



Participatory Grantmaking in Borealis Philanthropy

Prepared by:

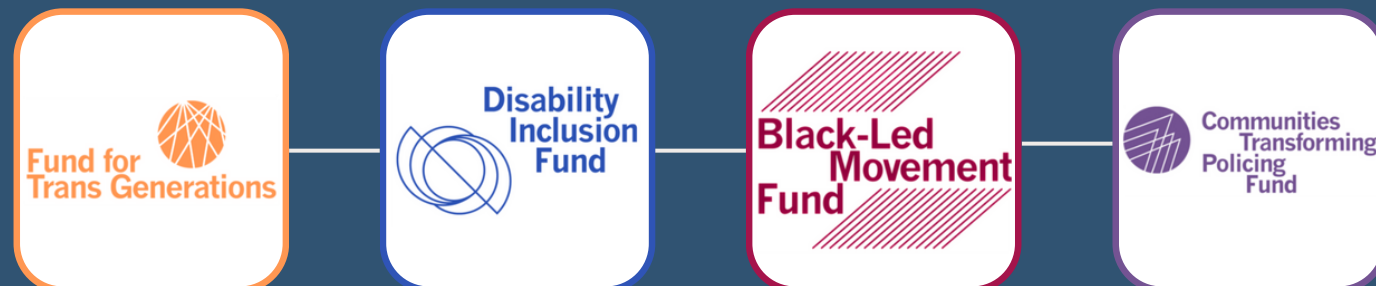
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Introduction

In 2022, within Borealis Philanthropy there were four funds practicing Participatory Grantmaking (PGM). In hopes of better understanding and explaining the ways of doing PGM in Borealis Philanthropy, the Black-Led Movement Fund (BLMF) contracted the help of learning partner-Social Insights Research.

Social Insights Research is a Black Woman-led and BIPOC-staffed research and evaluation firm based in Atlanta, GA. They are an interdisciplinary team that uses multiple methodologies to meet the needs of their projects. They conduct critical and mindful evaluation and research in partnership with organizations that resource and center marginalized populations.



Guiding Questions and Methods

What does Participatory Grantmaking look like in Borealis Philanthropy?

- How are the processes similar?
- How are they different?
- What seems useful to know for funds considering a shift to PGM?

Methods

- Document collection
- Interviews with fund representatives
- Meaning-making session with fund representatives

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A Summary Guide to Transition Based on Experiences

2016

Goal: To bring together folks on the ground connected to BIPOC trans organizing work, to determine what's actually needed for the communities.

Grantmaking Cycle: Nov - June

\$4,000 Compensation

Committee selection is done based on recommendations and through the grantee network. Optimal candidates are trans and represent the diversity of the trans community.



5 Committee Members

PGM committee community advisors participates in an orientation and political education. Committee facilitated by FTG.

All Applications Reviewed

Staff reviews all applications and compiles themes and key questions. PGM committee reviews all applications and makes decisions in a 2-day virtual session.

2019

Goal: To have representative community perspectives making decisions in grantmaking to support the community.

Grantmaking Cycle: June - Nov

\$2,500 Compensation

Committee selection is done via an annual open call. Optimal candidates are disabled, represent various perspectives and have an ability to express themselves without dominating conversations.



11 Committee Members

Committee consists of community and funders. Community advisors participate in Philanthropy 101 and political education. Funders discuss power dynamics. Committee facilitated by DIF.

50 Applications Reviewed

Staff reviews all applications and makes first cut to 50. PGM committee reviews and makes decision in a 3-day hybrid session.

General Fund Information

PGM Committee Recruitment



PGM Committee Structure

Grantmaking Review Process

2020

Goal: To have community perspectives at the table to make decisions that impact the community we are trying to support.

Grantmaking Cycle: Jan - Apr

\$5,000 Compensation

Committee selection is done via referrals and an open call as needed. Members can serve for multiple years. Optimal candidates have been directly impacted by police/carceral violence.



10 Committee Members

PGM committee members participate in an orientation session and political education. Committee facilitated by BEAM.

All Applications Reviewed

PGM committee has access to all applications and reviews 60 in a 2-3 day virtual session. Committee is split into two groups to meet separately.

2022

Goal: To democratize the giving process and engage people with lived experience who are directly closest to the issues.

Grantmaking Cycle: Sept - Mar

\$5,000 Compensation

Committee selection is done via open call. Optimal candidates are Black-identified, represent the diversity of Blackness, value-aligned with M4BL, and queer/trans.



10 Committee Members

PGM committee members participate in Philanthropy 101 and political education. Committee facilitated by Emergent Strategy Institute.

60 Applications Reviewed

Staff reviews applications and cuts down to 60. PGM committee meets in a 4-day virtual session.

Defining Participatory Grantmaking

“Participatory grantmaking cedes decision-making power about funding— including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions—to the very communities that funders aim to serve.”

Cynthia Gibson and Jen Bokoff - Deciding Together Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grantmaking (2018)

At Borealis Philanthropy, funds using participatory grantmaking center:

- Power sharing as a central function of engaging the community
- People directly affected by the funds’ intended work

Different Approaches to Participatory Grantmaking





There is no single way to do participatory grantmaking.

