

NATIVE VOICES RISING

10 YEAR IMPACT REPORT

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FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Looking back at ten years of supporting Native-led change efforts through Native Voices Rising, we have seen much progress and growth. But there is still much more ground to be gained. The initial report in 2013 opens with these words: "Native American organizations face enormous challenges to their communities, their lands and environments, and their basic rights as Indigenous peoples. They face these challenges with limited support from the broad spectrum of America's philanthropic institutions. Far too many foundations simply give little to nothing at all in support of Native causes." While most facts in this statement still ring true in broad strokes (challenges faced, lack of philanthropic support, etc.), the story is ever evolving – as are the storytellers and audience.

This follow-up report is an opportunity to tell a grantmaking story rooted in relationship and reciprocity, and centered on Native power-building and visibility.

This report might strike you as different from others you have read. The report still includes data points focusing on the impact of Native Voices Rising, but there are also direct quotes and stories from those who have directly experienced the power of Native Voices Rising. This follow-up report is an opportunity to tell a grantmaking story rooted in relationship and reciprocity, and centered on Native power-building and visibility. The impact of NVR cannot be understood without acknowledging the work of Louis T. Delgado (Oneida) who led the research for the original report, "A Case for Funding Native-led Change." Our report stands on the shoulders of Louis' life-long work to lay the groundwork for focused funding of Native-led change and the development of Native Voices Rising.

Native Voices Rising (NVR) serves as a mechanism to build broad-based philanthropic support for grassroots groups led by and for Native communities. It is a partnership between Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy, and its leadership is composed of staff, volunteers,

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Advisory Council members, etc. who all identify as Native. Since 2013, NVR has moved $9M to more than 185 Native-led groups fighting for change.

Based on interviews and surveys with grant partners and funding partners, NVR is one of the most effective models for investing in Native communities because it combines Indigenous-led participatory grantmaking with a trust-based approach towards philanthropy. While trust-based philanthropy has become more widespread among funders, it has not necessarily resulted in better giving outcomes for Native communities (i.e. more grant dollars, general operations support, longer grant terms, larger sized grants, etc.). Philanthropy often does not share power, even as it promotes that narrative. Core to NVR's model is having Native communities be making decisions about funding and strategy.

The recommendations put forward in this report are meant to offer an entry-point for all of philanthropy to better support and build relationships with Native communities and organizations. As you read through, we ask you to think about how you might envision putting these recommendations into action. This report is not meant to sit on the figurative shelves, but instead to be a jumping-off point for engagement and action to support Native-led change and Native communities across the country.





Carly Hare (Pawnee/Yankton) and
Ron Rowell (Choctaw/Kaskaskia)

Co-Founders of Native Voices Rising

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Fund grassroots Native-led organizations directly whenever possible, and when not possible, fund trusted Native-led intermediaries.
- Fund multiple, trusted Native-led intermediaries to better support the Native-led ecosystem and increase your organizational learning and relationship building.
- Provide flexible general operations funding that Native organizations can use towards building their financial sovereignty.
- Examine your own grantmaking process to be curious which questions or stages might present unwanted barriers for Native-led and non-Native groups.
- Explore ways to increase your organizational commitment to support Native communities throughout your entire philanthropic strategy, including representation within staff, trustees, grant review process, and DEI goals & outcomes.
- Deepen your organizational learning by engaging in meaningful efforts to understand how to resource Native-led organizations.
- Explore how to be in meaningful relationships with trusted Native-led groups beyond just funding relationships.
- NVR invites foundations and donors to pledge to award at least 10% of their grant dollars to Native-led groups and Native communities.

INTRODUCTION

> We inherited everything from the three generations before us and we borrow it from the three generations after us. So we have no choice but to make things better than we got them. *— Sachem Hawkstorm, NVR Community Reviewer*

After a decade of grantmaking experience, Native Voices Rising (NVR) has demonstrated itself to be a trusted partner to both Native-led organizations and non-Native philanthropic partners. Trusting relationships are at the heart of the Fund's approach, and NVR has compiled an ever-growing track record of being a trusted intermediary. Trust-based philanthropy has become more widespread among funders, but giving outcomes for Native communities have not necessarily followed suit. Trusted grant intermediaries like Native Voices Rising play a critical role in advocating for long-term changes to philanthropic practices, while redistributing funds to trusted Native-led organizations when there is not the ability to support Native communities directly within an institution.

