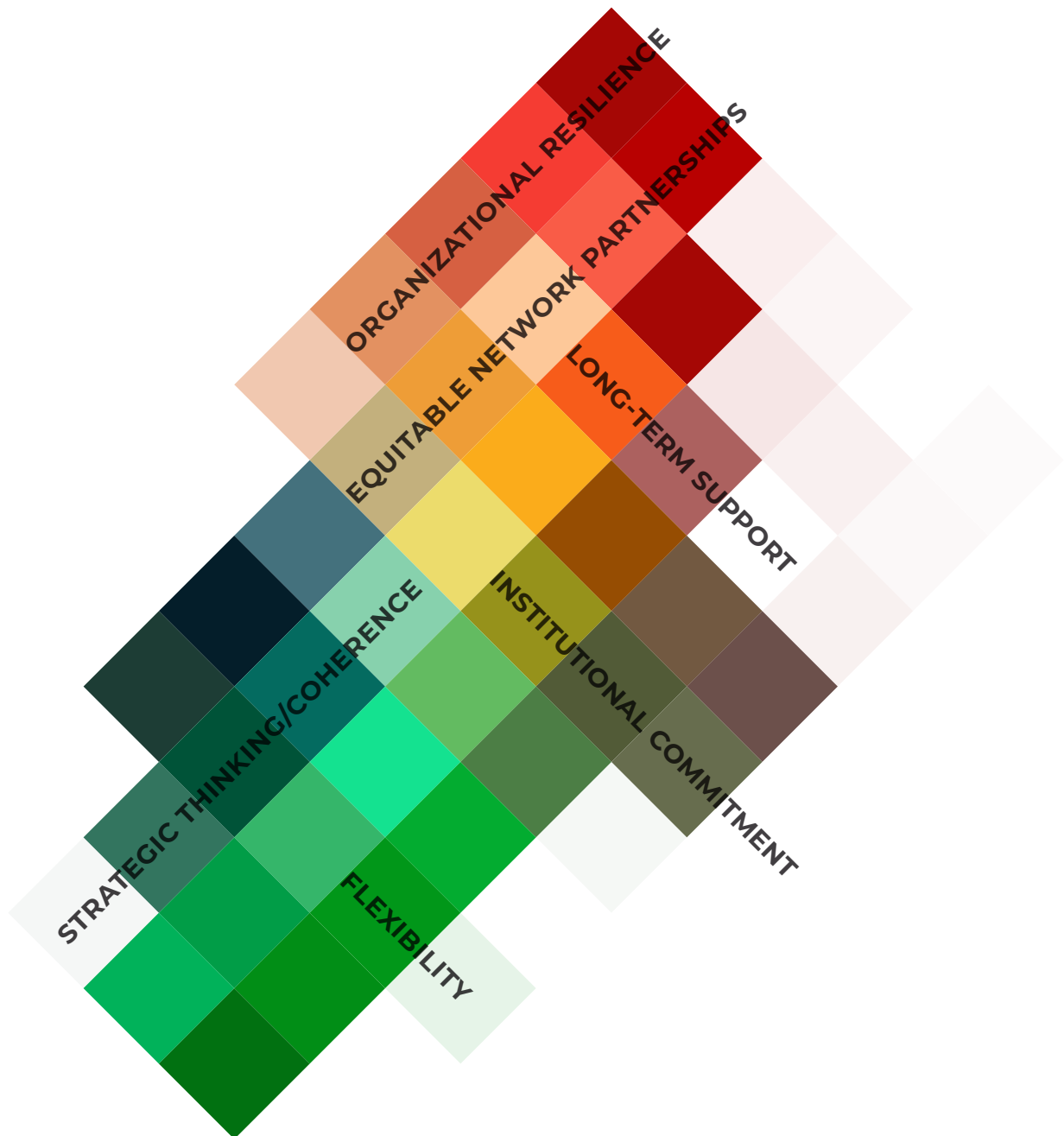




Final Report

BUILD Developmental Evaluation

March 2022



© 2022 NIRAS Sweden AB

Published under a [Creative Commons License](#)



Published in digital format by NIRAS Sweden AB

Box 70375

107 24 Stockholm

info@niras.se

<https://www.niras.se/>

Graphic design by [Green Ink](#)

Authors

Raphaëlle Bisiaux, Ron Dwyer-Voss, Maggie Bangser, Susana Morales, Anthony Boateng, Florian Poli

Project manager

Emelie Pellby

Reporting advisor

Florencia Enghel

Contents

Preface	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Executive summary	iv
Acronyms and abbreviations	ix
I. Introduction	1
The BUILD initiative	1
The Developmental Evaluation	2
The Final Report.....	3
Structure of the report.....	4
Glossary of key terms.....	5
A note on data sources.....	6
II. What difference did BUILD make for organizations?	9
a. Organizational resilience.....	9
b. Financial resilience.....	16
c. Mission impact.....	23
d. Connections, networks and fields.....	27
III. Which aspects of BUILD support have most influenced grantees?	31
a. Prioritizing institutional strengthening and getting grant size right.....	31
b. Combined effect of flexible, multiyear funding with an institutional-strengthening focus	37
c. Cohorts, convenings and technical assistance	41
d. Relationships between program officers and grantees	45
IV. What changed for which kinds of organizations and contexts?	50
a. Established and emerging organizations	50
b. Organizations going through a leadership transition	53
c. Networks and grassroots mobilizing organizations.....	56
d. Organizations founded and historically led by People of Color in the US	59
e. Indigenous People-led organizations.....	62
V. What did we learn? Lessons and reflections on the BUILD approach.....	65
a. Lessons learned	65
b. Recommendations going forward.....	69

Preface

In 2018, the Ford Foundation commissioned NIRAS to undertake a Developmental Evaluation of the *Building Institutions and Networks Initiative* (BUILD) in an effort to understand BUILD's impact and influence on strengthening the long-term capacity of up to 300 civil society organizations and networks, primarily in the US and the Global South, that are focused on dismantling inequality in all of its forms. The evaluation took place from February 2018 to March 2022, and was conducted by:

- Raphaëlle Bisiaux, Team Leader
- Ron Dwyer-Voss, Deputy Team Leader and US Lead
- Maggie Bangser, Civil Society Lead
- Anthony Boateng, Financial Resilience Expert and Africa Lead
- Susana Morales, Racial Equity and Organizational Development Lead
- Florencia Enghel, Reporting Advisor
- Florian Poli, Quantitative Data Analyst
- Ian Christoplos, Advisor (Team Leader, February 2018–December 2020)

In addition, Peter da Costa was a crucial and influential member of the team up until his passing in August 2019.

At NIRAS, Anna Liljelund Hedqvist was the Project Director, Kristoffer Engstrand was Project Manager from the evaluation's start in February 2018 until June 2019 when Emelie Pellby took over until project completion in March 2022, and Matilda Svedberg was the Research Assistant.

Many professionals have supported the evaluation in different capacities without which the evaluation products would not have been made possible. Kamlita Reddy, Miguel Santángelo and Milorad Vidovic contributed to making possible the evaluation products in different capacities as external professional consultants.

Acknowledgements

The NIRAS evaluation team would like to extend a special thanks to all of those at the Ford Foundation who invested their time and brainpower in the Developmental Evaluation of BUILD; a special thanks also goes to the BUILD team and the Office of Strategy and Learning for their unwavering support and dedication to the evaluation, including Kathy Reich, Bess Rothenberg, Victoria Dunning, Subarna Mathes, Patrick Kenani, Karim Babouder-Matta, Reena Geevarghese, Kelsey Simmons, Shanice London, Rowena Nixon, Clarice Robinson and all the BUILD program officers who have in one way or another contributed to the evaluation, especially Monica Aleman, Christopher Cardona, Marissa Tirona and Shireen Zaman. We would like to extend our thanks to Hilary Pennington for her vision and insight, which helped shape this Developmental Evaluation and Naomi Wax, accessibility specialist at the Ford Foundation, for her excellent supervision in generating accessible PDF documents that conform to PDF/UA and Section 508 standards.

Finally, we would like to thank all 229 BUILD grantees who participated in the evaluation by engaging in surveys, site visits, interviews, webinars and workshops with the Evaluation Team. Special thanks go to the participants of the co-creation workshop organized at the outset of the evaluation in 2018: the Center for Media Justice, Upturn, the National Immigration Law Center, the Alliance for Safety and Justice, Forward Together, the National Women's Law Center, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Doc Society, Fern, Global Witness, PRISMA, FUNDAR, the Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir, the Arab Council for Social Sciences, the African Women's Development Fund, LEAP Africa, Katswe Sistahood and the Public Affairs Research Institute.

Executive summary

The *Building Institutions and Networks Initiative* (BUILD) was launched by the Ford Foundation in 2016 with the goal of strengthening the long-term capacity and sustainability of 300+ social justice organizations around the world in order to more effectively achieve their core missions and reduce inequality in its various forms.

Specifically, BUILD inputs were centered on highly flexible five-year grants that could enhance the ability of civil society organizations to think, collaborate, plan, invest, take risks and innovate. This grantmaking approach shifted away from philanthropy's dominant model of providing short-term, project-specific grants that are often an obstacle to creative, adaptive and collaborative action by social justice actors. In addition, BUILD's commitment to putting the "grantee in the driver's seat" asserted that grantees, rather than funders, should determine how funds are utilized.

In February 2018, the Ford Foundation commissioned a Developmental Evaluation to assess whether and how BUILD was achieving its goal of enhancing the ability of social justice organizations to become stronger and to achieve impact. The evaluation aimed to foster understanding within the Ford Foundation and throughout the field of philanthropy about how the BUILD grantmaking approach can contribute to social justice, especially in contrast to more common restricted, short-term funding.

Developmental Evaluation is an approach to evaluation that seeks to support innovation development and guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. It provides real-time feedback, centers on the values and commitment of the innovators and develops measures as outcomes emerge while responding to unfolding processes and contexts. This report captures findings and analysis from the final stage of the evaluation, which took place throughout 2021, and builds on findings and analysis from the earlier stage (2019 to 2020).

Key findings

Findings from the evaluation support BUILD's theory of change that **strengthening institutions and networks leads to improved programming and impact**—that is, to an increased number of programs and/or improvements in their quality, strategic relevance and adaptability. And interestingly, the evaluation findings indicate that institutional strengthening, organizational resilience and mission impact are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing: when grantees are more resilient and impactful, they invest further in strengthening their organizations so they can seize opportunities and take on further challenges.

The ability to think, plan and implement led BUILD grantees toward **increased organizational and financial resilience**¹:

- Eighty-three percent of surveyed grantees (88% of US grantees, 76% of Global South grantees) stated that their organization was more financially resilient in 2021 compared with the start of their BUILD grant.

¹ Financial resilience is defined as an organization's ability to address shocks affecting their finances and desired institutional outcomes. Financial resilience is one component in the broader framework of organizational resilience.

- Ninety-one percent of BUILD grantees reported that BUILD's support for institutional strengthening contributed to their ability to achieve mission impact to a large extent (70%) or to some extent (21%).
- Nearly all surveyed grantees (98%) stated that BUILD was beneficial in enhancing their support for their field and networks and making them stronger, at least to a small extent.

Grantees described the **combination of flexible, multiyear funding with a dedication to institutional strengthening** as "*a game changer*" and "*transformative*," and stated that it freed them from "*the constraints of one-size-fits-all grantmaking*." Grantees reported that this approach gave them "*permission to strengthen*," "*headspace to think*," "*room to plan*," "*bandwidth to execute*," "*time to innovate*," "*space to fail*" and "*flexibility to respond and adapt (internally and externally)*."

More specifically, **BUILD's approach enabled organizations to put institutional strengthening on the agenda and gave those who already had it on their agenda the ability to fund and plan for it more fully**. With the time, space and resources provided by BUILD funding and the ability to determine how funds would be used, grantees invested in a range of institutional capacities. Grantees surveyed in 2021 said that the following areas of institutional strengthening were a primary focus of their BUILD grants: growth and sustainability (72%), strategic clarity and coherence (71%), leadership and governance (65%), communication and dissemination (49%), human resources (47%), predictable and flexible funding (44%), and diversity, equity and inclusion (44%).

This final stage of the BUILD evaluation provided an opportunity to understand how organizations leverage institutional capacities toward organizational resilience and **how resilience is tested**. Facing the multiple threats of a global pandemic, intensified racial justice reckoning in the US and shrinking civic space globally, grantees used their BUILD grants to continue strengthening their institutions and deepening organizational resilience.

In addition to financial resources, BUILD also provided opportunities for grantees to participate in capacity-strengthening and network-weaving opportunities that are organized by the BUILD program, and in some cases also by program teams and regional offices of the Ford Foundation. **A large majority of grantees who participated in these Cohorts, Convenings and Technical Assistance (CTA) offerings stated that peer exchange was particularly valuable**. The main benefit mentioned was gaining new insights (62%), followed by finding personal and moral support (39%), creating collaborations and partnerships (37%) and developing new skills (36%). Grantees shared that having access to a space for shared thought partnership had been very useful in order to gain new insights and develop collaborations with allies and peers.

Finally, a stated goal of the BUILD initiative was that the relationships between Ford Foundation program staff and BUILD grantee organizations would become deeper, more strategic and more trusting. The evidence indicates that 65% of surveyed respondents in 2021 said that **BUILD had provided the basis for a more open and trusting relationship with their program officer**, with whom they could discuss ideas and the challenges they were facing.

Lessons learned

BUILD's approach of flexible, multiyear funding with a focus on institutional strengthening supports organizations in building organizational resilience by developing and consolidating

key capabilities such as strategies and programs, operating systems, human resources, financial security and organizational culture.

The BUILD grantmaking approach **enables grantees to make choices** regarding the use of funds (“grantees in the driver’s seat”), which contributes to building strong organizations and achieving impact.

Findings from the evaluation indicate that, as grantees continuously develop, test, learn from and adapt their institutional capacities, their capabilities evolve and deepen. As grantees put in practice essential capabilities over time, they **build organizational resilience**—the ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to unforeseen circumstances and seize opportunities while staying true to mission. As a result, stronger and more resilient organizations are able to deepen, expand and/or accelerate their ability to achieve social change.

The evaluation also found that grant size and BUILD’s share in the annual budget matter for grantees’ ability to strengthen their organization, but not as much as **the flexibility to invest BUILD funds** and the diversity of funding types (e.g., unrestricted) that a BUILD grant adds to an organization’s funding portfolio. Organizations with little to no unrestricted funding reported benefiting greatly from receiving a BUILD grant, however small, if this meant they were able to flexibly invest in aspects of their organization they had never been able to invest in, or to seize opportunities that restricted funding did not allow them to respond to.

The **lack of clarity about future BUILD or Ford Foundation funding** can undermine progress and have a negative effect on grantees’ ability to plan for the future. For a quarter of BUILD grantees, the benefits of BUILD were limited by a lack of clarity around how they would transition after the BUILD grant term expired. We learned that some grantees start reducing their BUILD investments in year three, anticipating the end of their BUILD grant, therefore limiting the full impact that BUILD could have on their organization and their work. On the other hand, others planned on receiving further BUILD funding and ran their organization with the assumption that their BUILD grant would be renewed. While it can be difficult for the Ford Foundation to decide on BUILD 2.0 funding allocations prior to the end of BUILD 1.0, it is crucial for program officers to be transparent with grantees about the possibility of their BUILD (or Ford Foundation) funding continuing or ending through clear and regular communication about this from the start of the grant.

Finally, the assumption that the BUILD model is more specifically suited to certain types of organizations and certain contexts does not appear to hold true based on the evidence collected over four years of evaluation. The versatility of the BUILD approach means that it is **suitable for many different types of organizations and contexts** (e.g., established and emerging organizations, organizations going through a leadership transition, network and grassroots organizations, organizations led by Indigenous People or People of Color, US organizations and Global South organizations, etc.), and there are very few examples of BUILD being poorly fitted to an organization (e.g., organizations not committed to reflecting on organizational change and institutional strengthening, or organizations moving their BUILD funds toward programming only). BUILD should therefore not be limited to specific types of organizations and contexts in the future if the Ford Foundation wants to ensure impact for the wide range and variety of organizations they support in their work for social justice.

Recommendations

For grantee organizations

1. **Proactively engage with program officers** on strategy, desired impact, planning and financial resilience strategy.
2. **Discuss and design a plan for the end of the BUILD grant at the beginning of the grant.** Communicate to the Ford Foundation what is needed to decrease dependency while maintaining effectiveness gains.
3. **Start conversations with other funders (existing and potential) about shifting existing and future grants to long-term and flexible grants.** Share BUILD results publicly to facilitate these conversations and influence the field of philanthropy.

For the Ford Foundation and BUILD 2.0

1. **Continue to build around the three components—flexible, multiyear funding dedicated to institutional strengthening—**so that grantees take the driver's seat and do not feel the pressure to invest in programming with no long-term organizational strengthening achieved.
2. **Continue to fund grantees that face complex challenges, particularly those run by new leaders, emerging from crises, working in challenging environments or grappling with difficult changes in organizational culture.** Balance this with recognizing that BUILD can also help grantees from ever hitting crisis inflection points and that these points in time or contexts are often unpredictable or unforeseeable. The best preparation is a strong, resilient network of grantees prepared to adapt to challenging contexts and emerging crises.
3. **Putting more guidance, direction or restrictions on BUILD 2.0 grantmaking might lead to unintended negative consequences.** Flexibility is an important component of the success of BUILD 1.0, as is putting grantees in the driver's seat. Giving a tighter perimeter to BUILD 2.0 by defining the ideal conditions for giving a BUILD grant (e.g., the level of BUILD dependency, governance of the organization, financial situation, etc.) may well prevent the Foundation from funding organizations that would have been ideal candidates for BUILD.
4. **Apply principles of co-creating to determine the right size of a BUILD grant and encourage a collaborative process, transparency and commitment to what it takes for an organization to meet its goals.** A crucial part of the discussion should focus on the ability of the grantee to leverage other funds as a result of their BUILD work as well as a planned process for eliminating BUILD dependency over time while maintaining resilience and program impact gains.
5. **Communicate clearly and early with grantees regarding continued BUILD and Ford Foundation funding.** Integrate planning for the end of the BUILD grant into early discussions so grantees are best able to plan for organizational and programmatic growth or consolidation, and can adapt more easily to changing circumstances such as those caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Particularly given ongoing global crises, grantees need to be able to plan early for significant funding changes.
6. **Integrate financial resilience support into a broader organizational resilience framework to ensure that grantees work in an integrated way when they address financial aspects of their organization.** CCTA offerings could support this and be organized as a menu of options for grantees to choose from, with clear paths between one offering and another.

For philanthropy

1. **Integrate the BUILD approach—flexible, multiyear funding dedicated to institutional strengthening—into grantmaking** as a strategy to support partners to be most effective and impactful.
2. **Listen actively to the goals and opportunities of grantee partners** in order to understand better how to support their mission.
3. **Consider the no-(financial) cost aspects of making a grant flexible and long-term as well as the benefits for organizations.**

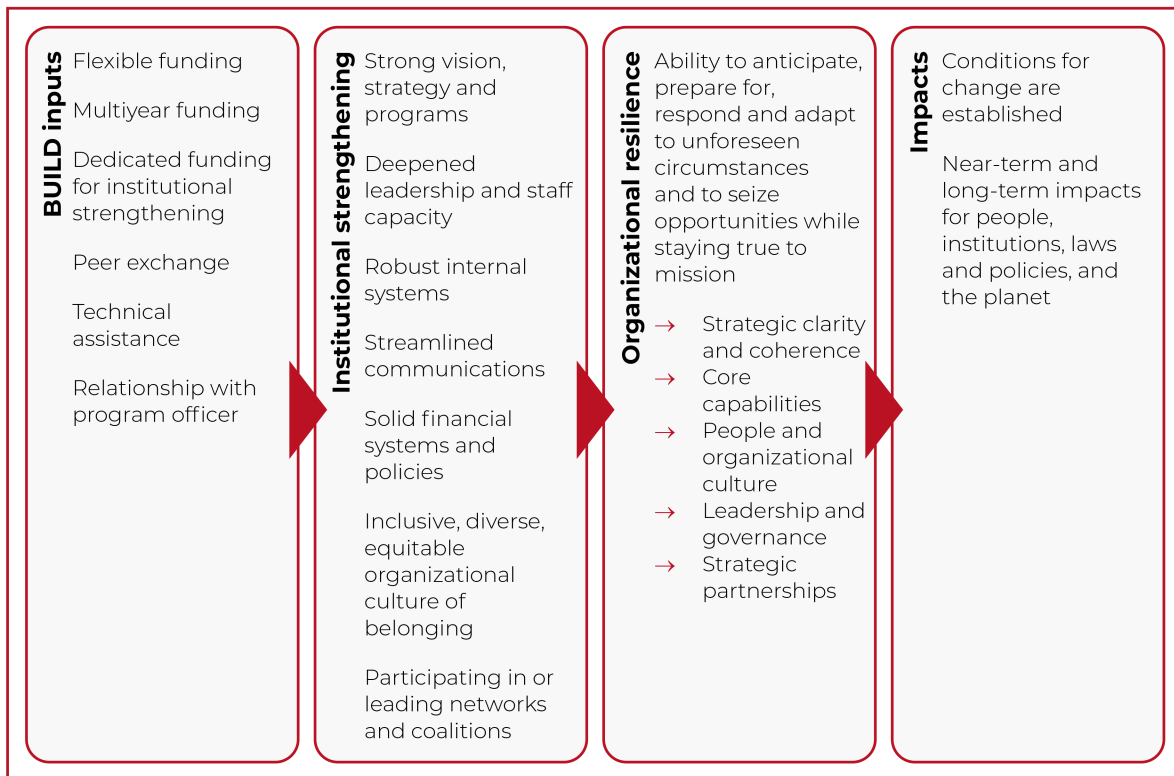
Acronyms and abbreviations

ASJ	Alliance for Safety and Justice
BDO FMA	Formerly FMA—Fiscal Management Associates
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Color
CCTA	Cohorts, Convenings and Technical Assistance
CEP	Center for Effective Philanthropy
CSO	Civil society organization
DEI	Diversity, equity and inclusion
FCS	Full Cohort Survey
FIRE	Financial Innovation and Resilience program
FoLT	Friends of Lake Turkana
IISP	International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy
IP	Indigenous People
ISLA	Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa
ITA	Initial Trend Analysis
LDF	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
OIT	Online Interview Tool
OMT	Organizational Mapping Tool
PARI	Public Affairs Research Institute
PO	Program Officer
POCFHL	Organizations founded and historically led by People of Color
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPEF	Public Policy and Education Fund of New York
PWN	Positive Women's Network
RPO	Responsible Program Officer
SERI	Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa
USPS	United States Postal Service

I. Introduction

The BUILD initiative

The *Building Institutions and Networks Initiative* (BUILD) was launched by the Ford Foundation in 2016 with the goal of strengthening the long-term capacity and sustainability of 300+ social justice organizations around the world in order to more effectively achieve their core missions and reduce inequality in its various forms. Based on the findings of our evaluation and relevant literature, the Evaluation Team adapted the original BUILD theory of change to illustrate how BUILD’s package of inputs can contribute to institutional strengthening, leading to organizational resilience and ultimately resulting in near- and long-term mission impacts.



Specifically, BUILD inputs were centered on highly flexible five-year grants that could enhance the ability of civil society organizations to think, collaborate, plan, invest, take risks and innovate. This grantmaking approach shifted away from philanthropy’s dominant model of providing short-term, project-specific grants that are often an obstacle to creative, adaptive and collaborative action by social justice actors.²

² J. Eckhart-Queenan, M. Etzel and J. Silverman, “[The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle](#),” The Bridgespan Group, 2019. This article is available on the website of the Bridgespan Group.

The Developmental Evaluation

In February 2018, the Ford Foundation commissioned a Developmental Evaluation³ to assess whether and how BUILD is achieving its goal of enhancing the ability of social justice organizations to become stronger and to achieve impact. The evaluation aims to foster understanding within the Ford Foundation and throughout the field of philanthropy about how the BUILD grantmaking approach can contribute to social justice, especially in contrast to more common restricted, short-term funding. The Foundation engaged NIRAS, which assembled a multidisciplinary and multinational team to undertake the task.

The evaluation was designed in four stages.

The first stage, which took place in 2018, was *Familiarization*, which sought to understand BUILD's design, intentions and mechanisms as they functioned within the Ford Foundation and among grantees. This stage also included a co-creation workshop with a diverse group of grantees who spent two days together co-designing the evaluation's learning questions:

- **Learning Question 1:** Has BUILD been organized and implemented optimally to achieve the desired impacts?
- **Learning Question 2:** How has BUILD strengthened grantees?
- **Learning Question 3:** Did BUILD impact grantees' roles in leading or participating in networks in a way that strengthened those networks?
- **Learning Question 4:** Does strengthening key institutions and networks advance (or consolidate past advances in) social justice?

The second stage, which took place during the first half of 2019, was the *Initial Trend Analysis* (ITA). This stage was in lieu of an established baseline⁴ and sought to understand the ways in which BUILD was already supporting grantees. The insights from this stage of the evaluation helped inform the development of case study profiles used in the subsequent stages of the evaluation.

The third stage—referred to as *Evaluation Phase 1*—took place from 2019 to 2020. This was a period of intensive data collection, including seven case studies comprised of interviews with 56 grantees and their stakeholders (partners, constituents, allies, members, etc.), a survey of all BUILD grantees, a literature review and an examination of Ford Foundation documents including grantee narrative reports and third-party data such as the Center for Effective Philanthropy's most recent "Grantee Perception Report."⁵ The findings from *Evaluation Phase 1* are presented in the *Interim Report*, available on the Ford Foundation website.⁶

3 Developmental Evaluation is an approach to evaluation that seeks to support innovation development and guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. It provides real-time feedback, centers on the values and commitment of the innovators and develops measures as outcomes emerge while responding to unfolding processes and contexts.

4 It was deemed difficult to establish a baseline with BUILD grantees because new grantees were added to the cohort every year between 2016 and 2021, and also because the evaluation started about two years after the initial BUILD grants were made. Instead, the Evaluation Team sought to understand how BUILD was already supporting its first cohort of grantees and gathered insights to inform the subsequent stages of the evaluation.

5 For more information about the most recent "[Grantee Perception Report](#)," visit the website of the Center for Effective Philanthropy.

6 *Interim Report: BUILD Developmental Evaluation* (Stockholm: NIRAS Sweden, 2020). To download the *Interim Report*, visit the Ford Foundation website.

The Final Report

The present report captures findings and analysis from the final stage of the evaluation, *Evaluation Phase 2*, which took place throughout 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and included both continued and new case studies involving virtual interviews with 48 grantees, a second round of the survey with all BUILD grantees, interviews with Ford Foundation program officers, an Online Interview Tool with a stratified representative sample of 75 grantees to expand on topics in the survey, a review of the literature, a new “Grantee Perception Report” from the Center for Effective Philanthropy, a quantitative analysis of grantees’ financial statements and an expanded review of secondary sources. This data was analyzed and triangulated to learn how BUILD may have supported grantees and their networks and fields, how it may have contributed to their strengthening and whether or not institutional strengthening led to organizational resilience. Ultimately, we also tried to determine how increased or deepened strength and resilience may have impacted grantees’ mission-related work, specifically contributing to reduced inequality.

