



Considering Forms of Social Power: Facilitation Guide for Giving Circles



30 minutes to
40 minutes



Materials

- Facilitation guide
- Social Power handout
- Pens or pencils

What to Know

You're in a giving circle, so aren't you already using your power for social good? Yes, and there is room to develop a deeper understanding of how systems of power advantage some over others. The following activity will enable your giving circle to reflect on individual and group levels of social power and consider how their grantmaking process can be improved to share power more effectively.

Desired Outcomes

- Deepen understanding of the systems of power in society today.
- Increase awareness about each individual's position within those systems of power.
- Identify strategies for how your giving circle can most responsibly leverage the power you hold.



2 min

Framing

Frame the session by connecting our ability to make impact on the issues we care about with the power we have within society.

You could say: *Today we're going to have a conversation about power and systems of power in society. We're bringing this conversation to our giving circle because power is inherent in the concept of philanthropy and giving. Understanding how we think about power in general will help us work out how to manage the inherent power we hold as givers. The word "power" comes from the Latin word potere, which means "to be able." In contemporary usage, though, power most often is used to indicate an ability to control or have influence over something.*

Based on our different identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.), we have different amounts of power in society. The various ways we do and do not have power intersect to create our particular position within the power structure of our society.



5 min

Opening Discussion

If you'd like to include an opening conversation about power, ask your group:

Before we start our discussion, share with the person next to you one situation in your life where you felt like you held a lot of power relative to others and one instance when you felt powerless relative to a system or to others.



15 to 22 min

Considering Personal Power

1 Have participants take five minutes to complete the Social Power handout individually. They will identify where they fall on a series of societal power dynamics (race, religion, gender, sexual identity, access to financial resources, access to people with social power). Have participants total their 'power score' to come up with a number representing their relative power.

You could offer the following instructions: *There are many different types of power and privilege. This handout lists a few of them. Think about your background and situations in your life and how much power you hold based on these measures.*

2 Once they've completed the Social Power handout, have participants pair up with a partner and discuss these questions:

- Given the types of power you just identified yourself as having, how could you leverage that power to benefit others with less power than you?
- In what ways might the areas where you have less power get in the way of you having a positive impact?
- Do different members of your giving circle have different levels of these various types of power? If so, how might you leverage that as a group?
- How might a deeper understanding of power impact the work of your giving circle?
- Do you think that your relative social power affects how you think about giving away money?



5 to 10 min

Closing Discussion

When each pair has finished their discussion, bring the group back together and have participants share any insights or highlights from their conversations, as well as what they are taking away from the activity.

You could also ask your giving circle: *Are there ways we can change our giving circle process or grant selection criteria to share more social power?*



Personal Relationship to Social Power

Instructions: For each of the following types of social power, circle the number which you believe best represents how much of that type of power you as an individual hold compared to others. For this activity, 1 represents very little of that type of power while 5 represents a lot of that type of power.

Gender



Race



Religion



Sexual Orientation/Identity



Access to Financial Resources



Access to People with Power/Authority



Total: _____ out of 30