There is an assortment of choices that need to be made.

These choices are often informed by the community, fund's capacity, and nest organization.

Accessibility

Language Justice

- Intentional recruitment
- Translation of materials
- Live translation in meetings
- Language justice education in meetings

Disability Justice

- Intentional recruitment
- Accessible materials (i.e. video/voice submissions)
- Less onerous processes
- Attention to mental and emotional health

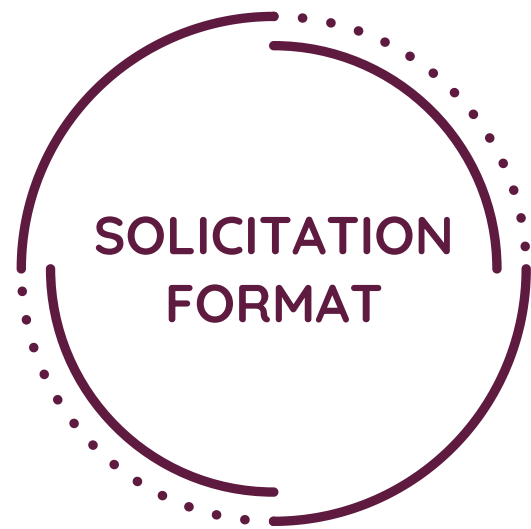
Note: Funds found it most effective and efficient to develop accessibility guidelines at the onset of planning.

"One of our members who is Deaf offered:

'DO YOU HAVE ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR THIS GROUP IN TERMS OF HOW WE WANT TO WORK WITH EACH OTHER? HOW WE WANT TO BE MINDFUL OF ACCESSIBILITY?'"



Committee Selection



Doing an open call for applicants can result in a broader array of potential members.

Eliciting nominations may identify people in alignment with the funds values.



Asking members to serve multiple years keeps experiential knowledge.

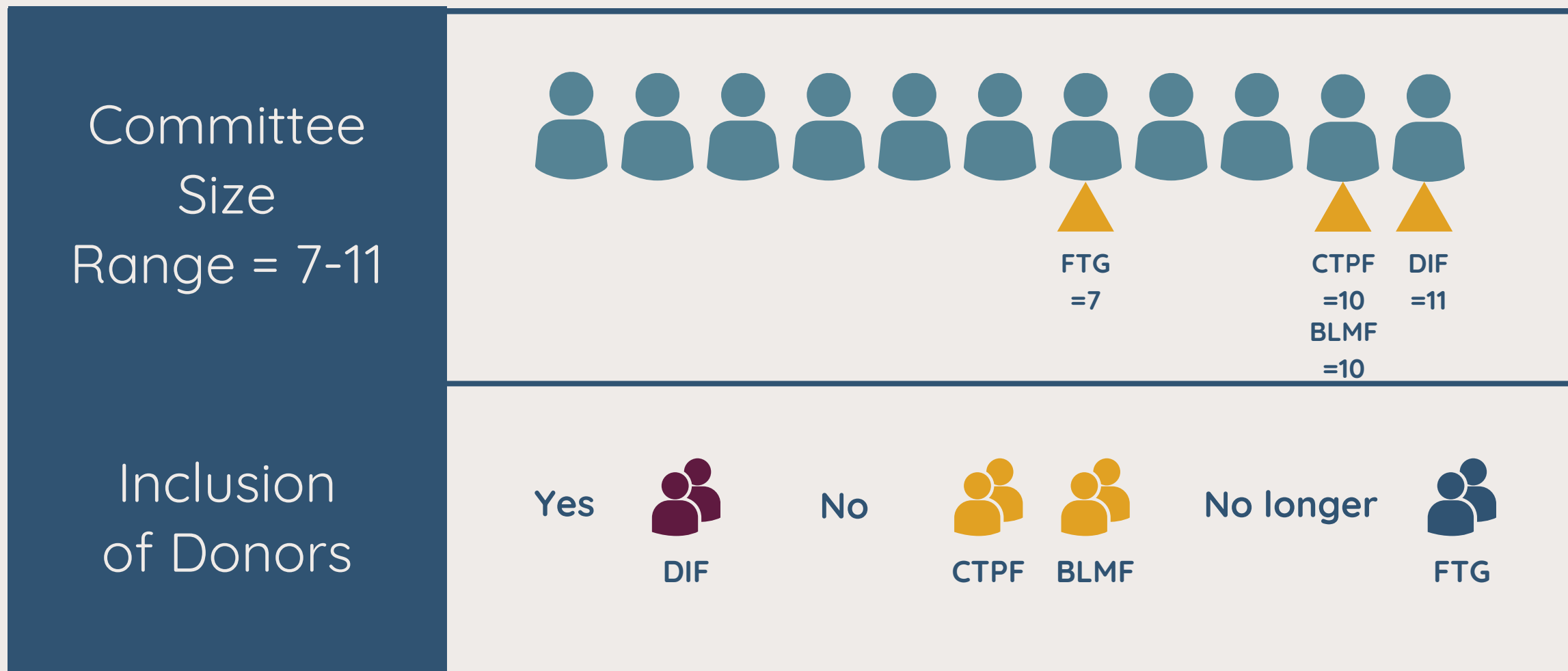
Rotating members yearly engages more people and spreads the labor.