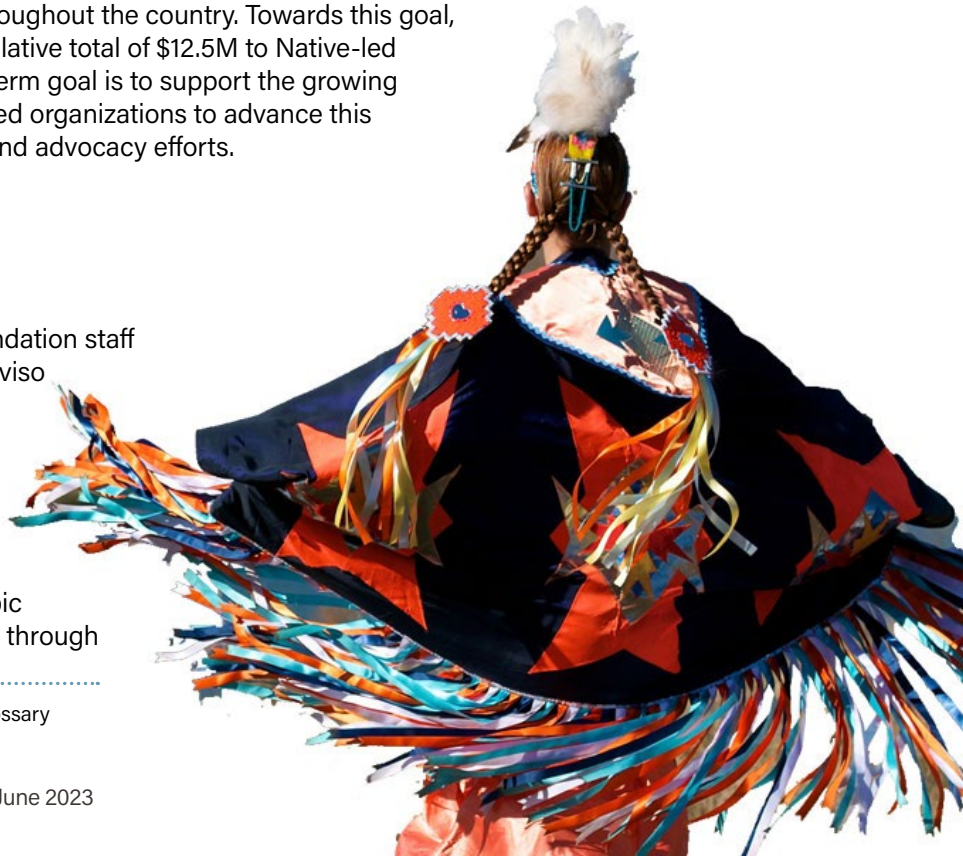
This report is largely retrospective in its reflections, but by sharing the accomplishments over the past decade and highlights from NVR's collective learning, it also communicates a clear vision for the future. In 2022, NVR celebrated a successful $10 million dollar campaign that helped lay the foundation for the next phase of NVR's work. This support laid a foundation to extend multi-year funding, invest meaningfully in the support and relationships with grant partners, and develop NVR's capacity to meet community needs.

NVR grant partners know how to identify their community's needs, develop effective program strategy, prioritize allocation of financial resources, and communicate with NVR directly when support is needed. Resulting from a series of strategic conversations in 2021, NVR launched its inaugural Advisory Council, comprised of 9 Native leaders, with deep experience around philanthropy and grassroots[1] Native nonprofits, to serve as thought partners around NVR's strategy, programming, and organizational development. Around the same time, Native Americans in Philanthropy – one of NVR's two backbone partners organizations, launched the Native Youth Grantmakers to inspire Native youth as the next generation in philanthropy.

NVR is often seen and discussed as a clear demonstration project for what self-determination and centering Native voices can look like in philanthropy. Within the next decade, NVR aims to deepen this role by moving $10M annually to support Native organizing, advocacy, and power-building efforts throughout the country. Towards this goal, NVR is projecting to have moved a cumulative total of $12.5M to Native-led change by the end of 2023. NVR's long-term goal is to support the growing ecosystem for both funders and Native-led organizations to advance this movement centering Native organizing and advocacy efforts.

METHODOLOGY

In October 2022, Common Counsel Foundation staff contracted with lead researcher Dana Arviso (Diné) to gather stakeholder voices, stories of impact, and cumulative grantmaking data to evaluate the impact of 10 years of giving within Native Voices Rising. The purpose was to deepen the understanding of the Fund's unique role within the philanthropic ecosystem and uplift the lessons learned through



1 The term "grassroots" has been defined in the Glossary along with other key terms used in this report.



NVR's community-led model with the rest of the sector. Like other social justice funders who seek to alleviate the root causes of racial inequity, NVR seeks to support Native American grant partners in making the structural changes needed to support Native people in rebuilding their Tribal Nations.

This research was conducted in three phases: 1) background and grounding; 2) research and data gathering; 3) synthesis and report creation. While the researcher reviewed background materials about NVR – including the 2013 report titled "Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-led Change"[2] – she also brings first-hand experience and context as a previous NVR Community Reviewer and current Advisory Council member. Dana also was a board member for Native Americans in Philanthropy during NVR's inception and initial years of growth.

During the research phase, Dana conducted 12 virtual one-hour interviews with NVR Community Reviewers, Advisory Council members, grant partners, and Funders.[3] The analysis of the interview transcripts were done by Dana Arviso (Consultant, Common Counsel Foundation) and Winoka Yepa (Data & Research Associate, Native Americans in Philanthropy). During the synthesis phase, Dana worked closely with the NVR Core Team to share initial findings, identify quotes and stories to uplift from the interview data, and summarize potential recommendations to the field. She also presented initial findings and elicited feedback from the NVR Advisory Council as she worked on early drafts. The full listing of interviewees can be found in the appendix to this report.

ADVANCING INDIGENOUS SOLUTIONS THROUGH NATIVE-CENTERED GRANTMAKING

Native Voices Rising (NVR) is primarily a pooled regranting collaborative that serves as a mechanism to build broad-based philanthropic support for grassroots groups led by and for Native communities. These groups elevate indigenous solutions to historic harms around environmental, racial, and societal injustices. NVR is uniquely positioned to engage and guide non-Native donors and funders into the opportunity to learn about and resource Native-led social change work.[4] Central to NVR is a community-led grantmaking approach with Native community members – termed NVR Community Reviewers – empowered to make grant decisions within regional review committees.