While the framework of the evaluation was developmental, the methods were grounded in Most Significant Change and Contribution Analysis (refer to Annex II for the methodological note). The Evaluation Team found that BUILD grantees seek profound, long-term changes. In doing so, they often used BUILD to strengthen and sustain themselves for the long game of social justice, making it difficult to observe and measure grantees’ ultimate mission impact in just four years. That said, the Evaluation Team examined changes in grantee institutions, in grantees’ relationships within their field and in the trajectory of their mission-related accomplishments. Taken together with findings on how grantees used BUILD funds and BUILD’s contributions to these changes, the team was able to draw conclusions about BUILD’s early effects on fields and on the societal inequalities they work to address.

The final phase of the evaluation (*Evaluation Phase 2*) focused on several priority areas identified through conversations with the BUILD team, Ford Foundation program officers and directors, and grantees. These priority areas align with three of the four learning questions that guided the *Evaluation Phase 1*:⁷

Learning Question 1: Has BUILD been organized and implemented optimally to achieve the desired impacts?

Priority Area 1: How have cohorts, convenings and technical assistance (CCTA) supported grantees?

Priority Area 2: How has the Organizational Mapping Tool (OMT) supported grantees?

Priority Area 3: How has BUILD changed the relationships between grantees and the Ford Foundation program officers?

Priority Area 4: What is the best approach to determining the right size of a BUILD grant?

⁷ Learning Question 3 was not a specific focus of Evaluation Phase 2. Findings and analysis for this question can be found in the *Interim Report (2020)*.

Learning Question 2: How has BUILD strengthened grantees?

Priority Area 1: How does BUILD contribute to financial resilience?

Priority Area 2: How does BUILD contribute to organizational resilience?

Learning Question 4: Does strengthening key institutions and networks advance (or consolidate past advances in) social justice?

Priority Area 1: What are the conditions and pathways that grantees believe are needed for their organization to achieve mission impact?

Priority Area 2: How does being a stronger organization enable grantees to create and/or advance those conditions and pathways to achieving mission impact?

Structure of the report

The report is organized in five sections. **Section I** is the **Introduction**: it includes a glossary of key terms as well as a brief note on data sources to guide the reader.

Section II looks at **what** difference BUILD made for grantee organizations. Specifically, we present findings related to organizational resilience (II.a), financial resilience (II.b), mission impact (II.c) and connections, networks and fields (II.d).

After looking at the difference BUILD made, **Section III** looks at **how** different aspects of BUILD influenced grantees. The aspects of BUILD analyzed are the focus on institutional strengthening and the OMT process (III.a), combined multiyear and flexible funding (III.b), CCTA offerings (III.c) and relationships between grantees and program officers (III.d).

Finally, **Section IV** presents summaries of **case study inquiries** of BUILD's effects on:

- established and emerging organizations (IV.a)
- organizations going through leadership transitions (IV.b)
- network and grassroots organizing/mobilizing organizations (IV.c)
- organizations founded and historically led by People of Color in the United States (IV.d)
- organizations led by Indigenous People (IV.e)

The report concludes with **Section V**—a summary of lessons learned and reflections on the BUILD approach as well as recommendations for grantees, the Ford Foundation and philanthropy in general. The **Annexes** include full case study analyses (Annex I), a description of methods (Annex II) and tools and data sources (Annex III). The **Annexes** can be found in a separate document (PDF) on the Ford Foundation website.

It should be noted that this report includes direct quotes. These were carefully selected by the Evaluation Team and are used to exemplify the most common responses, as well as to flag outliers. Finally, for each BUILD grantee named in the report, the Evaluation Team first asked the organization for their permission to use and attribute selected quotes to them.

Glossary of key terms

A few definitions are important for understanding the findings presented in this report. Below, we outline the definitions of key terms used in this evaluation.

Cohorts, Convenings and Technical Assistance (CCTA): CCTA provides learning, training, accompaniment and support to two or more BUILD grantees at a given time. Offerings focus on a particular geographic context, line of work (e.g., networks) and/or institutional-strengthening topic (e.g., leadership, governance, resource mobilization). CCTA programming offers a range of commitments from periodic webinars to regular facilitated peer learning to blended options that include some individualized coaching with cohort-based technical assistance.

Networks: Networks are defined as organizations that act as a hub—meaning they exist to support other organizations as well as to organize and mediate the relationship with them around shared values and specifically defined mission impact foci. These are formal affiliations, and the hub supports and connects recognized network members who share purposes and priorities over time.

Grantee geography: *Global South* refers to grantees that do work in, are based in and are led by people in the Global South. They constitute 42% of the BUILD portfolio. *International* refers to grantees that work across multiple countries, including those in the Global South, and are based in the United States, Canada or Europe. International grantees constitute 10% of the BUILD portfolio. *US* refers to grantees that do work in, are based in and are led by people in the United States. They constitute 48% of the BUILD portfolio.

Grassroots organizer/mobilizer: Grassroots organizing/mobilizing grantees are organizations focused on connecting and mobilizing organizations, informal associations and individuals to achieve changes in broadly defined mission fields and/or specific geographic interests. The networking of grassroots mobilizers tends to be looser than formal networks and related to shared immediate purposes.

Field, movement and ecosystem: *Fields* are wide, open areas of action filled by a multiplicity of actors with loose affiliation and identity operating in a variety of ways around a collection of common interests that often have a unifying but broad focus. *Social movements* are identified as the building and reproduction of dense informal networks between a multiplicity of actors sharing a collective identity and engaged in social and/or political creation and/or conflict.⁸ *Ecosystems* refer to the collection of interrelated actors, knowledge, values, history, context and power dynamics related to an area of interest.

Financial resilience: Ability to address shocks affecting grantees' finances and desired institutional outcomes. *Anticipatory capabilities* are defined as grantees' ability to identify and manage their vulnerabilities and recognize potential financial shocks before they arise, as well as their nature, likelihood, timing, scale and potential impacts. *Coping capabilities* are about the resources and abilities that enable an organization to face shocks and manage their vulnerabilities. *Vulnerabilities* are the extent of exposure to potential shocks that may affect grantees' finances. Financial vulnerability can be considered the result of both external (e.g., dependency on grants, undiversified revenues) and internal (e.g., debt financing, reserves) sources.

⁸ M. Diani and I. Bison, "Organizations, Coalitions, and Movements," *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 281–309.

Organizational resilience: The ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to unforeseen circumstances and to seize opportunities while staying true to mission.⁹

Programmatic outcomes and mission impact: *Programmatic outcomes* are relatively near-term results that can be linked—to a greater or lesser extent—to a grantee’s work. *Mission impact* is longer-term, deeper and/or broader change that is linked to the work of the grantee and may also influence the broader ecosystem in which the grantee acts.

A note on data sources

This report relies on several data sources that are described in depth in Annexes II and III. Key data sources are briefly introduced here as a resource for the reader.

It is important to note that this report relies partly on grantees’ self-reporting of outcomes and impact. These are supplemented with the perspectives of grantees’ partners (e.g., other organizations in a shared network) and the Evaluation Team’s professional review of the impacts to the extent possible. The evaluation does not include a separate external validation of outcomes and impact for each grantee, as per its agreed scope.

Full Cohort Survey (FCS, referred to as the “survey”): An online survey of all BUILD grantees was conducted in 2019 and 2021. In 2019 grantees were asked 15 questions. One hundred thirty-four grantees, or 67% of the cohort, responded. In 2021 the survey repeated five core questions from 2019 and asked 14 new ones. This survey was conducted during the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic in February 2021. One hundred twenty-four grantees responded, which was 44% of the cohort at that time.¹⁰ Sixty grantees completed both the 2019 and 2021 surveys, providing valuable longitudinal data.

Online Interview Tool (OIT): An in-depth online interview questionnaire that included open-ended questions was sent to a random sample of grantees representative of the BUILD cohort (as of December 2020) stratified by geography, year of grant, size of grantee budget, BUILD dependency,¹¹ and the Ford Foundation program, strategy or regional office administering the grant and supporting the grantee. The response rate was over 90%, with 82 grantees completing the questionnaire and representing the BUILD cohort as a whole based on geography, year of grant, size of grantee budget and BUILD dependency. The OIT was administered online in May 2021, with the option to respond through a live interview by phone or Zoom.

Case studies: Case study interviews were primarily conducted during on-site, in-person visits by Evaluation Team members during *Evaluation Phase 1*, and by phone or Zoom during *Evaluation Phase 2*. During *Phase 1*, 56 grantees were interviewed, and 48 grantees were interviewed as part of *Phase 2*. In both phases, online validation webinars were held with participating grantees to share learning and to determine the degree to which the findings accurately captured their experiences.

9 This definition was informed by the experiences of BUILD grantees together with the following key resources: Diana Searce and June Wang, *Resilience at Work: How Nonprofits Adapt to Disruption. How Funders Can Help* (S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation: 2020); “Evaluation of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Organizational Effectiveness Program,” November 2015, and “Co-Impact Organizational Strengthening Guidebook,” July 2020 working draft.

10 We hypothesize that the lower response rate in 2021 was due to acute Covid-19 crisis points in several countries at the time of the survey and general survey/screen fatigue related to home-working arrangements.

11 BUILD dependency is calculated by dividing grantees’ average annual BUILD grant amount by their annual budget in the year a BUILD grant was awarded. Three categories are used to report on BUILD dependency: higher dependency (>30%), medium dependency (15% to 30%) and lower dependency (<15%).

Eight program officers were also interviewed, individually and by program. Each grantee was also asked for knowledgeable third-party but arm's-length partners to interview about what had changed for the grantee during the years of the BUILD grant. These sources were expected to speak not to BUILD's role but rather to any changes in the grantee's relationships and work in the field since the year the grantee received a BUILD grant. They included partners, member organizations, field allies and former board members.

Grantee proposals and narrative reports: Grantee proposals, yearly narrative reports submitted by grantees and grant recommendations prepared by program officers were an important contribution to the Evaluation Team's understanding of grantees' trajectories.

Financial statements: Grantees who responded to the Online Interview Tool were also asked to share their financial statements on a voluntary basis. The financial statements from 2015 to 2020 from 37 grantees (18 from the Global South and 19 from the Global North) were used in our analysis of BUILD's impact on financial resilience and to assess the number of months that existing expenditure levels could be sustained. We discuss the caveats around this analysis in the financial resilience section (II.b).

Expert interviews: In some case studies, the Evaluation Team interviewed sector experts to better understand the issues facing grantees, especially related to case study-specific topics (e.g., Indigenous People).

Literature review: As part of each case study, a review of literature pertaining to the topics of the case study was conducted. Sources included academic articles, books, philanthropy reports and webinar presentations.

Cohorts, Convenings and Technical Assistance (CCTA): Evaluation Team members attended, observed, participated in, presented at and interviewed grantees at various convenings, technical assistance sessions and cohort meetings. In some cases, this included interviewing facilitators or technical assistance providers as well as reading their summary reports. In addition, the BUILD team shared a tentative list of CCTA activities organized since the start of BUILD. The Evaluation Team used this list to understand the CCTA component.

Flux data and coding: Flux is the Ford Foundation's grant database. Program officers coded BUILD grants to enable the more systematic recording of the following information: grantee programmatic approach; grantee internal priorities; data on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for the board and leadership; organizational health and financial health assessment; and top revenue sources. As the coding was introduced in 2018, only grants made after 2017 were coded in a systematic way. We used this categorization and information to triangulate and cross-tabulate findings from primary data.

Historical funding data: For each BUILD grantee, the Ford Foundation shared the following information: number of non-BUILD grants received, sum in USD of non-BUILD grants received and year of earliest grant from the Ford Foundation.

OMT reports: The Organizational Mapping Tool (OMT) is a participatory diagnostic tool, required of all BUILD grantees at the start of their grant and led by a trained facilitator, used to discuss and determine institutional-strengthening priorities. OMT data is collected by the Ford Foundation and anonymized by a third party. OMT data is available for 50% of the BUILD grantees. It is important

to note that the OMT was paused in 2020, affecting most of the 2019 cohort. We analyzed 172 anonymized OMT reports to get a picture of grantees' assessment of their respective organization's state at the time of securing their BUILD grant.

Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP): The CEP's "Grantee Perception Reports"¹² from 2017 and from 2021 explore the depth and quality of funder–grantee relationships through a large-scale survey with all Ford Foundation grantees. It also compares BUILD and non-BUILD grantee responses by year and location. The Evaluation Team discussed the 2021 findings directly with the CEP team in June 2021.

Interim Report findings: The *Interim Report*,¹³ covering the period from 2016 to 2019 and published in November 2020, is referred to as a source of evidence throughout this report.

Ford Foundation staff discussions: Regular, shared learning discussions and analysis with the BUILD team and Office of Strategy and Learning team.

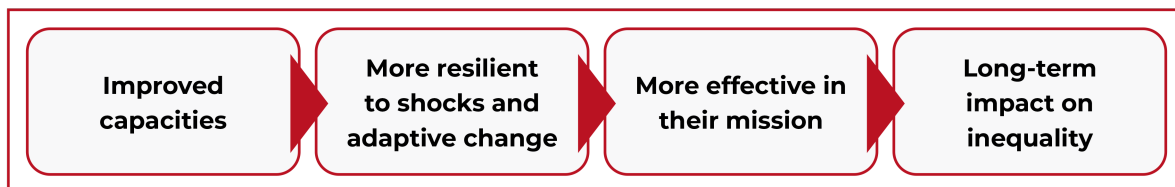
¹² For more information about the "[Grantee Perception Reports](#)," visit the website of the Center for Effective Philanthropy.

¹³ NIRAS, *Interim Report*.

II. What difference did BUILD make for organizations?

a. Organizational resilience

The goal of BUILD, since its inception in 2016, has been “to help organizations moving the needle on inequality become stronger, more sustainable and more durable.”¹⁴ The BUILD theory of change¹⁵ envisions that, with flexible, long-term funding including for institutional strengthening, grantees will be more resilient and adaptive, more effective in their core mission and will ultimately have greater impact on reducing inequality.



This final stage of the BUILD evaluation, which took place in 2020 and 2021, when grantees were facing multiple challenges, provided an opportunity to understand how organizations leverage institutional capacities toward organizational resilience and how resilience is tested. Facing the multiple threats of a global pandemic, intensified racial justice reckoning in the US and shrinking civic space globally, grantees used their BUILD grants to continue strengthening their institutions and deepening organizational resilience.

In this section of the report, we first discuss whether BUILD support helped grantees improve their capacities and strengthen their organizations. Second, we describe the pathways from institutional strengthening to organizational resilience.

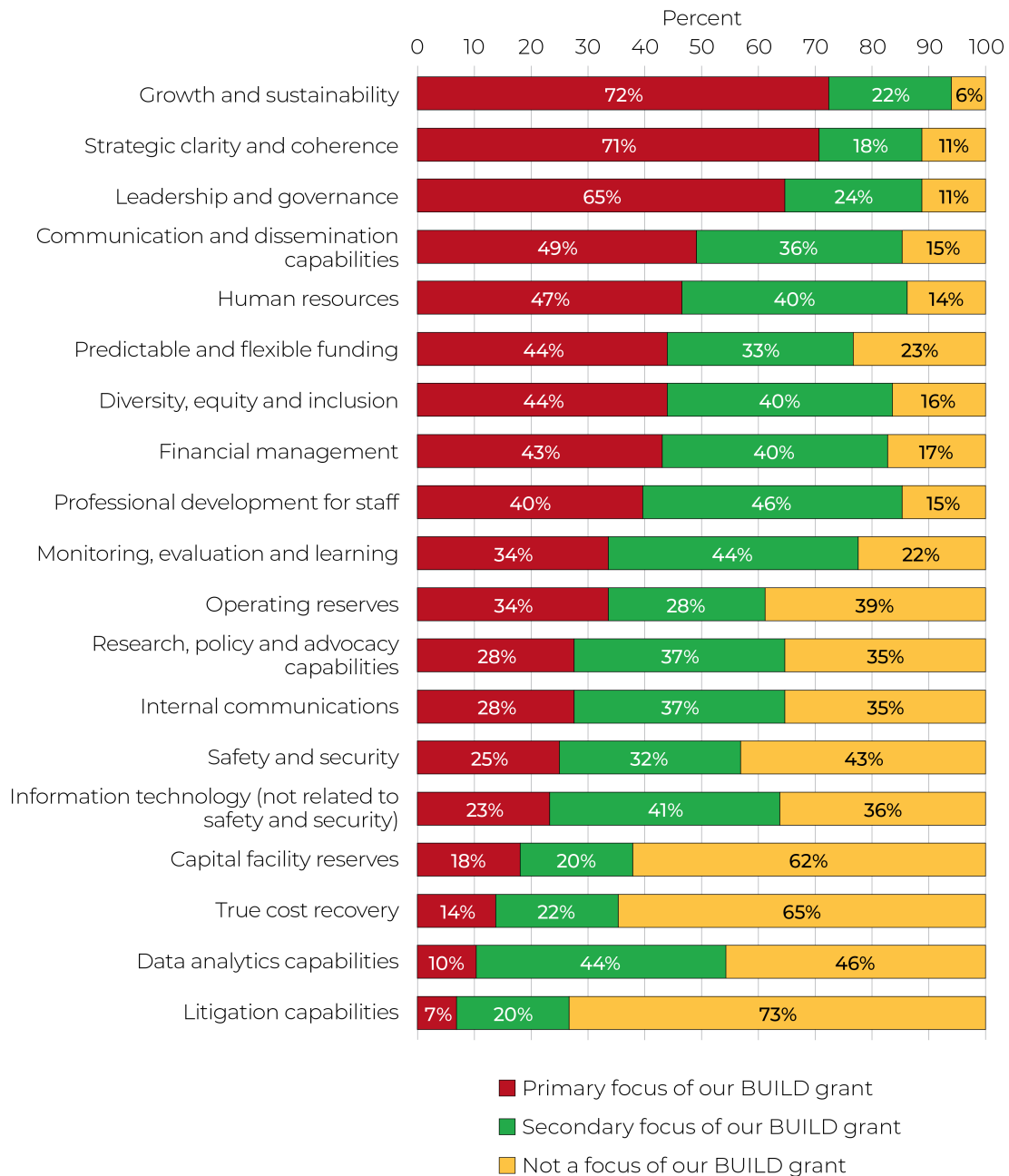
Did BUILD support grantees to improve their institutional capacities and strengthen their organizations?

With the time, space and resources provided by BUILD funding and the ability to determine how funds would be used, grantees invested in a range of institutional capacities. Grantees surveyed in 2021 said that the following institutional-strengthening areas were a primary focus of their BUILD grants: growth and sustainability (72%), strategic clarity and coherence (71%), leadership and governance (65%), communication and dissemination (49%), human resources (47%), predictable and flexible funding (44%), and diversity, equity and inclusion (44%).

¹⁴ Kathy Reich, “Reflections on the first year of BUILD,” Ford Foundation, accessed September 19, 2021. This article is available on the Ford Foundation website.

¹⁵ BUILD Learning and Evaluation Framework, July 2017.

Figure 1. Grantees' answers to the survey question: Which areas are you focusing on with your BUILD grant? (2021 survey data)

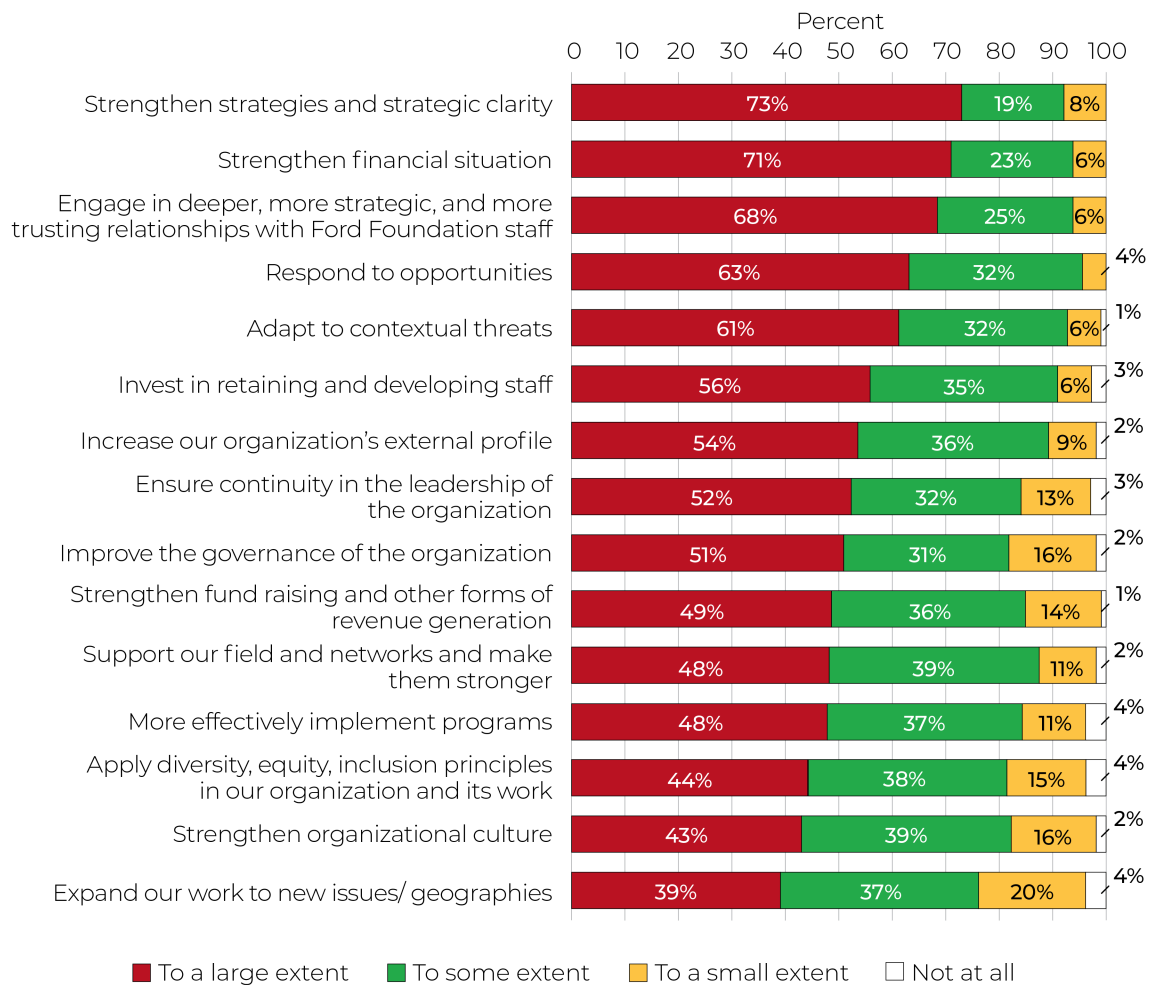


Note: Percentages are commonly rounded when presented in graphs. As a result, the sum of the individual numbers does not always add up to 100%.

Number of observations: 116 grantees (total)

Grantees also reported that BUILD funding enhanced key aspects of their organizations (survey data 2021). **The most significant benefits that grantees experienced (to a large extent or to some extent) were to respond to opportunities (95%), strengthen their financial situation (94%), strengthen strategies and strategic clarity (92%), retain and develop staff (91%) and increase their organization’s external profile (90%).**

Figure 2. Grantees’ answers to the survey question: How beneficial has BUILD been in enhancing the following aspects in your organization? (2021 survey data)



Number of observations: 116 grantees (total)

A senior staff person of a US-based grantee described the effects of the BUILD grant this way: *“Unrestricted resources allows us to have the capacity and the capability to [create] workplans to accomplish what it is that we are trying to do through our vision. [BUILD] also gives us the flexibility to do the work ... as we are also building infrastructure. The infrastructure [is] everything. It’s more people. It’s more technology supports. It’s more space—you name it—all the supports that we need to provide internally to staff to actually do the work. That is how I see the support that BUILD provides as being transformational for this organization.”*

The findings indicate that, as grantees continuously develop, test, learn from and adapt their institutional capacities, their capabilities evolve and deepen. For instance, grantees reported that communication skills became the backbone to support network partners in strategic campaigns; human resource policies were the basis for equitable hiring practices that are shared with network partners; robust financial practices opened up new ways to earn revenue for long-term sustainability; succession planning assured the smooth transition to a new executive director who will lead the organization in the future.

Did improving institutional capacity and strengthening organizations lead to organizational resilience? If so, how?

We observed that BUILD grantees enhanced their organizational resilience: *“the ability of organizations and networks to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to unforeseen circumstances, and to seize opportunities, while staying true to mission.”*¹⁶

As institutional changes happened, grantees were in a stronger position to deepen strategy, withstand shocks, catalyze change, change direction and withstand uncertainty.

The primary components of organizational resilience that BUILD enhanced were strategic clarity and coherence, and core capabilities: approximately two-thirds (65%) of grantees said that BUILD supported and/or enabled organizations to adapt strategy and/or programs, and 60% said that BUILD strengthened systems, processes and procedures (2021 OIT data).

The Evaluation Team used the following framework¹⁷ to assess organizational resilience and how institutional strengthening contributes to achieving resilience. Five components define resilience:

- The ability to maintain **strategic clarity and cohesion** while being adaptive
- Strong **leadership and governance** to guide the organization
- **People and organizational culture** that foster bold, equitable and caring practices
- **Core capabilities**, including financial resilience,¹⁸ that enable the organization to carry out its work
- **Strategic partnerships** that advance the vision of the organization and its field

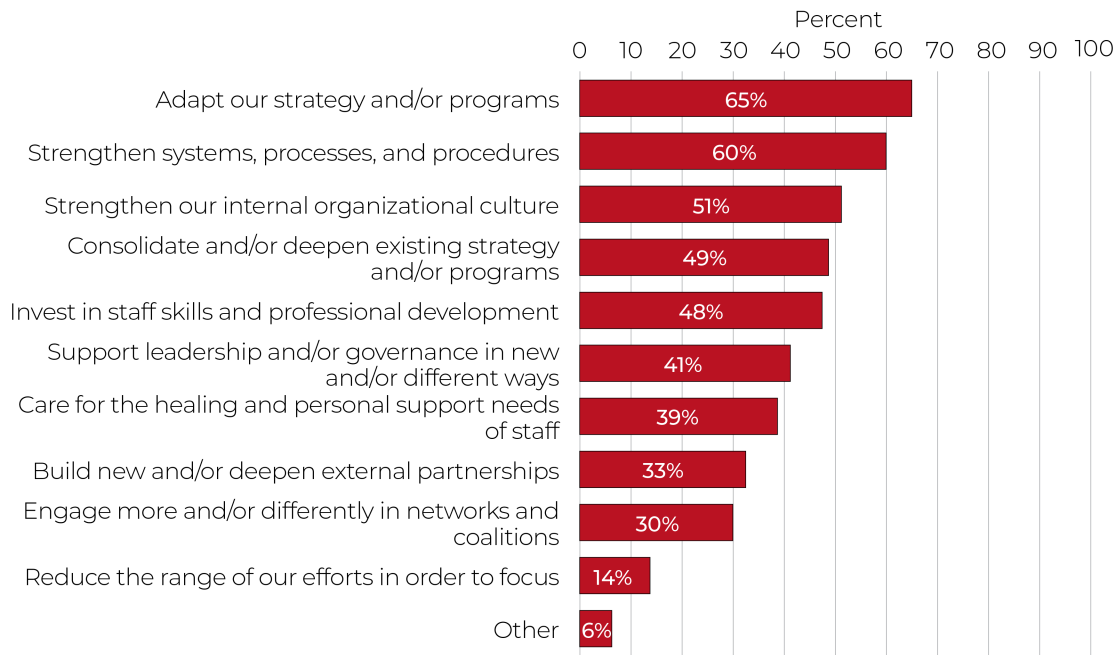
Using this framework, we describe how BUILD contributed to grantees' resilience, component by component, including examples from grantee organizations.