BMLF	FTG	DIF	CTPF
Blended Approach	Open Call	Open Call	Get Referrals
1 Cycle	1 Cycle	1 Cycle	≥1 Cycle

Note: Funds have experimented with various approaches and done a combination of options. It is okay to see what works well for your fund.

Committee Composition

Variations in committee characteristics often reflect the fund's budget, the decided workload of the committee, and stakeholder desires. **Not all variations are consequential.**



Note: Inviting stakeholders to assist with your committee selection process can further the redistribution of power.

"TO ME THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF DOING A PGM PROCESS IS REALLY HAVING COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES AT THE TABLE AND KNOWING THAT EVERYBODY IS REALLY INVESTED IN MAKING GOOD CHOICES AND HAVING REPRESENTATION FROM LOTS OF DIFFERENT SUBSETS."



Compensation for Committee

The committee's workload can vary and is generally an additional responsibility carrying emotional labor.

All Borealis PGM funds provide compensation for their committees.

Variation in the amount is often related to the fund's budget and the committee's workload.



Note: Committee members tend to find benefit in their engagement AND it is still important to pay people for their time and energy.

Fund for Trans Generations

We're looking for Advisory Committee members who can commit their availability for approximately 30 hours over the first six months of 2023 for the activities described below. Advisory Committee members will receive an honorarium of up to \$4,000 for their time and commitment.

- Participate in an online welcome/orientation meeting and initial advisement + political education discussion meeting in January 2023
- Review and score new and renewal proposals February - March 2023
- Participate in 2-3 grantmaking review meetings with FTG staff at the end of May 2023
- Offer honest feedback on the process via survey after the review committee meeting in June 2023
- Participate in an online learning session with grantees and donor partners in September/October 2023

Black-led Movement Fund

- Through a consensus-based process, you will select 30 organizations in and/or politically aligned with the Movement for Black Lives to receive \$200,000 (\$100,000 per year)
- Time commitment and timeline: You will likely spend 25-30 hours over the course of four months - from December 2022 - March 2023.
- An honorarium of \$5,000 will be offered in appreciation of your contributions and commitments. Please note that these funds will be reported and are considered taxable income.

Committee Member Roles

Disability Inclusion Fund

The purpose of the grantmaking committee is to provide guidance on the Fund's focus in its third year and will work closely with the DIF staff to determine the grant recommendations for Borealis board approval.

Expectations:

- Reviewers must conduct themselves with professional integrity, respect, and discretion
- To actively contribute to discussions during the review process
- To attend 1 pre-meeting prior to the convening. This will provide further context and level-setting for all members of this committee.
- To attend all 3-days (Sept 28th - 30th) of the committee's meetings unless prior arrangements have been made with DIF team staff.
- Submit reviewer scores/comments by September 16th to be shared with grantee applicants.

Communities Transforming Policing Fund

Committee members are expected to spend 40 hours over 4 months from January 2024 through April 2024 by participating in virtual meetings, reviewing fund applications, engaging in collective decision-making about funds, and participating in a learning review at the end.

- Onboarding: Committee attends two orientation meetings to provide a foundational understanding of the role and the work ahead. These meetings are tentatively scheduled for January 26, 2024 and February 9, 2024. (~3 hours)
- Proposal review: Committee members review and score no more than 30 proposals. There will be an optional scoring review session. CTPF staff will also have office hours for committee members to talk with team members and ask any questions they may have. (~30 hours)
- Deliberations & decisions: April 4 & 5, 2024 and the second group deliberating on April 11 and 12, 2024 (~6 hours)
- Learning & reflection: This feedback will be a part of a celebration gathering. (April 26, 2024)

Application Review Process



Compile Grantee Options

Potential grantees may be gathered through solicitation via network referrals, open call for applications, focused call for applications, etc.



Internal Staff Review

Typically the fund staff reviews the applicants first.



Committee Review

The committee will review the applications independently then collectively.



Committee Decision Making

The committee decides which applicants to fund through discussion and debate.