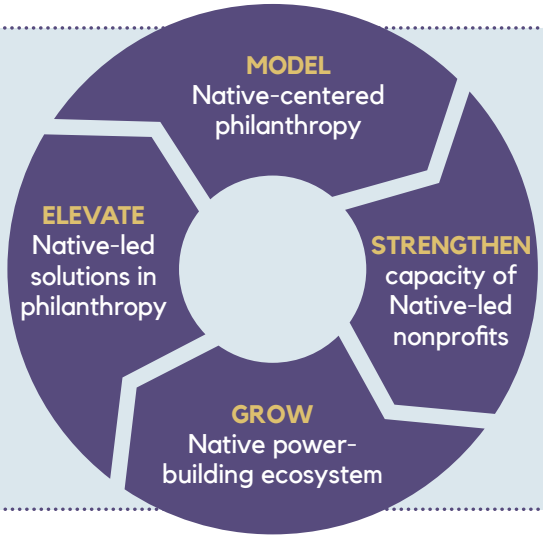
NVR's grantmaking priorities and model directly reflect the named priorities within the Native nonprofit sector. Across interviews and anecdotally through the years, NVR's grant partners collectively expressed a continued need for: 1) general operations support; 2) longer-term grant commitments; 3) increased grant sizes; 4) review processes where Native communities are centered and uplifted; and, 5) organizational eligibility that is inclusive of Native-led nonprofits, Tribes, and non-federally recognized Tribes.

2 The 2013 report "Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-Led Change" can be found at: nativevoicesrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Full-Report-NVR.pdf

3 A full list of the interview participants can be found in the Appendix.

4 Please see the Glossary at the end of the report for definitions of key terms used throughout the report.

While NVR's regranting activities remain the primary focus of the Fund, NVR's model has evolved as its unique role has evolved. Driven by direct requests from its grant partners, NVR has offered a supportive assistance program for its grant partners – inclusive of webinar offerings and customized consulting support – since 2019 to strengthen the capacity of Native-led nonprofits. This, in conjunction with NVR's growing funder advocacy and engagement efforts, are growing the Native power-building ecosystem and elevating Native-led solutions within the philanthropic sector.



NVR'S GOALS

- Provide flexible funding to Native-led organizations throughout the country by conducting an annual community-led cycle of grantmaking.
- Build out a culturally relevant capacity building program for current and past grant partners, including a webinar series and customized consulting support.
- Catalyze more funding dollars within the philanthropic sector for Native-led social change efforts.

While there are other Native-led foundations and intermediaries that fund regionally, NVR stands out for being a national funder. NVR's grantmaking has strengthened the capacity of Native-led groups to advance Indigenous solutions by providing flexible general support combined with culturally-relevant supportive assistance to strengthen the work of grant partners.

SNAPSHOT OF A UNIQUE MODEL FOR NATIVE-LED CHANGE

Let's begin with the premise that while institutional philanthropy as a sector might be newer to Native communities, Native people have always practiced traditions of giving. Native people are the original philanthropists of the United States and practiced giving since time immemorial. Indigenous traditional practices of redistributing resources amongst communities not only ensured survival, but formed the backbone of Indigenous cultural values and teachings. Native people are still guided by Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, relationships, and responsibility. As Native people, wealth is not measured in possessions but in the spirit of generosity or how much can be given back to the community.

Native Voices Rising is a living example of Native giving or philanthropy rooted in Indigenous values. Along with other Native-led foundations and intermediary partners, NVR is helping to (re)Indigenize philanthropy and offer lessons to the sector. Native Voices Rising is "a research, donor education, regranting, and capacity-building collaborative created and led by Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy. NVR is designed to support organizing, advocacy and civic engagement in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities." The Fund prioritizes general support for Native grassroots organizations that are building powerful community leadership and advancing change through organizing, advocacy, and power building.

Part of NVR's strength is an Indigenous[5] and responsive model that recognizes that community organizing and power building looks different in Native communities. As a funder, NVR models a commitment to

5 NVR's mission statement can be found at: nativevoicesrising.org/about



moving away from deficit-based framing centering around poverty, and instead moving towards asset-based narratives and storytelling that includes opportunities to invest in powerful Native-led change.

Another strength of NVR is raising the visibility of "grassroots"[6] Native organizations that are often overlooked by larger foundations. NVR is one of the very few sources of support for kitchen-table community change by and for Native folks. This Fund offers a model of how grassroots grantmaking in Indigenous communities can be accomplished and builds useful practice-based knowledge. NVR is developing a national community of practice that relies on those doing the work at the grassroots and can provide entry for funders who can understand its importance. Stephan Cheney, an NVR Community Reviewer, explained that "Grassroots people are getting things done with a limited amount of resources... our people are accomplishing so much with a very small amount of resources, sometimes their own money. They do this because it is vital to their community's health. And I would say, that's what grassroots organizing is for the most part, a willingness to go all in to fight for a better way of life."

In interviews with grant partners, many spoke about "Indigenizing the system" of philanthropy. What does it mean to Indigenize philanthropy? It means fostering an inclusive organizational culture that allows for a more spiritual and Indigenous ways of knowing. It also requires a commitment to review grant applications from a more cultural perspective that is embedded in Indigenous ways and viewpoints. This should also include incorporating knowledge sharing systems such as alternative forms of storytelling in both the grant proposal, assessment, and evaluation processes.

Sachem Hawkstorm, an NVR Community Reviewer, shared his take on what it means to Indigenize grantmaking:

> "And so to have Indigenous [reviewers] who are in touch with our situations, who understand the things that we're dealing with - and can look at a more spiritual and Indigenous way of looking at things - to be able to help our peoples get the support that they need for the programs that they're doing. And have an Indigenous perspective with that. I tell people, when we're in these [reviewer] groups, and when we're about to do these reviews, remember that we're not part of that system. And that we can look at things from an Indigenous perspective. And kind of look past some of the things that have held us back in the past, and that we wish that we didn't have to jump through all the hoops that we had to jump through, you know, in the past. We can say: Where is this organization actually going? What are they doing? And how is it benefiting the community that they're serving? We can look at that from a unique perspective that most of the philanthropy world can never understand or see, you know, they didn't come from that."

