

MAPPING: ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL MODELS BEYOND GRANTS

Introduction

Diversifying sources of income beyond traditional grant models can be an intimidating prospect.

However, social and climate justice groups around the world have always found creative ways to resource their work, support their communities, and build greater financial resilience and independence into their organizations.

This document compiles a few examples, trends, and ideas for financial alternatives beyond grants. These are incomplete categories and examples, and are intended to serve as a starting point for further exploration.

Effective financial strategies are always grounded in local context, which informs what options are available, what regulations are involved, and what strategies are needed to effectively engage new audiences—whether they are investors, donors, clients, or contributors.

**What examples or alternatives have inspired you?
Share them with Spring's Financial Innovation and
Resilience team at fire@springstrategies.org.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Community Fundraising

- Crowdfunding & giving circles
- Individual & membership giving

II. Income Generation & Investments

- Revenue-generating activities
- Impact investing & field-building
- Tokens and cryptocurrency

III. Collaborative Finances

- Fiscal sponsorship & cost-sharing
- Circular economies

IV. Additional trends to consider



I. COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Crowdfunding & Giving Circles

A method of raising money from a large number of people, typically online, to fund projects, causes, or businesses.

Examples & Case Studies

Imaginalco | Mexico: Through GlobalGiving, Imagonalco has raised funds for its “ASI no jugamos” project. Imagonalco’s effective storytelling—through project reports, photos, and video—along with its transparent reporting on program impact, has helped the organization receive more than 1,300 donations, raising \$65,000. (Source: [Panorama Strategy’s Fundraising Guide](#), pg 24)

Lawyers Against Abuse | South Africa: A charitable organization with a mission to ensure meaningful access to justice for victims of gender-based violence by providing legal services and psychosocial support. The organization has raised more than \$63,000 from 350 donors on GlobalGiving. To build trust with donors and keep them engaged and informed, it regularly shares updates from the ED and posts photos to showcase the impact of its work. (Source: [Panorama Strategy’s Fundraising Guide](#), pg 24)

Lifesong Kenya | Kenya: Lifesong Kenya leverages the GlobalGiving platform to raise funds for ongoing programs, highlighting its mission, solution, and long-term impact. GlobalGiving allows donations in various currencies, including Kenyan Shillings, which allows the organization to promote its cause locally and beyond. In a recent campaign, Lifesong Kenya raised nearly \$4,000 from 21 donors in under 3 months by tying donations to specific program needs. (Source: [Panorama Strategy’s Fundraising Guide](#), pg 24)

CEMDA | Mexico: As one of Mexico’s leading environmental organizations, CEMDA launched a fundraising campaign in November 2020 through GlobalGiving. The goal was to provide legal assistance to 10 communities in Mexico in addition to strengthening their capabilities in order for them to have the legal tools to protect their land, their natural patrimony, and their human rights. The campaign successfully raised \$ 18,224 from 94 donors. [Campaign video](#).

HIPGIVE | Hispanics in Philanthropy’s digital platform that makes it possible to mobilize resources for social impact projects throughout the Americas. It encompasses crowdfunding campaigns, permanent digital campaigns, peer-to-peer giving, and digital giving circles to bring people and organizations together, create community, and make an impact in the world.

Individual & membership giving

Individual giving and membership funding programs are designed to raise funds from a network of individuals. Methods for individual giving include annual fund campaigns, major gift solicitations, monthly giving, and planned giving such as legacies and bequests.

According to the [latest GivingPulse data](#), nonprofits and fundraisers in the US expanded their solicitation efforts to high-potential but currently untapped donors. The US sector could unlock between \$19 billion and \$46 billion in additional contributions annually.

The latest report from the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) [World Giving Index 2024](#) found that across 140 countries, an increasing number of people are donating money and providing help to strangers. CAF has been tracking global giving for 14 years and found that the global index score was at its joint-highest level, only previously matched during the pandemic.

Diaspora communities are a possible source for individual giving strategies. Diasporas have long histories of providing financial support to their communities—a culture of giving that could be leveraged for organizational fundraising efforts. [The World Development Report 2023](#), highlights that remittances to home countries totalled about \$656 billion, equivalent to the GDP of Belgium and surpassing funds received through [Foreign Direct Investment and ODA](#).

Examples & Case Studies

[Rainforest Action Network \(RAN\)](#) | United States : Individual contributions play an important role in funding programs like the RAN Community Action Grants (CAG), providing direct support to grassroots and frontline communities confronting climate change and environmental injustices. RAN mobilizes over [50% of its resources](#) from individual donors through individual giving, major gifts and bequests.

[Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales \(CELS\)](#) | Argentina: After losing a major donor, CELS [launched a local fundraising.push](#) through social media, telemarketing, and grassroots activism. While the culture of donating to social causes was not strong in Argentina, in just one year, CELS engaged 2,400 new monthly donors within Argentina. This highlights that individual giving can thrive even in low-donation cultures and help sustain long-term impact.

[Nawaat Patreon](#) | Tunisia: A progressive, independent media which provides free, thoughtful and fact-based journalism in Tunisia. Through its membership support platform Nawaat aims to keep free speech in Tunisia alive and to counter the dominant narrative and to defend rights and freedoms. Through its subscribers and supporters it mobilizes US\$4,831 per month.

Jela's Development Initiatives | Nigeria: This Nigerian non-profit connects the Nigerian diaspora community abroad to development initiatives in the country, through recurring donations of \$20 or £20, depending on the donor's country of residence.

Under the Olive Tree | Palestine: Through a \$12/month membership, members become a patron of BuildPalestine, where their monthly membership gets reinvested in BuildPalestine's work to uplift and accelerate Palestinian social entrepreneurs.

Popular Community Fundraising Platforms

There are a variety of platforms that can help facilitate community fundraising efforts. Some are more suited to issue-based crowdfunding campaigns, others are tailored for recurring donations, and others offer membership strategies such as providing access for paying members to exclusive content. Below are a few popular platforms used in fundraising:

- **GlobalGiving** | Worldwide: A nonprofit spanning 7 continents. Nearly 50% of GlobalGiving's partners are internationally registered, and funds have been disbursed to projects in more than 175 countries. Check out the top countries funded [here](#).
- **M-Changa** | Kenya: M-Changa is an online and mobile fundraising platform that provides individuals and institutions with a simple, secure, and convenient way to raise funds virtually. Founded in 2011 with a mission to empower fundraising for Kenyans by Kenyans, M-Changa is now described as [Africa's largest online fundraising platform](#).
- **Backabuddy** | South Africa: Designed to help individuals and organizations raise funds for various causes, with a focus on South African audiences and projects. Since 2015, they've helped over 90,000 individuals and organizations raise the critical funds they need.
- **GoFundMe** | [Nonprofits](#) in US, UK, Ireland, Australia and Canada: It is the world's largest crowdfunding platform, where individuals and nonprofits can raise money. In 2024, there were more than 23 million donations to 70,000+ nonprofits.
- **Donorbox** | Any country where Stripe or PayPal are available: Their donation forms encourage recurring donations and also offer a company matching option. They have facilitated over \$3 billion in donations and served 100,000+ organizations across 96+ countries.
- **HIPGive** | Americas: It is the only bilingual (English and Spanish) platform of digital tools that makes it possible to mobilize resources for social impact projects throughout the Americas. Since 2014, they have enabled the investment of USD \$4.4 million in social good for Latin communities.
- **Grapevine** | Grapevine is the infrastructure partner to the giving circle movement. Giving circles can take different formats, sizes and shapes. These can be local and community-based, regional, or international. Similar to crowdfunding initiatives, giving circles also raise resources for specific causes, but are much more dynamic and require a higher level of engagement. Grapevine and [Philanthropy Together](#) have partnered to update the latest research on collective giving and build the first-ever [global giving circle directory](#).
- **Patreon** | Patreon is a membership platform to connect content creators to paying subscribers. Creators can offer tiered membership subscriptions with corresponding access to content.

II. INCOME GENERATION & INVESTMENTS

Revenue-generating activities

There are two types of revenue-generating activities: Active models and Passive models

Active models require ongoing effort and engagement to generate income. The revenue is directly tied to time, labour, or service provided.

Examples:

- Training workshops or consultancies for a fee
- Management fees
- Merchandise

Passive models generate income with minimal ongoing effort once the initial setup is complete. It often relies on systems, assets, or content that earn over time.

Examples:

- Royalties from a book or curriculum
- Rental income
- Income from investments



Examples & Case Studies

Oxfam | EU: The first temporary Oxfam shop was set up to raise funds for the Greek famine emergency in 1943. Now they have online and physical stores that sell second-hand items. Money raised from the sale of second-hand goods goes towards their unrestricted funds.

Whitman-Walker | United States: Whitman-Walker partnered with Fivesquares Development to transform its flagship property into a mixed-use, revenue-generating asset. Retaining majority ownership, the nonprofit created a sustainable income stream to support long-term growth, allowing reinvestment in underserved areas while preserving mission alignment and community presence.

UAF healing farm | Africa: Establishing The Feminist Republik, a platform centered on healing, safety and collective care for Women's Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) across the continent. A key component is a land-based revenue generation via a women-run healing farm, serving as a restoration centre for WHRDs.