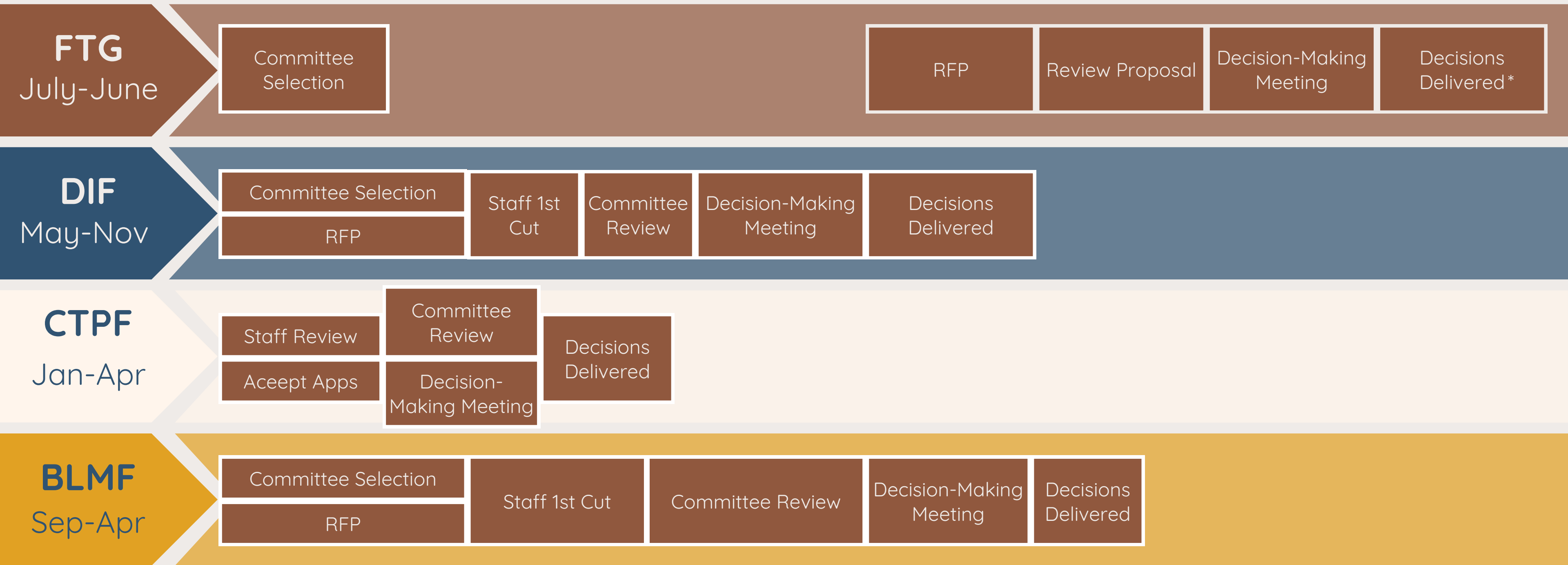


Final Approval

Currently, grant decisions must be approved by the Borealis Board.

Note: This process can be tweaked from year to year. Presently funds work for a future where PGM committees provide final approval.

Process Timeline Side-by-Side



Month

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9





10

11

12

*DIF - PGM committee notifies awarded grantees after Board approval.

Decision-Making Meeting Structure

	Meeting Format	Length (days each)	# of Meetings	Use of Faciliator	Rating System	Meeting Review Selection
 FTG	VIRTUAL	2	2	YES	YES/NO/MAYBE	REVIEW ALL WITH AT LEAST ONE 'NO' OR 'MAYBE'
 DIF	HYBRID	4	1	NO	GREEN/YELLOW/RED	REVIEW ALL
 CTPF	VIRTUAL	2	2	YES	RUBRIC SCORING TO GREEN/YELLOW/RED	REVIEW ALL
 BLMF	VIRTUAL	4	1	YES	YES/NO/MAYBE	REVIEW ALL

Note: Some of these choices may change from iteration to iteration.

Use of Supports/Consultants

I THINK IT WAS HARDER THE FIRST GO AROUND. THE FIRST GO AROUND WE HIRED A CONSULTANT TO WORK WITH US, TO HELP US WITH IT. WE DIDN'T NEED TO HIRE CONSULTANTS AFTER THAT, **BUT IF WE HADN'T HAD THAT CONSULTANT I DON'T THINK IT WOULD HAVE GONE AS SMOOTHLY.**

Type of Potential Supports:

Language Justice

Disability Justice

Technical

Facilitation

Planning

Note: Hire support that has lived and learned expertise in the area early in your planning process.

Factors that Influence Participatory Grantmaking Process Choices

Beyond the desire to shift power and engage the community more in the process of grantmaking, these additional elements may influence choices that are made related to the PGM process.

This influence is not inherently a negative thing; it is something to be aware of and intentional about.



Nest Organization

- May have distinct values
- Protocols

The organization may have restraints and/or exercise oversight of the process. Because the organization may have different values from its subgroup, it may influence the process distinctively from the fund.

Community

- Wants/Needs
- Buy-in & support of the fund/process
- Size

Shifting more power into the community is the primary objective of PGM processes in Borealis. As such the community must be taken into consideration as choices are made.

Fund Capacity

- Administrative capacity
- Financial resources
- Time

Without adequate capacity, choices related to all parts of the process including accessibility resources, involvement of staff, size of committee, etc may be more reliant on capacity than shifting access to power.