6 Please see the Glossary at the end of the report for definitions of key terms used throughout the report.

RE-INDIGENIZING PHILANTHROPY: IMPACT OF NATIVE VOICES RISING TO DATE

1 **NVR's community-led grantmaking is humanizing and deeply appreciated by grant partners by exemplifying what it means to do grantmaking "for the people and by the people."** Native-led grassroots groups feel powerful and recognized within philanthropy, which is not often the case. Knowing that grant decisions were made by Native leaders who are better able to understand their work, groups feel better about NVR's community-led grant process whether they receive a grant or not. NVR's community-led grantmaking model allows for first-hand community expertise to inform the grantmaking process and helps mitigate any potential power dynamics or possible favoritism in the grant review process. Native community reviewers better understand the nature of the work of grant partners and the challenges and opportunities that they might encounter. This participatory grantmaking model also requires that funders give up the majority of the decision-making power by yielding to the recommendations of the review committee instead of maintaining control of such decisions at the staff or trustee level.

2 **NVR's model of community-led grantmaking is also empowering for NVR's Community Reviewers, and is a demonstration of the sovereignty NVR is moving towards.** This is different from traditional philanthropy where Native communities are often not in decision-making positions. NVR Community Reviewers are recruited from a pool of national Native leaders within the nonprofit & philanthropic sectors. NVR honors the time and community expertise of grant reviewers by providing them with an honorarium. As a part of the onboarding and training, NVR offers its Community Reviewers knowledge, criteria, and other considerations that they will need to meaningfully review grants. NVR Community Reviewers gain deeper insight into the array of ways Indigenous communities across the nation are telling the stories of their organizing and their vision for change. Community Reviewers operate by consensus-based decision making and make time to hear both the strengths and concerns from other reviewers about the proposals. NVR also operates from a deep sense of relational responsibility towards community similar to how relatives help take care of one another. The Fund engages a great number of Indigenous community members from differing generations and levels of experience, including Native Americans in Philanthropy's Youth Grantmaking members. In this way, Native voices are not just amplified at the grant partner level, but also within the grant review process.

United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) staff member LorenAshley Buford shared her experience as a Community Reviewer:

> "What I think is so beautiful about the community review process is that we understand the traditional core values of the tribal communities that lie behind the proposed projects. This amplifies the community impact when you have a group of peers who are embedded in Indian Country and have lived experiences in the challenges these grant partners are addressing. So it's quality over quantity sometimes. And understanding the importance of the work based on the knowledge that Indigenous people carry with them that cannot always be translated into a five-page report, especially when you have word count limits and things like that. It goes beyond a grading scale. It really comes down to the understanding of knowing Indigenous worldviews and knowing how their land, culture, or language preservation efforts are tied to their survival and identity."

3 **NVR demonstrates trust in the expertise of its grant partners by offering general support grants.** Combined with general operating support and the intention for longer-term funding, grant partners feel a real difference in the funding support that they receive as it allows them to better focus on their community work. Susan Gordon from Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) shared her appreciation for how NVR grants are administered:

> "The number one issue is general support grants. And, making reporting easy. I've been fundraising for nonprofits for 30 years. And I mean, I have seen it all. I really have. And, so grant making has become easier. I think community people see the benefits of general support grants. And compared to the [norm] of philanthropy, where mainstream foundations have moved into this sort of business model where they're making an investment, and they want to know what their outcome is at the end of their grant. And that's not how community based organizing works. In the issues that I've worked on, which are nuclear weapons issues, and now uranium issues, we're not going to solve this next year, we're not going to solve this in 10 years. And so understanding that your last grant to us, which was a commitment of $30,000 a year for three years. That's amazing. That is just a phenomenal gift to this organization. Because it shows your confidence in us and what we're doing, and allows us to know that for the next three years, we have this, this support.

NVR staff, consultants, Community Reviewers, and the Advisory Council strive to understand the difference between transactional versus transformational relationships and to model being in good relations with one another both in interactions with one another and in "doing business" with each other. NVR takes the stance that its grant partners are experts in their own communities and contexts instead of assuming knowledge about what is best for a Native-led organization. Ron Rowell, former CEO of Common Counsel Foundation and current NVR Advisory Council member, shared why Native Voices Rising was committed to offering general support funding from its onset: "Organizations need the flexibility to decide for themselves how they're going to use funds to achieve their goals. Having funders assert power over these day-to-day management decisions makes absolutely no sense and undermines organizational effectiveness."

NVR continues to learn and adapt around how it can be more responsive to the needs that Native communities are facing. One NVR Community Reviewer, Marcus Briggs-Cloud, shared his experience with receiving grants for his group, Ekvn-Yefolecv: "It's really helpful when entities fund general operating support, no restrictions. Many communities need to apply funds to capital campaigns, like land acquisition, or the purchase of vehicles or building construction costs. We know how to manifest the visions we are carrying, but we need the financial support to do so. So, unrestricted funds, general operating support, is so important."

NVR supports its grant partners in developing stronger voices for Native solutions, identifying ways of organizing, and naming the changes needed for Indigenous futures. This is a demonstration of what is needed for Native people – employing concepts of self-determination and sovereignty – and resistance against the "white savior" narrative or poverty-based charity model.

4 **NVR offers a critically nimble funding vehicle that can adapt and evolve its understanding of community organizing and power building as shifts occur within Indigenous communities. It is known that community organizing and power building** looks different in Native communities than in other communities, and NVR's model allows for organizing efforts to be better acknowledged on the ground. This is often not the case in traditional philanthropies, which often lag behind efforts in communities.