UHAI EASHRI | Kenya: In 2014, UHAI purchased residential property to rent out, and later purchased office space for its own offices. By investing in real estate and managing these rental units, UHAI is growing its endowment. Furthermore, UHAI includes reserves as part of their annual budget and seeks out general support grants, a proportion of which is put towards reserves.

Magdas HOTEL | Vienna: In 2012, Caritas of the Archdiocese of Vienna founded this hotel as a social business to address social issues such as unemployment and environmental issues. By reinvesting profits into its mission, Magdas transforms hospitality to promote social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Peer-to-Peer Lending

Unlike donations-based crowdfunding, peer-to-peer lending models leverage loans and equity investments through which peer investors receive financial compensation in the form of interest payments or profit-sharing agreements.

Examples & Case Studies

Sitawi | Brazil: It is a Brazilian nonprofit that uses blended finance to fund social and environmental initiatives. By combining philanthropic and private capital, they reduce investment risk and increase impact. Their Impact Crowdlending platform enables individuals to co-invest in high-impact projects, helping mobilize diverse funding for sustainable development across Brazil.

USHA Multipurpose Cooperative Society | India: Established in 1995, USHA was initiated by the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), a collective of sex workers in Kolkata, West Bengal. The cooperative began with 13 sex worker members pooling INR 30,000 (approximately USD \$400) to create a financial institution tailored to the needs of sex workers, who were often excluded from traditional banking due to stigma, no husband representation, and lack of documentation. By 2020, it was handling approximately INR 30 crore (about USD \$4 million) in transactions annually and had grown to include over 30,000 sex worker members from across West Bengal.

Kiva | US & Worldwide: Kiva is a nonprofit platform that connects lenders with borrowers around the world to support small businesses, education, and community projects. Individuals lend as little as \$25, and as borrowers repay, the funds can be re-lent. Kiva partners with local organizations to manage loans and ensure accountability and impact.

Impact Investing & Field-Building

Investments that set out to achieve and measure positive social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.

One of the key features of impact investing is that it's done by institutional investors, such as mutual fund and investment fund companies, financial institutions and other asset managers. Other examples of impact investing include social impact bonds, venture capital funds, and private equity funds.

Organizations considering making investments can use our [Investment Readiness Infographic](#) ([Español](#), [Português](#)) to assess whether they are prepared to start investing. Long term investment creates opportunities for mission aligned financial growth and diversification beyond grants. And it can also contribute to a more accountable and transparent investment landscape, ultimately driving greener, fairer and more resilient economies.

For organizations interested in attracting impact investment capital: beyond a mission-driven organization, this requires making the transition to a market-based strategy and consolidating a model that has the potential to be self-sustaining and that can offer investors an eventual return. Impact investment often targets scalable, market-driven solutions. Read more about impact investing in [Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisor's guide](#).

Examples & Case Studies

[Mercy Corps Ventures](#) and [Heifer Impact Capital](#) are investing in social enterprises working on climate adaptation and resilience-building solutions in [adaptive agriculture and food systems](#), [inclusive fintech](#), and [climate-smart technologies](#).

[Equality Fund](#) | Canada: investing 100% of Canada's \$300M investment in a gender lens portfolio across equities, debt, public fixed income, etc and seeing 6% annualized return, generating \$33M. Launched new gender-lens "[Global Equality ETF](#)" in March 2025.

[Alfanar](#) | UK & MENA region: It is a venture philanthropy organization that supports high-potential social enterprises across the Arab region. Through strategic investments, capacity-building, and impact measurement, they help these enterprises grow sustainably while addressing critical social and environmental challenges. To date Alfanar has provided funding, training and management support to 185 social enterprises across the Arab region focused on tackling challenges related to education, empowerment, employment and the environment.

HEVA Fund | East African region: HEVA Fund LLP believes in the transformative and social economic potential of the creative sector in the East African region. Through direct finance and business support facilities, it endeavors to be at the forefront of helping producers of cultural goods and services build high-value, profitable businesses where new ideas come to life, and where the highest potential for great profits, great jobs and happy people are found. [Watch our interview with HEVA Fund's Board Chairperson George Gachara.](#)

Latimpecto | Latin America & Caribbean: Latimpecto is a Latin American and Caribbean network that brings together the largest number of capital providers with the goal of catalyzing the flow of human, intellectual, and financial capital, driving a more strategic deployment of resources toward social and environmental impact. The network [brings together nearly 220 members](#), including families, family offices, corporations, donor foundations, multilateral organizations, academic institutions, and accelerators. They invest in more than 16 countries in the region with headquarters in more than 30 countries worldwide.