Factors that Influence PGM Design Choices

Additional Areas of Consideration when Planning a PGM Process



Additional Areas of Consideration when Planning a PGM Process

Transparency

Continuous
Learning

Relationships

Engagement

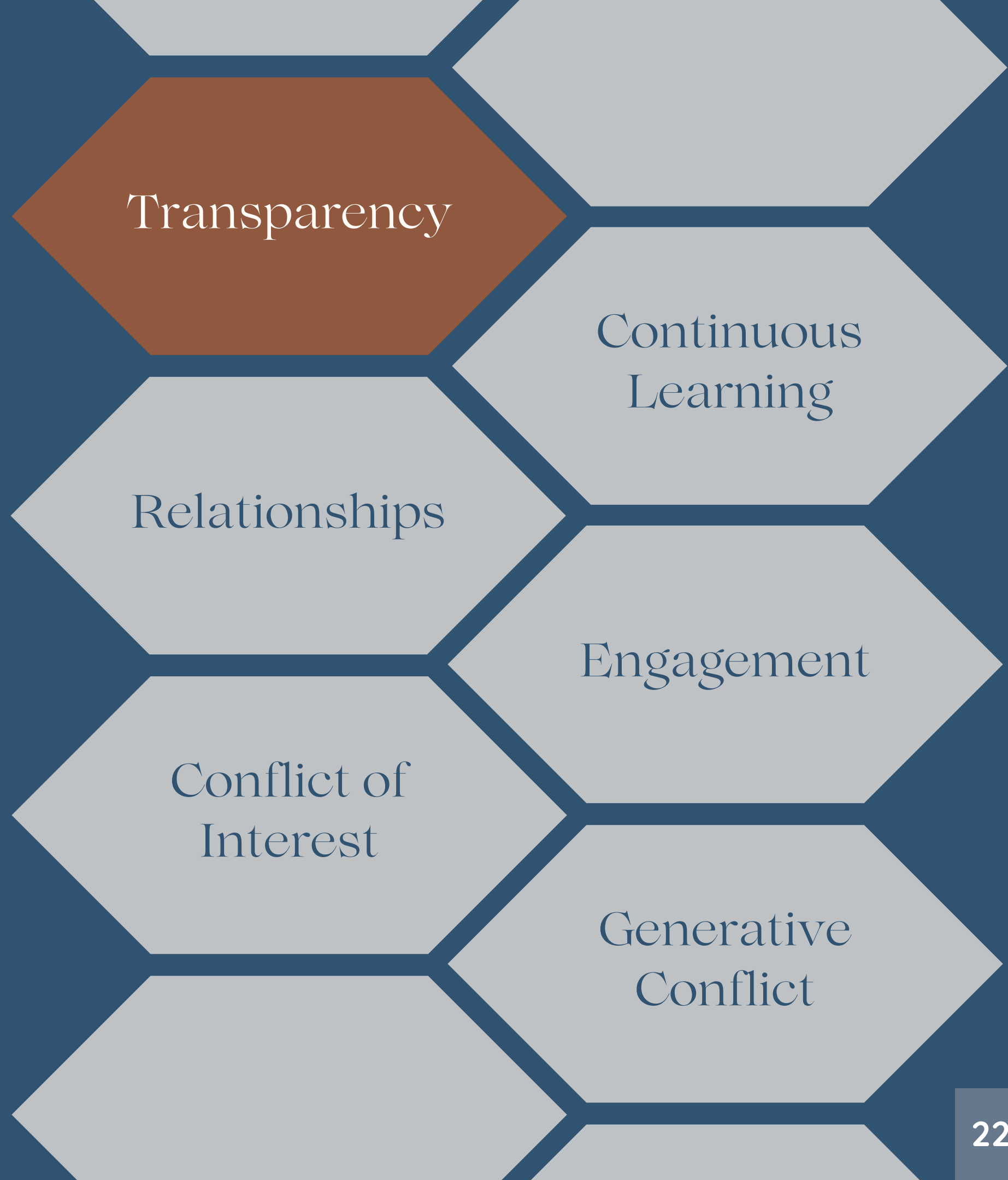
Conflict of
Interest

Generative
Conflict

Committee members find value in transparency when navigating the power during the process.

Consider having clarity from the beginning related to:

- Decision-making power
- Process information
 - What grants are awarded
 - How awards are communicated
 - Next steps
- Role expectations
 - Time
 - Duties



PGM processes benefit from continuous learning and adaptations at all stages.