Janeen Comenote, Executive Director of the National Urban Indian Family Coalition, shared how organizing in Native communities is distinct and often a form of "reactive organizing". It is also tied to the history of the American Indian Urban Relocation Era,[7] when Native people moved off of rural reservations into urban centers for the promise of education and employment. Once they arrived, the opportunities were limited and families found themselves without their extended family and community as a social safety net.

> "Organizing an Indian country doesn't follow what classic organizing looks like in other communities of color... I think urban Native communities have a pretty rich history of organizing.... We have been organizing as communities, since we got to cities. That's how urban Indian organizations came to be, they usually came to be as a result of a group of dedicated citizens organizing to meet the needs of our people in cities, and then they just grew as they began responding to the needs on the ground, and then became organizations."

7 For more information about American Indian Urban Relocation Era, see: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html

Judith Le Blanc from Native Organizers Alliance also shared her national perspective on what contemporary Native organizing and advocacy work look like in relation to both national and state politics and policy work:

> "That's why this is one of these magic movement moments where funders have to understand the need to invest in power building... We are not like other communities of color, because we were sovereign people. 70% of us live in cities. But as a voting constituency, we have a lot of power in key states. We have a lot of power when it comes to determining state elections. And in order to have policies that shift in the direction of: 1) climate change, which is a top concern based on an Indigenous Futures[8] survey that we did this year; 2) access to health care; 3) dealing with the impact of systemic racism across Indian country. Those are the top three concerns that motivated people to vote. And just like the other electorate, other, you know, constituencies, they had the similar concerns and moved by issues. So I think philanthropy has to look at power building from the angles that when voter engagement and voter protection work is done, it gives them the funders an understanding of the balance of power. It gives them the understanding of what Indian Country is concerned about."

5

NVR grant partners also benefit from the impact of the Supportive Assistance Program. NVR builds the capacity of Native community members to better understand the world of philanthropy. NVR offers Supportive Assistance programming to help grant partners build up their internal capacity through a webinar series and customized consulting support. This offering is annually revised and adapted to support Native-led groups to become more effective in achieving their mission and goals. Over the past 4 years, NVR's Supportive Assistance Program has offered webinar trainings on topics like grant writing, relationship building, fundraising from both foundations and individual donors, strategic planning for organizational growth, storytelling, understanding financial reporting, and developing a communications strategy. These webinar topics continue to evolve over time to meet the expressed needs and interests of NVR grant partners, and participants have the opportunity to engage in small learning pods following webinar offerings to dive deeper into the topics discussed in the webinars.

The second phase is customized consulting time with Native consultants. NVR grant partners identify discrete capacity building projects with 10-20 hours of consultant support, and NVR partners them with Native consultants and coaches who have appropriate skill sets. The Supportive Assistance Program not only strengthens the ability of grant partners to be competitive for grants beyond NVR, but it also helps them strengthen their organization's work. This is just one of the ways that NVR strategically provides Indigenous groups with information about how to become part of the "by and for Natives" philosophy.

While participation has fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic years, grant partners have expressed appreciation not only for the content of the webinar trainings, but the opportunity to learn from one another in learning pods. This cooperative learning also expands their network to include other Native organizations who are facing similar challenges in building up strong and sustainable nonprofits. Grant partner Ahtza Chavez from Naeva shared her experience with participating in the Supportive Assistance Program: "I think it was really helpful. It's just like a circle of family that, you know, you get used to being able to organize with more people. More brains or you know, better than just your own."

SUPPORTIVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Cycle	No. Webinars	No. Total Webinar Participants	No. Groups supported with customized consulting time	No. Native consultants engaged (webinars + projects)
Spring/Fall 2019	4	**300**	5	17
Spring/Fall 2020	4	**233**	5	13
Spring/Fall 2021	4	**226**	8	14
Spring/Fall 2022	3	**209**	14	13

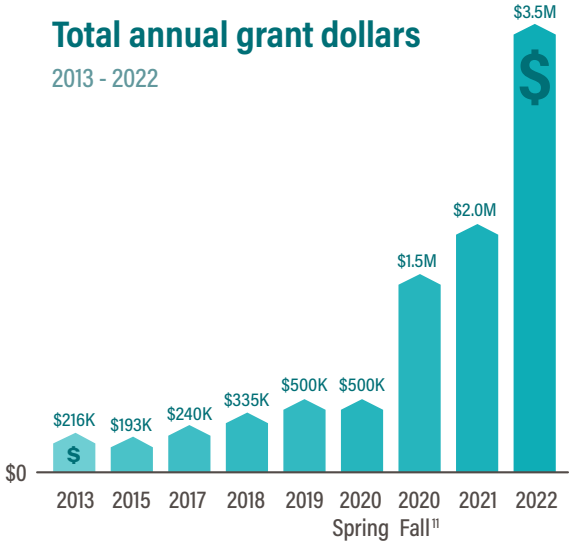
LorenAshley Buford also shared her experience as a grant partner at UNITY: "Quantifiably measuring success is very much a western idea of philanthropy. I think what Native Voices Rising does to address that is offer wrap-around services. The program offers networking, provides training, feedback on your grant writing, and an opportunity for capacity building to build up your organization so that you can thrive in the areas of community impact. So that is completely different from a lot of the other funding resources because it goes beyond deliverables and nurtures the indigenous organizations while also supporting them financially."

