# GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY DATA CHARTER

Good data for greater impact







# ABOUT WINGS

Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support (WINGS) is a network of almost 100 philanthropy associations and support organizations in 39 countries around the world whose purpose is to strengthen, promote, and provide leadership on the development of philanthropy and social investment.

# PARTNERS

We would like to thank WINGS' funders for all their support, in particular the Instituto C&A, in Brazil, which provided funding for the Global Philanthropy Data Charter project.

We would also like to thank our data and knowledge partners, and authors of this Charter, Foundation Center and CENTRIS. This revised Charter was made possible thanks to the insight and intellect of WINGS members and other philanthropic stakeholders globally.

# CONTENTS

4
6
7
9
10
12
16
17
19
22
26
31

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

Philanthropy plays an increasingly large and visible role in societies around the globe. It addresses human suffering, contributes to key development outcomes, promotes social justice, and supports a broad range of civil society goals and organizations. Its freedom to experiment enables it to direct private resources (both in terms of financial resources and expertise) to social issues in innovative and flexible ways. As philanthropy grows around the world, maximizing its impact becomes not only a shared vision for the sector, but also a double imperative: highlighting the importance of giving smartly and of continuously searching for approaches that deliver the best outcomes.

There is widespread belief that access to readily available, high-quality data will improve philanthropy's efficiency, influence, and impact, and highlight its role and contribution to society alongside other stakeholders such as governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector individuals, communities, and beneficiaries. Consistent and reliable data helps donors to establish approaches and make decisions on what, where, and how much to invest, and to develop strategies for effective program implementation, as well as understand gaps, needs, and trends. Organizations working on similar issues, locally or across borders, can share important insights into what works, and so better coordinate efforts towards maximizing impact in the pursuit of specific goals. The ones who will gain most from the benefits that improved data brings to philanthropy are the constituencies foundations reach through their activities. Philanthropy is now operating in a space where data or knowledge is no longer optional if it wants to work effectively.

In addition to informing decisions and actions for increased impact, building a strong culture of data collecting and sharing is essential to increasing transparency and, thus, building trust within societies. Lack of transparency regarding the way private resources are being used for social good may lead to lack of trust with governments, resulting in unfavorable policies. It can also create misunderstandings between philanthropy and the rest of civil society, limiting the ability to unleash the full potential for collaboration, which is needed to address the pressing social and environmental issues of our time. Now more than ever, building trust among different sectors of society is critical to achieve transformation towards sustainable development. Data, transparency, trust, collaboration: each leads to the other, and this is the virtuous circle we are committed to promote.

To realize this vision of improved data for deeper philanthropic impact and transparency, WINGS, Foundation Center, CENTRIS, and partners from around the world created and refined the Global Philanthropy Data Charter.

The main objective of this revision is to make the document more accessible and provide concrete guidance on how to successfully engage in data-sharing processes.

# CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

### **2.1 BACKGROUND**

The last 20 years have seen a surge in organized philanthropy around the world, coinciding with the rise of the Internet, social media, and global movements. We have entered the era of global, digital knowledge and "big data." The financial industry, corporations, multilateral organizations, and governments are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by information technology to collect, process, analyze, and organize data rapidly and effectively. Those same opportunities may be leveraged to optimize the flow of philanthropic funds.

At the same time, other significant developments have created pressures for philanthropy to change how it operates, including increasing demands for "open data," shrinking space for civil society, major advances in information technology, and rising concerns about information security. As these transformative trends unfold, it becomes increasingly urgent that philanthropy take a more proactive approach to identifying critical areas of need, key actors and institutions engaged in philanthropy activities, patterns and gaps in the provision of support, and opportunities for collaboration to improve impact, all of which depend upon the availability of timely and accurate data.

Changes in the global economy have also altered traditional patterns of philanthropic activities. The stalling of economic growth in more developed countries has resulted in a decline in their overseas expenditures. Some countries have witnessed dwindling support from traditional donors, while others, previously seen as aid recipients, are emerging as rising economic stars in the global arena. Meanwhile, increased understanding of the actual costs associated with eradicating poverty around the world has caused governments and other traditional sources of aid to turn to philanthropy as another source of finances and expertise. And increased awareness and use of global development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have created an important opportunity for philanthropy to be officially represented in the development ecosystem. These shifts affect donors in different ways, but they all share a common need: more and better philanthropy data.