Planning

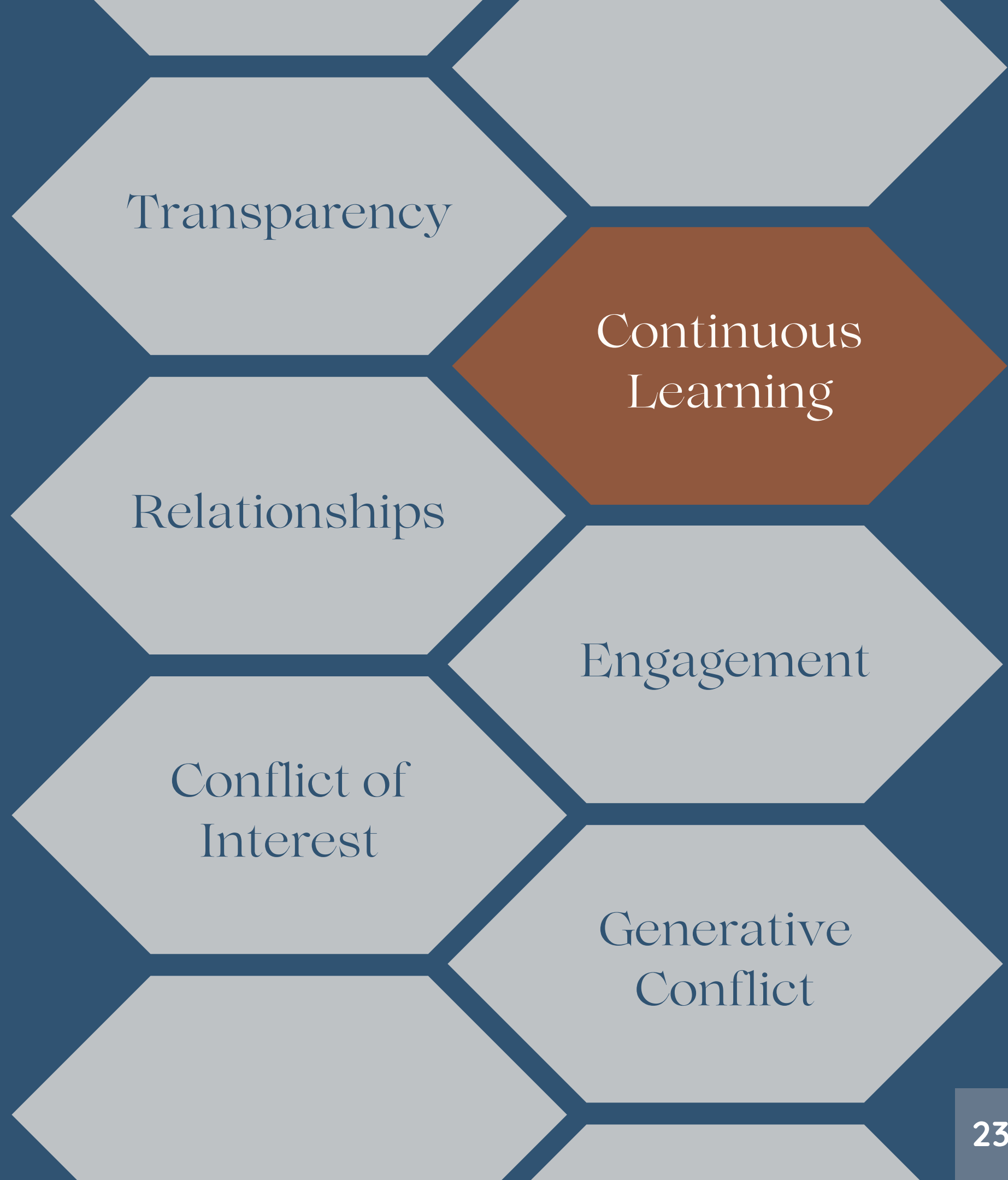
- Semi-structured conversations with other PGM funds (Borealis and external)
- Review materials for other funds and ongoing meetings/chats.

Implementation

- Request feedback from:
 - Other PGM funds
 - Involved actors
 - Community (i.e. previous grantees, potential grantees)

Post decision-making

- Evaluation (independently and/or with learning partners)
- Debrief internally and with other PGM funds