8 For more information and the results of the Indigenous Futures survey, please see: indigenousfutures.org/#about

NATIVE VOICES RISING'S GRANTMAKING BY THE NUMBERS[9]

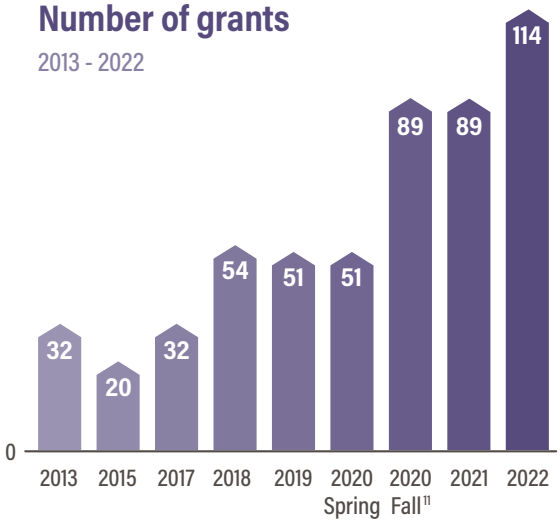
Total annual grant dollars

2013 - 2022



Number of grants

2013 - 2022



States with grant partner representation

2013 - 2022



States with at least one grant partner:

32 states + DC

Top 5 states with most grant partners:

CA (31), HI (19), MN (16), SD (15), WA (15)

9 While the Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy Funding Map may have outdated or inaccurate data that excludes grassroots Native American organizations as grant partners, we encourage funders to become familiar with the mapping tool and ensure that your foundation's data submitted to Candid is accurate for future versions: nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map

While the inspirational stories of NVR's grant partners help to understand how the funding dollars are making a difference, success and growth over the past decade is also measured by the increases in the number of grants, average grant size, and total grant dollars awarded per year.

- **Numbers of Cycles: 9**
- **Total number of unique grants: 531**
- **Cumulative total in grants: $9,000,000**
- **Unique grant partners: 190 (as of end of 2022)**
- **Community reviewers: 61 (as of end of 2022)**

GRANTS

Cycle	No. Grants	Avg. Grant	Total Grants
2013	32	$6,763	$216,400
2015[10]	20	$9,678	$193,561
2017	32	$7,500	$240,000
2018	54	$6,204	$335,000
2019	51	$9,804	$500,000
2020 - Spring	51	$9,804	$500,000
2020 - Fall[11]	89	$16,853	$1,500,000
2021	89	$22,472	$2,000,000
2022	114	$30,702	$3,500,000

10 NVR conducted grant cycles every other year 2013-2017, as fundraising was a major barrier until 2018, when grant cycles occurred annually.

11 NVR offered two grant cycles in 2020 in response to the urgent needs that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. NVR also renewed some grants without an additional application process as a means of moving resources quickly.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD: SUPPORTING NATIVE POWER-BUILDING EFFORTS

1. **Fund grassroots Native-led organizations directly whenever possible, and when not possible, fund trusted Native-led intermediaries.** The need for funding grassroots Native-led organizations is still critical. NVR offers philanthropies a means of reaching those small, grassroots efforts that most feel they cannot do on their own. Over the past decade, NVR has built a compendium of grant partners that is meant to serve as a starting point to find Native-led groups. As a national funding opportunity, NVR also connects regions throughout Indian Country, celebrates the diversity, and helps equitable distribution of support. And the"ripple effect" of changes across the country is beginning to be seen.

2. **Fund multiple, trusted Native-led intermediaries to better support the Native-led ecosystem and increase your organizational learning and relationship building.** Along with other Indigenous-led funders, accountable intermediaries are changing the narrative and increasing the sector's understanding of the reality of what it means to fight against the root causes of the complex problems communities are working to solve. Philanthropies also need to understand that the funding disparity is rooted in settler colonial history and modern policies of white supremacy. Overcoming that painful legacy will take significant time and investment.



In solidarity with its partners across the field, NVR cannot be the sole Native-led intermediary that you support. Other Native-led foundations and intermediaries are supporting critical work across native communities, including but not limited to: American Indian College Fund, CIRI Foundation, Decolonizing Wealth Project, First Peoples Fund, First Nations Development Institute, Hawaii People's Fund, Hopi Foundation, IllumiNative, Na'ah Illahee Fund, Native Arts & Cultures Foundation, Native Forward, Native Organizers Alliance, Native Ways Federation, NDN Collective, Potlatch Fund, Return to the Heart Foundation, Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, and Tiwahe Foundation – to name a few.

3. **Provide flexible general operations funding that Native organizations can use towards building their financial sovereignty.** General operating funding demonstrates trust that groups know how best to support and resource their work. This could include providing grant partners the opportunity to use general operations funding to contribute to their endowment. NVR grant partner Naeva's Executive Director Ahtza Chavez encourages funders to move in this direction:

> "They really just need to entrust Native communities to really help build our own endowments. So that we can do that on our own, they need to be able to step aside and not have to have ownership of where it goes. And allow us to reinvest it, [and] do what we need to [do]. I think a lot of times organizations get money and then they're like: we need to spend it, we need to spend it, that's the you know, grantors want us want to see us spend every single dime. What would be more advantageous for a lot of these communities is for them to say hey, keep 5% to 10% of those funds and use that to safeguard you as an organization for future years."

4. **Examine your own grantmaking process to be curious which questions or stages might present unwanted barriers for Native-led and non-Native groups.** Along with other funders, NVR aims to simplify both the grant writing and grant reporting processes for Native-led organizations who are seeking support. NVR invites other funders to learn more about its grantmaking model and consider how you might integrate some aspects of it into your own grant review process. It is a responsive, reflective, and reactive model which other funders can replicate with some support. Advisory Council members and CCF staff work together to do outreach to other funders who may have an interest in this model and help answer your questions.