¹⁶ The definition and components of organizational resilience are informed by the experiences of BUILD grantees together with the following key resources: Diana Searce and June Wang, *Resilience at Work: How Nonprofits Adapt to Disruption. How Funders Can Help* (S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation: 2020); “Evaluation of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Organizational Effectiveness Program,” November 2015; and “Co-Impact Organizational Strengthening Guidebook,” July 2020 working draft.

¹⁷ Searce and Wang, *Resilience at Work*.

¹⁸ BUILD grantees focus significant time and resources on strengthening their financial resilience, a key facet of organizational resilience. The ways in which BUILD grantees address this are explained in Section II.b of this report.

Figure 3. Grantees’ answers to the survey question: *Has BUILD supported and/or enabled your organization to ... ? Please select all that apply (2021 OIT data)*



Number of observations: 80 grantees (total)

Strategic clarity and coherence

Two-thirds (65%) of grantees (2021 OIT data) said that BUILD supported and/or enabled them to adapt strategy and/or programs. The financial security provided by BUILD and the commitment to putting “grantees in the driver’s seat” enabled grantees to define and pursue their own priorities rather than a donor’s priorities, and to shift their priorities as needed. With stronger programs and organizational infrastructure in place, BUILD grantees were able to adapt their strategies to be effective when the external context changed.

As one grantee shared, *“it’s an ever-changing environment, and we have been reflecting on key issues and how we adapt to the changes, and we [have used] ... BUILD support to help us through this process.”* Another grantee explained that the BUILD grant was *“instrumental in sustaining a robust strategic framework planning process ... which led to a significant reframing of our theory of change and strategic focus. The strategic framework has been a crucial component of our ability to shift from a stance of resistance during the Trump era to one focused on long-term transformational change and governance in partnership with a new administration.”*

Leadership and governance¹⁹

Grantees used BUILD funds to strengthen the board of directors (40%), build a pipeline of new leadership (39%), do succession planning (36%) and improve governance (33%; 2021 OIT data). Each of these helped sustain their organizations through rapidly changing circumstances. These investments included establishing robust and diverse senior management teams to support executive directors / CEOs as they consolidated strategy and responded to and created new opportunities. Grantees invested BUILD resources in hiring a range of new senior staff including deputy directors, chief operating officers and director-level positions in human resources, finance and communications. Grantees also restructured boards of directors and trained board members in governance. Grantees used BUILD funds to focus on intergenerational handoff of leadership, to bring new Leaders of Color to executive director / CEO positions and to increase women in leadership particularly among grantees in the Global South and among organizations led by Indigenous People.

Grantees also developed new organizational structures and forms of decision-making to match their expectations for shared ownership in a more equitable future. They used BUILD funds to facilitate consultations, hire technical support, diversify leadership and boards, and test new models that shift from “leadership” to “leaderful.”²⁰ This included efforts to ensure that their organizations reflected the constituents and communities at the center of their work: *“We are intentionally working to build a multiracial (and multigenerational) organization with shared power, and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) leadership at all levels. We have invested deeply in self-directed learning, professional development, all-staff and small-group training, consulting and coaching. This race equity work transcends all work including decision-making, resource allocation, human resource policies and practices, etc.”*

People, organizational culture and DEI

Throughout the evaluation, **grantees spoke about their commitment to supporting people who advance the visions of their organizations** by investing in hiring, training, developing, mentoring and retaining strong staff (47% focused on human resources and 40% focused on professional development for staff; 2021 survey data). BUILD enabled grantees to invest in the deep work of building equitable and effective organizational cultures and protecting the emotional and physical health of staff, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sixty-six percent of BUILD grantees in 2021 (OIT data) said BUILD also supported their efforts on diversity, equity and inclusion in strategy and programs. BUILD also supported DEI in their leadership team and board (52%), and in internal practices, procedures and systems (40%). For US-based grantees, the priorities were race, gender, ethnicity and LGBTQI (97%, 77%, 65% and 65%, respectively). Among Global South grantees, the priorities were gender, age, race and disability (87%, 61%, 48% and 45%, respectively).

BUILD grantees also used funds to bring their internally facing values and practices to their relationships with external partners, including networks and constituents, through shared advocacy, policy development, communications and organization. *“Basically,”* as one grantee stated, *“we want our organization to function like the world we are trying to build.”*

¹⁹ Refer to Annex I.b for the case study on *Organizations going through a leadership transition*.

²⁰ Grantees describe “leaderful” as a more egalitarian form of leading an organization (including co-directorship and shared decision-making) than traditional “leadership” models that are typically more hierarchical.

Core capabilities

BUILD's focus on institutional strengthening gave grantees the resources, time and mandate to invest in their infrastructure and build the core capabilities (operational and financial)²¹ needed to sustain their work (60% said that BUILD strengthened systems, processes and procedures (2021 OIT data)). Grantees were intentional in using flexible BUILD funds to align their operations with their stated values by creating equitable systems, processes and procedures (both administrative and financial). Grantees reported that BUILD's flexibility allowed them to adapt their human resource systems to be more supportive of staff in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic—for example, increasing paid leave and mental-health services. As one grantee stated: *"We have strengthened our policies to be more consistent with our feminist values and for better clarity. We are working on our systems for more efficiency [and] to boost staff morale and productivity. We had more flexible funding [through BUILD] to strengthen some of these processes."*

One-quarter of grantees responding to the survey in 2021 said that the lack of clarity on future BUILD funding had disrupted their forward planning. The uncertainty about future funding can undermine a grantee's ability to sustain investments in the core capabilities that add to long-term resilience, such as financial planning. The uncertainty can also affect the ways in which grantees are involved in movement building, particularly when grantees provide technical and moral support, and sub-grants, to network partners. One grantee shared that they would *"hit [a] cliff when the BUILD grant ends"* and that they would not be able to *"live into what it means to do cross-movement work ... I'm freaking out a little bit. We are finally dismantling the inequities we've been fighting all along."*

Strategic partnerships

Nearly half (44%) of grantees in 2021 (OIT data) said that BUILD support enabled and encouraged collaboration between their leadership and other social justice leaders. Flexible, multiyear funding enabled organizations to deepen their engagements with partners and to build more vibrant movements. In turn, these partners and movements further strengthened grantees. This was true across contexts and types of organizations. For instance, grantees reported that their engagements in coalitions and movements had lifted up grassroots voices and built power at the community, state, regional and national levels.

While the findings from *Evaluation Phase 1* pointed to the important role of partnerships in advancing grantees' mission, this became an even more prominent theme in the final phase. This may reflect the crucial role that networks and coalitions play in a highly turbulent time.

²¹ Including human resource systems; safety and security; monitoring, evaluation and learning; social media platforms; basic office functions; IT; internal communications; knowledge management; external communications and field engagement; brand positioning; and financial, accounting, tax and administrative systems, policies and procedures. For a discussion on financial resilience, see Section II.b of this report.

b. Financial resilience

BUILD grantees are accustomed to dealing with both external and internal disruptions that negatively affect their finances. Diverse drivers shape these disruptions, and organizations use a range of capabilities, not only financial measures, to address and cope with these disruptions. The Evaluation Team used the framework developed by Barbera et al.²² to guide its analysis of the external conditions and internal capabilities that enable grantees to prepare for and withstand shocks. The criteria are explained below.

- **Environmental conditions:** the conditions within the institutional, economic and social environment in which the organization operates. This includes external shocks that disturb the overall field and thereby affects the financial situation of organizations.
- **Anticipatory capabilities:** whether the organization has the relevant tools and capabilities to identify and manage shocks before they happen, and whether the institution understands the nature, scale, timing and potential impacts of these hazards and their own internal vulnerabilities to these risks.
- **Coping capabilities:** the resources and abilities that enable the organization to face shocks and manage their vulnerabilities. To cope with shocks, the organization needs to be able to adapt, in particular, learn and apply new knowledge, adopt timely responses, put together collective expertise and rely on internal collaboration.
- **Vulnerabilities:** the extent of exposure to potential shocks from both external and internal sources with a focus on the organization's financial resources.

We first present how grantees define financial resilience. Second, we explain the institutional, economic and social environment in which BUILD grantees operate. Third, we discuss whether BUILD improved grantees' financial resilience, and whether it helped grantees increase their reserves and assets. Finally, we discuss the role CCTA offerings played in enhancing grantees' financial resilience.

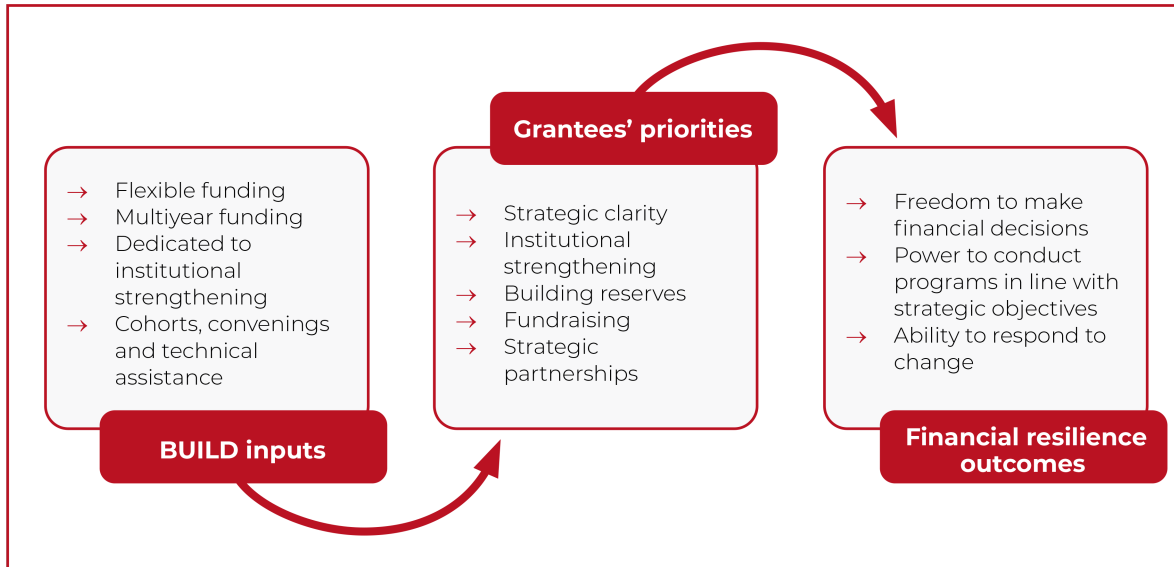
How do grantees define financial resilience?

BUILD grantees define financial resilience as the freedom to make financial decisions and the power to conduct programs in line with their strategic objectives rather than having to implement donor priorities. Grantees also see the ability to respond to changes (disasters, new trends, pandemics, etc.) as important, along with the ability to adjust to a dynamic environment with available resources. Grantees pointed to several indicators to assess financial resilience over time: diversity in the types of income and different types of donors, the lack of dependency on a single funding source,²³ operating reserves, the ability to fundraise and strategic partnerships to achieve operational and financial benefits.

22 C. Barbera, M. Jones, S. Korac, I. Saliterer and I. Steccolini, "Governmental Financial Resilience under Austerity in Austria, England and Italy: How Do Local Governments Cope with Financial Shocks?" *Public Administration* 95, no. 3 (2017): 670–697.

23 For instance, BUILD dependency is calculated by dividing grantees' average annual BUILD grant amount by their annual budget in the year BUILD was awarded. Three categories are used to report on BUILD dependency: higher dependency (>30%), medium dependency (15% to 30%) and lower dependency (<15%).

The figure below illustrates the link between the BUILD theory of change and grantees' approach to achieving financial resilience.



What is the institutional, economic and social environment in which BUILD grantees operate?

The pandemic affected the fundraising prospects and funding landscape in different ways for most of the Global South organizations interviewed. Most fundraising activities that began in 2019 could not continue in 2020 mainly due to Covid-19. Some funders suspended activities in the Global South, while others reviewed their strategies and decided to provide relief directly to households during the height of the pandemic. These are some of the ways the pandemic affected the fundraising prospects and funding landscape for the Global South organizations interviewed.

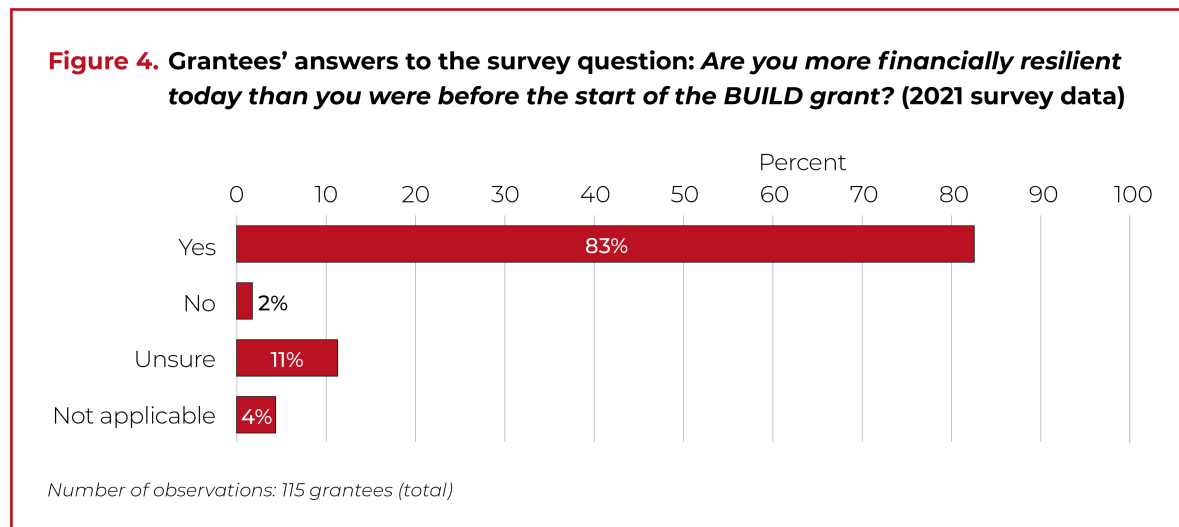
Four Global South grantees reported that 2020 funding was about 30% less than previous years, and that this was mostly related to lower contributions from private foundations and bilateral donors. A grantee mentioned that *"most of our major funders are changing their priorities toward direct Covid-19-focused areas and have indicated the possibility of not funding the [organization]. Planned fundraising activities (workshops, support programs, conferences, etc.) by the [organization] in 2020 were terminated as a result of the pandemic, which has had a direct effect on the 2021 revenue. Certain programs will be frozen in June 2021 because of funding, until the situation gets better."*

However, there were no significant reductions in the funding during the pandemic for US BUILD grantees that were interviewed. Most of the US grantees saw an increase in giving during the pandemic, mostly because of the Black Lives Matter movement, the 2020 US election and other social justice campaigns that brought attention to their work. In the words of a US-based grantee, *"the organization started the fiscal year 2019 in October 2019 strong financially but was heavily impacted by the pandemic between February 2020 and May 2020, where revenues were at [their] lowest in 10 years. A fundraising campaign was started, and from June 2020 to September 2020 revenues increased dramatically, improving the whole situation. With the racial equity lens, the Hispanic community was on the radar and helped with the campaign drive during the period."*

Generally, grantees reported that funders had lifted some of the restrictions on the use of their funds during the pandemic. A few donors converted their restricted funding to unrestricted, and most relaxed their rules and allowed institutions some latitude including, in some cases, to increase the overhead allocation of their project from 15% to 30%.

Did BUILD improve grantees' financial resilience? Are organizations better prepared to face the environment in which they operate?

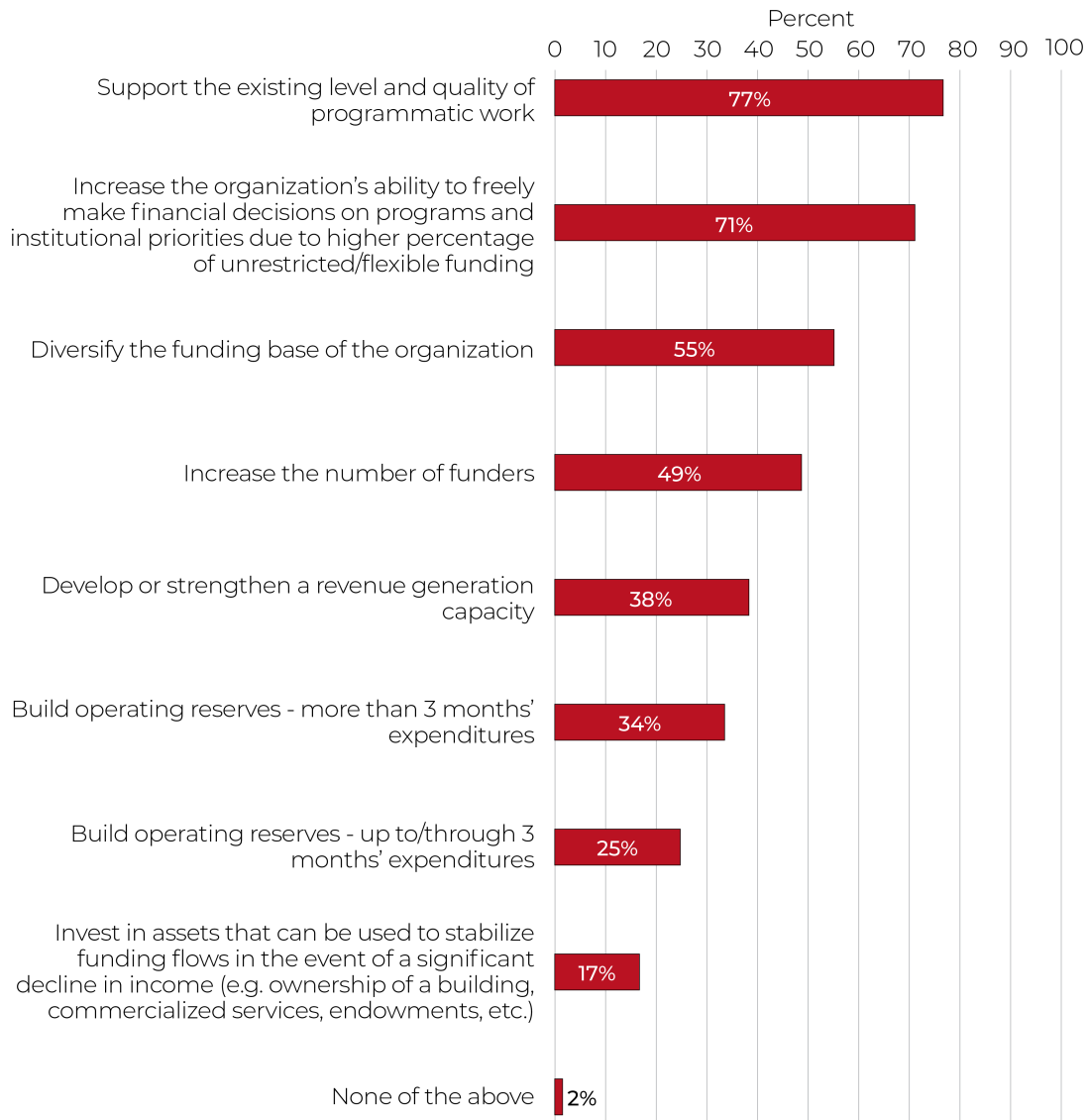
Eighty-three percent of surveyed grantees (88% of US grantees, 76% of Global South grantees) stated that their organization was more resilient in 2021 compared with the start of their BUILD grant. In contrast to restricted funding, the flexibility of the BUILD grant helped organizations navigate through the pandemic. Grantees used the unrestricted funds to build reserves and to meet general operating expenses during the pandemic.



For those organizations with a low BUILD dependency, the size of the grant may have been modest when compared with their annual budgets; however, BUILD's focus on institutional strengthening allowed organizations to establish the structures needed to execute their mandate effectively, including to undertake assessments and audits of their workflow. Assessed in that context, the BUILD grant is a significant contribution to grantees, even to those with a low BUILD dependency.

When asked which aspects of financial resilience they were able to strengthen (2021 survey data), **71% of respondents stated that BUILD enabled them to increase their ability to freely make financial decisions on programs and institutional priorities due to a higher percentage of unrestricted/flexible funds.** Fifty-five percent declared that BUILD funding had enabled them to diversify the funding base of their organization, while 34% stated that they had built an operating reserve of more than three months' expenditure with their BUILD grant.

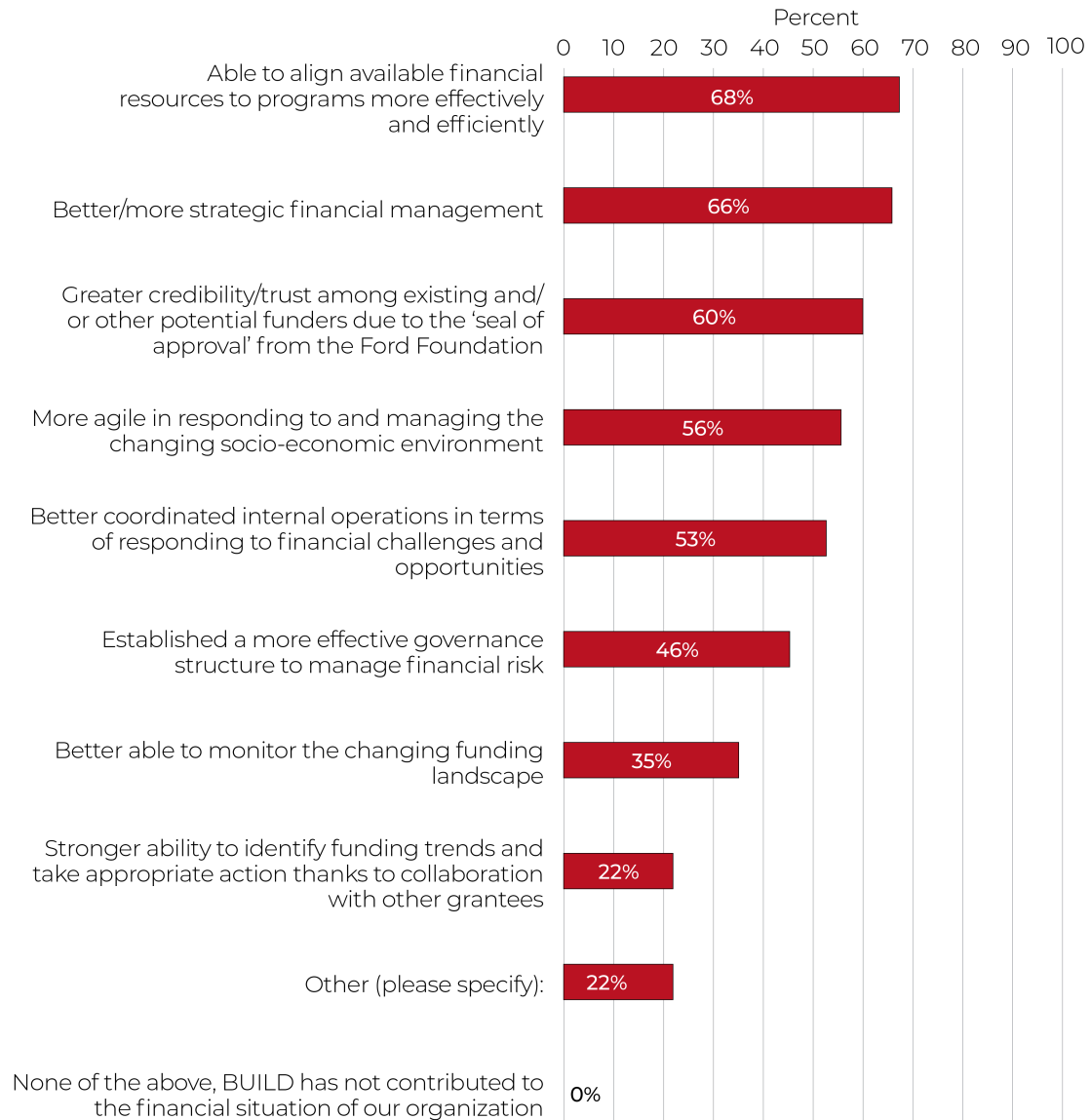
Figure 5. Grantees' answers to the survey question: Which of the following aspects of financial resilience have you been able to strengthen with BUILD? (2021 survey data)



Number of observations: 125 grantees (total)

Grantees were also asked how BUILD had contributed to the financial strengthening of their organization (2021 OIT data). **Sixty-eight percent of the respondents said that they were able to align available financial resources to programs more effectively and efficiently, while 66% said they were better or more strategic in their financial management processes.**

Figure 6. Grantees' answers to the question: *Has the BUILD grant contributed to your organization becoming financially stronger in any of the following ways? (2021 OIT data)*



Number of observations: 68 grantees (total)

Grantees further confirmed during case study interviews that aligning their financial resilience efforts with their strategic goals had helped them identify which programs to scale back due to a lack of funding. This was particularly helpful during the pandemic, as funding challenges forced some grantees to terminate programs.

BUILD also gave grantees the time and the opportunity to develop an initial relationship with new funders with aligned interests (as opposed to funders that did not align with their strategic

objectives), and the benefit of deepening the relationship with these funders and having a long-term engagement in the future. Grantees facing financial sustainability challenges and focused on survival could easily forge funding partnerships that are financially beneficial but have little or no strategic value. This action usually results in organizations moving into areas they have little or no expertise in, thus addressing a short-term need for funds and creating a more dire situation in the long term. As mentioned by one grantee reflecting on their BUILD grant, *“most conversations with donors are to encourage them to fund the entire strategic plan, as it gives us the autonomy to align the resources with the needs on the ground. Where the donors have peculiar interests, efforts are made to ensure that these are aligned with a thematic area or meet the overall mission of our organization.”*

Most grantees reported that they continued to prepare budgets by looking at previous numbers and allowing for inflationary increases as a representation of future plans. A few grantees indicated that they recognized the need to have a more participatory budget-making process. This would ensure that new ideas and ambitions were widely captured and aligned with available resources for a more realistic and comprehensive assessment of the future of the organization. One grantee stated that *“the main budgetary process [had] been the Executive Director and Director of Operations putting together the programs and numbers and then bouncing it off a few staff members for feedback. In 2022 we are looking at making the process much more participatory so that new ideas and ambitions could be aligned to available resources.”*

Did BUILD support enable organizations to build operating reserves?