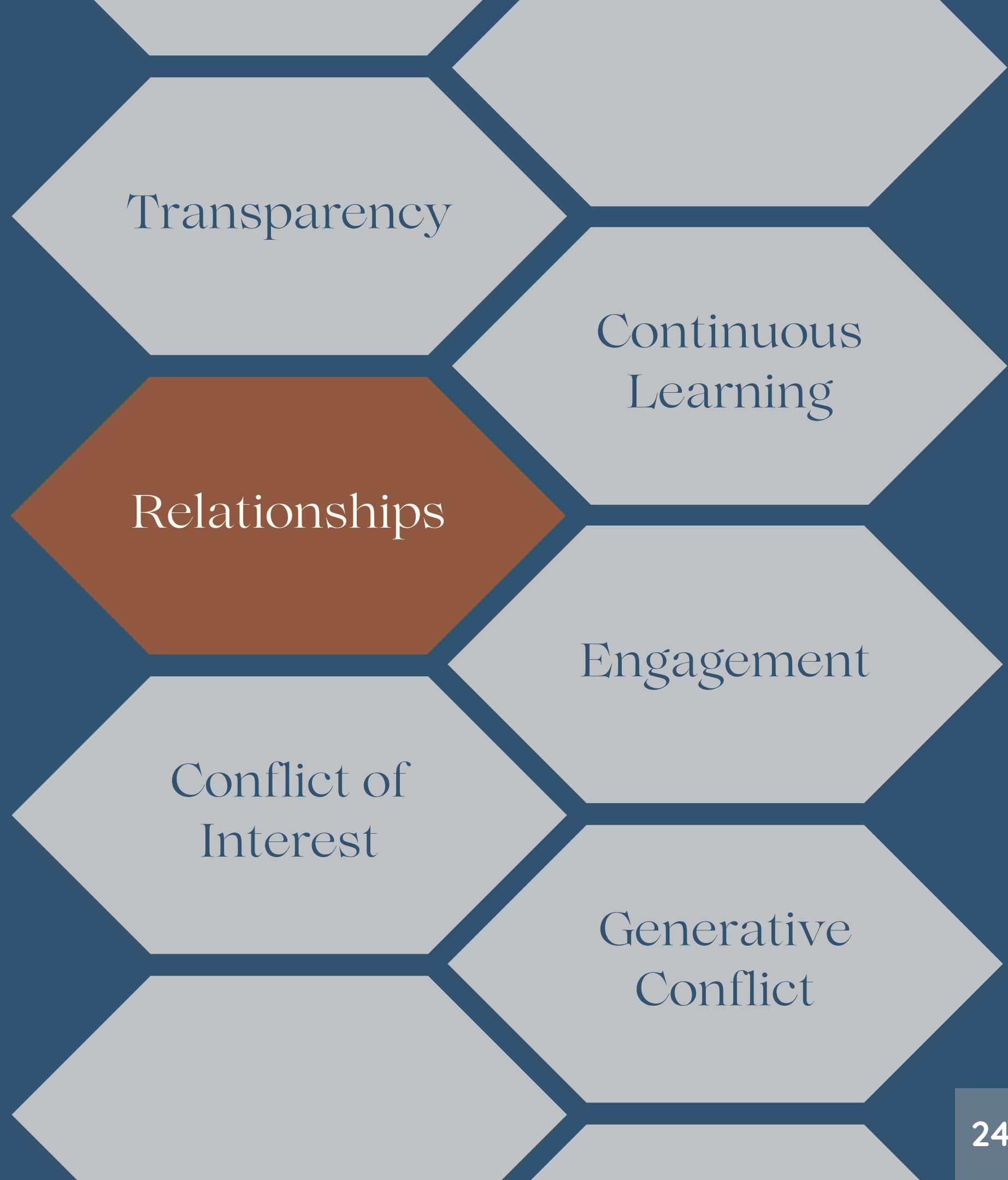


Borealis Funds demonstrate the need for reciprocal relationships with:

- Previous Grantees
- Donors
- Nest Organizations
- Community

The benefits for those involved include:

- Greater collaboration and agreement across ecosystem
- Increased involvement
- Increased access to support (resources, funding, networking)
- Places for feedback
- Experiencing the positive impact of movement building



The PGM process is contingent on the involvement of committee members who often have other responsibilities.

The following are some ways Borealis funds encourage engagement throughout the process:

- Compensation
- Support for the mental/emotional toll
 - Explicit discussion about relationships with money
 - Discussion about the scope of this fund in relation to other avenues of funding
 - Trauma-informed trained facilitators
- Allowing for flexibility
- Building in structured time to engage with the application review work
- Having committee members serve in multiple cycles