NVR encourages you to examine your own process and determine if all aspects are really necessary and where you can offer a simplified and flexible approach to increase access to prospective grant partners. Helena Jacobs, NVR Community Reviewer and staff member to grant partner Alaska Native Birthworkers Community, offered some appreciation for how NVR has been one of the easiest to work with:

> "NVR keeps it simple - pretty straightforward proposal. Reporting was waived during the pandemic and reports for other grantors were accepted. [NVR offers] high quality capacity building webinars, growing inclusive community of Native leaders as reviewers and advisors, [and] doesn't require a PhD in grant writing to get a proposal awarded. It really centers grassroots leadership and first-time grants writers, my favorite proposal that got the highest award in our review group this year was the proposal that written in the way you would have a conversation with an Auntie - very down to earth, real, relatable, funny and reminded us of a lot of commonalities we have as Native peoples."

5

Explore ways to increase your organizational commitment to support Native communities throughout your entire philanthropic strategy, including representation within staff, trustees, grant review process, and DEI goals & outcomes. According to CHANGE Philanthropy's 2020 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals data, only "3.8 percent of people working in philanthropy identify either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with some other race or ethnicity. Of those respondents, 0.8 percent identified solely as Indigenous." Native Americans in Philanthropy has further unpacked this data in their 2022 Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report[12] to understand this data by age, gender identity, foundation type, workforce size, and region.

The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors.

Along with other Native-led foundations, institutional funders are encouraged to invest in building up their internal capacity to foster strong and trusting relationships by explicitly including Native Americans as a population group within your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals. There is a dire need for more Native representation at all levels within philanthropic organizations – including particularly at the program officer, senior leadership, and trustee levels – in order to better understand and address how Native communities have been impacted by colonization and to build stronger relationships. Commit to advancing equity in philanthropy by creating a current baseline of your Native American staff and trustees and then set goals and strategies for how to increase this representation within your foundation.

While advancing DEI goals within your foundation, it is important to ensure that national grantmaking data is capturing Native American giving data and trends accurately. Giving statistics get easily conflated, often seen through double-counting of self-reported regional and national data and failing to distinguish between Native-led organizations over organizations that serve Native Americans as part of their larger mission. This data integrity is important to provide an accurate baseline from which to measure change.

6

Deepen your organizational learning by engaging in meaningful efforts to understand how to resource Native-led organizations. NVR has evolved as a demonstration project for funders to build trust in Native communities and learn about how best to support Native communities with funding dollars. The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors. However, there are still opportunities for funders and donors to deepen their organizational learning and commitment to Native communities with continued learning and inquiry in support of grassroots community organizing, advocacy, and systemic change work.

12 To access NAP's Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report see: ippreport.nativephilanthropy.org Please note that an updated version will be released in 2023.

Towards this end, NVR will be recruiting and piloting a Funder Learning Circle in the near future for institutional funders looking to deepen their support for Native-led work and change efforts. This program will help build tangible skills to support Native-led work within philanthropic institutions, gain better understanding about the work happening across Native communities, and promote peer learning with other funders who want to deepen their support and learning around Native communities. Please email nvr@commoncounsel.org to learn more about this.

7

Explore how to be in meaningful relationships with trusted Native-led groups beyond just funding relationships. Beyond grant dollars, interviewees revealed that funders can also provide support to Native grant partners by employing the following strategies:

- Open doors and "tell your friends" (other funders and individual donors) about the work to help us gain more financial support.
- Provide opportunities to promote the story of the work on the foundation's social media pages.
- Use Tribally-owned or Native-owned businesses, vendors, consultants, artists, and caterers, whenever possible.
- Convene grant partners to help build relationships and expand networks, assist with capacity building, and still provide time and space for opportunities for rest, healing, and wellness.
- Invest in research and data practices led by Indigenous people and dig into the existing data and reports that are referenced throughout this report.
- When possible, support Native organizations in building endowments as a form of gaining financial sovereignty.

8

Finally, NVR invites foundations and donors to pledge to award at least 10% of their grant dollars to Native-led groups and Native communities. While this is a bold demonstration of abundant support for Native communities, there are other ways to engage along this spectrum of support for Native communities. For a foundation or donor, it could look like pledging to give 10% more than your last year based on grant data, increasing your giving to 10% to Native communities within a 5-year time period, or something else that meaningfully supports Native communities with funding dollars. Philanthropic support of Native communities has stayed stagnant at less than half of a percent of philanthropic dollars, and it requires accountability and collectivity to reimagine what real support of Native-led work can look like.

Similar to our recommendation on how to increase Native representation within your foundation, NVR suggests that you start by examining your giving history, make sure the data is accurate, and then create a current baseline of your grants to Native-led organizations. From there, you can set goals and strategies for how to increase these grants within your foundation. If you need assistance, NVR staff are willing to help.

The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors.





CLOSING: JOIN US IN ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF NVR

NVR envisions a future of abundance for Native communities. This is a future where everyone can bear witness to Native people rebuilding Native nations, the return of ancestral land and natural resources to effective Native stewards, and the rebalancing of the relationship with the environment and natural world. NVR also envisions a future where communities can thrive and be free, where wealth and resources have been redistributed in equitable ways.