Finally, the high profile of certain philanthropists draws attention to the act of giving and the causes they support, giving philanthropy a level of visibility it has not had in the past. In turn, heightened public scrutiny puts pressure on philanthropy to be more transparent by providing easily accessible information on its activities.

### **2.2 THE CHALLENGE**

Currently, reliable data on philanthropic giving can be found in only a limited number of countries. Globally comparable data is virtually nonexistent and it is hard to find a rigorous analysis of philanthropic giving that views it through a global lens. Given the differences among foundations and cultures of giving within a given country, not to mention across borders, gathering global data on philanthropy is no small challenge.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that when it comes to generating, managing, and using data, countries, and organizations within countries, have different needs – and differing capacities to meet these needs. A further complication is the lack of clarity on data ownership and intellectual property rights – which can lead to organizations and individuals not knowing how or where to access data even when it is available.

These challenges point to the need for a statement of values and principles that can serve as a framework to guide the collection and use of philanthropy data. This is the primary function of the Charter.

#### **2.3 PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER**

The Charter is intended to act as a framework to guide organizations in the sector as they set out to gather or improve the collection of philanthropy data, while acknowledging the diversity of context, culture, and legal frameworks within which these organizations operate. It proposes both a code of good practice to improve the working relationships of those involved in the philanthropy data "system" – data users, providers, and collectors – and a framework for engaging other sectors (governments, multilateral agencies, the private sector, academia, and civil society in general) in the sharing and use of philanthropic data for public benefit.

#### The Charter envisages and promotes:

- A global value proposition to highlight why data is so important for philanthropy to undertake its work effectively
- 2 A global vision for creating, collecting, processing, analyzing, sharing, and using data on philanthropy
- 3 A framework for collaboration among data collectors, providers, and users
- A forum for assessing current data-related issues, needs, and capacities
  - 5 The ability to build and establish trust in data and knowledge processes
- 6

The provision of education and sensitization regarding data and knowledge processes to defuse concerns that such activities are overwhelmingly complex



Showcasing philanthropy's contribution to development

#### **2.4 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DATA?**

At root, philanthropy data can be defined as information that answers the following questions:



#### = Good data for greater impact

Answering the first question (about **FUNDING**) leads to a need for the following kinds of data related to financial flows and organizational characteristics:

## What are the characteristics and priorities of relevant philanthropic funding organizations?



Basic organizational data – e.g., year founded, staff size, total assets, total expenditures, etc.



How much funding are they providing for specific issues?



Is the funding going to other civil society organizations or to operate foundation-administered programs?



What geographic areas are being supported by the funding?



What population groups are being supported by the funding?



What is the strategic purpose of the funding – e.g., general operating support, project support, capital support, technical assistance, advocacy and policy initiatives, etc.?

## What are the characteristics and priorities of relevant implementing organizations?



Basic organizational data – e.g., year founded, staff size, total budget, revenue model, etc.



How much external funding are they receiving for specific issues?



What geographic areas do they work in?



What population groups are being supported by their work?

Answering the second question (about **KNOWLEDGE**) leads to a need for the following kinds of data:

# What outputs and outcomes did philanthropic support help to bring about?

What was learned about what works and what doesn't?

Often, these sorts of data are collected by philanthropy support organizations (PSOs), such as national and regional associations of foundations, philanthropy affinity groups, academic institutions, and specialized information aggregators (such as Foundation Center). In some countries, official data on the scope and activities of the philanthropic sector may also be collected.

Some data may be collected at the level of individual philanthropic transactions (e.g., a specific grant), while other types may be collected at a summary, or aggregate, level (e.g., total assets). Decisions regarding the collection and sharing of data at either the individual or aggregate level depend upon factors such as available resources for data collection, information sensitivity, and the intended users of the information.

