

Worksheet: Be Clear



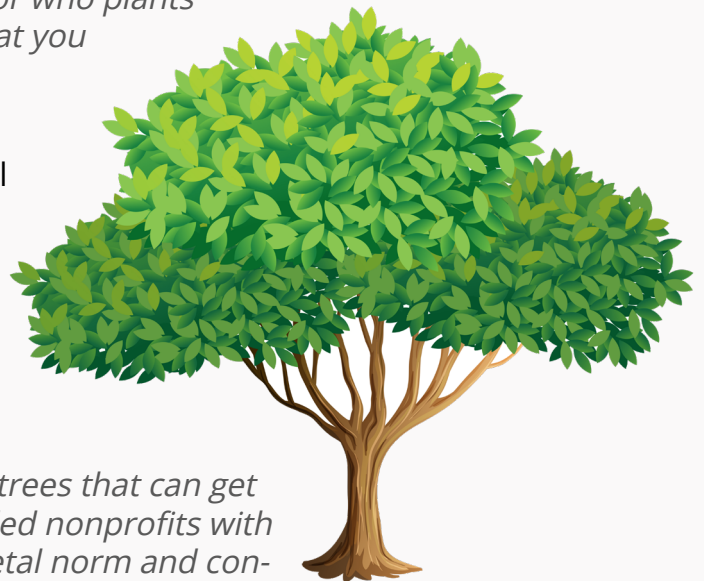
■ Are you a sustainer, campaigner or launcher funder?

Sustainer = You give general support to a nonprofit year-after year, with very few strings attached. You believe the nonprofit or nonprofits are already adequately taking care of the problem or challenge you are concerned about.

Illustration: You believe more trees should be planted to counter climate change. You aren't particular about what tree species are planted, or who plants them, or where. There are several nonprofits that you respect, and that deserve your support.

Campaigner = You are funding to achieve a goal to change a major societal norm. You are more wedded to changing that societal norm and to achieving a goal than you are to any one specific nonprofit.

Illustration: You believe more trees should be planted to counter climate change but where you live there are strict limits on the number of trees that can get planted. You want to support existing, like-minded nonprofits with specific, measurable targets to change this societal norm and convince people to plant as many trees as possible in your state.



Launcher = You see a gap, a problem, or challenge that needs to be solved but no nonprofit organization exists yet to fill that gap. You want to fund the creation of an entirely new organization from scratch.

***Illustration:** You believe more trees should be planted to counter climate change. You want to start locally, in your county, with the goal of increasing the number of native tree species that are planted. No organization currently exists with this specific mission, but your goal is to organize and fund just that.*



“You can waste valuable time and money trying to put a square peg into a round hole.”

■ Why take the time to figure out what type of funder you want to be?

- You can cause serious damage if you approach a nonprofit **as if you are a sustainer funder** but then instead start meddling in their business to try to force them to change a societal norm.
- You can also cause damage if you see a societal norm that needs to be changed but **you are unclear with the nonprofit about your interests**—what you want to fund—and essentially become passive-aggressive in your donations. You become passive-aggressive if you want the nonprofit to change the societal norm but you are not offering them the additional support and resources that they may need to carry such a heavy lift.
- You can also cause damage if you see a gap that needs filling and try to force existing groups to work on the gap when they are already stretched thin with the work they are currently doing. You can cause everyone to **waste valuable time and money** trying to put a square peg into a round hole. I have seen all of this happen. Far from hypothetical, it is a main reason why I created this course, so that as a funder you will not end up standing in the way of the nonprofits and causes you care about, but instead will **become a valuable partner**.

I think a funder can offer valuable support in any of the three approaches I outline above. ***There is no one right way.*** It is most important that you take steps to be present and available to the nonprofit's partners, based according to how you want to approach your funding strategy. And, ***it is different depending on whether you are a sustainer, campaigner or launcher funder.***



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■ Corresponding Funding Approaches:

Sustainer

- Multi-year grant.
- General support grants.
- Limited interactions with nonprofit once you establish a trusting relationship.
- Little-to-no proposal or other reporting requirements.
- Trust the nonprofit's knowledge of the issues and do not dig too much further.
- Only meet with the nonprofit, or take their time, if they proactively request such a meeting and update.

Campaigner

- Short term grants or donations based on very specific outcomes to change a societal norm.
- Invest in additional expertise with staff or consultant who know a lot about the specific societal norm you want to change so that they can develop an overall docket and portfolio of grantees for you as a donor or for your foundation.
- Get advice also from outside experts that do not need your funding but also have a big picture understanding of the societal norm you want to change.
- Collaborate with other funders to support the goal and outcomes to change a societal norm.

Launcher

- Short term grants that may start off larger and taper off over a few years as the new organization is able to find additional diverse funding sources.
- Invest in additional expertise with staff or consultants who know a lot about the specific gap you want to fill so that they can develop an overall strategic plan with the new organization to help it survive over time and over the long-term.
- Work with other funders to help the nonprofit find additional funding and support over time for the work.

Currently, Trust Based Philanthropy, (listen to my podcast Episode No. 21 with a co-founder of Trust-Based Philanthropy), which is based on sustainer-funder principles, is the popular focus. When I started out in philanthropy many years ago, the Alliance for Justice was focused on a type of funding that was based on campaign funding principles. At the time, funders were responding to what they perceived as a problem with the style of funding they called a “benevolent banker,” which they believed was interfering with real change because funders were holding groups back from advocacy.

When I first started out as a philanthropist over ten years ago, I believe that, in our zeal to promote advocacy and campaigns, we failed to take into account the perils of the funder bubble phenomenon that I will discuss fully in Lesson No. 2. We started to meddle in ways that were detrimental to the nonprofits, causing a backlash, and a desire on the part of some nonprofits for funders to stay out of their way altogether. This also created the push we see now for Trust-Based philanthropy, which advocates for much less orchestration and interposition by philanthropists and follows sustainer-funder strategies.

While Trust-Base philanthropy and sustainer-type funding is a very good way to approach your funding strategy, I have also seen situations where it was beneficial for funders and nonprofits to work together in synchronicity on a campaign to change a societal norm or to launch a new organization to fill a gap. When it works well, it is quietly manifest, and no one complains about the outcomes. So it is natural, but inaccurate, to conclude that all campaign and launcher-type funding is flawed. This is why I am training you to consider all three funding strategies.

None of these funding strategies is controversial as long as it is done with humility and care. Hence this course talks not only about sustainer philanthropy, but also campaigner and launcher strategies, and how to make a difference with step-by-step guides to each approach. Your goal should be to be clear with the nonprofit about your funding philosophy prior to funding the group to do the work.



“I created this course so that YOU will become that valuable partner.”

■ Homework: Now put yourself in the shoes of a sustainer, campaign and launcher funder.

1. Pretend you are a **Sustainer Funder**. What issue do you care about and how do you think you will approach your funding strategy as a *sustainer funder* to make a difference?

2. Pretend you are a **Campaigner Funder**. What issue do you care about and how do you think you will approach your funding strategy as a *campaigner funder* to make a difference?

3. Pretend you are a **Launcher Funder**. What issue do you care about and how do you think you will approach your funding strategy as a *launcher funder* to make a difference?

4. Now offer your thoughts on which strategy or strategies you are most comfortable pursuing in your funding strategy.

If you would like my direct feedback, please fill out the online assessment provided in this lesson.