.

“I feel like the [political education] conversation sort of came down to ‘Yes, we want to support organizations. We want to funnel money toward these organizations. Also, we're still working within the system. Like this is not a solution.’ and then it sort of stopped there with how do we sit with these feelings rather than trying to actively create a process that sort of side steps these issues or is a creative alternative to these issues, You know, I just felt like the political education could have gone deeper.”

- 2023 Committee Member

“Another thing that we're thinking about is how we better define things upfront for folks. So both in the RFP [Request for Proposals] and also in the decision making meetings. So, for example, we say Our values are in alignment with the Movement for Black Lives, right? Well, they have things like abolition- Well what do we mean by that, because that can mean a lot of different things?”

- BLMF Staff

# BLMF Growth Edges

“It's the difference of adding more people to the pot, you know. It means you have to move in a different way. I think with less folks, less hands in the pot in the kitchen. You can kind of move a little quicker. So I would say it seems to me there's still a lot of learning here of “Whoa!” Inviting this whole committee and these stakeholders and all these moving parts- it's like, wow, like we really have to move at an entirely different pace, and I think, like our team has. It feels like our team's been used to kind of and then you just do it. But in this process you can't, cause you're like. “Wait. We are accountable to this committee that actually made these suggestions. And in order for us to uphold...” So I think, yeah, maybe before it's just the ability to move a little faster. You know how it is where it's like- It's your house so you can leave your bed unmade, but it's like you want to make your bed when you got guests coming over. It kind of requires us to- not require perfectionism, but just like really have our sh\*t together a little bit. You know. It's like we're inviting people into a process. So we want to make sure people are taken care of.”

- BLMF Staff

## 4

### Space to streamline feedback loops

The BLMF staff recognize that inviting people into the grantmaking process is not a task to take lightly. Rather it requires additional work. One of the things that requires a great deal of adjustment is communication. **In a traditional grantmaking process, the involved people likely have multiple touchpoints and a cadence as a team. In a PGM process, the people may be more deeply enmeshed in other work and there may not be long established lines of communication lines amongst them.** As BLMF has begun to create these new systems of communication, there is space to increase the feedback loops while also pushing engagement deeper.

Committee members expressed their interest in seeing the various areas of the process. **While, they appreciated their well defined roles and being able to stick to them, they also wanted to know what else was happening.** Specifically, committee members wanted to know about what happened after their decision-making including: whether their recommendations were approved by the board, how grantees were informed of their award, and how grantees were informed of their not being awarded in this cycle. One supporter of the process suggested that future iterations could involve committee members co-writing award and denial letters to applicants explaining some of their reasoning to help the process be even more generative and keep committee members in the loop. In this iteration, BLMF worked to release newsletters to the committee members to share the progress in the process.

# BLMF Growth Edges

## 5

### Space to deepen curriculum and level setting

One theme that the BLMF staff reflected on deeply was around their efforts at accessibility. **In the future, the BLMF team will plan their accessibility measures earlier and be more intentional throughout the process.** They will also recruit more members who benefit from translation. More time will be allotted for translating materials as well. In the end, they learned a lot about the process and things that would be helpful. They hope to make it even more useful next time and more cost-effective.

“I think around the accessibility piece, our big lesson is that even though we've been like, “yeah, this is important,” it's been an afterthought instead of at the front of our planning. And I think that's the shift for us. It's like, “Well, we just did this application. Let's figure out another format before we send it out.” Right? So with the Committee application, what we did was we had an “A-ha” moment. “Oh, we should do a video version” because we saw another team had done something similar. So we did that, but it took an extra couple of weeks and pushed the timeline out in a little bit- not in any way that really impacted the process but... it was an example. It's like an afterthought, and we should have been planning for that in advance.”

- BLMF Staff



# Committee Members

## Areas of Success

### 1 Committed to the process and their roles

Committee members committed to their roles, adapted to institutional changes (such as the board approval pivot) and requested and received support from BLMF staff. **It is due to their dedication to thoughtfully distributing resources amongst Black movement and community power builders, that committee members found the time and energy to contribute to generative conflict.**

### 2 Asked for support

**Committee members helped build the process they needed by asking for support.** For example, a committee member asked for a spreadsheet of the grantee applicants that had not been previously created. Facilitators were able to help the staff with this ask that ended up being useful for multiple people involved in the process.

## Growth Edges

### 1 Space to improve time management

**Committee members shared a desire to manage their time more effectively in future iterations.** They recognized that the lift required for reading all of the applications was a heavy one and required more time than they expected at times. At the same time, BLMF staff continues to think of ways to request less verbose proposals from applicants to lighten this lift.

### 2 Space to use provided resources

**Committee members asked for and received support, they often noted how useful it would have been to have more accountability partnership.** While some proposed a buddy system, some recognized that the co-working times that the BLMF staff created would have been useful if they had tried it.

“When there isn't agreement, and we lean into the tension, and we have the dialogue, and we make space for it, which I found that we did a lot here, making time for it.”

- 2023 Committee Member

Office hours- I didn't utilize them but I recognize that it was a really wonderful offering to give. They were co-working sessions where folks were able to come together and do reviews with one another on like a zoom link together. A really good space to ask questions, I'm assuming again, I never went to that. I imagine it would have been a good time to ask questions in real time with the BLMF team. It also could have been a good time for mirroring. Personally, I don't feel like I can be productive without mirroring.”

- 2023 Committee Member





# Conclusion

In the end, it should not go without stating that an ultimate success of the BLMF's first iteration of PGM is that \$6 million were distributed, projects were supported, and new relationships were created in a variety of areas. Being able to support Black movement and community power building was the drive and reward for so many of the people involved with this PGM process as staff, committee members, and supporters. Participatory grantmaking functions within capitalism. Something that neither committee members nor staff ignore. This reality means there are some limits to the power sharing and shifting that can easily occur. Yet, it is possible for this collective of people to continue to re-envision and practice different ways of resource sharing that challenges the constraints of capitalism.

This is a story of the value of lived and learned expertise. As BLMF continues to practice PGM and others consider these models of resource sharing and distribution, we hold space to the honor the desire to experiment in the hopes of positive change. **Well-guided experiments are often worth the risk and yet harm is possible and should be minimized.** Mariame Kaba reminds us that we are sometimes less willing to experiment and take risks around positive social change especially compared to other areas of innovation. BLMF's focus on reflection internally, with peers, and with us, their learning partner, is an honorable model of how to do these experiments while minimizing risk.

We extend our deep appreciation to the Black-Led Movement Fund staff: Julia Beatty, Jardyn Lake, and Ashley Crawford Starck. Working with a team so dedicated to Black movement and community power building has been both grounding and inspiring. Their commitment to their values and supreme organizational skills have been useful beyond expression.

We greatly appreciate the support of all who have been willing to share their lived and learned expertise with us as we have moved through this project.

We are honored to be part of this story and experiment. Please contact CheyOnna Sewell ([cheyonna@socinsights.com](mailto:cheyonna@socinsights.com)) with comments and questions.

In gratitude,

Social Insights Research