Beyond the philanthropic sector, there is a broader global development ecosystem within which (or beside which) philanthropy operates. This ecosystem includes governments, multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and private corporations, among others. The scale on which the development ecosystem operates necessitates continuous coordination among large, complex organizations. To facilitate such coordination, the field relies upon numerous sophisticated data collection and management systems, many of which are of high relevance to philanthropy. Effective philanthropy requires, at minimum, basic awareness of these broader, contextual data systems, so that conscious choices may be made as to how philanthropic data might either align or diverge from them. 3

# THE CHARTER: A Commitment to Data on Philanthropy

## 3.1 Vision & Value Proposition

Maximizing philanthropy's impact is a vision shared by everyone in the sector – organizations and individuals are constantly looking for new approaches and strategies to better serve their constituencies. Data is key to improving philanthropy's abilities to understand needs, coordinate efforts, build trust among partners, encourage greater professionalization of the field, and raise and allocate resources. **We envision a philanthropy sector powered by good data to achieve greater impact.** 

## Vision

Good data for greater impact

## Goals

**1.** Usable, high-quality data on philanthropic investments, activities, and outcomes

**2.** Secure, sustainable global, regional, national, and subnational systems for collecting and maintaining philanthropy data

**3.** Sufficient organizational capacity to participate in field-wide data collection efforts; access, analyze, and draw meaningful conclusions from data; and apply data-driven insights to decision making





### Benefits

1. The sector learns from the experiences of peers

2. Philanthropic gaps and trends are identified, leading to informed decision making and more effective grantmaking and development outcomes

**3.** Time and resources are not wasted by organizations reinventing philanthropic approaches that have already been employed (either successfully or unsuccessfully)

**4.** The diversity of philanthropic cultures, contexts, and approaches becomes more visible, contributing to the development of innovative philanthropic strategies

**5.** Philanthropic data are sufficiently comparable across borders to allow meaningful cross-national comparisons, benchmarking, and global summaries

**6.** Organizations (within and across sectors) develop collaborative approaches to addressing complex issues

**7.** Collaboration builds trust and deeper commitment to data sharing, resulting in better data and knowledge for philanthropy

**8.** The work of the philanthropic sector becomes more visible, highlighting its role in the broader development ecosystem and enhancing philanthropy's ability to relate to and influence other sectors

#### 3.2 Stakeholders

The key stakeholders upon whom the development of better philanthropic data depends are:

#### 

ndividuals using data to advance and better understand the philanthropy sector While these categories define specific roles organizations may play in a data system, these are not three separate, mutually exclusive types of stakeholders. Each is an integral part of an interdependent system and **each philanthropic organization plays different roles at different times.** In other words, each organization holds **multiple** stakes in the philanthropic data system, sometimes as data consumers, sometimes as data providers, and sometimes as data collectors.

All philanthropic organizations are data consumers or potential data consumers. They may differ in terms of how systematically they seek out and make use of data. But unless they operate by whim, they are all data consumers at some point or another. As data consumers, they count on having accurate, reliable, and timely data at their disposal when it is needed.

At the same time, all philanthropic organizations are also data providers. There can be no data on philanthropic activities without the participation of philanthropic organizations in sharing some level of information about their work. The philanthropic activities of these organizations (funds allocated, programs operated, reports generated, etc.) are the raw materials from which philanthropic data is produced. An accurate, collective picture of the work of the philanthropic sector can be produced only if each organization takes its role as a philanthropic data provider seriously.

Finally, most philanthropic organizations are also data collectors. At a minimum, for example, grantmaking organizations collect data from grant seekers through the process of applying for a grant. They collect more "data" from the grantees they support in the forms of grantee reports and evaluation studies. Operating foundations often collect data in the form of beneficiaries served, outputs generated, and impact achieved. As data collectors, philanthropic organizations understand

the role data plays in making investments, tracking progress, and assessing success. Importantly, they also understand the challenges associated with collecting relevant, high-quality data, such as using efficient, culturally sensitive, and nonburdensome methodologies, and processing and analyzing data appropriately.