At this particular moment, Indigenous people around the world are urgently fighting for justice amid racial inequities, economic inequality, and the disproportionate impacts of climate change. Simone Senogles, of NVR grant partner Indigenous Environmental Network, shared what this moment means:

> "We've seen a lot of shifts in what organizing looks like on the ground and what the relationships with funders looks like. I think that those two things have shifted a lot and gone up and down. After Standing Rock, it's like everyone got interested in our kind of work. The kind of work that we've been doing quietly on the sidelines [and feeling] marginalized forever. Not just our organization, but Indigenous peoples. Even environmental justice is really a continuation of a fight against colonization and imperialism - and you know - all the land grabs and all the threats to our livelihood on our homelands. And it's never been popular - how could it be? How could Indigenous peoples fighting for our lands ever be a popular thing in a capitalist society that is based upon our sort of disenfranchisement, right? All the wealth that has been built is largely built upon Indigenous lands and the injustice is what we face. So when we fight for that, it's not always something that funders want to face or want to fund. So I think that there's a lot more understanding on the funder side about the value of Indigenous organizing. Just because it's been shown to be so powerful because we're so committed, and we're so based in our own values - and you know - we're fighting for our lives. And it just means everything, this is our homeland. And so when we're fighting against climate change, for environmental justice, and for clean water, at a time when the world is at a tipping point."

Judith LeBlanc from Native Organizers Alliance also voiced the urgency of this moment:

> "Since I got involved with NVR - 8 years ago - the organizing context has changed so much. There is a really heightened awareness at the grassroots level of what our political power has the capacity to do. Because when you have clearly stopped the Keystone XL Pipeline, stopped drilling in the Arctic, and Standing Rock - well, we didn't stop that pipeline. But we built a level of awareness that interrupted the dominant narrative. And people got a sense of the power of what that does when you interrupt the narrative... If there's anything this report says, I think there needs to be a note of urgency, we have two years where we potentially can get some structural chips made in the way that governance handles the problems and concerns of Indian Country. And if they don't invest, then it's going to limit our ability to get as far as we can, under this administration."

CONTACT US

LEARN MORE by visiting our website at: nativevoicesrising.org/invest
Email us at: nvr@commoncounsel.org

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Indigenous Futures Survey 2.0. (2021). *About IFS.* IFS is a collaborative effort of IllumiNative and Native Organizers Alliance in partnership with the Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity (RISE) Center Director, Dr. Stephanie Fryberg (Tulalip) at the University of Michigan and Dr. Arianne Eason at the University of California-Berkeley. Website available at: indigenousfutures.org

APPENDIX

THANK YOU TO OUR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

NVR thanks the Interview Participants including NVR Community Reviewers, Advisory Council members, Grant partners, and Funders for sharing their perspectives for this report:

- Susan Gordon (Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment)
- Simone Senogles (Indigenous Environmental Network)
- Carly Bad Heart Bull (Native Ways Federation & Native Americans in Philanthropy Board Member)
- Janeen Comenote (National Urban Indian Family Coalition)
- Ahtza Chavez (Naeva, formerly NAVA Education Project)
- Judith LeBlanc (Native Organizers Alliance)
- Helena Jacobs (Alaska Native Birthworkers Community)
- Ron Rowell (NVR Advisory Council & Screener)
- Stephen Cheney (Neighborhood Funders Group & Screener)
- LorenAshley Buford (UNITY & Community Reviewer)
- Sachem Hawkstorm (Community Reviewer)
- Marcus Briggs-Cloud (Ekvn-Yefolecv Maskoke Ecovillage & Community Reviewer)

APPRECIATION TO NVR'S PARTNERS

NVR is deeply appreciative of the trusted relationships that they have built with their grant partners. While funders measure the impact of their collective giving, the impact that all of its grant partners have within the Native and Tribal communities that they serve is immeasurable. For a full listing of grant partners, please visit nativevoicesrising.org.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Financial Sovereignty

- "To provide and support opportunities that enact respectful and culturally appropriate policies and programming to facilitate tribes' economic development efforts, increase investments, and bolster Native communities' financial well-being into the future." Source: nonprofitquarterly.org/no-one-is-coming-to-save-us-forging-paths-to-native-financial-sovereignty/
- Native Financial Sovereignty is a movement led by Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that " acknowledges that nothing will change for Native communities without Native families having access to homeownership and Native small businesses having access to capital." Therefore these CDFIs help others "navigate the bureaucratic systems steeped in inequities that continue to sideline—and redline—Native communities." Source: www.nicoa.org/the-native-financial-sovereignty-movement

General Operating Support

"General operating support is a grant in support of a nonprofit organization's mission rather than specific projects or programs. General operating support is the working capital nonprofits need to sustain their day-to-day operations." Source: GEO Funders; www.geofunders.org/resources/what-is-general-operating-support-and-why-is-it-important-678

Grassroots

NVR defines grassroots organizations as those that are rooted and invested in, have deep relationships to, are led by, and are accountable to the communities in which they work. Grassroots can mean both small, volunteer groups and large groups with paid staff, but are distinct from grasstops groups who differ in levels of relationships, governance, and accountability.

Indigenous

The original inhabitants of a geographic location. It is often used as an umbrella term for Native peoples no matter where they originate from. Also, when referring to Indigenous peoples, be sure to capitalize the word. Source: Native Americans in Philanthropy: nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else

Native American

A term that refers to American Indians and Alaska Natives and usually excludes Native Hawaiians. This term is also often a broader reference to people from tribes that are not federally-recognized. Source: Native Americans in Philanthropy: nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else

Native-led

Organizations, groups, or affiliations that are based in and serving a Native community or population and whose leadership is composed of a majority Native community who represent and are accountable to their communities. The primary focus of NVR's work is American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.

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. (from Deciding Together).

Power building & organizing

Collectively, we define power building as knowing our inherent collective strength, honoring Indigenous values, and understanding and respecting our respective roles (i.e., tribal leaders, youth leaders, matriarchs, medicine keepers, culture keepers). We also understand we are accountable to our role, and to community. Source: Native Organizers Alliance: nativeorganizing.org/our-work/power-building