

Guiding Principles for the Power of Pop (PoP) Fund



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The Power of Pop (PoP) Fund

The Power of Pop (PoP) Fund is an innovative pooled UK fund supported by [Comic Relief](#), [Unbound Philanthropy](#), [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#), [Paul Hamlyn Foundation](#) and [Oak Foundation](#). The PoP Fund supports organisations working at the intersection of popular culture and social change, with a particular focus on migration and racial justice. The first cohort of funded partners is made up of: [2POCC](#), [Skin Deep](#) and [We Are Bridge](#). The second cohort of funded partners is made up of: [Counterpoints Arts](#), [Heard](#) and [OKRE](#). Collectively, their inspiring work amplifies the experiences and testimonies of Black, People of Colour (POC), migrant, refugee and marginalised creatives through bespoke support, network building and cultural production.

What are guiding principles? Why are they important for the PoP Fund?

Guiding principles are values which will shape the engagement with and contribution of those involved in the PoP Fund, to create a common understanding and culture around what is expected as the PoP Fund develops. These principles are fundamental in shaping the PoP Fund and have been developed in collaboration with the funders and the funded partners. They will be revised on an annual basis to ensure they reflect any changes in the PoP Fund and the needs of the partners.

A Adaptability

We recognise that working with people who have lived experience requires sensitivity and flexibility. Narrative change work often involves responding to cultural and societal moments so we need to be able to respond to external change with a certain degree of fluidity. Where our learning objectives or assumptions need to shift in line with or against our initial thoughts, we will be open, brave and willing to make adaptations together.

“I think there is something around being comfortable with the messy and the fuzzy. We are dealing with a subject that is quite intangible and understanding how change happens and even observing change will be complex. I think we should be prepared for the inconclusive and the intuitive and go where the work takes us rather than pushing for metrics that might try and ‘prove’ cause and effect.”

Holly Donagh, Director of Strategic Learning, Insight and Influence,
Paul Hamlyn Foundation

2 Collective learning

Learning is at the heart of our approach to strengthening and growing the pop culture for social change field in the UK. This includes learning from the work that is taking place and from the experiences of the funded partners and the funders. It also means harnessing learning that arises from the pop culture for social change field in the US. A key aspect of learning identified by the funded partners relates to improving their knowledge and expertise around monitoring and evaluation, in order to help them observe and measure their impact.

“We know that pop culture is largely driven by human-powered creativity and that social change is powered by community organising. Our partners are working with both approaches in diverse and unique ways. Any learning or insights about impact needs to be rooted in what is relevant, useful and replicable for our partners first.”

Faiza Ali, PoP Fund Portfolio Manager, Comic Relief

3 Embedding lived experience

Being intentional about valuing and embedding lived experience in this process is key to ensuring the authenticity of the PoP Fund and the work being funded. The centring of lived experience will also help to forefront the Black, POC, migrant, refugee and marginalised creatives at the heart of this work. Being understanding of people’s time, capacity and wellbeing is also vital to this principle.

“We want to make sure that the learning we gain and share from the PoP Fund is a regenerative process, not an extractive or exploitative one. Many creatives in this field are working within systems and structures that are not built for or with them, and so we must place their lived experience at the heart of this work in order to work towards an equal and pluralist society.”

Saphia Youssef, PoP Fund Learning Coordinator

4 Risk-taking

Due to the experimental and innovative nature of this pilot phase of the PoP Fund, taking risks is encouraged regardless of whether there will be an immediate impact. We want to test new approaches and strategies and work without unnecessary boundaries. We must all be tolerant of delay, ‘failure’ and challenges that are part and parcel of cultural change work.

“We must acknowledge that, as cultural change takes time, it may be years before the impact of this work comes to fruition.”

Alice Sachrajda, Cultural Strategist, Researcher and PoP Fund Advisory Consultant

5 Patience

Having patience for the individuals and organisations at the centre of this work is crucial for the PoP Fund and for future investment in the field. Patience must be embedded from the application stage to the end of the funding period, taking into account the personal and organisational needs of each funded partner. For some organisations, this is their first experience with philanthropic funding, and it will take time to learn how to navigate the journey. Funders can help by being flexible, responsive and allowing space for different approaches.

“Patience is particularly important at the start of the process for future grantees who may not have the teams and capacity that we do.”

Jessica Straker, Co-Director of We Are Bridge

What is needed from the funded partners and the funders in order for these principles to be realised?

- Facilitate in-person spaces to connect, strengthen relationships and learn from one another.
- Use our shared networks to connect with individuals, groups and organisations with lived experience working in the pop culture for social change field in the UK and in the US.
- Manage expectations around when and where the funded partners' input is needed and what is expected from them during the funding period.
- Support the funded partners to grow their knowledge, skills and expertise in areas they require support in, whilst also supporting them to prioritise their wellbeing throughout the PoP Fund.
- Provide opportunities to challenge traditional processes, approaches and strategies and be experimental in creating new ways of working.

For further information about the PoP Fund, please contact:

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