For the field to have access to high-quality, reliable, and timely data, a collaborative environment must be established among data consumers, data providers, and data collectors. Since most philanthropic organizations have played each of these roles at one time or another, a natural basis upon which to create a collaborative environment is to draw upon the specific experiences organizations have had in each of these roles. When in the role of data provider, for example, it is useful for an organization to recall its satisfaction or dissatisfaction over the quality of data it has sought as a data consumer in the past. Data-providing organizations need to bear in mind that if the field is to have "good data for greater impact," such data can only be as good as the quality of the information they themselves provide about their activities. Transparency and trust among data collectors, data providers, and data consumers is established through clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities inherent to each.

Finally, while data consumers come from within the philanthropy sector, the information produced may also be of great value to others outside the field (e.g., academia, governments, civil society actors in general). This has implications in terms of how much data is made available outside the sector, under what conditions of access, and at what level of detail.

#### **3.3 Values**



Mutually shared values make possible the creation, collection, and dissemination of philanthropy data. Values are important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. In a series of facilitated workshops at the global, regional, and national levels, six values were consistently expressed as fundamental to building a culture of data collection in philanthropy – *transparency, sharing, respect, accountability, inclusiveness, and improvement.* 

**Transparency** – A commitment to transparency is the fundamental underlying value that makes the collection of philanthropy data possible. Transparency simply means that information about a philanthropic organization is not kept secret or hidden. Rather, the organization allows others to see appropriate types of information about its work.

It is important to note that transparency is not necessarily identical to "openness." Openness generally refers to unrestricted public access to available information. In an earlier version of the Data Charter, "openness" was proposed as a key value driving the collection of philanthropic data. Further discussions of these values in specific countries around the world, however, demonstrated that the concept of "transparency" was more appropriate as a guiding value, given the challenging political climates in which many philanthropic organizations operate. While openness remains for many an aspirational value, transparency has emerged as a value around which greater consensus can be generated.

**Sharing** – While transparency suggests an organization's willingness to let aspects of its work be seen by others, sharing implies a willingness to proactively disseminate information about its work to others. The more people and organizations (especially from different backgrounds) share what they know – in terms both of ideas and information, and of what they discover in the process of creating, using, and interpreting data, including its limitations – the greater the opportunity to improve the quality of data collection and collaboration in the philanthropic sector. And greater collaboration is key to maximizing the impact of the sector's work.

**Respect** – By adopting the values of transparency and sharing, organizations have essentially committed to entering reciprocal relationships with each other. This leads necessarily to the adoption of a third value – respect. To ensure mutual trust and confidence, it is important to explicitly acknowledge the efforts undertaken by organizations to make their data available to others, and for users of the data to use it appropriately and responsibly. It is also important that organizations be explicitly asked for permission to use their data in ways that are mutually agreed upon. Intellectual property rights must be respected and data ownership must be properly credited when analyzing data that is not your own.

It is also important that organizations take their responsibilities as data providers seriously, knowing that only by providing valid data will they be contributing to improving the impact of the field. Failing to do so implies a lack of respect for the collective data-sharing initiative in which they have agreed to participate. Accountability – Accountability means being willing to stand behind the data that has been collected and openly acknowledge the procedures by which it was generated. Specifically, clear and accurate information about the data process, including collection methods, analysis tools, and technologies, must be made available to allow users to determine the quality, credibility, and reliability of the data. All data has inherent limitations, due to the nature of how it is collected and the resources available to collect it. This doesn't mean the data is bad or useless. Rather, it means that there are more and less responsible ways in which it may be used.

There is a strong ethical dimension to this value. The data process must be free of deceptive practices. Because data collection can sometimes be intrusive, data collectors should place concerns for human dignity, consent, and confidentiality first while also striving for maximum transparency, truthfulness, and objectivity. Mechanisms should be put in place for reporting concerns about data quality and unethical use of data. In short, the same principles of ethical behavior that apply to all interactions among organizations that agree to work collectively with each other should be applied to activities specifically associated with data, as well.