Thirty-four percent of survey respondents in 2021 said that the multiyear timeframe and flexibility of the BUILD grant enabled them to build an operating reserve of more than three months' expenditure. However, if the effects of the pandemic persist, especially in the Global South, accumulated reserves will be used to address operational challenges. The pandemic made most of the grantees assess the viability of sustaining their existing programs with available resources. They also used their annual budgetary process to critically interrogate all programs being offered and made appropriate decisions accordingly, such as discontinuing certain programs until adequate funding is obtained or partners willing to fund such activities are identified.

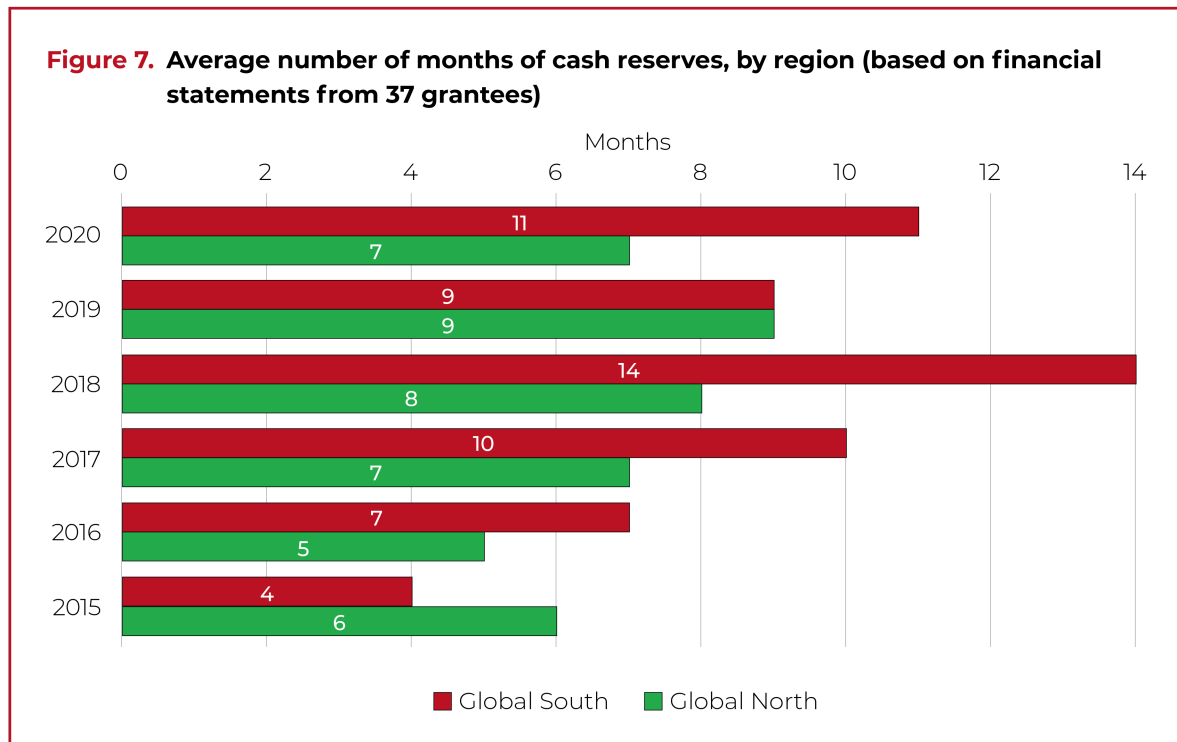
Grantees in both the US and the Global South set up for-profit entities affiliated with their not-for-profit organizations as an additional strategy to attract revenue. These entities ensure that grantees have a structure in place to earn dividends from opportunities that arise beyond the remit of their not-for-profit outfits. In the words of one grantee, *“the majority of programs contribute to the general overheads, and any surplus from these projects [goes] to the reserve account. However, without BUILD, it [would] be difficult to continue paying the salaries of the support staff in the foreseeable future unless a replacement is found. We are considering setting up a for-profit outfit to take advantage of existing opportunities and then ensure dividends are paid from this entity to us to address our financial sustainability challenges in the future.”*

With regard to operating reserves, the Evaluation Team also analyzed financial statements from 37 grantees from 2015 to 2020 (18 from the Global South and 19 from the Global North) to assess the number of months during which existing expenditure levels could be sustained.²⁴ **Since these financial statements were obtained on a voluntary basis from grantees, it is important**

²⁴ The following formula was used: {cash position as at the end of the financial year} divided by {annual expenses / 12}.

to note that the sample is biased toward organizations that felt confident sharing their statements and therefore probably have a good financial situation to show. As such, findings from this analysis cannot be generalized to the full BUILD cohort.

All 37 grantees had enough reserves to sustain operations and programs for between 4 and 20 months, and improved their reserves over the course of their BUILD grant. Global South grantees achieved a 100% increase from 7 to 14 months' cover from 2016 to 2018. Even though most grantees interviewed indicated that they did not have a formal policy for operating reserves, they recognized the significance of having a reserve to address vulnerabilities and were using their surplus cash balances to achieve this.



Do grantees possess other sizeable assets that can be used to stabilize funding flows in the event of a significant decline in income? How do these assets affect the organization's financial resilience?

Some grantees in the US and the Global South own their office buildings. This can be an important aspect of a financial resilience strategy particularly for grantees in the Global South, where rental arrangements tend to be sporadic, and some jurisdictions require tenants to pay multiple years of rent in advance. Grantees who own their building avoid rent payments and generate additional income for the organization by renting out certain parts of their building. Some grantees also expanded their premises to increase the income-generating potential of the asset, with proceeds being earmarked to improve their operating reserve accounts or to support general operating expenses.

Few organizations other than established ones tend to have endowment plans, and most plans have been in existence for over a decade. Grantees with endowment plans were able

to start these with seed capital from earlier Ford Foundation initiatives such as the International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy (IISP).

What role did CCTA offerings play in supporting grantees' financial resilience?

About 140 Global South grantees (BUILD and non-BUILD) participated in the Financial Innovation and Resilience (FIRE) program organized by Spring Strategies and the Ford Foundation, and 40 US grantees participated in the BDO FMA program.

Data from the 2021 survey shows no significant differences in financial resilience between BUILD grantees who participated in CCTA programs and those who did not. This can be considered normal, as it is too early²⁵ to see the benefits of the CCTA programs.

Most of the grantees interviewed who participated in the FIRE program corroborated the findings from the 2021 survey that the main lesson learned was the need to have an adequate operational reserve, an important tool for coping with financial shocks. Several grantees established systems to foster internal collaboration among departments to improve information flow and enhance coordination of activities within their organizations. As one grantee stated, *"the main lesson learned was ensuring that all aspects of the organization were working in unison toward a common goal and putting in the needed structures to support this. We have instituted a collective internal fundraising strategy that involves not only the Executive Director, as ... is usually the case, but rather all departments brainstorming and coming up with a comprehensive plan."*

Finally, grantees attempting to implement aspects of true cost recovery²⁶ realized that it resulted in a much higher cost for projects than what donors expected. The challenge for grantees is to ensure that they do not lose funding as they seek to cover true costs.

c. Mission impact

In this section of the report, we discuss whether resilience has made grantees more effective in achieving impact, and the possible linkages between BUILD support and these impacts. Given the length of time needed to achieve social change, it would be unrealistic to expect grantees to report major impacts within a five-year grant period. Nonetheless, grantees shared rich evidence of how they have positively impacted individuals, communities, institutions, cultures and the planet by influencing policy and practice, the ways in which arts and culture shape the public imagination, privacy and public information, and security of economic and human rights, to name a few.

Are BUILD grantees more effective in achieving impact?

While it is difficult to attribute results directly or exclusively to BUILD support, findings provide rich evidence of the ways that BUILD enhanced grantees' impact.

The evaluation asked grantees to consider two dimensions of impact.

25 Some of the concepts might need further one-to-one support after the FIRE / BDO FMA sessions to ensure that the learnings are being translated into workable action items to realize desired benefits. These take a few years—anywhere from two to five years depending on the stage of growth the organization is in—before the effects are seen.

26 What organizations need to charge in order to break even and recover all costs in an activity or service, including overheads. It is also known as the true cost of doing business.

The first was **near-term program outcomes**, defined as meeting the goals set for specific programs and adapting to changing contexts through, for example, local organizing, advocacy campaigns, legal and policy influence, public engagement through arts and culture, collective action in networks, addressing the impacts of Covid-19, etc. These outcomes are typically, but not always, easier to define and measure than long-term change.

Meeting the immediate challenges facing Communities of Color

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) fights for racial justice through litigation, advocacy and public education. The LDF seeks structural changes to expand democracy, eliminate disparities and achieve racial justice in a society that fulfills the promise of equality for all Americans. BUILD's multiyear support for the LDF enabled it to strengthen itself to the point that, when Covid-19 threatened the Black community, the LDF was in a position to respond. LDF staff shared two examples of their work:

"BUILD contributed to the organization's ability to hire critical staff to expand its footprint, engage in additional data collection and research, and elevate this vital work to national audiences through strategic communications. The devastating impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on Black communities and the challenges the pandemic presented for education, voting, criminal justice and housing forced the organization to deepen and expand our existing portfolio of work at a time of great uncertainty for our staff. But while many organizations faced cuts, the LDF was able to hold our staff steady and push forward to meet the demands of the moment because the BUILD grant provided a reliable source of funding and had allowed us to build our reserve ('rainy day') fund. This enabled us to stay fully engaged and to lead at a critical time, until donations from funders resumed in the summer of 2020."

"The organization impacted civic engagement for the 2020 election in tangible ways. It educated millions of Black voters through its new microsite and mailings containing election information and PPE kits; recruited thousands of new poll workers to keep polling sites open amid a life-threatening pandemic; successfully secured court orders requiring USPS to deliver mail-in ballots in a timely manner; and filed several lawsuits to prevent Southern states from erecting additional voting barriers. Together, the cumulative impact was profound: Black citizens overcame overwhelming obstacles to not only vote, but to be a decisive force in the 2020 election."

The second dimension of impact that the evaluation asked grantees to consider was **long-term impact**, which the Evaluation Team defined as establishing the conditions for change²⁷—for example, in the way people organize for change and the ways that systems and structures shape people's lives.

These can be changes that are broad, deep and often difficult to measure. In addition, while they are likely to take (much) longer than a five-year grant period to achieve, it is possible to see the beginnings of these changes take root. Below are a few examples of longer-term impact as reported by grantees.

²⁷ The research by Hahrie Han, Elizabeth McKenna and Michelle Oyakawa examines and articulates the factors that help establish the conditions for long-term mission impact. Their analysis includes "building power through strategic organizations and leaders" (relational power dynamics), "strategically investing in people as agents instead of props" (sustaining people's involvement until they develop a "voice") and "developing pragmatic commitments to stand together" (when leaders focus on impact and effectiveness over scale and efficiency). Hahrie Han, Elizabeth McKenna and Michelle Oyakawa, *Prisms of the People: Power & Organizing in Twenty-First-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

Building feminist human rights systems in Africa

The Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA) is the first Africa-based and -run strategic litigation initiative with a regional focus and expertise on women's human and sexual rights. ISLA uses a feminist and pan-African approach to strategic litigation as a powerful tool for social change.

BUILD "supported our core ... feminist litigation network. We have been able to transition the first cohort of lawyers [to be] full-time strategic litigation lawyers in their organizations. Our strategic collaborations have enabled us to partner with a variety of organizations to support and enhance our [programs] and our innovation. The ISLA Panel of Experts [has allowed] us to work with feminist African scholars to produce feminist knowledge and to surface the intellectual contributions of feminist African scholars in the development of the African human rights systems."

Empowering communities to lead long-term social change in New York State

The Public Policy and Education Fund of New York (PPEF) addresses critical social, economic, racial and environmental issues facing low- and moderate-income residents of New York State. The PPEF uses many tools in its work, including grassroots organizing, research and policy development, public education on a wide range of policy issues and community outreach. With these tools, the PPEF is building community power for the reform of institutions that shape people's lives and expand—or infringe on—their basic rights. The PPEF explains how BUILD supports these efforts:

"Our strategic approach to our work combines grassroots organizing, leadership development and political education while strategically communicating with the people. Our work has allowed us to be critical partners in winning historic legislation on housing, bail, discovery and speedy trial, and we have led and paved the way for reforms on democracy. BUILD supported all this work by giving us the space to educate, train and develop community members while we built stronger communities in areas of low-income Black and Brown communities."

Building formal and informal structures to address local issues in Lake Turkana

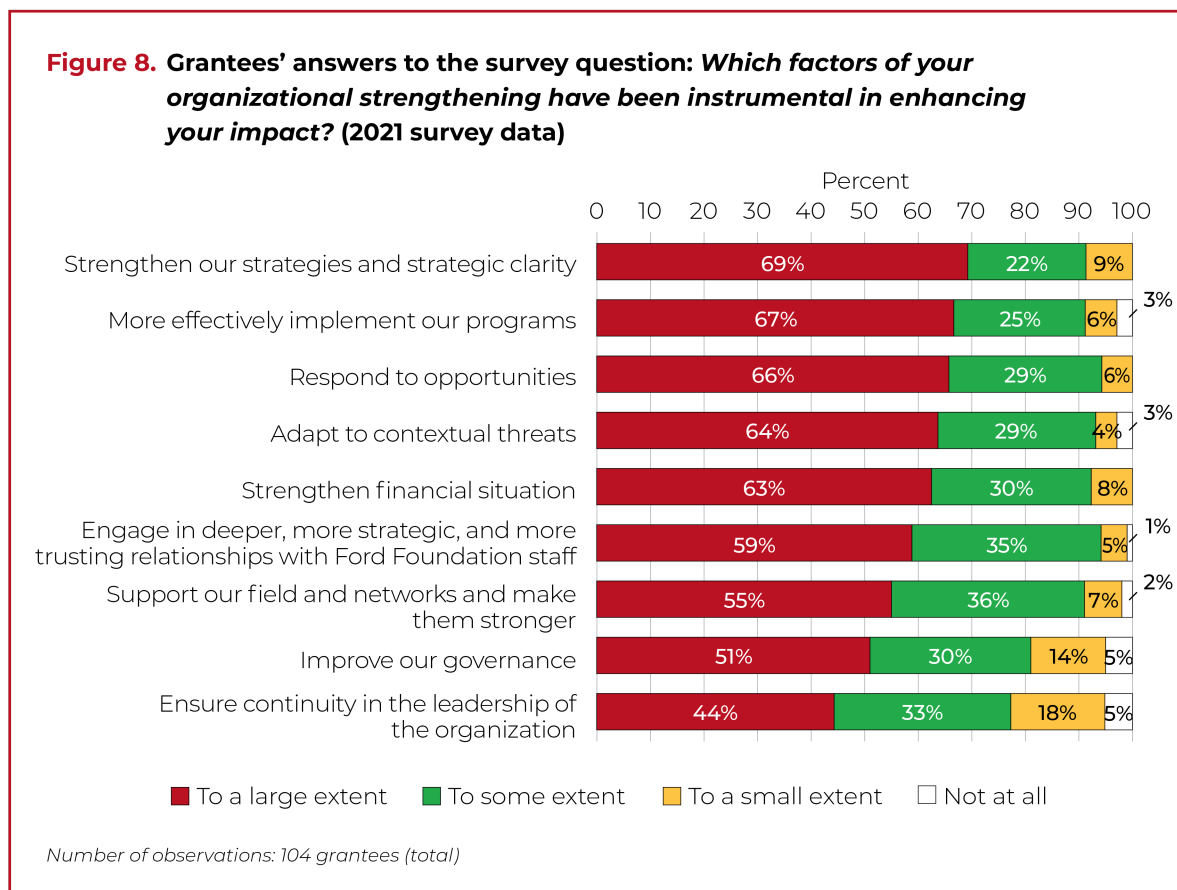
Friends of Lake Turkana (FoLT) is a Kenyan grassroots Indigenous organization that works with and on behalf of communities within the greater Turkana basin to demand collective social, economic, cultural, environmental and territorial justice.

According to FoLT: "BUILD has helped us to be there for communities and allowed management to think through models being used to ensure that communities are building both formal and informal structures to address issues affecting them. We had sessions on disaster management strategies with communities before Covid-19 on what to do in times of disaster. This helped build thoughtful organic structures within communities in dealing with emergencies and disaster, which came [in] very handy during the pandemic. Also, it enabled us to create awareness in communities in terms of the responsibilities of governments during pandemics, which enabled community leaders to hold government officials accountable for the Covid-19 relief resources available to the community."

How did BUILD contribute to grantees' ability to achieve impact?

Ninety-one percent of BUILD grantees surveyed in 2021 reported that BUILD's support for institutional strengthening contributed to their ability to achieve mission impact to a large extent (70%) or to some extent (21%).

Grantees reported that four elements of organizational/institutional strengthening were particularly instrumental in enhancing their impact to a large extent or to some extent (2021 survey data). These elements closely match key elements of organizational resilience, namely the ability to respond to opportunities (95%), adapt to contextual threats (93%) and implement programs more effectively (92%). Having deeper, more strategic and more trusting relationships with Ford Foundation staff (94%) also ranked highly.



Grantees in the Global South (2021 survey data) reported that BUILD had enhanced their ability to effectively implement programs to a large extent more than US-based grantees did (59% compared with 37%).

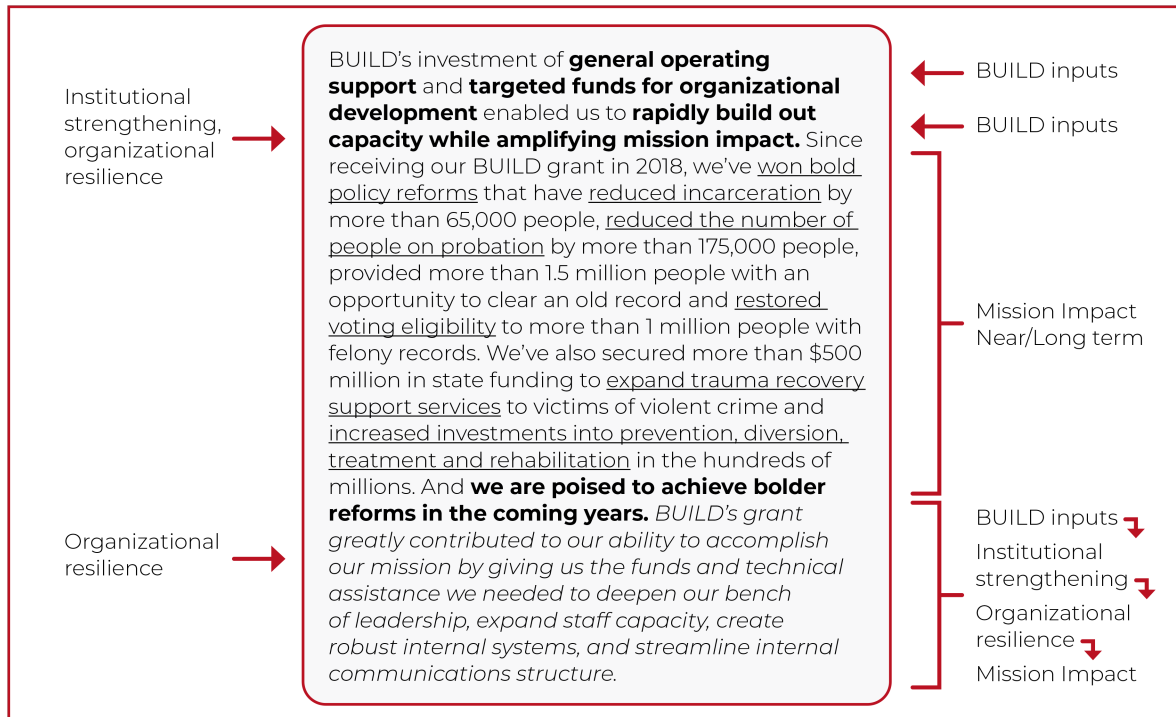
What are the pathways from BUILD support to achieving mission impact?

BUILD's flexible, long-term funding and dedicated resources for institutional strengthening helped grantees create the resilience needed to sustain their work over time, adapt in times of crisis and seize opportunities as they arose (see Section II.a on organizational resilience). In vastly different

contexts, grantees described how they had used this resilience to accelerate near-term outcomes and to establish the conditions for longer-term mission impact.

Grantees experienced the pathway from BUILD support to mission impact in different ways, and the through-line is not always linear. BUILD’s theory of change and the Evaluation Team’s adapted version (see the Introduction to this report) suggest that the dimensions of change are sequential. Interestingly, the evaluation findings indicate that institutional strengthening, organizational resilience and mission impact are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing: when grantees see they are more resilient and impactful, they invest further in strengthening their organizations so they can seize opportunities and take on further challenges.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ), a grantee based in the US, illustrates this experience well. The ASJ is a multistate organization that aims to replace over-incarceration with more effective public safety solutions rooted in crime prevention, community health, rehabilitation and support for crime victims. They shared the following experience (captions outside the box are added by the Evaluation Team to explain the through-line):



d. Connections, networks and fields

The evaluation examined BUILD’s effects on how grantees influenced their fields in two distinct ways. In a case study inquiry entitled “Network and Grassroots Organizing/Mobilizing Organizations” (full version available in Annex I.c), the Evaluation Team studied BUILD’s contributions to organizations whose primary purpose is to organize, convene, facilitate, support and/or mobilize other organizations, associations or leaders. In addition to the case study, the evaluation explored if and how BUILD may have contributed to grantees’ ability to connect with and even strengthen the networks and fields in which they associate. This section is about the latter.

While strengthening grantees' connections, networks and fields was not an explicit objective of BUILD, the evaluation found that it was important for grantees. Early in the evaluation, during the *Familiarization Phase* and the co-creation workshop in 2018, grantees stated that BUILD was a special opportunity, a "privilege" for grantees. With that came a responsibility to share and use these opportunities to build up other similar organizations and partners. The co-creation workshop report (2018) states, "another key issue that was discussed among grantees was the importance that they take the responsibility to strengthen their network partners. Indeed, it was argued that this should be considered an obligation of all organizations accepting a BUILD grant and something that should be measured." Grantees in the co-creation workshop also stated that, in addition to enhancing grantees' own institutional strengthening, grantees should use BUILD to 1) build movements, establish networks of change and undertake work that is replicable by others; and 2) focus more on what value grantees can add to communities.

How did BUILD contribute to strengthening connections, networks and fields?

Nearly all (98%) of the grantees stated that BUILD was beneficial in enhancing their support for their field and networks and making them stronger, at least to a small extent (2021 survey data). More than half (59%) said this was true to a large extent, and less than a third (32%) said it was true to some extent. This is a slight increase from 2019, when 54% said it was true to a large extent. Grantees in the Global South were more likely than grantees in the US to state that BUILD had a large influence on enhancing their support for their field and networks (60% compared with 34%; 2021 survey data). We hypothesize that this is because, in the Global South, fewer donors are willing to fund field and network supporting activities compared with program-specific activities.²⁸

Since nearly all BUILD grantees claimed that BUILD enhanced their support for connections, networks and fields, we looked at how grantees used BUILD to this effect and found four major ways:

BUILD supported new networks or strengthened existing networks. BUILD grantees reported using funds to increase their engagement with and support for existing networks and sometimes to organize new networks. As one US grantee stated, "*BUILD has helped the leadership in two states to build networks with like-minded actors to jointly pursue the agenda of tribal development in association with government.*" Another grantee that is highly engaged in movements and networks cited being able to use BUILD funds for staff time and direct financial resources: "*[Our] program model is built around the concept of collaboration, movement building and strengthening networks. While this is something we have always been engaged in, the BUILD grant helped to strengthen these areas of our work through its financial support of our work in the regions, and through our connection to other grantees through the regional BUILD cohorts we participated in (in Latin America).*"

BUILD helped leaders invest time in existing networks and deepen engagement. Grantees often described a dynamic where their internal institutional strengthening enabled the organizations' leader(s) to spend more time engaging outside the organization, including

²⁸ "Driven by their desire for quantifiable results, donors are tending to fund short-term, service-delivery projects rather than offering longer-term, strategic funding or funding more controversial work that seeks to address the root causes of poverty through advocacy or mobilization. This so-called 'projectization' of the sector leaves CSOs struggling to cover their core costs and instead forces them to lurch from one project to another in order to secure sufficient funds to continue operating. It undermines the financial sustainability of organizations and creates a culture in which organizations are encouraged to chase money and issues, rather than maintaining their original goals and agenda." See CIVICUS, *State of Civil Society Report* (Johannesburg: CIVICUS, 2015).

strengthening connections in their networks and fields and taking leadership roles outside the organization. One grantee said, *“the governance changes enabled the Director to dedicate more time to fundraising, building networks and sustaining partnerships with support from the Deputy Director.”* Another stated, *“Our internal efforts have influenced our approach to a grassroots community engagement approach, and more deeply collaborating in networks across sectors.”*

BUILD supported more strategic participation in networks. Grantees often described a process through which their internal strategic planning and clarification enabled them to better shift strategy. In turn, this meant grantees needed to establish new partnerships and connections or invest more in existing ones that aligned with their new strategy. Often organizations do not have the time or resources to invest in creating and cultivating new networks or relationships, especially when strategy shifts. One grantee described BUILD’s influence on this dynamic, stating that *“BUILD funding gave our leadership flexibility to pursue our strategy rather than responding to funding trends. Because of this we were able to develop partnerships and networks that are truly in line with our strategy.”* Another grantee described an intentional process of changing the connections they invest in, including to drop some: *“Through a reflective process carried out within the organization’s programs, and afterwards between the mid-level leaderships of the organization, we were able to make decisions regarding what networks to keep, strengthen or abandon, depending on different factors, including how strategic they were to [the grantee’s] goals.”*

BUILD enabled grantees to provide funding, technical support or “modeling” to networks.

Grantees also strengthened connections and engaged in their networks and fields by directly supporting them either with financial resources, technical support or “modeling” practices that the network members could then employ. One grantee pointed to the value of sharing specific human resources practices with their peers: *“We are modeling for our peer organizations and our networks how to employ and engage trans and queer employees of color.”* Another grantee that had found great value in providing professional coaching for its staff members extended this to contracting a coach for the executive directors of each of its network members. This resulted in several network members extending this practice to their employees.

What was the effect of strengthened grantee connections, networks and fields?