AVPN | Asia: AVPN is a leading ecosystem builder that aims to increase the flow and effectiveness of financial, human, and intellectual capital in Asia by enabling members to channel resources towards impact. Key areas include: Climate Action, Gender Equality, Health, Youth and special funds for Leadership and AI. The “[Outcome Ready](#)” approach for nonprofits offers a framework to assess a nonprofit’s preparedness to participate in outcomes-based financing (OBF).

AVPA | Africa: This is the Pan-African network for social investors seeking to catalyze social impact across the continent. Key focus areas include: Agricultural finance, Climate, Healthcare, Education and Energy.



Tokens & Cryptocurrency

Cryptocurrencies and digital tokens are a rapidly evolving financial technology. While there is a learning curve, there are examples of organizations leveraging these digital assets to invest, fundraise and receive donations.

According to [The Giving Block's 2024 Annual Report](#), more than \$1 billion in cryptocurrency was donated to charitable causes in 2024. Charitable giving in crypto is expected to continue growing in 2025 and beyond. However, the regulatory environment surrounding cryptocurrencies is rapidly changing and varies greatly between countries. Anyone interested in exploring crypto investment or fundraising should be sure to evaluate their context and risks.

Examples & Case Studies

The Tor Project | NFT Auction: The Tor Project is a project that develops tools for digital privacy and security. In May 2021, the Tor Project auctioned a generative art piece titled Dreaming at Dusk on Foundation. The piece was created as a non-fungible token (NFT) with the artist Itzel Yard. The final bid for the token was 500 Ethereum, roughly \$2 million USD at the time of the auction.

PADF | Through its partnership with AIDONIC, the Pan American Development Foundation has reached farmers in Haiti to rebuild their livelihoods and strengthen food security for their communities. AIDONIC is an innovative platform that leverages technology to streamline the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Breadchain | Breadchain is creating a network of post-capitalist web3 projects aiming to provide mutual aid. People offer what they have, which is sometimes resources like food or money - and other times skills or favors like grocery runs or legal assistance to people who need them. It creates a system where everyone wins. The goal of the project is to create an experiment to model new ways of collaborating in real life, and in the "cryptoverse" through its own coin: \$BREAD is linked to \$DAI, which is a stablecoin with equal value to USD. So \$1 = 1 \$BREAD. Earnings from the minting of \$BREAD go to supporting a co-operative of post-capitalist web3 projects. Projects like these [are still early in their inception](#).

The Giving Block | Partners with charities, universities, faith organizations, and political groups to set up systems to receive donations in cryptocurrency. The Giving Block works in [60 countries](#).

The Pineapple Fund | In 2017, an anonymous Reddit user thought to be one of the largest holders of Bitcoin in the world announced they would be donating the majority of their Bitcoin to charity. In total, around 5,104 Bitcoin was donated to 60 charities, worth around \$55 million USD at the time.

WWF | The World Wide Fund for Nature is using blockchain technology for conservation in projects such as monitoring wildlife over large areas in addition to tracking the supply chain of a marine species from ocean to dinner plate and to support community-led carbon measurement of nature-based climate solutions.

III. COLLABORATIVE FINANCES

Fiscal sponsorship & cost-sharing

Practices like fiscal sponsorship or collaborative budgeting can enable registered and unregistered groups and organizations to share administrative resources, legal and tax-exempt designations, and more.

Examples & Case Studies

Open Collective | Various countries: Offers fiscal sponsorship & collaborative budgeting. Open Collective has a network of over 300 fiscal hosts worldwide.

Open Collective offers fiscal sponsorship through various registered organizations in different countries, including the United States, Europe, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. When you start your crowdfunding campaign or you receive money from foundations or sponsors, the fiscal host manages all the administration and reporting.



IV. ADDITIONAL TRENDS TO CONSIDER

HNWIs and the changing philanthropic landscape

While still largely grant-based, High Net Worth Individuals' (HNWIs) giving practices are changing the landscape of philanthropy. There is an increasingly influential philanthropic sector growing across the Global South, and HNWIs such as MacKenzie Scott are disrupting traditional philanthropic approaches.

Evolving Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

For a variety of reasons (including demand, brand image, directives and regulations), some corporations are beginning to invest more in their “corporate social responsibility” (CSR)—which could open doors to partnerships with civil society organizations who are ready to creatively leverage these opportunities. The first OECD Global Corporate Sustainability Report was published in 2024 and highlights key trends and shifts in the landscape of corporate sustainability practices worldwide.

Read about how the Manas Foundation, a Delhi-based organization, leveraged public and private partnerships along with mandatory CSR programs to promote behavior change and sexual harassment on urban transport.

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