**Inclusiveness** – Data collection should strive to represent the diversity of the sector, in terms of the nature of the organizations, the issues they are concerned with, and the cultural contexts in which they operate. The data process must respect and appreciate the local context by ensuring culturally sensitive data collection and reporting methods. In some cases, this may require translating data collection instruments and reporting mechanisms into local languages.

**Improvement –** No data collection system is ever perfect, but all data systems can be improved over time. Organizations collecting data

should monitor their procedures, improving them in line with emerging principles of good practice, in response to stakeholder feedback and as new tools for data processing and dissemination become available. It is also critical to continuously assess the capacity challenges that may exist within organizations and across the sector that make data collection and dissemination difficult, and to find ways to reduce such challenges so that all organizations may participate in the data process on equal terms.

An essential practice for ensuring continuous improvement is ensuring that results generated through data analysis, as well as information about their application and impact, are consistently fed back to the data providers when they are available. This is the fundamental contract that data providers and data collectors enter into – data collectors obtain essential information about the work of philanthropic organizations and, in exchange, data providers obtain a better understanding of how their work contributes to the greater good.

# 3.4 Principles for Data Sharing



Over the course of several workshops at the global, regional, and national levels, nine principles emerged as fundamental to ensuring the strategic creation, collection, processing, analysis, and sharing of global data on philanthropy:



Notably, the principles that were surfaced during meetings with different stakeholders in different locations and at different times tended to strongly converge on the same themes. This suggests that broad-based global consensus is achievable on the key principles that are needed to create the preconditions for the collection and sharing of philanthropic data among peer organizations. These principles amount to the "rules" that stakeholders agree to follow when engaging in collecting and sharing of data about philanthropy.

**Value Proposition –** A value proposition is a statement that explains why it is important that philanthropic organizations collect and share data with each other. It serves as a compass for ensuring that the process of data collection is guided by the specific goals that data can help organizations and the sector achieve. There is no value in data collection for its own sake. Data is valuable only when it is put in the service of generating better understanding, making clearer decisions, or achieving greater impact.

**Clearly defined roles and responsibilities** – Data collection doesn't happen by itself. It involves collaboration among stakeholders – data providers, data collectors, and data consumers. As noted earlier, all organizations play each of these roles at one time or another. Clear expectations need to be set as to which organizations are authorized to serve as data collectors and for what purposes, how data will be collected from data providers, what obligations (if any) data providers have for participating, how data will be used once it has been collected and analyzed, and who will have access to the findings.

**Scope and relevance –** Agreement on exactly what data to collect is impossible unless it is clear what the data will be used for. Data collection is expensive and time consuming. It places burdens on data providers, who often face enormous capacity challenges already. Collect only as much data as is necessary to adequately address the

specific issue being researched. And only collect data on matters of high priority. Always question whether a specific type of data is essential before seeking to collect it. At the same time, don't collect what's easy, but rather what is most relevant.

In deciding what data to collect, it is important to evaluate what, if any, impact past data collected has had. Also, keep in mind that the most useful data is that which benefits not just the philanthropic sector, but the public, as well.

**Timeliness and frequency –** The scope of data that can be collected is endless. But not all data needs to be collected at the same time or with the same frequency. Some data (e.g., basic organizational information, such as date of founding and contact information) remains relatively consistent from year to year and it is not necessary to collect it annually. The cost and difficulty associated with collecting certain types of data is also a factor to consider in determining how often it should be collected. The more complex the project, the longer it will take to assemble and analyze the data. If it is important that results be presented in a timely fashion, the scope of data collection should be restricted and complexity should be minimized.

**Data quality** – In an ideal world, data would be accurate, reliable, timely, comparable, actionable, put in context, and competently managed throughout the stages of collection, analysis, and presentation. In a world of limited resources, tradeoffs must often be made among these various attributes. At the least, minimum acceptable standards for data quality should be established to ensure that data may be used as reliable evidence for decision making. Principles of best research practice are widely available and should be followed as rigorously as possible. Basic guidelines and norms for providing, collecting, and consuming data should be developed and adopted by organizations playing each of these roles.