These expanded and deepened connections led to three primary outcomes. First, **BUILD grantees noted an increased profile among their peers and within philanthropy.** One grantee stated that this *“raised the visibility of the organization in philanthropy to the extent [where] we are feeling more valued for our unique perspectives and expertise on labor, economy, democracy. We are being more included in conversations with other well-known diverse organizations, networks, etc. BUILD is like a certified validator of our organizational purpose, role, and function in the movement.”*

Second, **grantees describe direct mission impact because of their strengthened position in their fields and with their networks.** Newer and smaller grantees shared experiences of *“being at the table”* to represent their particular community of interest in their field. Larger grantees described mobilization of new or strengthened subnetworks that influenced regional or statewide policy actions.

Third, **grantees used their strengthened network and field connections to mobilize resources on behalf of Covid-19-affected communities.** As one grantee stated, *“we had great visibility and impact [at the] national level.... [Our organization] was able to promptly mobilize solidarity*

networks to provide Covid-19 humanitarian response to communities.” Another grantee added, “[The] BUILD grant has given us a level of freedom to respond to emergent needs that we didn’t have with our other grants that are smaller and more program-specific ..., freedom to take risks that have so much benefited our base” (emphasis added by the grantee).

Having a seat at the table ... and/or creating new tables

The Positive Women’s Network (PWN) is a particularly poignant example of a grantee whose strengthened connections have led directly to mission impact. PWN is a relatively new (established in 2008), small (USD 800,000 budget at the start of BUILD), national grassroots mobilizing grantee that seeks to strengthen the strategic power of all women living with HIV in the US. Founded and led by diverse women leaders living with HIV, PWN supports member actions (individuals and chapters) at the local level as well as collective actions at the national level. Their field position has strengthened over the course of their BUILD grant, which has resulted in PWN’s influencing the 2020 Biden Administration’s policy formation around HIV issues.

As PWN stated, *“HIV narrative, policy and leadership used to be dominated by gay White men. Now women and People of Color are in leadership of the larger organizations. We have helped move that. We are still fighting for our places at the table. But now you can’t set up a table or agenda without PWN included.”* PWN continued by stating that *“women and trans folks still continue to fight for a place at the table. People living with HIV are still fighting for a place at the table within the HIV response. But now, they can’t leave us out. It wouldn’t be considered acceptable anymore to marginalize women and trans folks in the response [to HIV] ... and for the most part, people are coming to us for that.”*

Meanwhile, local PWN chapters and individual memberships continued to grow and have impacted state and local policies as well as how narratives about people living with HIV are covered by local media and on social networks. PWN provides an example of the inseparability of strengthening the organization internally, strengthening its direct network, deepening and expanding its connections in the field, and influencing narrative and mission impact. This is a strong example of how a small network becomes a national grassroots mobilizer resulting in policy influence at all levels. By creating a “table” in their own way, PWN built the power—and earned respect—to be seen as essential at tables that they had been excluded from in the past.

III. Which aspects of BUILD support have most influenced grantees?

a. Prioritizing institutional strengthening and getting grant size right

BUILD's explicit commitment to institutional strengthening is considered a strong asset compared with many donors' expectations that the vast proportion of grant resources be put into programs. In this section, we present our findings about BUILD's emphasis on institutional strengthening, and whether the BUILD grant was sized adequately to enable grantees to strengthen their organizations and address their priorities. We also provide a detailed review of the OMT process and its effect on grantees.

Did BUILD help grantees prioritize institutional strengthening?

BUILD's approach enabled organizations to put institutional strengthening on the agenda, and gave those who already had it on their agenda the ability to fund and plan more fully for it.

Ninety-one percent of surveyed grantees in 2021 reported that BUILD's dedicated funding for institutional strengthening had a large positive influence on their organization. With earmarked, dedicated funding for organizational strengthening, BUILD supports investments that can be hard to make when program goals feel like a higher priority. Dedicated funding for institutional strengthening enabled BUILD grantees to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as an organization and address institutional needs, in addition to directing funds to programs.

BUILD helped put institutional strengthening on the agenda

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law is a US-based BUILD grantee promoting and strengthening civic freedoms, public participation and philanthropy around the world. Its work supports local organizations and activists in seeking greater participation in government decision-making, creating greater opportunities for all people, including marginalized communities, and in seeking social and economic justice. Dedicated funding for institutional strengthening was the most helpful component of BUILD for the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law: *"While we may receive general support from other funders that we can use flexibly, the BUILD structure of funding dedicated to specific objectives for institutional strengthening makes it a clear priority, and does not create the feeling that we are taking away funding from highly valued program goals ...; rather, it forces us to explore what is really important organizationally to achieve higher program impact."* The organization also added that BUILD increased accountability in spending on organizational development by making it visible and central in the organization's strategy.

What did grantees perceive as being the right size for their BUILD grant?

When asked about grant size, 72% of surveyed organizations in 2021 perceived their BUILD grant as being the right size, and 19% perceived their grant as being too small.²⁹ With no significant difference across geography, grant size, annual budget or size of BUILD grant in relation to the recipient's annual budget, it is surprising that a large majority of grantees assess their grant as being the right size despite the heterogeneity in the BUILD portfolio.³⁰ This suggests that **the current approach³¹ to deciding the size of a BUILD grant seems to respond to the needs and ambition of most grantees, or that grantees adapt their levels of ambition to the grant size they receive.**

From our conversations with BUILD grantees, it appears that discussions about the right size of a grant need to happen at the start of grant negotiations, and they should focus on the amount of resources grantees need for their institutional investments and the overall strategic direction of the organization. A right-sized grant is a grant that has been sized with purpose, for opportunities that have been discussed openly between the grantee and the program officer and that are in line with the grantee's overall strategic plan for the grant. In the words of one grantee, *"this is what makes it the right number."*

For a majority of grantees surveyed (2021 survey data), BUILD support was *"the right amount for the major investments and strengthening that we need, but wasn't so big that we became overwhelmed with changes and [that we] couldn't fully implement."* Nevertheless, for about a third of surveyed BUILD grantees, the evidence is not as straightforward. Priorities and external circumstances changed during the life of the grant, and responding to threats or opportunities meant the organization shifted from the original intentions for using their BUILD grant. Grant flexibility was key to supporting organizations to weather the storm or take a different direction, largely with positive outcomes, but there was no right or predictable grant size to anticipate these changes. For example, a grantee explained: *"I came in at a time when [the organization] was in a financial crisis. BUILD helped us to navigate through that period. Now that we are stable, I wish we had a refreshed BUILD grant to use it for its purpose in strengthening the organization for the longer term."*

29 One percent of grantees responded that their BUILD grant was too large, and 9% said they were unsure whether their grant was too large or too small.

30 The size of the BUILD grant as a share of the recipient's annual budget ranged from 1% to 86%, with an average of 25% across all BUILD grantees.

31 The approach to deciding the size of BUILD grants is not described in BUILD documentation. In this report, we reconstructed the approach by interviewing eight program officers, and summarized the different aspects they consider when deciding on the size of a BUILD grant.

Considerations from program officers when they decide on BUILD grant size

Interviews with program officers (POs) helped shed light on the aspects they consider when deciding on the size of a BUILD grant. For all eight POs interviewed, two considerations were of importance: first, the organizational goals of the grantee (“*We ask them where they want to go, have a conversation about it and see [what BUILD] would look like in the organization*”), and second, the portfolio of grantees each program officer was responsible for (“*Resources are finite. We have to make decisions about BUILD budgets based on the portfolio of grantees in our strategy*”). While program officers often have a specific figure in mind when approaching future BUILD grantees, most reported that they listen to grantees and judge whether their assessment of the organization’s needs is in line with the figure they have in mind before making a final decision on grant size.

More specific factors also weigh in the discussion about BUILD grant size. Program officers discuss the annual budget size of the organization, their funding environment and their projected growth. No program officer reported doing a comprehensive assessment of their grantees’ financial health. However, they said that they “*rely on conversation with grantees, consider absorption capacity in these discussions, and [these are] honest discussions.*” When asked whether they pay attention to BUILD dependency (percentage of BUILD grant in relation to the organization’s annual budget), program officers pointed out that the Ford Foundation often tends to account for a high percentage of the organization’s annual budget, primarily due to the nature of the BUILD grant, which is to strengthen organizations. This enables organizations to “*grow, hire additional staff and develop relationships with other foundations ... which in turn means that the dependency [is reduced] toward the end of the BUILD grant.*”

Interviews with program officers illustrated the level of discretion they exercise when deciding about the size of a BUILD grant, and the value they place on having the flexibility to do so. In the words of one program officer, “*my hope is that the Ford Foundation will continue to allow this flexibility ... because grant sizing is a conversation, a relationship with the organization; it’s not a formula.*” Another program officer added that “*the maturity of the organization, their budget size, the diversity of their funding sources—yes, that’s important to look at ... but sometimes we’ll fund an organization for different reasons than their financial health.*”

Did the size of the BUILD grant have an impact on grantees’ ability to strengthen their organization? How?

Seventy-five percent of BUILD grantees received a grant that ranged between USD 1 million and USD 4 million. As such, the variability in BUILD grant size across grantees was not great, considering that BUILD grants ranged from USD 300,000 to USD 13 million. However, there were large variations in the annual budget size of grantee organizations (from USD 72,000 to USD 239 million), the composition of grantees’ funding sources and the share that BUILD represents in the annual budget for grantee organizations (from 1% to 86%). With such variability, how do we explain that a large majority of BUILD grantees perceived their grant as being the right size?

Grant size and BUILD’s share in the annual budget matter for grantees’ ability to strengthen their organization, but not as much as the flexibility to invest BUILD funds and the diversity of funding types (e.g., unrestricted) that a BUILD grant adds to an organization’s funding portfolio. Organizations with little to no unrestricted funding reported benefiting strongly from receiving a BUILD grant, however small, if this meant they were able to flexibly invest in aspects

of their organization they had never been able to invest in, or to seize opportunities that restricted funding did not allow them to respond to. According to one grantee, “our annual budget is USD 3.5 [million per year], so our BUILD grant (USD 2.5 [million] for five years) is not a game changer ...; however, it has been invaluable in providing us with the flexibility we needed in a time of crisis for the movement in 2020 (due to Covid-19).”

Large-sized BUILD grants, in contrast, have often helped organizations grow and leverage additional funding. One grantee reported, “when the [BUILD] grant started, I think it was beyond what was normally allowed, given the relatively small amount of other funding, but it was well judged, as can be seen by the fact that our other funding is now so much larger than the (unchanged) BUILD amount. [The] really valuable flexibility from BUILD ... [enabled us] to make that commitment on the understanding that it would likely help us to leverage significant other funding, as it did.”

Right size ... for what?

Given the heterogeneity of BUILD grantees and of the uses of BUILD funding, it is difficult to generalize about the right size of a BUILD grant. Nevertheless, the right size is strongly correlated with the answer to the following question: The right size for what? A useful example comes from the Indonesia-based grantee Combine Resource Institution, an organization that collaborates with communities across the country to develop digital literacy and community media. After relying on project funding from donor agencies for years, the organization was faced with unpredictable funding flows. With the BUILD grant, Combine Resource Institution hired external facilitators and consultants to develop a business system and business plan to generate revenues from the services that the organization provides as a resource institution. A few years into their grant, the organization shifted from being a technical organization to being a resource organization, and built and started operating a training center for which it set a net income target of 15% of its total operating costs. While BUILD represented 65% of its annual budget in 2017—an amount that was necessary for the investment in the training center—the grantee strategically invested its BUILD funds to enhance its financial sustainability. High BUILD dependency did not necessarily imply financial risks for the organization in this situation, as long as the purpose of the grant was clear and in line with the long-term strategic goal of increasing funding predictability.

What is the best approach to determining the right size for a BUILD grant?

While we have established that the right-sized grant is a grant that has been sized with purpose, for needs that have been identified by and discussed with the grantee, it is important to note that 45% of organizations (2021 OIT data) reported that they were not involved in deciding the terms (amount, duration and flexibility) for their BUILD grant. This is at odds with the evidence provided by the program officers interviewed, who stressed the importance of having a conversation with grantees about their organizational needs and strategic direction prior to deciding on the grant amount.

Going forward, the Evaluation Team encourages BUILD to facilitate more systematic discussions between program officers and grantees with the aim of finding the adequate grant size that reflects both the needs and opportunities of grantee organizations and the strategic priorities of the Ford Foundation. **Instead of a checklist of organizational and financial indicators, broader considerations and principles could be offered to program officers to facilitate a discussion with grantees that enables the co-creation of a BUILD grant.** Interestingly, this is what program officers interviewed as part of this evaluation did without properly formalizing it.

As a starting point, BUILD grantees suggested the following principles for grant sizing. These could be explored further by the BUILD team as they move forward with the design of BUILD 2.0.

- **A collaborative process:** Grantees value that the Ford Foundation has knowledge of the fields in which they are working. Program officers can offer a wider perspective to the grantee and help *“co-create a plan that more closely aligns with the organization’s capacity and trajectory.”*
- **Transparency:** Grantees would like to know if there is room for a conversation about the amount of the grant so they can take the opportunity to *“talk it through with the foundation and co-create a successful grant.”*
- **Commitment:** Grantees recognize that the Foundation’s commitment to their organization is pivotal to their moving to the next stage of development and impact. Once there is agreement on the grantee’s strategy and plans, there should be *“a commitment from the Foundation to put the full weight of its resources behind the organization to get it there and with a real plan to sustain it.”*

Did the OMT help BUILD grantees identify institutional-strengthening priorities?

Eighty percent of surveyed grantees in 2021 stated that the OMT had a positive influence on their organization. Among them, Global South grantees and grantees with a smaller annual budget were more likely to report that the OMT was useful to their organization, compared with US-based grantees and larger organizations. Most probably, these smaller, Global South-based organizations are less likely to have established strategy tools and processes in place. In contrast, legacy US grantees might have felt that the OMT was repetitive given their own strategy tools and ongoing processes of internal organizational assessment.

For organizations that found the tool useful, 74% (2021 OIT data) reported that the OMT exercise led to beginning or enriching a process of internal reflection and learning in the organization, and 85% said that the OMT directly helped prioritize which organizational issues to focus on. Interestingly, the OMT also supported a stronger culture of reflection and learning in the organization.

From the qualitative evidence gathered in the OIT in 2021, there are different ways in which the OMT supported grantees with their institutional-strengthening priorities:

- **By supporting a process of identification and prioritization:** A majority of grantees (85%) used the OMT to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Grantees decided on their priorities, established a plan for addressing these and went ahead with the plan. As noted by one grantee, *“the tool reaffirmed many things we already knew but was helpful in assisting us with prioritizing those things in a fashion that we knew where to start.”*
- **By starting a conversation about priorities and an internal process of reflection:** For a large share of grantees (74%), and even for those who decided to change their focus areas after the OMT exercise, the OMT started a conversation about priorities and stimulated a collective reflection inside the organization. The value added by the OMT lies in the exercise itself. A frequent explanation was that the OMT surfaced issues, allowed frank conversations to take place and created *“traction”* around addressing organizational strengthening. In the words of one grantee, *“embarking on [the OMT] with the entire team within the organization is positive; it creates unity, solidarity and understanding of the organization’s dynamic.”* For some organizations, the OMT also enabled staff to collectively recognize their strengths, setting a solid basis for identifying what needed to be addressed in the organization.

The OMT can be a conversation starter about institutional strengthening

The US BUILD grantee Alliance for Safety and Justice is a multistate organization that aims to replace over-incarceration with more effective public safety solutions rooted in crime prevention, community health, rehabilitation and support for crime victims. The OMT had a positive impact on programs and operations and helped the organization identify a number of areas for improvement. According to the Alliance, *“the OMT process and dedicated facilitation helped us pull back from the day-to-day to engage in big-picture thinking and reflection. This process illuminated several key learnings. The scale and pace of our organizational growth has increased our capacity to deliver results; it also contributed to a change in staff culture and particularly in our ability to maintain strong internal communications ... Since we completed the OMT, we have made significant progress in addressing these key learnings.”*

Why did some organizations experience the OMT differently?

While the evidence around the usefulness of the OMT is largely positive, 8% of surveyed grantees in 2021 said that the OMT was not useful and/or not a good fit for their organization. Most of them are fairly large and long-established organizations, with an average annual budget size of USD 8 million. Grantees described the factors that limited the usefulness or fit of the tool:

- **Timing is important:** Organizations might have ongoing diagnostic processes that overlap with the areas covered during the OMT exercise. The timing of the OMT can be disruptive or feel repetitive, highlighting areas for improvement that organizations are already aware of or addressing, and/or creating diagnostic fatigue among the staff.
- **Facilitation matters:** Organizations reported the importance of engaging an OMT facilitator who knew about their field and/or was familiar with their organization. However, the pool of OMT-accredited facilitators was not always broad enough to allow the hiring of a facilitator with a high level of understanding of the organization and the field. For a handful of organizations, facilitators played a pivotal role in modifying and adapting the OMT so that the process fit with their structure; for some grantees, the lack of alignment between the facilitator and their organization was highly disruptive.
- **Managing expectations is key:** Among the organizations that reported that the OMT was not useful, four mentioned *“the expectation that change was about to happen to fix all the issues raised”* that the tool had created among staff. For these organizations, it was not realistic (or perhaps even desirable) for all priorities to be addressed at once—for example, to *“fix the finance department, the internal processes, the human resource system and the internal decision-making process”*—therefore creating distrust and disillusionment in the organization after the OMT process.
- **The OMT is a participatory process, which is not suited to every organization:** For organizations with less participatory decision-making structures and/or with new leadership, it may not be appropriate for all staff to collectively decide on priorities; rather, *“the Executive Director and the leadership team should have authority to set priorities and bring staff along.”* New executive directors in particular believe that it is important that they focus the discussion about the most important internal strengthening issues.

The OMT: A one-off exercise?

A group of 15 to 20 grantees suggested that the OMT be repeated throughout the grant period as part of an important process of self-reflection and learning, and not only a one-off diagnostic tool. The grantees suggested several ways that BUILD could improve the OMT process, including that the Ford Foundation should “*find a way to revisit it at the end of the grant period*” or “*require a revisit, or a circling back, one year later.*” They also suggested building in a periodic OMT check-in and making the OMT “*a living document so you can make an adjustment based on the situation and time.*” The BUILD team could consider offering to support grantees by repeating the OMT, while keeping the flexibility for grantees to decline if they do not see the tool or the timing of the exercise to fit their organization.

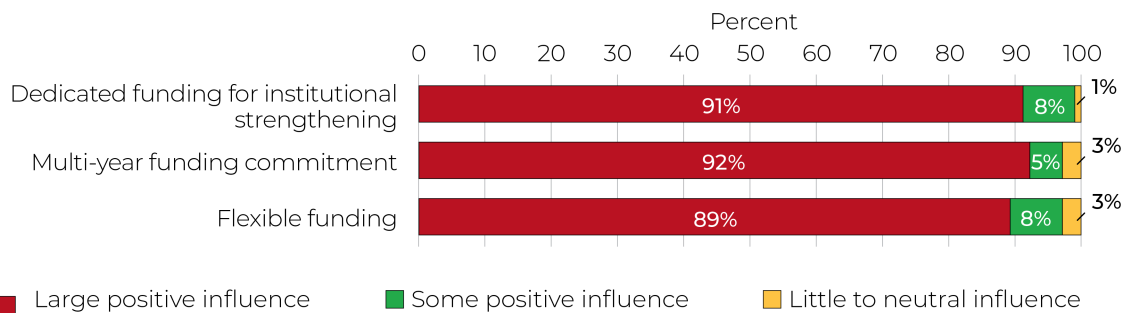
b. Combined effect of flexible, multiyear funding with an institutional-strengthening focus

In this section, we discuss the effect on grantees of the combination of flexible, multiyear funding with a focus on institutional strengthening.

To what degree did these components influence BUILD grantees?

About 90% of grantees cited BUILD’s three primary components (flexible, multiyear funding and an explicit commitment to supporting institutional strengthening) as having a large positive influence on their organization.

Figure 9. Grantees’ answers to the survey question: *How much have various components of BUILD influenced your organization?* (2021 survey data)



*Note: Two negative-influence options were offered for this question and not selected by any grantees.
 Number of observations: 102 grantees (total)*

In *Evaluation Phase 1*, it became clear that grantees benefited from the combination of BUILD’s three primary components: flexible, multiyear funding and an explicit commitment to supporting institutional strengthening. The built-in synergy of these components made the BUILD approach particularly influential, with the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. One grantee described the combined impact of these factors by stating, “*It has given our organization the ability [both] to focus on ... our internal strength and to grow our external impact in the issue areas most important*”

to us.” Another highlighted the unique result of a long-term commitment with flexible funding by stating, “*The BUILD program is one of a kind that trusts and risks with its beneficiaries.*”

Grantees described this combination of flexible, multiyear funding with a dedication to institutional strengthening as “*a game changer*” and “*transformative*” and that it freed them from “*the constraints of one-size-fits-all grantmaking.*” One grantee summed up their experience this way: “*While we may receive ‘general support’ from other funders that we can use flexibly, the BUILD structure of funding, dedicated to specific objectives for institutional strengthening, makes it a clear priority and does not create the feeling that we are taking away funding from highly valued program goals. Rather, it forces us to explore what is really important organizationally to achieve higher program impact. [It] increases accountability in spending on organizational development*” (emphasis added by the Evaluation Team).

While all three components require funding, none of them cost more grant money to the funder than other forms of grantmaking. Flexibility, multiyear commitment and dedication to institutional strengthening are no-cost features of BUILD that reduce transaction costs for the Ford Foundation and the grantees over time, compared with annual grants and project-specific grants. Whether grant funds are given as several sequential restricted project grants or through flexible, multiyear funding with a focus on institutional strengthening, the amount of money is the same. What BUILD provides (in addition to the money) is an approach that provides grantees with the ability to make choices regarding the use of funds that is essential to building strong organizations and achieving program outcomes.

A diverse range of grantees experienced the benefits of flexible, long-term funding with an institutional-strengthening focus including across geographic region, cohort year, organizational size, grant size and dependency on BUILD funding.

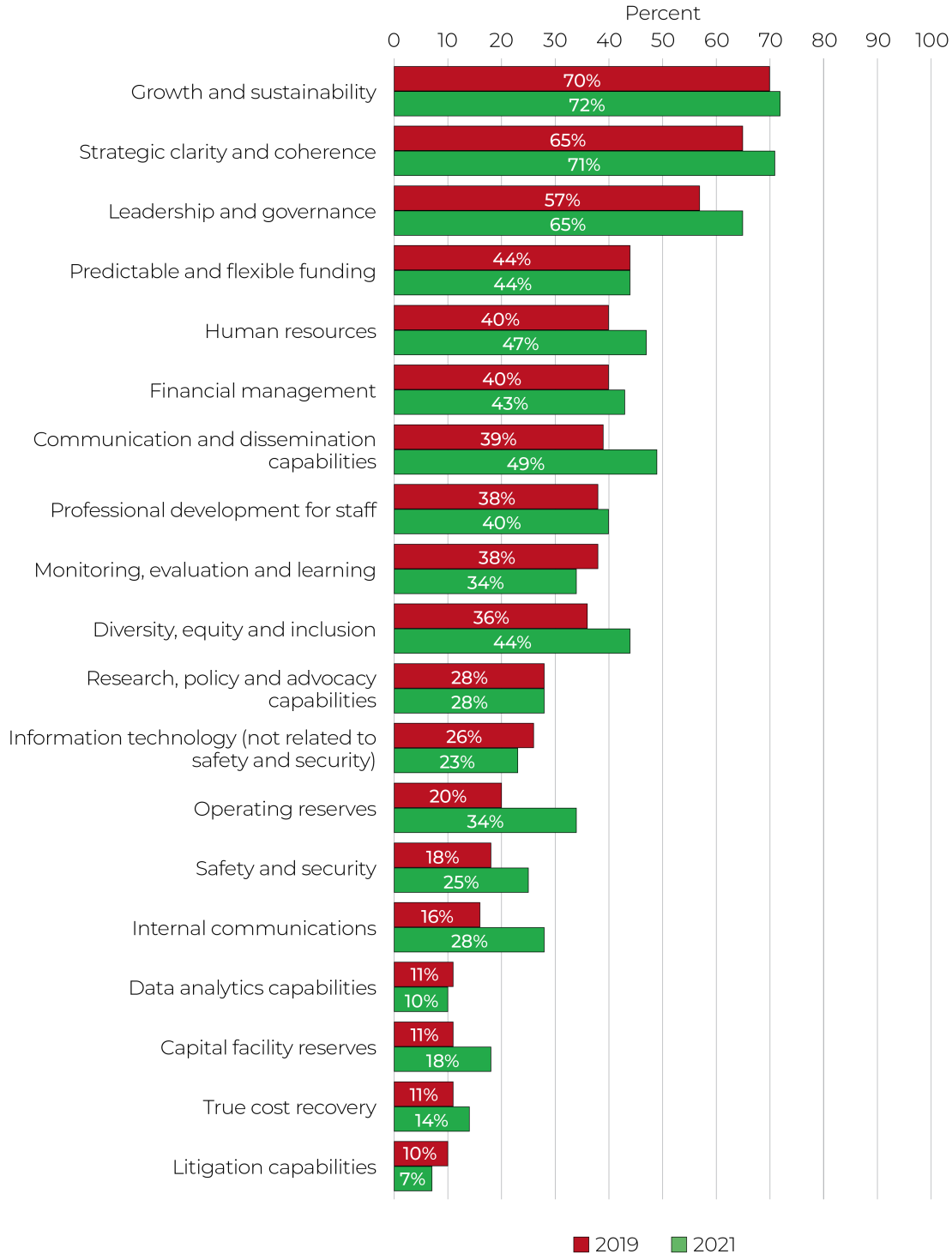
Interestingly, grantees new to the Ford Foundation (having received only one grant from the Foundation prior to their BUILD grant) more frequently reported that these BUILD components had a large positive influence compared with grantees that had previously received several grants from the Foundation.

BUILD component	Grantees new to the Ford Foundation who reported large positive influence of BUILD component (n=20)	Grantees with 2 or more prior grants from the Ford Foundation who reported large positive influence of BUILD component (n=77)
Dedicated funding for institutional strengthening	100%	88%
Multiyear funding commitment	100%	90%
Flexible funding	100%	86%

How did these components influence grantees’ focus on institutional strengthening?

Given the opportunity to focus on institutional strengthening over several years and with flexibility about what to prioritize, grantees used BUILD grants to address a wide range of issues. **Grantees expanded the range of their institutional-strengthening efforts over time.** As Figure 10 shows, they expanded the areas of strengthening in which they focused between 2019 and 2021. This indicates that, given time and flexibility, grantees do more and experience a compounded or aggregate benefit of BUILD.

Figure 10. Grantees' answers to the survey question: Which areas are you focusing on with your BUILD grant? (2019 and 2021 survey data)



Number of observations: 133 grantees (2019) and 116 grantees (2021)

What was the effect of these components on grantees' work?