Transparency

Continuous Learning

Relationships

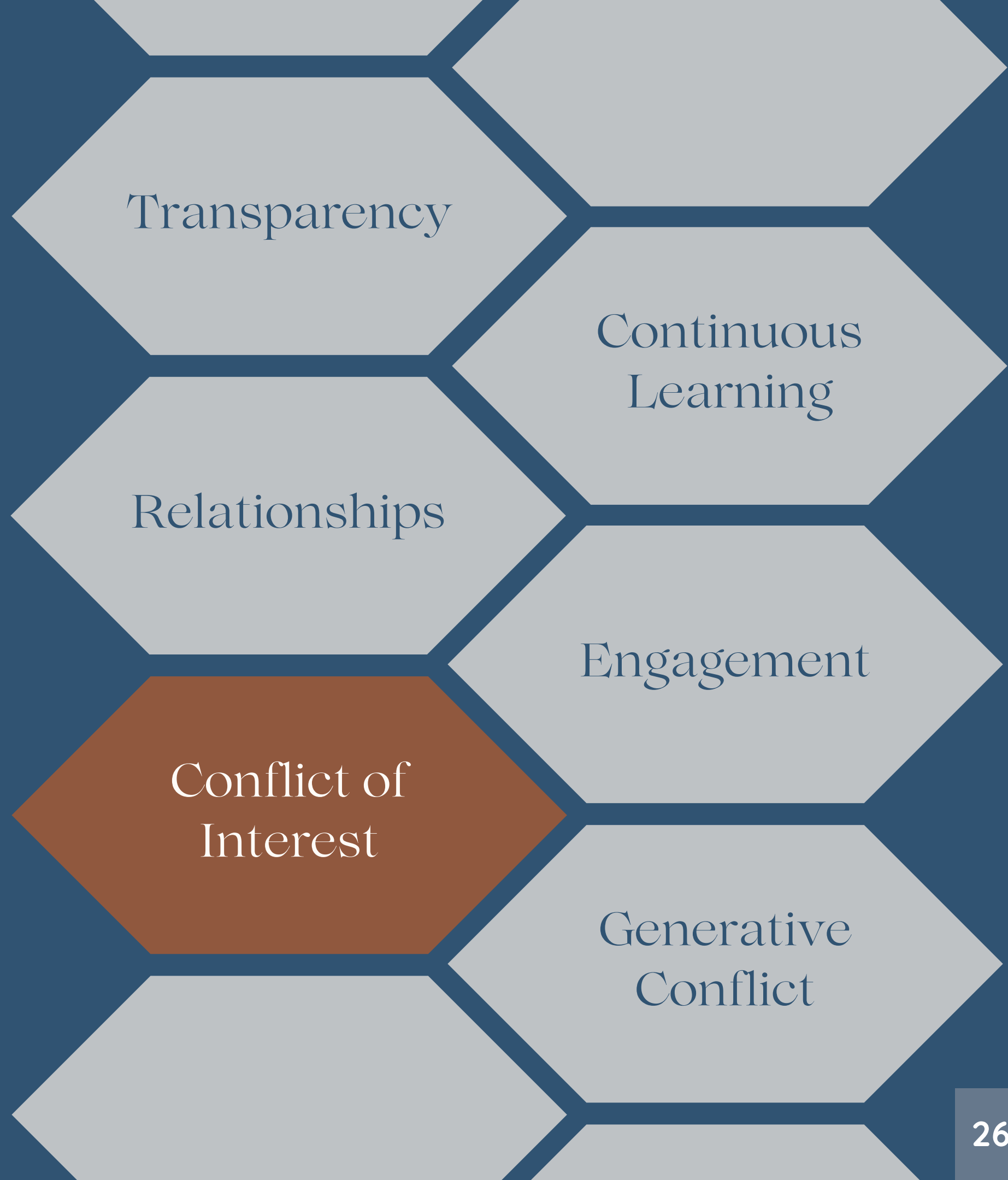
Engagement

Conflict of Interest

Generative Conflict

One of the benefits of advisory committees is that they bring a broader working knowledge of the sector of work. **With this greater knowledge and proximity may be relationships and interpersonal conflict.**

Funds must determine what relationships present a conflict of interest versus this beneficial knowledge/proximity.



Staff and committee members sometimes note the value and art of generative conflict in PGM processes.

Importantly, conflict is not inherently generative. The space benefits from having developed shared values/norms and allowing members to build some level of trust. This trust can be built with explicit conversations about values and how they can influence decision-making. It can also be fostered through practicing generative conflict such as through mock debates.

Post PGM, it is beneficial to debrief the experience with all involved.

Transparency

Continuous Learning

Relationships

Engagement

Conflict of Interest

Generative Conflict

A summary guide to transition based on experiences

- 1 Define the fund's values
- 2 Learn from others
- 3 Enlist support
- 4 Plan and experiment
- 5 Reflect and evolve

Define the fund's values

Check in with your funds “foundation”

- What are your values and how will they translate into PGM?
- What do you have the capacity for?
 - Consider:

Time

Staff

Budget

1

Learn from others

Other PGM funds and grantee partners hold an abundance of knowledge and experience that they are often willing to share.

Learning from peers increases the ability to fill gaps between funds, leverage power, and reduce the work needed to create new processes.



Enlist support

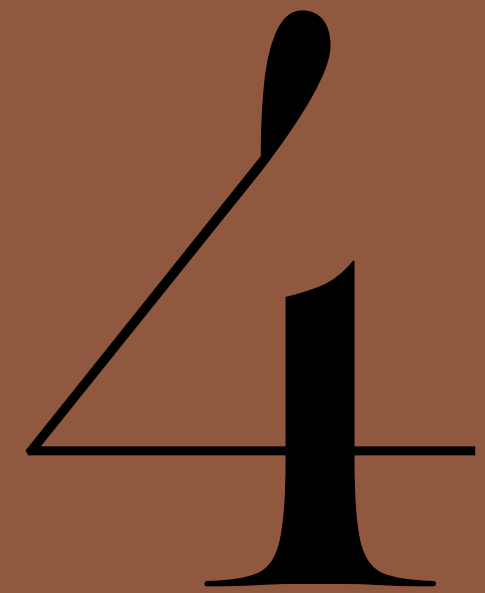
Facilitating a PGM process requires a considerable level of capacity as there are numerous overlapping roles that must be filled. Examples include facilitation, disability justice, language justice, and technical support.

Teams shared that having additional support was critical for ensuring all parts were held fully and by people with that expertise.



Plan and experiment

Considering the process ahead of time can allow for a more efficient use of resources. There is also power in the doing.



Reflect and repeat

Learning is continuous.

Ways to learn:

- finding space to reflect with other PGM funds
- embed processes of internal reflection

Learning processes must include a willingness to learn and adapt in response to that learning.

Harm should be identified and efforts should be made to avoid it in the future.

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Thank you

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