**Standardization –** Three of the most common purposes for which philanthropic data is collected are: 1) to create an aggregate-level picture of the characteristics and activities of philanthropic organizations; 2) to compare differences and similarities across organizations; and 3) to track trends over time. To do any of these things, data needs to be collected in standardized ways. Decisions must be made regarding the types of data to be collected and from which organizations or individuals, the processes by which the data will be collected, the specific questions that will be asked when requesting information, and the categories into which data will be sorted and analyzed.

Numerous challenges exist to developing a set of data standards that can be widely adopted. Because individual organizations may already be engaged in their own data collection efforts, they will be invested in maintaining data collection standards that they have already adopted. Shifting from one set of standards to another results in loss of comparability between data collected before and after the shift. Likewise, there may be data collection standards already in use in other contexts (e.g., government statistics, international aid data, etc.) that may be useful to consider as models for philanthropy to follow. While acknowledging and borrowing appropriately from such existing standards may be important to consider, it is also important that the philanthropic sector define its own set of indicators that best meets its needs.

**Confidentiality and trust** – In the philanthropic sector, organizations will differ in terms of their levels of comfort with sharing data. Some consider much of the information they have about their work to be confidential. Others strive to make public as much information as possible. Protocols for data sharing and access should be defined to establish a clear understanding of what information is to be treated as confidential, what isn't, and how data will be used. When promises of anonymity are made to organizations that provide sensitive data,

procedures must be in place to ensure that confidential information is not accidentally released. Under certain circumstances, confidential data may be shared with other organizations or with the public, but only if it is presented at an appropriate level of aggregation to ensure that organization-specific information is not released.

**Data security –** Organizations have maximum control over their data only when they choose not to share it with anyone. But once they have shared their data with others, they must have assurance that it will only be used for agreed-upon purposes and may only be accessed by authorized users. This means that data-collecting organizations must store the data in secure databases that cannot be breached by unauthorized users. Organizations entrusted with data provided by others must demonstrate that they have adequate technical safeguards in place to ensure the security of the data.

Accessibility – Because data should only be collected with the intention of being used, systems must be developed that allow authorized users to access the data under appropriate conditions. Data providers should be clearly told how their data will be used, where to find it, and how they and others may access it. Others (non-data providers, for instance) may be allowed access to the data only under certain conditions. For example, they may be allowed to access aggregate-level data that does not reveal specific information about individual organizations.

There may also be situations in which it could be useful to share data outside the philanthropic context. For example, a more complete picture of the contributions of philanthropy to the achievement of development goals can be created when philanthropy shares its data in this larger context. Academic researchers may also wish to conduct secondary analyses on existing data – under what conditions may individual-level data be used for such analyses, and by whom?

## 3.5 Ensuring Successful Implementation

Achieving the vision of "good data for greater impact" articulated in the Charter requires a concerted effort to ensure that five key enablers of success are in place:



Without ongoing collaboration and knowledge sharing on a global basis, the field risks the development of multiple, incompatible data collection systems, which would severely limit the ability of philanthropy to document and demonstrate its impact around the world. The Global Philanthropy Data Charter provides a strategic framework for the development of local data management systems in a way that not only meets local data needs but contributes to greater global understanding of philanthropy's impact, as well.

#### WINGS FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS





#### InstitutoC&A







#### **REPORT SPONSOR**

#### InstitutoC&A

WINGS KNOWLEDGE PARTNER





#### Address:

Av. Brigadeiro Faria Lima, 2391, cj 122 Jardim Paulistano - São Paulo - SP - Brasil



# **GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY DATA CHARTER**

Good data for greater impact

# **GOALS**



Usable, high-quality data on philanthropic investments, activities, and outcomes

Secure, sustainable global, regional, national, and subnational system for collecting and maintaining philanthropy data

Sufficient organizational capacity to participate in field-wide data collection efforts; access, analyze, and draw meaningful conclusions from data; and apply data-driven insights to decision making





















# PRINCIPLES

Clear value proposition Defined roles & responsibilities Scope & relevance of data ✓ Timeliness & frequency of data collection Procedures for ensuring data quality Standardization ✓ Confidentiality & trust ✓ Data security Accessibility