A majority of grantees stated that the combined BUILD approach of flexible, multiyear funding with an institutional-strengthening focus deepened their ability to think, plan and implement both internal strengthening and external program priorities. Grantees reported that this approach gave them “*permission to strengthen*,” “*headspace to think*,” “*room to plan*,” “*bandwidth to execute*,” “*time to innovate*,” “*space to fail*” and “*flexibility to respond and adapt (internally and externally)*.” When asked what the most influential components of BUILD were, Chief Executive Alex Cobham from the Tax Justice Network³² shared the following: “*Funding for a multiyear period focused on the core strategy and on building organizational resilience allowed us to focus on just these things rather than having to have short-term funding concerns top of mind so much of the time. Those benefits and that headspace has, in turn, been fundamental to the major impact we have since been able to exert.*” The combined BUILD approach enabled organizations to do the following:

- **Plan:** “The most helpful factor is the multiyear funding because it allows us to have medium- and long-term plans; then the flexibility is also a great feature because it makes us more resilient, especially [because] we work in changing environments.”
- **Invest:** “The institutional-strengthening focus from BUILD has given us the ability (and frankly permission) to invest significant resources [in] strategic planning, diversity and equity, internal leadership development and documentation/evaluation of our work that I think will be the key to long-term sustainability.”
- **Become financially stable:** “Stability provided by [a] long-term funding commitment, which made for ... funding stability across our network, which also affected the broader field by securing capacity that allowed coalition partners to invest in their own stability and growth.”
- **Adapt and respond to the changing environment:** “Multiyear and flexible funding, undoubtedly, because it gives us flexibility and the capacity to respond more effectively to the changing context.”

The evidence supports BUILD’s theory of change that strengthening institutions and networks leads to improved programming—that is, to an increased number of programs and improvements in their quality, strategic relevance and adaptability. It seems unlikely that either restricted, multiyear funding or flexible, short-term funding would have led to the same results. Funding exclusively for institutional-strengthening activities would also not likely support the same level of external impact, as shown by the BUILD model.

What are the limitations of flexible, long-term funding with an institutional-strengthening focus?

Some grantees reported one or more limitations of BUILD, including unsustainable growth (16%), greater dependency on Ford (13%) and other funders pulling back (10%; 2021 survey data). These effects were more pronounced in the Global South than in the Global North and US.

Importantly, for 25% of grantees, the benefits of BUILD were limited by a lack of clarity around how they would transition after the BUILD grant term expired. In interviews and surveys, grantees reported that the uncertainty of what would happen after BUILD caused a great deal of

³² The Tax Justice Network is a UK-based international advocacy group consisting of a coalition of researchers and activists working on the issues of tax avoidance, tax competition and tax havens.

organizational stress and inability to plan, and led to decreased effort around year three of their five-year grant due to a lack of definitive funding. **For a quarter of BUILD grantees (2021 survey data), the very benefits of having the BUILD grant began to be limited by not knowing how to plan for life after BUILD.**

As one grantee stated, “[our] experience as a BUILD grantee has been incredibly beneficial to the health and vitality of the organization and our ability to expand the work we do ... A key suggestion BUILD may consider is providing better clarity around the future of programs like BUILD as early as possible, ideally more than a year ahead. BUILD is crucial core support for our organization and requires significant planning and fundraising should the program shift unexpectedly.”

Another grantee put it this way: “The only negative is that we struggled to get funders who could replace the BUILD grant on the same terms and have had to consider project funding in its place, which is a regression.” A final example is from a grantee who stated: “We are planning for year three. If we don’t get clarity on what happens in year five, then we will need to start now to pull back on some of the improvements we have made so we can adjust to reduced funding later.”

c. Cohorts, convenings and technical assistance

In addition to financial resources, BUILD grants provide opportunities for grantees to participate in capacity-strengthening and network-weaving opportunities that are organized by the BUILD program, and in some cases also by program teams and regional offices of the Ford Foundation. CCTA offerings focus on a particular geographic context, line of work (e.g., networks) and/or an institutional-strengthening topic (e.g., leadership, governance, resource mobilization). We explored if and how CCTA offerings³³ had an effect on grantees and contributed to enhancing their work.

Which CCTA activities were offered?

The following types of activities (or hybrids of these) were organized during BUILD 1.0:

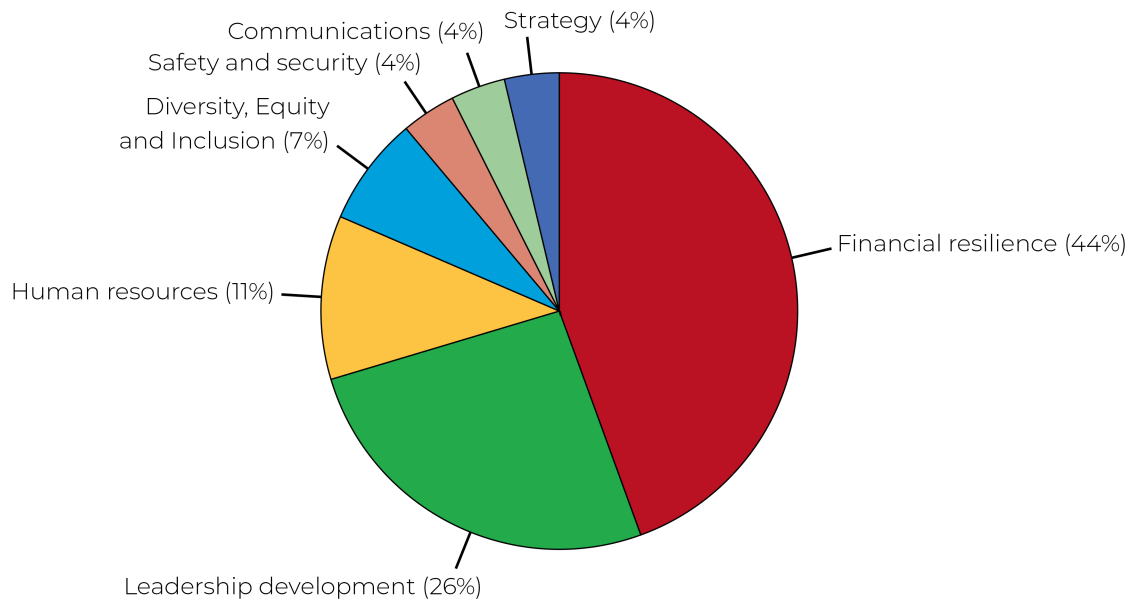
- **Convenings:** Participants attended (in person or online) stand-alone events or took part in a learning series around capacity needs, programmatic issues, field, sectors and/or geographic regions.
- **Cohorts:** Participants met regularly (in person or online) over an extended period of time and discussed/exchanged ideas and experiences about a specific topic as part of a learning community.
- **Technical assistance:** Participants received targeted support delivered by external content experts (consultants, coaches, trainers) about topics best suited for building skills and sharing knowledge.

Between 2017 and 2020, the BUILD program organized 33 CCTA activities³⁴ with a total of 844 participants. Stand-alone convenings were the most common format (45%), followed by cohorts (30%) and technical assistance (25%). Thematic areas ranged from financial resilience (44%) and leadership development (26%) to safety and security (4%).

³³ CCTA is offered on an opt-in basis for BUILD partners, based on their interest, priorities and availability. CCTA programming offers a range of commitments from periodic webinars to regular facilitated peer learning to blended options that include some individualized coaching with cohort-based technical assistance. CCTA is meant to provide learning, training, accompaniment and support to two or more BUILD grantees at a given time. Individualized technical assistance that a particular grantee needs would normally be included within its BUILD grant.

³⁴ Fourteen events took place in the US, and 19 in the Global South.

Figure 11. Thematic areas covered by CCTA offerings between 2017 and 2020 (based on the list of 33 CCTA activities compiled by BUILD in December 2020)



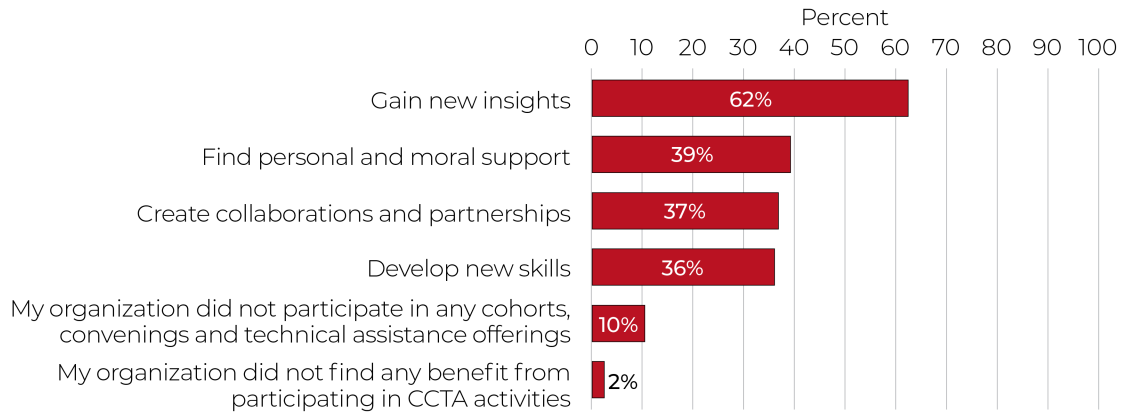
Did CCTA offerings provide opportunities for BUILD grantees to develop skills, gain new insights, create collaborations and partnerships, and find moral support?

Ninety percent of grantees (2021 survey data) reported having participated in at least one CCTA offering. **A large majority of these grantees stated that peer exchange was particularly valuable, and only 2% of grantees reported that their organization did not receive any benefit from participating in CCTA activities.** The main benefit mentioned was gaining new insights (62%), followed by finding personal and moral support (39%), creating collaborations and partnerships (37%) and developing new skills (36%).

In qualitative interviews, grantees shared that they appreciated having access to a space for shared thought partnership and that cohorts had been a very useful space to gain new insights and develop collaborations with allies and peers. After participating in a BUILD workshop, a group of grantees created a grantee-managed support group *“to bounce ideas and discuss issues.”* According to a participant at a convening organized by the Office of West Africa, *“it is a good opportunity to bond with colleagues and see that you are not alone with your issues.”*

Interestingly, there was a significant difference between US and Global South grantees regarding the influence of CCTA offerings. Forty-one percent of Global South grantees (2021 survey data) reported that conferences and convenings had a large positive influence on their organization, compared with 22% of US grantees.

Figure 12. Grantees’ answers to the survey question: *Have cohorts, convenings and technical assistance offerings provided your organization with the opportunity to ... (2021 survey data)*



Number of observations: 125 grantees (total)

The importance of peer support during the Covid-19 crisis

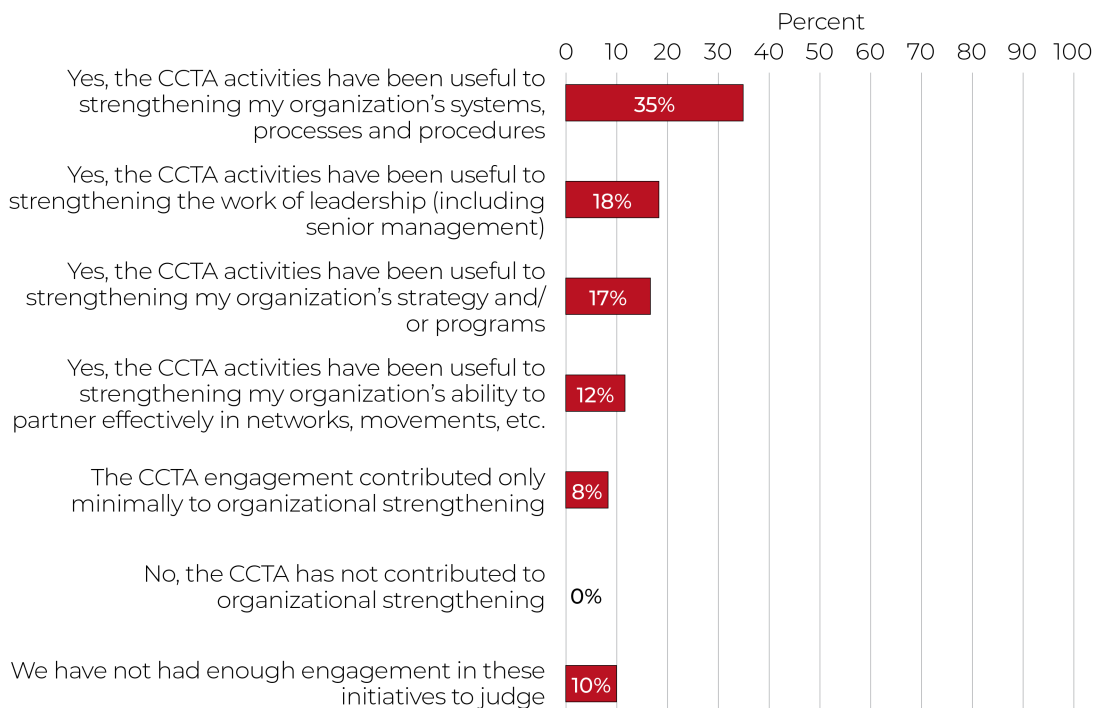
Inuka Ni Sisi is a grassroots Kenyan-based organization that fights for social justice for all Kenyans through campaigns against corruption in public offices and calls to learn how resources are being distributed and used in the extractive sector. In 2021 they remarked on the major changes that had happened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and how the Ford Foundation could play a role by sharing how different organizations had responded to the situation so that *“BUILD grantees can learn from each other vis-à-vis resilience.”*

The Sundance Institute, based in the US, is a nonprofit organization that actively advances the work of independent storytellers in film and theater. It reported that BUILD convenings had provided an opportunity to interact with allied organizations and to identify areas for collaboration and cross-organization support. They explained that these links *“have been particularly meaningful throughout the Covid-19 crisis, which has necessitated responsive, field-wide support and resources for independent artists. The relationships we have developed due to BUILD convenings, as well as overarching peer networking and learnings facilitated by BUILD, have served as critical resources as we weather the impacts of Covid-19 as a community.”*

Did BUILD grantees apply lessons learned from CCTA offerings to their work?

While it is difficult to precisely measure the effects of CCTA participation on grantees' work, most participants reported positive effects, particularly due to learning and networking opportunities. Grantees pointed in particular to benefits for (2021 OIT data) systems, processes and procedures (35%), leadership and senior management (18%), strategy and programs (17%) and partnering effectively in networks and movements (12%). Only 8% mentioned that CCTA activities had a minimal effect on their organization's work.

Figure 13. Grantees' answers to the question: Overall, have CCTA activities contributed to your organization's work? (2021 OIT data)



Number of observations: 60 grantees (total)

Grantees said they had applied new insights or skills gained during CCTA events in a variety of ways. For one grantee, the “Women in Leadership” convening was especially helpful because it started an important conversation in the organization about succession planning: *“during the peer networking sessions, I managed to find a cohort of new leaders that I could lean on. The strong connections were useful in setting up a larger leadership collective.”* For another grantee, the technical assistance webinars about financial resilience not only provided knowledge but were *“accompanied by tools to help translate that knowledge into actual changes in the organization.”* One grantee mentioned that developing a relationship with other grantees around specific organizational development issues led them to drafting their own version of an internal pay-equity document.

Eight percent of grantees (2021 OIT data) reported that CCTA engagement contributed only minimally to their organization. Their main concern was that the trainings and convenings did not

reflect the context and needs of their organization and were too generic to add value to the process of internal strengthening. One grantee stated that CCTA offerings seemed “*packaged*” and that they provided limited opportunities for learning and internal reflection.

How can CCTA offerings be improved to be more useful to grantees?

A key role for the Ford Foundation should be to act as a convener and facilitator for grantees to interact, network, strategize and partner with one another. While each BUILD grantee can use their grant to hire technical assistance in the organizational development areas of their choice (reinforcing the idea of the “grantee in the driver’s seat”), organizations also strongly benefit from interacting with their peers and allies. In this space, the Ford Foundation is well placed to establish connections between grantees and facilitate interactions between groups that would not normally interact, especially given the heterogeneity of their geography, size and program.

When asked how CCTA offerings could be improved (2021 OIT data), grantees specifically mentioned that the Foundation should bring grantees together that share a particular geography or strategy for learning, sharing and support (31%); focus more on building specific skills in addition to convening people for inspiration (29%); strengthen opportunities for ongoing peer support and exchanges (28%); and expand opportunities for coaching and/or accompaniment (26%). Several grantees also suggested that a wider group of their organization’s staff be able to participate instead of just one person (usually the CEO). According to one grantee, “*we would be thrilled to be able to extend these opportunities to other senior leaders and/or managers across our organization, whereby they could fully take advantage of these learning opportunities and bring critical insights back to their teams.*”

Finally, grantees also recommended network-building activities that are less intensive, such as a common email group or online forum with clear rules of engagement for grantees to communicate with one another and exchange experiences, recommendations for consultants and invitations to activities that might be of interest to the cohort. This reinforces the idea that the Foundation plays a facilitation role by helping grantees navigate training offers and capacity-building options, and also enables groups to jointly organize CCTA activities based on identified needs, thereby increasing the efficiency of BUILD funds spent on technical assistance by these organizations.

d. Relationships between program officers and grantees

A stated goal of the BUILD initiative is that the relationships between Ford Foundation program staff and BUILD grantee organizations become deeper, more strategic and more trusting. We explored how relationships between grantees and Ford Foundation staff (primarily with the responsible program officer³⁵) have changed as a result of BUILD. In particular, we looked into if and how the process of designing, negotiating and managing a BUILD grant deepened grantees’ and Ford Foundation staff’s trust and transparency in communicating ideas, experiences and challenges.³⁶

³⁵ The responsible program officer (RPO) is the program officer with primary responsibility for a grant. The RPO is typically in a thematic area of the Foundation. In some cases, the BUILD program awards grants directly to organizations, and the RPO is a BUILD program officer.

³⁶ The data supporting this section comes from the Center for Effective Philanthropy. In addition, the Evaluation Team interviewed eight grantees and eight program officers. The Evaluation Team also interviewed program officers during the *Familiarization Phase*, which supported the analysis behind this section.

Has BUILD changed the relationship between program officers and grantee organizations?

Sixty-five percent of surveyed respondents in 2021 said that BUILD had provided the basis for a more open and trusting relationship with their program officer, with whom they can discuss ideas and the challenges they are facing. Fifty-eight percent also reported that BUILD fostered a more strategic “*thought partnership*” between them and their program officer, as illustrated below.

BUILD supports more open and trusting relationships between organizations and program officers

The People’s Action Institute is a US BUILD grantee contributing to achieving racial and economic justice by building and strengthening state and local power organizations in 30 states. For the organization, sharing their organizational vision and their challenges with the Ford Foundation led to a more open relationship overall. According to the Institute’s Executive Director, “*the BUILD program has created strong bonds between our organization and our program officer. I can think of several opportunities over the last few years when we received important information about the philanthropic landscape from our program officer.*”

For another grantee, BUILD fostered a strategic “*thought partnership.*” In the words of its Senior Operations Officer, “*we were able to share our challenges with transparency and care. Rather than using a fear-based or scarcity approach, we could be clear about our strategic pivots with our program officer, especially in the current changing realities.*”

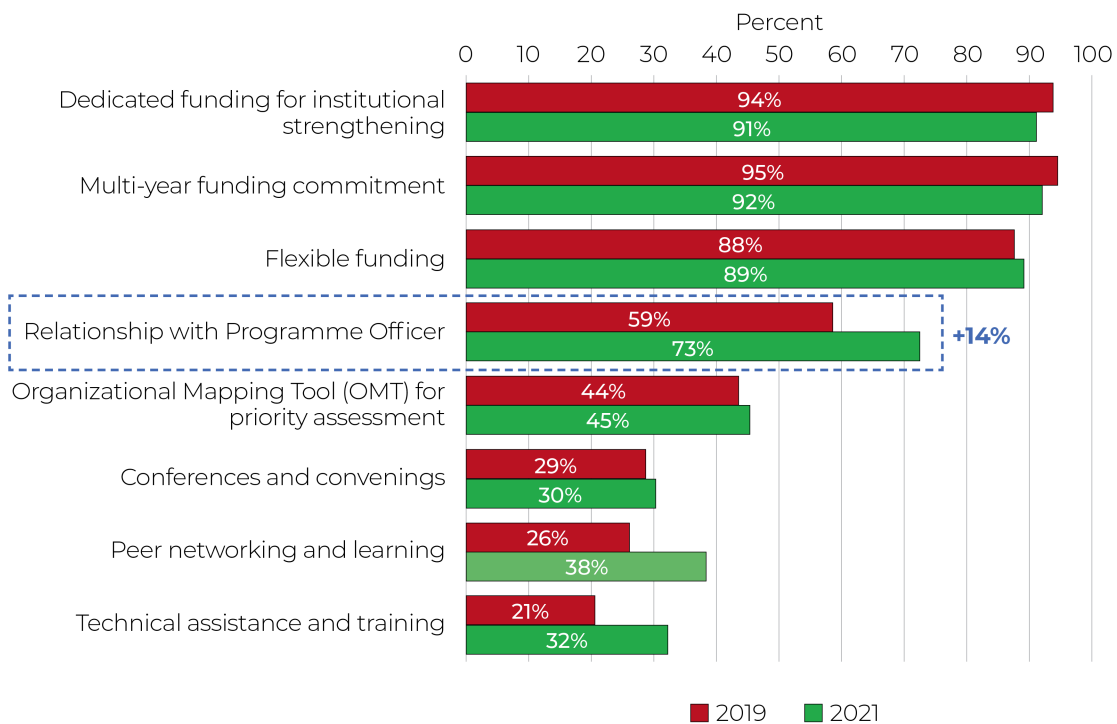
While BUILD can be seen as playing a strong role in shaping the relationship between grantees and program officers, it is interesting to note that 8% of survey respondents in 2021 stated that they had a similar relationship with their program officer before BUILD. These grantees tended to be larger organizations, with a longer history of being Ford Foundation grantees compared with other BUILD grantees, which may explain the quality of the preexisting relationship with their program officer.

We also explored whether the shifts in relationships had influenced BUILD’s impact on the organization or other aspects of the grantees’ work, and found during our interviews with grantees and program officers that there were several ways in which a more trusting and open relationship could support a grantee’s work:

- A more open and trusting relationship led to more understanding about the grantee’s work, which meant that **program officers were able to provide more strategic, more tailored advice and moral support to organizations.**
- Trust led program officers to listen to and guide grantees in their work, and it **gave grantees the space to decide how to use their BUILD grant** and to operate more freely.
- In a few cases, BUILD enabled grantees to connect with Ford Foundation staff beyond their responsible program officer, which created opportunities for grantees to **form new and strategic relationships with Foundation staff and their extended network in the philanthropic sector.** Six grantees (5% of surveyed respondents) reported that they could rely on the Foundation’s relationships to influence and promote their work. One grantee also explained that they had built a more trusting relationship not only with their program officer but also with the whole team with which that program officer works.

The relationship with program officers took a more important place in the BUILD model over time, with an increase of 14 percentage points in the share of grantees that perceived their relationship as having a large positive influence on their work between 2019 and 2021 (survey data). It is possible that grantee-program officer relationships became deeper over time and more influential in the life of the organizations as a result of the contextual changes that took place in 2020, with grantees engaging more in these relationships as they navigated the pandemic context and other social and political upheavals affecting their work.

Figure 14. Percentage of surveyed grantees who responded “a large positive influence” to the survey question: How much did various components of BUILD influence your organization? (2019 and 2021 survey data)



Note: The graphic highlights an increase of 14 percentage points over two years.
 Number of observations: 130 grantees (2019) and 102 grantees (2021)

How can we explain the effect of BUILD on grantee-program officer relationships?

To understand the BUILD effect, we looked into data from the 2021 report for the Ford Foundation from the Center for Effective Philanthropy that compared the experiences of BUILD grantees with non-BUILD grantees. Responses from CEP-surveyed grantees clearly indicated that BUILD grantees had deeper, more strategic and more trusting relationships with their program officers compared with non-BUILD grantees. **BUILD grantees systematically reported higher scores than non-BUILD grantees on the extent to which the Ford Foundation understood their organization’s strategy and goals, on the Ford Foundation’s awareness of the challenges they were facing, on the level of comfort they felt about approaching the Foundation if a problem arose and on the extent to which the Foundation exhibited trust in the organization’s staff.**

Based on our evaluation findings, grantees stated that BUILD's explicit focus on institutional strengthening showed that program officers and other Foundation staff were clearly invested in the overall health of grantee organizations. In turn, this created the opportunity for program officers and BUILD grantees to have honest discussions about organizational strategy and challenges. In the words of one grantee, BUILD gave them *"a chance to share more deeply the particulars of what happens behind the curtain at our organization."* This shift in perspective and openness in the grantee-program officer relationship was well illustrated by another grantee: *"For some foundations it is about letting them know where we are succeeding and painting that picture because they simply want to know the outcomes have been met. Here, it is about really digging in on how we can improve, where the challenges are and troubleshooting [that] makes the relationship much more authentic. That could not happen without trust."*

The Foundation's multiyear funding engagement also encourages honest conversations about internal aspects of grantee organizations. For grantees, the five-year timeframe of the BUILD grant reduced anxiety about grant renewal and strengthened their sense that the Ford Foundation was invested in their work over the long run. Being able to interact with their program officers on substance, without worrying about grant renewal, was very beneficial. In the words of one grantee, *"deeper partnership has been possible, as we have not had to have our eye on [the] immediate task of grant renewal ..., [and the] longer-term time horizon and field-wide issues [have] become more of a focus of our discussions."*

Hearing the story from the other side: What program officers say

The eight program officers (four US, four regional offices) who participated in the interviews all expressed the idea that managing a BUILD grant was more fulfilling than managing non-BUILD grants. For program officers, BUILD is perceived as *"accelerating a process of trust."* BUILD makes grantees more open about their challenges, which creates the conditions for more in-depth, substantive discussions and therefore a stronger relationship. BUILD's mandate to focus on institutional strengthening gives program officers significant additional opportunities to focus on long-term strategic change rather than more immediate outcomes like a particular change in policy. As one program officer remarked, *"the grantees that you engage with are the grantees you think are important for your strategy, so you nurture them ... The policy change will come later and that's ok."*

Program officers managing BUILD grants also stated that they were able to witness the ways in which organizations carry out their work, thus gaining a deeper understanding of organizational culture, financial management, strategic planning and growth. One program officer mentioned that *"working with BUILD grantees also informs how we work with non-BUILD grantees I feel more confident to talk about institutional strengthening, and I am better able to support all grantees, regardless of whether they are a BUILD grantee or not."* Another program officer noted, however, that managing a BUILD relationship was more demanding and required *"a lot of engagement and knowledge about institutions,"* reflecting the learning curve that program officers face when they start discussions about institutional strengthening with BUILD grantees.

Which groups were most likely to report a trusting and strategic relationship with their program officer as a result of BUILD?

According to 2021 survey data, grantees with smaller grants (USD 2 million or less) and grantees that are relatively newer to the Ford Foundation (five or fewer non-BUILD grants prior to receiving a BUILD grant) are more likely to report that BUILD provided the basis for a more open and trusting relationship with their program officer compared with grantees with larger grants and grantees that had received Ford Foundation funding for a longer period of time. As explained by one of the program officers, BUILD accelerates a process of trust, especially for grantees that are smaller in size and/or new to the Foundation: *“Other organizations have had long-term relationships with the Foundation, so they are confident in their relationship with Ford. But for newer organizations, the relationship is in the making, and BUILD supports it.”*

What can we learn from the few organizations for which the relationship deteriorated during BUILD?

One percent of surveyed grantees in 2021 reported that BUILD led to a deterioration of the grantee’s relationship with their program officer. The handful of grantees that responded in this way mentioned a lack of—or sporadic—access to the program officer as a reason for their answer. Another concern was related more broadly to a lack of clarity concerning future BUILD and/or Ford Foundation funding (25% of surveyed grantees in 2021 mentioned this). Uncertainty appeared to have caused unease in the relationship between grantees and program officers, as well as difficulties in planning for the future for grantees, specifically for those whose BUILD grant ends in 2021.

IV. What changed for which kinds of organizations and contexts?

The case studies presented in this section represent a major part of the empirical data and analysis produced during *Evaluation Phase 1 and 2* of the BUILD initiative. They were designed in line with the Developmental Evaluation approach with the aims of embracing the complexity and diversity of the grantee experience as well as the variety of contexts in which grantees operate, and with the purpose of facilitating learning and creating shared ownership of the evaluation process with BUILD grantees.

The case study topics were selected to provide a basis for the continued assessment of the distance traveled by grantees with their BUILD support (*longitudinal case studies*) and to take a deeper look into specific aspects of those trajectories (*single case studies*):

Longitudinal case studies (data collected during both *Evaluation Phase 1 and 2*)

- organizations going through a leadership transition
- network and grassroots organizing/mobilizing organizations
- organizations founded and historically led by People of Color in the United States

Single case studies (data collected during either *Evaluation Phase 1 or 2*)

- established organizations (*Evaluation Phase 1 only*)
- emerging organizations (*Evaluation Phase 1 only*; subsequently merged with established organizations)
- organizations operating in challenging environments (*Evaluation Phase 1 only*)
- organizations led by Indigenous People (*Evaluation Phase 2 only*)

The case studies were designed to illustrate and contrast the various situations and contexts that grantees have been facing, and the different aims that they are striving toward. Each sample was chosen to provide an understanding of organizations working in different contexts and across different Ford Foundation programs. The samples make it possible to analyze differences between grantees in the US and the Global South, among grantees within the US and between grantees working across regions in the Global South.

The following summaries are based on full case study reports, which the reader can find in Annex I to this report. For case studies completed during *Evaluation Phase 1*, please refer to the *Interim Report*³⁷ published in 2020.

a. Established and emerging organizations

Emerging organizations have a relatively new or informal structure, and are often led and shaped by a founding director. They have a less formal strategy compared with larger, longer-standing

³⁷ NIRAS, *Interim Report*.

actors in the field. Sometimes they have grown rapidly in size or staffing and thus require a more formal governance structure and organizational systems. Interestingly, long-standing organizations that are considered well established often struggle with challenges similar to those facing younger organizations. Even though they are assumed to be stable, unstable external contexts affect their work, requiring them to analyze what the current environment requires and to adapt decisively.

This case study (full version available in Annex I.a) looks at how both types of organizations used their BUILD grant. We present findings on how emerging organizations leveraged their BUILD grant to organize, stabilize and/or formalize, and to potentially transform into more sustainable actors (i.e., with a long-term vision and diversified funding) in their field by refining their strategic intent and use of resources, defining clear roles and enhancing their exchanges with other organizations. We also compare emerging organizations with older, more established organizations to understand how BUILD contributed to the evolution and restructuring of sometimes obsolete aspects of the organization. For legacy organizations that have a long history of funding from the Ford Foundation, BUILD provided an important opportunity to standardize long-established—but still rather informal and ad hoc—practices. In some cases, the changes centered on breaking down organizational silos to generate better-integrated and more-strategic teamwork.

Key findings

For both established and emerging grantees, BUILD facilitated a journey from upstart or informal to more formal, efficient and organized. Each type of organization became more effective at leveraging their strengths by focusing on some neglected organizational pillars necessary for operating properly.

For established organizations, stability can create risks of perpetuating old approaches or, to the contrary, can allow grantees to leverage preexisting trust and reputation to move forward. Strong leaders used their BUILD grant to start (or restart) a conversation within their organizations about strategic pathways to change.

For most established grantees, the BUILD grant coincided with and contributed to the evolution and restructuring of obsolete aspects of their organizations. As one director stated, *“we had to focus on capacity building, managing outdated systems. The whole program structure moved ... to a matrix structure. This was a radical transformation of our work, to build legs of the stools for building power and public will for these issues.”* Others saw a need to revamp and enhance communication and advocacy capacities. One grantee needed to find ways to downsize significantly while retaining strategic relevance.

Even within established organizations that might already have had strong systems in place, BUILD supported a process to create new formal structural changes in organizational and administrative procedures. At least two organizations used their grants for long-overdue transitions from paper-based to digital administrative systems. It is somewhat paradoxical that even established organizations saw BUILD as an important opportunity to standardize long-established—but still rather informal and ad hoc—practices. This included practices concerning human resource management, knowledge management, reporting, division of labor and even administrative procedures. This could suggest that established organizations may have been too concerned with basic survival to address professionalization. It would also appear that in some instances path dependencies and a reluctance to cause trouble (within their organizations or in relationships with

partners) stood in the way of innovations to introduce more appropriate and formal institutional norms and procedures. In other instances, BUILD contributed to an ongoing trajectory of maturation, as one grantee stated: *“We are getting to that inflection point where the ways you work when you are small and scrappy—it won’t work anymore.”*

For emerging organizations, BUILD plays a role in how they solidify their existence by helping them put basic institutional processes in place and clarify their strategic direction. Identity and positioning in the field are central to emerging grantees’ discussions about their uses of the BUILD grant. They have focused efforts, time and resources on institutional development, which has been instrumental in terms of placing them on the map in their respective fields.

However, there are some questions around the extent to which the BUILD model is tailored for newer, less conventional organizations. It appears that grantees that seek to retain flexibility and agility while engaging in formalization processes prefer alternative scenarios of organizational evolution. Emerging organizations do not necessarily aspire to have a linear organizational development pathway toward becoming established. There is a healthy skepticism about standard solutions typically adopted by more established organizations, and grantees stated their concerns about the risk of formalization brought about by the BUILD program.

For instance, emerging grantees that were asked to carry out the OMT exercise questioned the tool’s emphasis on elements that are typical of large, long-established organizations. These included questions about common institutional features such as working with a planning cycle, having a detailed strategic plan, putting a number of policies in place or establishing a traditional governance structure.

Institutional change and the risks of formalization

For one grantee, the rather difficult experience of applying the OMT to their flat organizational structure motivated its leaders to be more proactive and clearer in their message to donors when describing their organization. After the OMT process, staff decided to document the key principles of their organizational culture, the flat nature of their structure and their attachment to keeping processes as lean as possible. While this structure had prevailed from the start, it did so through unspoken and unwritten rules, and BUILD’s OMT led to the realization of the need to be vocal about their ways of working for funders to understand what institutional development meant for them. To some extent, this outcome could be characterized as a “reaction to BUILD” (to quote the grantee). While this reaction was negative at first, over time it led to positive developments for the organization and a reaffirmation of their “DNA.” This example suggests that, to some extent, the BUILD approach (e.g., the OMT, the proposal guidance or the BUILD pyramid³⁸) conveys an idea of institutional development that primarily fits larger and more established organizations.

In the context of BUILD support, all grantees in the sample engaged in discussions around the need to formalize, the rationale behind seeking to institutionalize and the risks associated with these changes, especially vis-à-vis trying to preserve their organizational culture. As explained

³⁸ The BUILD pyramid describes areas in which grantees can choose to invest the institutional-strengthening portions of their BUILD grants. The pyramid has four tiers, from bottom to top: strategic clarity and coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, organizational resilience, and growth and sustainability.

by one of the grantees, “Are we doing these things to change social justice, or do we do this for ourselves, with a narrow-minded view of what an organization should be? Is it about doing the work, doing it better, or about my personal interest? If leadership cannot be questioned anymore because it’s too codified, there is a risk of NGOization,³⁹ and that’s what I want to avoid here in my organization.”

Lessons learned

In the course of the case study, it became apparent that some BUILD grantees that are the oldest and perceived as the most successful used their grant to make investments in basic systems and strategic clarity. Ideally, these investments should have been made earlier. The path to making the needed changes in these systems and strategy demanded a proactive dialogue within and outside the organization. An important part of what BUILD has meant for established organizations is having the ability to reflect patiently on the design of new knowledge management structures before embarking on creating such structures.

This case study can inform conversations underway at the Ford Foundation and at other philanthropies about the value of investing in established organizations. As one director said, “*BUILD alone cannot transform any organization, but the leverage can be transformative.*” As these grantees generally had a relatively stable foundation to build on, they had good opportunities to leverage the support for results. For those that were facing severe contextual challenges, the grant was of profound significance for their organizational development.

Emerging organizations seek to move away from a traditional model of growth and expansion that involves doing more of the same on a larger scale or in different geographies. For instance, some emerging organizations used their BUILD grant to support a shift from doing the work to supporting partners to do the work. This suggests that a different BUILD theory of change may be more suitable for these emerging organizations. Nonetheless, BUILD appears to have been a successful and adaptive model for both types of organizations, mostly thanks to its flexibility and the ability of grantees to be in the driver’s seat.

b. Organizations going through a leadership transition

BUILD’s approach of flexible, long-term funding with a focus on institutional strengthening is an asset to new leaders as they build their organizations to pursue social justice. This proved true among case study grantees across diverse countries and contexts, and as new leaders faced the multiple challenges of Covid-19, the intensified racial justice reckoning in the US and the further shrinking of civic space globally.

BUILD gave new leaders stability and security to take the time they needed to design, implement and maintain changes in their organizations and new forms of engagement in networks and coalitions. This included creating strategies and programs, organizational cultures and ways of working, systems and processes, and external partnerships to advance their vision of social change. While the timeframe of the BUILD grant (five years) is brief, grantees in the case study achieved both near-term program outcomes and established the conditions for longer-term mission impact. The full version of this case study is available in Annex I.b.

³⁹ Becoming an institutionalized nonprofit with rigid structures and processes.

Key findings

Three key factors support organizations in preparing for and undergoing leadership transitions: resources to create a strong executive team to partner with new leaders, a skilled board of directors to help guide the organization and to support the leader, and resources to invest in new leaders from all backgrounds and identities to enable them to grow in the organization.

The flexibility and predictability of BUILD funds together with the focus on institutional strengthening helped new leaders to assemble a senior management team so they could “*hit the ground running*.” Grantees hired talented and experienced people for positions such as chief operating officer, deputy director and directors of key departments such as research, finance and communications.

Boards of directors played an important role in supporting organizations through leadership transitions, including for several grantees that transitioned from White-led to Person of Color-led leadership. In these cases, boards helped grantees to “*seed the ground to transition [the organization’s] cultural values*.” Grantees in the case study and evaluation overall remarked on the need to provide boards of directors with training so they could better support new leaders and help organizations navigate programmatic and management decisions related to the transition.

For new leaders coming into their roles after the crisis of an unplanned, unexpected leadership transition, the BUILD grant provided essential stability and security to continue operating. BUILD was an important source of support when the funding from other donors was uncertain or withheld, staff were dealing with trauma, and in cases where boards of directors were not providing the necessary guidance to move beyond crises.

Several grantees in the case study talked about the importance of nurturing a new generation of leaders as a way to sustain the organization and the broader ecosystem. This included developing a “*pipeline*” of emerging leaders in the organization and supporting staff who leave to take their skills and talents to partner organizations.

In the year(s) immediately following their transition, the predictability and flexibility of BUILD funds supported new leaders by ensuring the stability to think about strategy and programs and providing a mandate to invest in organizational development. New executive directors reported that BUILD’s predictable and stable funding gave them the space to think about strategy and to bring “*real intentionality*” to this focus “*rather than breathing out of a fire hose*.” While BUILD grantees in general value using grant funds for organizational development, this was a particularly strong asset for new leaders who used BUILD support to hire talent and establish the institutional systems needed to advance effective programming. This included by strengthening departments for policy, research, advocacy and strategic communications, and by bolstering capabilities in finance, human resources, technology and knowledge management.

New leaders and senior management also prioritized creating internal organizational cultures based on equity and respect, and then aligned these cultures with how they engaged in networks and coalitions. This process was particularly challenging for leaders who came into their role after a crisis, or who followed a long-serving executive director. Lastly, leaders who were relatively new in their roles spoke about seeking opportunities for their own personal and professional support and development particularly in response to the stresses and threats in 2020 and 2021, and the uncertain fundraising landscape.

New leaders bring internal values and resilience to external partnerships

A board member of a Global South grantee that went through a leadership transition reflected on the importance of building a stable and equitable internal culture that serves as a guidepost for engaging in equitable partnerships in the broader ecosystem: *“The issue of stability of funding is that it allows an organization like [us] to have meaningful, substantial relationships [with local organizations] that are founded on the principles—the understanding—that we provide certain expertise, sometimes on a daily basis, but there is a clear demarcation between what we do and never overstepping the boundaries, where we [would] replace the inner workings of those organizations. The stability that [we have] had is so important. If the organization internally becomes unstable and [is unable] to behave the way I’ve described ... particularly if [the new executive director] can’t lead by example in the organization and in relation to outside partners ..., these advances will be compromised ..., [and] the kind of support that [we] got from BUILD and other funders allows for that interaction.”*

Grantees reported that the challenges in 2020 and 2021 further exacerbated the disproportionate expectations and pressures placed on Leaders of Color to succeed. As one leader who was a Woman of Color stated: *“The last year has been really extraordinary and has really called Women of Color leaders and Black women leaders in particular to sort of continue to show up in ways that guide their organizations as they’re trying to hold themselves together. It has been really intense with a lot of high expectations. The truth is, we were all placed in a situation that was not just unexpected, but one where there wasn’t actually a rule book on how you do it. I do worry. I’ll just be really frank. I worry a lot around retention on the other side of this pandemic because 2020 was sort of an unforgiving year.”*

Notably, US-based grantees that experienced leadership transitions were more likely than grantees that did not to report that they were financially dependent on the Ford Foundation. In addition, they reported that the lack of clarity on future BUILD funding disrupted their forward planning and potentially “*compromised*” the gains they had made in their organizations.

Leaders in the case study described three avenues through which their organizations had advanced near-term program outcomes and established the conditions for long-term mission impact.

First, they established **equitable ways of working** internally that shaped effective external partnerships. The values and organizational cultures that new leaders seeded within their organizations became a guidepost for the organizations’ relationships with external partners. This included how external partnerships were *formed* (building strategic alliances based on mutual respect), *strengthened* (co-creating effective strategies for social change) and *sustained* (nurturing people and partnerships for long-term agendas).

Second, new leaders and their staff shared capabilities with partner organizations to help build **more effective networks and coalitions**. New executive directors invested BUILD resources to hire, develop, mentor and supervise staff, and to establish mission-critical capabilities. Grantees applied these fundamentals to building external partnerships that could seize opportunities and create pathways for change. In addition, with skilled staff taking on lead roles in programs and administration, leaders could engage more actively in movement building. Rather than fundraising and developing administrative policies, BUILD resources enabled leaders to focus on leading.

Third, grantees spoke about **increasingly being “at the table”** and navigating their positions of power in the broader policy and advocacy ecosystems. This enabled new leaders and their organizations to bring typically marginalized people and issues into policy and advocacy at the local, state, regional and national levels of government. Grantees described near-term “wins” in childcare, paid family leave, housing security, access to social services, environmental protections and recourse in cases of sexual harassment. Grantees also described establishing the conditions for longer-term change by working with partners to, for example, build constituent power for voter engagement, create state-level advocacy campaigns on racial justice and change the narrative in public discourse around gender and LGBTQI rights.

Lessons learned

Leadership transitions provide a window onto leadership and governance issues that many leaders—not only new ones—grapple with. At the same time, transitions are a stress test for organizations and focus a spotlight on vulnerabilities and opportunities that new leaders face—and that funders can support—in building organizational resilience and sustainability.

BUILD’s predictable and flexible funding provide stability and security to new leaders who begin their roles after a leadership crisis. The assurance of financial resources and Ford’s vote of confidence helps new leaders make changes to people and systems, create new organizational cultures, build (and in some cases rebuild) external relationships and raise additional funding for ongoing work.

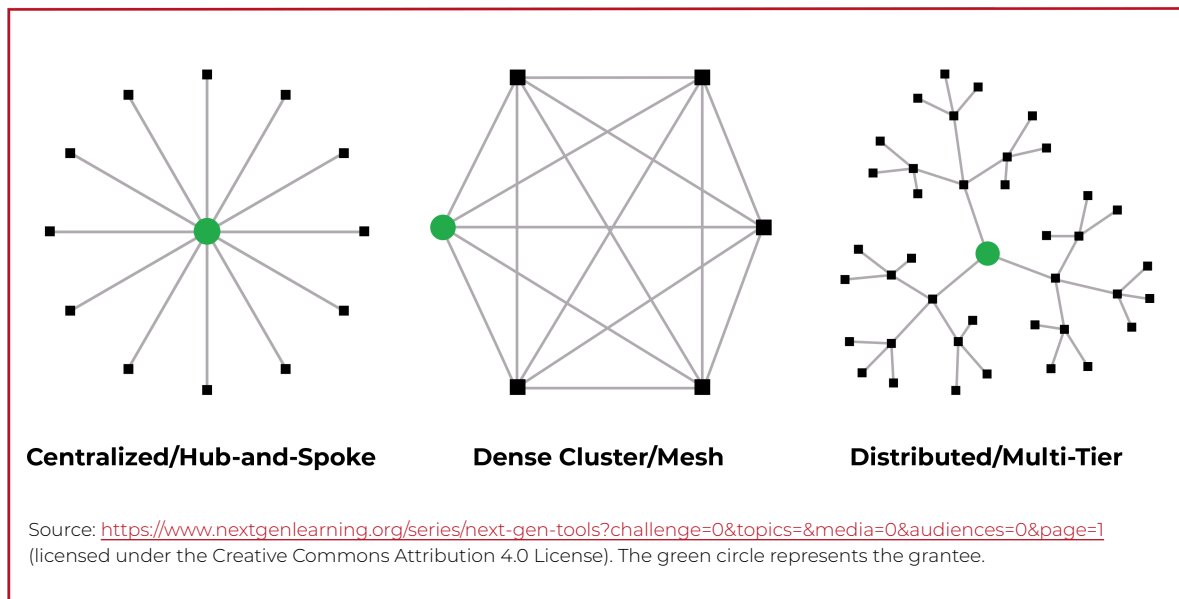
Leadership transitions are far more complex processes than changing an organization’s executive. Supporting a leadership transition requires an extended commitment to the individual leaders and their entire organizations to prepare for, transition through and move on from the change in executive, with the aim of enabling the new leader to succeed and thrive. This process can take more than five years, and philanthropy should consider extended investments for new leaders.

The shifts taking place in the nonprofit sector toward more varied and nonhierarchical models of leading, and from White-led to Person of Color-led leadership in the US and male to female leadership globally, provide an opportunity for BUILD to expand its support for different types of leadership transitions. This includes working with new leaders and resource persons to reimagine what leadership and transition mean in a range of contexts and how best to facilitate peer exchange, accompaniment, skills development and coaching for new leaders across a range of organization types and socio-political contexts.

c. Networks and grassroots mobilizing organizations

This case study (full version available in Annex I.c) examines both the “what” and the “how” of BUILD’s influence and effects on organizations whose primary purpose is to convene, organize and/or mobilize. These grantees are distinct from other BUILD grantees in that their primary organizational focus is outside of their own formal organization. Network conveners are facilitators of other organizations. Grassroots organizers and mobilizers connect and catalyze action by groups, organizations, affiliates and leaders. Both types of organizations are primarily focused on providing vision, leadership, capacity support and infrastructure to their networks and movements.

We developed a basic typology for this case study. While designed for networks, we found the typology useful for understanding changes in how grassroots organizing/mobilizing organizations relate to their constituencies. In the diagram below, the green dot represents the convening organization, or grantee in the case of BUILD. The black dots are nodes and represent the other organizations that formally connect with the grantee. The lines represent the connection and communication between organizations in the network. The typology is designed to recognize the traditional and stereotypical “hub-and-spoke” model, the more facilitative and collaborative “mesh” model and the multitier nature of many “chapter-style” networks. The typology implies varying distributions of power and densities of connections.



Key findings

Network and grassroots grantees mostly experienced BUILD’s effect at three levels. First, as designed and intended, BUILD supported the grantees’ organizational strengthening and resilience just as it does with non-network, non-grassroots organizations. Grantees used BUILD for planning and clarifying strategy, building or improving internal systems, growing and sustaining staff, expanding or deepening internal work on diversity, equity and inclusion, enhancing their financial position, and expanding and improving communications among many areas of organizational development focus. Ninety-four percent of network and grassroots grantees (2021 survey data) reported that BUILD enhanced the strengthening of their strategies and strategic clarity to some extent or to a large extent, with 76% saying this occurred to a large extent (compared with 82% and 65% of the whole surveyed BUILD population, respectively).

The second level of BUILD’s effect on these grantees was in the connections between themselves and their members and/or among their members. Network and grassroots grantees used BUILD to fund, facilitate, organize, convene and build the capacity of their members. Network and grassroots grantees reported (2021 survey data) that the most beneficial aspects of BUILD were strengthening strategies and strategic clarity (94%), strengthening their financial situation (91%) and supporting their field and networks and making them stronger (91%). Grantees and their

members/constituents reported enhanced, improved and more impactful relationships based on the changes the grantee made in how it worked with or related to them.

The third level of BUILD's effect on these grantees was in their networks' impact on their fields, or the mission impact. Every grantee in the second phase of this case study reported that their work was having greater impact. Additionally, 100% of network and grassroots grantees (2021 survey data) reported that their impact was enhanced by at least one factor of organizational strengthening. Ninety-one percent of all grantees and 97% of network and grassroots grantees said that their own impact was enhanced by supporting their fields and networks and making them stronger. One grantee described the work they did early in the BUILD grant to develop the capacity of their constituencies, explaining that, *"instead of waiting for our staff to arrive, local leaders are now implementing the work and responding to issues as soon as they arise This makes us more impactful in more places at the same time."*

Spreading the BUILD effect by strengthening partners

One national grantee in the US hired a staff person to work with its chapter members and help them with organizational development. *"We invested a lot in our HR work, both internally and as a resource for our affiliates. But we had to send [a staffer] out to sit with local directors and get some basics in place Our members' leaders came up through organizing and don't necessarily become an executive director knowing a lot about HR or budget management."* Like many of its peers, this BUILD grantee used its resources to enhance its own institutional strengthening as well as support its members in doing so. Another network chose to provide funds specifically for capacity building for their members, who were distributed across countries, making it more challenging for the BUILD grantee staff to provide direct technical assistance: *"We can't provide all the capacity, so we give them grants to procure it themselves ..., [and] we also have increased our grant amounts and added multiyear grants to support this."*

Lessons learned

Even though when BUILD was created its design did not specifically account for the unique nature of network conveners or grassroots organizers and mobilizers, its effectiveness with these types of organizations appears especially strong. Funding network conveners and grassroots organizers and mobilizers can leverage the impact of grantmaking and provide a path to support hard-to-fund local efforts and movements. The organizations we studied have the organizational capacity to manage large, flexible, multiyear grants while also having the relationships necessary to effectively extend resources to smaller units and local leadership through technical assistance and regranteeing. This enables the Ford Foundation to extend support to smaller, more local organizations without having to significantly increase its own knowledge of those local contexts.

BUILD provided network and grassroots grantees the time, resources and institutional focus necessary to be able to develop longer-term strategies to strengthen themselves and their networks regardless of competing constituent demands or funder trends.

While the effectiveness of BUILD is grounded in its lack of prescription and restriction, network and grassroots grantees appreciate and benefit from the Foundation's convening support and

accompaniment. Many grantees in this case study cited the thought partnership of program officers, the regional and global convenings that enabled them to connect with similarly structured organizations and think together about how to be a network, and the organizational-strengthening peer support they experienced through BUILD. BUILD provided rare opportunities for network and grassroots grantees to reflect on and plan for how they convened, organized and mobilized their primary constituents.

The OMT process was useful for these grantees, but several case study grantees and some survey respondents noted that it would be helpful to have tools that more directly address networks rather than single organizations. One grantee also noted the benefit of having an OMT facilitator who is experienced in and sensitive to network and grassroots dynamics. Going forward, it will be helpful to provide more network-aligned tools and identify facilitators with experience and expertise in networks and grassroots organizing.

Given the time, resources and space to plan and coordinate with partners, network and grassroots grantees tend to reorganize in a more decentralized way, sharing power with their partners and affiliates. They extend resources and their own institutional-strengthening work to the nodes of their networks, sometimes organizing subnetworks that act independent of the grantee. Grantees refer to this transformation as one of moving from transactional relationships to relational and strategic relationships and cite increased strength, capacity, resilience and mission impact as results.

d. Organizations founded and historically led by People of Color in the US

Organizations founded and historically led by People of Color (POCFHL) are deeply rooted in social justice and profoundly connected to the communities they serve by their work and engagement in civil rights. POCFHL organizations serve their communities while facing a multitude of systemic and historical roadblocks in philanthropy.⁴⁰ Minimal access to donors, a lack of role models and limited connections to wealth and other types of networks have had a negative effect on the ability of POCFHL organizations to strengthen their mission impact and become strong institutions to advance the field of social justice.⁴¹

This case study (full version available in Annex I.d) focuses on eight organizations that receive BUILD funding and provides insights into the types of philanthropic support that can best contribute to the strengthening and effectiveness of organizations founded and historically led by People of Color in the US. This case study also speaks to the events of 2020 and 2021, when these organizations had to adapt to a new reality. These organizations were impacted even more than usual by structural racism during these two years, when social and racial reckoning and Covid-19 impacted Communities of Color disproportionately compared with other organizations and communities. Organizational resilience and financial resilience became critical aspects of surviving a global pandemic, social and racial reckoning, and a difficult political landscape.

40 Cheryl Dorsey, Jeff Bradach and Peter Kim, "[Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table](#)," The Bridgespan Group, May 2020, accessed September 20, 2021. The publication is available on the Bridgespan Group website.

41 Cheryl Dorsey, Peter Kim, Cora Daniels, Lyell Sakaue and Britt Savage, "[Overcoming the Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding](#)," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* website, May 4, 2020, accessed September 20, 2021. The article is available on the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* website.

Key findings

BUILD contributed to creating stronger POCFHL organizations by supporting grantees in focusing on the development of systems, processes and strategy. For many POCFHL grantees, this was the first time they had received funding for institutional strengthening and were able to prioritize resources for it. With this funding, they grew and stabilized systems, procedures, human resources and financial organizational systems. With more developed and clearer strategies, grantees strengthened their presence and leadership in their networks and in their field more broadly.

Hiring and maintaining staff allowed senior leadership and executive directors to work on the organization's vision and mission and not be consumed by day-to-day operations. Executive directors were able to support larger collaboratives in their program strategy areas, focus on fundraising, attend convenings and advocate at the local and national levels. One executive director said that she could finally focus on executive director-level duties because there were people on her team that could run programs and operations. Most grantees in the case study hired operations staff, program staff and financial support, strengthened their communications team and invested in human resources.

BUILD enhanced the ability of POCFHL grantees to lead and take part in networks. For example, grantees in the case study reported that they had the capacity to strengthen their networks by being more present, taking leadership roles in collaboratives, having a stronger focus on base building, gaining trust and recognition, and offering leadership development to their network partners. As one grantee explained, *"we also fought from the margins, not always at the table or even in the room. We are small and scrappy, but strategic and impactful. [We were] always trying to get to the table, let alone have a seat at the table. Now we are at the table and we are leading."*

Traditional funders usually see large, typically White-led, legacy organizations as models of success that can be trusted with flexible funding and funding overall. In contrast, and given the history of structural racism in philanthropy, POCFHL organizations typically receive lower levels of funding overall and especially lower levels of flexible funding.⁴² This sets up a dynamic in which legacy organizations can use flexible money to build programs that fulfill standard philanthropic expectations of impact, while POCFHL organizations focus on smaller programs, with more limited results, and which in turn seem less successful. This only reinforces the notion that POCFHL organizations have less *"absorptive capacity"* to use large amounts of funding and flexible resources. Compounding this, with limited ability to decide how to use their funds, POCFHL organizations have been conditioned to focus on programs for which they can get funding rather than what might best support their constituents. As one grantee shared, *"People of Color organizations are often not trusted to manage general operating support grants of any size. But without a large general operating support grant, they can't prove otherwise. BUILD breaks that cycle."*

⁴² Dorsey et al., "Overcoming the Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding."

Directing resources to People of Color-led organizations

According to *Grantmaking With a Racial Justice Lens*,⁴³ the most impactful work in the US is often led by Black- or other People of Color-led organizations that are deeply committed to long-term systems transformation. It further states that people from the communities most affected are the people who should solve the root causes of systemic problems because they are working directly with communities and are knowledgeable about needs and opportunities. Resources need to be directed to community-based workers and their organizations. Yet, philanthropy typically underinvests in these groups, which can add strain even to organizations with high capacity and especially to those with fewer staff members to manage their operations.

With BUILD, POCFHL organizations were able to respond to the moment by investing grant funds in priorities at a time of crisis. BUILD also helped organizations hire staff and invest in infrastructure in order to be financially resilient in a time of uncertainty. As one grantee pointed out, *“BUILD provided a base and support that allowed us to adapt to Covid-19 and fundraise in a new environment.”*

With BUILD, POCFHL grantees felt that they had flexibility to use the resources as they saw fit. For these grantees, this was a significant change, as most of the funding they receive is earmarked for specific programs or projects. BUILD enabled organizations to invest in what they particularly needed: organizational development, clarity and strategic planning, and infrastructures and systems. Long-term investment and flexibility enabled these organizations to focus on growth (when appropriate) and sustainability without constantly having to raise more money.

BUILD also offered opportunities for connection and collaboration with other grantees. Many grantees spoke about the shared space created by BUILD for collaboration and for moral support through CCTA offerings, including the cohort for new executive directors and for Women of Color leaders as well as the additional financial support and guidance provided during Covid-19.

Lessons learned

BUILD contributed to institutional strengthening by supporting organizational development among POCFHL grantees. The support allowed grantees to take the time to strengthen their capacity to focus on the development of systems, processes and strategy.

With clearly articulated strategies, grantees were able to strengthen their presence and leadership in People of Color networks. In addition, with time, space and capacity, grantees continued to strengthen their mission impact work.

All grantees except for one leveraged BUILD resources to create more data, research and publications. This work is elevating their profile and credibility as POCFHL organizations and in turn creating a space where POCFHL organizations can leverage resources and seek further support from funders.

⁴³ Rinku Sen and Lori Villarosa, *Grantmaking With a Racial Justice Lens: A Practical Guide* (Washington, DC: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, 2019).

Philanthropy continues to put extra burdens on POCFHL organizations by requiring more reporting, micromanaging programs and offering restricted funds.⁴⁴ Using their BUILD funding, POCFHL organizations are demonstrating that they can have impact and serve their communities with a culturally responsive approach that philanthropy has yet to fully trust.

e. Indigenous People-led organizations

The purpose of this case study (full version available in Annex I.e) is to explore Indigenous People-led (IP-led) BUILD grantees as a group in the evaluation, to share some of the strengths and challenges that IP-led organizations experience and to better understand BUILD's unique impacts (if any) on IP-led organizations. This case study looks at institutional strengthening, organizational development, sustainability and the unique narratives of IP-led grantees.

Their internal strength comes from their relationship to the community. Institutional strengthening for IP-led grantees is centered in the communities and territories they serve. They view institutional strengthening as a means to support Indigenous People, and they work in partnership with Indigenous People. IP-led grantees believe that the ways in which they develop and operate internally must reflect the values and ways of operating of the communities and territories and larger ecosystems in which they work. Grantees use resources and time to engage with their communities to further understand their values, systems and processes. With this understanding, grantees can strengthen their own organizational development in ways that reflect the communities they serve.

BUILD contributed to organizational development in terms of providing resources and giving grantees the space and time to reflect on their strategies and vision. For many of these organizations, this was the first time they received flexible funding, which allowed them to make the decisions on where to focus their resources (grantee in the driver seat).

Sustainability for IP-led grantees exists in the context of economic, social, cultural and environmental factors. For IP-led grantees, these factors are uniquely tied to and derived from their communities. They view sustainability as developing and supporting local economies that thrive, creating the space for Indigenous People to flourish socially and to preserve their culture and the environment. The "BUILD effect" is that BUILD provides resources for grantees to reflect together with communities, lead with direction and become stronger organizations in their context.

Nonetheless, IP-led grantees struggle in the larger context, notably in sharing their voices in philanthropy and in the traditional Western context. To some extent, BUILD has amplified the voices of IP-led organizations so they are better able to shift and share the narratives of Indigenous People.

Key findings

Institutional strengthening is a long-term process for IP-led organizations. One grantee defined it as the ability to strengthen the internal capacities in their own organization and the territories in which they work so that Indigenous People and their communities are better served. BUILD

⁴⁴ Dorsey, Bradach and Kim, "Racial Equity and Philanthropy"; Dorsey et al., "Overcoming the Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding."

supported this effort by offering grantees the space, resources and time to fully develop their strategies and to focus their work on communities. Grantees, for the first time, were able to use BUILD funds to hire consultants for communications, human resources, administration, financial infrastructure and internal systems. Because of their intimate relationship with and roots in communities, internal processes often require more democratic decision-making and value alignment than within most nonprofit organizations and NGOs. BUILD provided the flexibility and time for IP-led grantees to do this internal work in ways consistent with the accountability and value alignment they keep with their communities.

BUILD supported a reflection on the challenges faced by communities

One grantee, who defends the rights of the Indigenous People in their area, made internal changes after reflecting on the challenges their communities were facing and realized their internal ways of working were no longer applicable to the communities' new reality. *"For many years there was no such reflection of where we are, what is our context, and we as Indigenous People, how ... we respond to that context and guarantee, well, our survival as peoples, guarantee our identity, our culture, continue to control and work in our territories. So BUILD came [in] handy to respond to that need."* BUILD supported the grantee in restructuring and updating the financial and administrative components of their organization to better support their communities. This enabled the grantee to better manage their activities at both the national and international levels.

One organization said organizational development included developing the capacity of partner organizations to respond to a changing environment. For one organization, the Covid-19 pandemic meant they had to stop their work in Indigenous territories. The organization stated, *"We belong to collectives, to dialogue, to make spaces for reflection ..., and the pandemic—it clashed with our way, especially at the level of activities in territories."* BUILD's flexible funds allowed grantees to better respond to situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic and to community needs. Some organizations took on a new role to support their communities in the emergency. For example, several organizations said they used BUILD funds to provide their communities with equipment and Zoom connectivity so their people could work virtually.

Having a solid team of professionals that are representative of the communities and cultures they represent is important to IP-led organizations. One organization spoke extensively about the leadership pipeline they were developing with a new generation of leaders. BUILD gave them the opportunity to offer competitive salaries so they could attract appropriate talent. It was not just about finding someone who could do the work, but also about finding the person who was culturally the right fit, who knew the culture they were serving and the language and the traditions of the people they would serve.

Organizations interviewed as part of this case study value culturally responsive storytelling as a means of sharing their work, including with donors. BUILD enabled them to find ways to create and disseminate their stories. For example, one grantee publicized a local census they had led that enabled Indigenous People to collect information from Indigenous People for the first time. BUILD supported this project: *"It was not an external entity that went there to collect information from our territories; instead, it was us who launched a very large team to our [ancestral] territories."*

BUILD helped IP-led organizations strengthen their communications and enhance their use of social media platforms. One grantee mentioned that they were trying to put forward the message that Indigenous People have something to say and something important to contribute to the field of social justice: *"It was always thought that what comes from Indigenous People, from rural people, from people who do not have ... the accepted status is all bad."*

BUILD also facilitated conversations with other funders, which led to new funding opportunities. Grantees reported being more visible to potential new funders and that they had received new funding. At the same time, one grantee reported that funders always looked at organizational development before looking at the organization as a whole, and that they attempted to shift the conversation toward how the organization fit within the cultural norms, situation and context of the community. Grantees further shared that it was easy for funders to provide one-off funding, but for them their work was constant—whether there was a project or not—because they were a resource for the community. Hence, long-term funding was critical to sustaining their work.

Lessons learned

This case study demonstrates that BUILD's flexible, long-term funding and its focus on institutional strengthening benefits IP-led organizations. Flexibility offers grantees the freedom to decide how to best invest in the communities and territories they serve. With long-term funding, organizations experienced security and had the financial resources to strengthen and establish operations and infrastructures. This leads to institutional strengthening and the long-term mission impact these grantees are working toward creating.

IP-led grantees highlighted organizational development as a road to mission impact. Organizational development involved developing infrastructures, which led to the provision of better external support to those they serve. IP-led grantees have a comprehensive definition of sustainability that includes various pillars: social, cultural, environmental and economic. These reflect the full context of the Indigenous People and towns they serve and the full scope of sustainability.

IP-led organizations have an uphill battle in changing a predominantly Westernized narrative regarding the value they bring to the field. They are often viewed as organizations with limited capacity and less capable in using flexible funds. Grantees are also restricted in the way they communicate with the larger field. IP-led grantees have much to share, and this could influence the field of philanthropy as well as the field of social justice in marginalized communities.

IP-led grantees were able to pivot in 2020 and, despite having to communicate virtually with their territories, they operated effectively and demonstrated success. The pandemic put a halt to their usual model, which is centered around personal relationships and dialogue. Yet, several IP-led organizations spoke about their successes in offering support to their communities and territories. Importantly, organizations felt that BUILD understood and trusted them to know what to do and how to work within their communities.

V. What did we learn? Lessons and reflections on the BUILD approach

This part of the report presents our lessons learned, reflections and recommendations for the BUILD model. These are based on all phases of the Developmental Evaluation and more specifically on the evidence from *Evaluation Phase 2* presented in this report.

a. Lessons learned

BUILD's approach of flexible, multiyear funding with a focus on institutional strengthening supported organizations in building organizational resilience by developing and consolidating key capabilities such as strategies and programs, operating systems, human resources, financial security and organizational culture.

Findings from the evaluation indicate that, as grantees continuously develop, test, learn from and adapt their institutional capacities, their capabilities evolve and deepen. As grantees put in practice essential capabilities over time, they are able to build organizational resilience—the ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to unforeseen circumstances and seize opportunities while staying true to mission.

The key BUILD ingredients that contributed to organizational resilience were the multiyear term and flexibility of BUILD funds, commitment to institutional strengthening, open communication with Ford Foundation staff and peer support among social justice leaders. Grantees shared several aspects of organizational resilience that were “*all great enablers of stronger impact,*” including being able to “*pivot resources and efforts,*” “*respond to emerging issues*” and “*develop responsive strategies.*”

Strong and resilient organizations are able to deepen, expand and/or accelerate their ability to achieve social change.

While it is difficult to attribute impact exclusively to BUILD support, grantees described the ways in which they achieved near-term outcomes and established the conditions for long-term impact in the period of their BUILD grants. These include winning bold policy reforms and legal challenges, supporting the capacity of network partners to organize marginalized communities, engaging artists and activists in shaping the public narrative, ensuring access to services and public entitlements, building coalitions for a broad range of campaigns and meeting the direct needs of constituents in response to Covid-19.

The ability to build reserves, diversify the funding base, invest in developing new initiatives prior to securing external funding and approach donors that align with their strategic mission are crucial elements of grantees' increased financial stability.

BUILD grantees define financial resilience as the freedom to make financial decisions and the power to conduct programs in line with their strategic objectives rather than having to implement donor priorities.

Eighty-three percent of surveyed grantees in 2021 stated that their organization was more financially resilient today compared with the start of the BUILD grant. The flexibility of the BUILD grant helped grantees to invest funds to build reserves and meet general operating expenses, especially during the pandemic. BUILD also gave grantees the time and the opportunity to develop an initial relationship with a new funder with aligned interests, and the benefit of deepening the relationship with that funder and having a long-term engagement in the future.

Grantees in the Global South, in particular, are directing BUILD resources to ensuring financial resilience. Sixty-five percent of BUILD grantees in the Global South (2021 survey data) have focused BUILD funds on strengthening financial management, compared with 27% of US BUILD grantees; and twice as many Global South grantees focused on building operating reserves compared with US grantees (47% compared with 23%).

Most of the grantees that participated in the BUILD-funded FIRE program and the BDO FMA program indicated that the main lesson learned was the need to have an adequate operational reserve, an important tool for coping with financial shocks. Other lessons learned included having a more integrated setup rather than working in silos, to improve information flow within the organization.

BUILD enabled grantee organizations to create or deepen their participation in networks and their fields.

While strengthening grantees' ability to make connections with and operate within networks was not a primary focus (although it was intended) of the BUILD program, grantees reported that BUILD supported them in creating or deepening these engagements. With flexible, long-term funding, leaders had the time and space to pursue their strategies, engage with partners aligned with these strategies and take leadership roles in networks.

Grantees in the Global South were more likely than those in the US to say that BUILD had a large influence on enhancing their support to their field and networks, perhaps due to the fact that fewer funders were willing to support networking and field building in the Global South.

Grantees shared with network partners the resources, knowledge and increased capacity they had developed in their own organizations. This led to greater mission impact for the organization and the network by increasing the visibility of partners' issues, enhancing coordination of programmatic work within and across networks, raising the profile of individual organizations and networks, and catalyzing solidarity and support for a broad base of constituents during Covid-19.

BUILD's dedicated funding for institutional strengthening gives grantees the resources, permission and mandate to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and invest in building their organizations.

Internal investments can be hard to make when program goals feel like a higher priority. BUILD enabled grantees to keep institutional strengthening on the agenda as a vital part of creating social change.

A right-sized BUILD grant is purpose-driven, based on opportunities and needs identified by the grantee, and in line with a clear strategy for strengthening the organization and moving it toward greater impact. Discussions need to begin at the start of grant negotiations and be open conversations between the grantee and Foundation staff.

There is little evidence that a particular size of grant or particular portion of a grantee's budget is more or less beneficial across all grantees. BUILD's flexibility and the diversity that a BUILD grant adds to an organization's funding portfolio matter more for strengthening an organization than the grant size or BUILD's share in the annual budget. Organizations with little or no unrestricted funding report benefiting strongly from a BUILD grant even when it was a small portion of the annual budget. The flexibility enables grantees to invest in aspects of their organization they had never been able to invest in, or to seize opportunities they previously could not because of restricted funding. A fair assessment of the impact of the grant should not be made on the basis of a percentage of the annual budget but should rather draw a comparison to contrast the contributions from other donors for institutional support with that of the BUILD grant.

The OMT helped BUILD grantees identify and prioritize institutional-strengthening priorities, especially among Global South grantees and grantees with a smaller annual budget.

These grantees may not have had access to diagnostic tools in the past. For most grantees, and even for those where priorities shifted after the OMT exercise, the OMT started a conversation about key areas of work and stimulated a collective reflection inside the organization. Factors that make the OMT process productive and useful for the grantee include the timing of the process, a good fit between the facilitator and the grantee, and managing expectations and communication within the grantee organization and with the facilitator.

BUILD's combination of flexible, multiyear funding and dedicated support for institutional strengthening bolsters grantees' ability to think, plan and implement internal strengthening and external program priorities.

The BUILD grantmaking approach enables grantees to make choices regarding the use of funds ("grantees in the driver's seat"), which is essential to building strong organizations and achieving impact. Grantees state that BUILD gave them "*permission to strengthen*," "*headspace to think*," "*room to plan*," "*bandwidth to execute*," "*time to innovate*," "*space to fail*" and "*flexibility to respond and adapt (internally and externally)*."

The evidence supports BUILD's theory of change that strengthening institutions and networks leads to improved programming. This is seen in more programs and improvements in their quality, strategic relevance and adaptability. Grantees chose to invest their funds in growth and sustainability, strategic clarity and coherence, and leadership and governance. Most grantees said that increased opportunities to think, plan and implement had enhanced both organizational and financial resilience. It seems unlikely that either restricted, multiyear funding or flexible, short-term funding would have led to the same results that grantees described.

Nevertheless, the lack of clarity about future BUILD or Ford Foundation funding can undermine progress and have a negative effect on grantees' ability to plan for the future.

BUILD's CCTA offerings provided an opportunity for grantees to gain new insights, find peer support, establish partnerships and gain new skills.

While each BUILD grantee is able to use their grant to hire technical assistance (reinforcing the idea of grantees being in the driver's seat), the BUILD program is well placed to establish connections between grantees and facilitate interactions between groups that would not normally connect.

Grantees valued having access to a shared thought partner space, including through BUILD cohorts, where they can develop collaborations with allies and peers. Interestingly, Global South grantees benefited more from CCTA conferences and convenings, as well as peer networking events, than US-based grantees.

As BUILD further develops the CCTA program, it can seek input directly from grantees about their priorities. To date, grantees have suggested that the Foundation bring grantees together that share a particular geography or strategy, focus more on building specific skills in addition to convening people for inspiration, strengthen opportunities for ongoing peer support and exchanges, and expand opportunities for coaching and/or accompaniment.

Relationships between program officers and grantees became stronger because BUILD created the opportunity, time and space for program officers and BUILD grantees to have honest discussions about their organizational strategy and challenges.

More honest conversations about internal organizational aspects happened as a result of the Foundation's multiyear funding engagement with the grantees. Rather than caring about a certain policy change or program output happening as a result of a grant, program officers look at organizations as partners in which they invest, through BUILD, with a long-term perspective.

A more open and trusting relationship leads to more understanding about the grantee's work, which means that program officers can provide more strategic, tailored advice and moral support to organizations. Space is also an important aspect of the relationship, and trust has led program officers to listen to and guide grantees in their work, while leaving them the space to implement.

Despite clear successes for the BUILD approach, limitations were identified during the evaluation that we would like to bring to the attention of the BUILD team and the Ford Foundation.

The five-year timeframe for the BUILD grant was portrayed as a limiting factor by grantees experiencing a leadership transition, emerging organizations and networks and grassroots organizers/mobilizers. The Evaluation Team learned that, in these situations, grantees could benefit from more flexible grant terms that accommodate their circumstances. This could be part of the initial discussions between grantees and their program officer, and, for instance, the timeframe could be extended from five to seven years if deemed useful.

The lack of clarity about further funding is a key factor in how grantees approach the second half and the end of their BUILD grant. Grantees that are not clear about whether their BUILD / Ford Foundation funding will continue or end at the end of the five years are unable to plan appropriately, leading to adverse effects and curtailing the positive effects of BUILD. We learned that some grantees start reducing their BUILD investments in year three, anticipating the end of

their BUILD grant, therefore limiting the full impact that BUILD could have on their organization and their work. On the other hand, others plan on receiving further BUILD funding and run their organization with the assumption that their BUILD grant will be renewed. While it can be difficult for the Ford Foundation to decide on BUILD 2.0 funding allocations prior to the end of BUILD 1.0, it is nonetheless crucial for program officers to be transparent with grantees about the possibility of their BUILD (or Ford Foundation) funding continuing or ending by having clear and regular communication about this from the start of the grant. Post-grant planning should be part of the pre-grant conversations.

Finally, the assumption that the BUILD model is more specifically suited to certain types of organizations does not appear to hold true based on the evidence collected over four years of evaluation. The versatility of the BUILD approach is suitable for many different types of organizations and contexts, and there are very few examples of BUILD being poorly fitted to an organization (e.g., organizations not committed to reflecting on organizational change and institutional strengthening, or organizations moving their BUILD funds toward programming only). BUILD should therefore not be limited to specific types of organizations in the future if the Ford Foundation wants to ensure impact for the wide range and variety of organizations they support in their work for social justice.

b. Recommendations going forward

For grantee organizations

1. **Proactively engage with program officers** on strategy, desired impact, planning and financial resilience strategy.
2. **Discuss and design a plan for the end of the BUILD grant at the beginning of the grant.** Communicate to the Ford Foundation what is needed to decrease dependency while maintaining effectiveness gains.
3. **Regularly communicate pivots** and design regular follow-up of the organization's financial resilience, organizational resilience and impact.
4. **Be proactive in letting the Ford Foundation know how you wish nonfinancial support to be designed**—for instance, to create new opportunities for peer learning and mutual support around institutional-strengthening goals, issue- and geography-based challenges, and shared interests.
5. **Integrate succession planning into the ongoing practices of organizational strengthening** in order to build organizational sustainability and continue to nurture the next generation of leaders within the organization and ecosystem.
6. **Enhance the capacity of boards of directors and staff to address financial resilience.** Strengthen the fundraising skills of board members, including how to foster networks of potential donors for the organization and the coalitions in which organizations operate. Engage a range of staff in training opportunities so people beyond the executive director have the skills to strengthen the organization's financial health.
7. **Start conversations with other funders (existing and potential) about shifting existing and future grants to long-term and flexible grants.** Share BUILD results publicly to facilitate these conversations and influence the field of philanthropy.

For the Ford Foundation and BUILD 2.0

1. **Continue to build around the three components—flexible, multiyear funding dedicated to institutional strengthening**—so that grantees take the driver's seat and do not feel the pressure to invest in programming with no long-term organizational strengthening achieved.
2. **Continue to fund grantees that face complex challenges, particularly those run by new leaders, emerging from crises, working in challenging environments or grappling with difficult changes in organizational culture.** Balance this with recognizing that BUILD can also help grantees from ever hitting crisis inflection points and that these points in time or contexts are often unpredictable or unforeseeable. The best preparation is a strong, resilient network of grantees prepared to adapt to challenging contexts and emerging crises.
3. **Putting more guidance, direction or restrictions on BUILD 2.0 grantmaking might lead to unintended negative consequences.** Flexibility is an important component of the success of BUILD 1.0, as is putting grantees in the driver's seat. Giving a tighter perimeter to BUILD 2.0 by defining the ideal conditions for giving a BUILD grant (e.g., the level of BUILD dependency, governance of the organization, financial situation, etc.) may well prevent the Foundation from funding organizations that would have been ideal candidates for BUILD.
4. **Apply principles of co-creating to determine the right size of a BUILD grant and encourage a collaborative process, transparency and commitment to what it takes for an organization to meet its goals.** A crucial part of the discussion should focus on the ability of the grantee to leverage other funds as a result of their BUILD work as well as a planned process for eliminating BUILD dependency over time while maintaining resilience and program impact gains.
5. **Communicate clearly and early with grantees regarding continued BUILD and Ford Foundation funding.** Integrate planning for the end of the BUILD grant into early discussions so grantees are best able to plan for organizational and programmatic growth or consolidation, and can adapt more easily to changing circumstances such as those caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Particularly given ongoing global crises, grantees need to be able to plan early for significant funding changes.
6. **Be mindful that the desired organizational and mission impacts take three to five years to achieve and longer to sustain.** Building an off-ramp or exit strategy to decrease BUILD dependency should recognize the time taken to achieve goals and may require graduated reductions in funding that extend a grantee's engagement with BUILD to seven years or more.
7. **Continue to use an intentional assessment process such as the OMT.** Address the OMT's bias toward organizational models that do not reflect grantees' visions or intentions for networks and grassroots groups, nonhierarchical organizations and Indigenous groups. Provide a clear pathway from the OMT process to CCTA offerings—for instance, by guiding grantees about which CCTA offerings are available based on the organizational goals they identified.
8. **Integrate financial resilience support into a broader organizational resilience framework to ensure that grantees work in an integrated way when they address financial aspects of their organization.** CCTA offerings could support this and be organized as a menu of options for grantees to choose from, with clear paths between one offering and another.
9. **To maximize the usefulness of CCTA offerings, emphasize peer learning and connections and focus specifically on areas where grantees are striving to learn from peer reflection.** This may require linking one-time events to longer processes of organizational reflection. Grantees particularly appreciated CCTA events linked to continued engagement and events that provided opportunities for peer exchange.

10. **Respond to grantees' requests to be put in touch with one another when they express the need to know how similar organizations are coping.** Support groups to jointly organize CCTA activities based on identified opportunities, thereby increasing the efficiency of BUILD funds spent on technical assistance by organizations.
11. **Even though BUILD's design did not specifically account for the unique nature of network conveners or grassroots organizers/mobilizers when created, its effectiveness with these types of organizations appears to be especially strong.** Seek to leverage the impact of grantmaking and/or support hard-to-fund local efforts and movements by funding network connectors and grassroots organizing/mobilizing organizations.
12. **Examine the opportunities for maximizing the BUILD approach and broader philanthropic support for grantees in the Global South.** Future investigations in this area should recognize the vast differences and complexities across and within regions, address the particular aspects of organizational resilience that would support Global South organizations to thrive, and consider the grantmaking policies and practices that would bring equity in funding to grantee partners in the Global South.

For philanthropy

1. **Integrate the BUILD approach—flexible, multiyear funding dedicated to institutional strengthening—into grantmaking** as a strategy to support partners to be most effective and impactful.
2. **Listen actively to the goals and opportunities of grantee partners** in order to understand better how to support their mission.
3. **Consider the no-(financial) cost aspects of making a grant flexible and long-term and the benefits for organizations.**
4. **Invest in network hubs and grassroots organizers and mobilizers that catalyze and support focused subnetworks.** These grantees seem to be effective when they convene and support subnetworks that have not, and probably will not, self-organize.
5. **Offer opportunities for POCFHL organizations to connect with philanthropy.** Limited and restricted access is still a critical component of the historical and systemic racism that has existed in the field when it comes to funding POCFHL organizations.

Final Report

BUILD Developmental Evaluation

© 2022 NIRAS Sweden AB

