Partner Diversification

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What is it?

Why diversify?

Why it may be hard?

What can be done

How can OTT help?
We really believe in this

This may not be your mandate; but it will help you deliver it / Diversifying a little will support your mandate – even if you do not have a mandate to build think tank capacity
WHAT IS IT?

Includes:

• Funding **directly in** priority countries – more proximal partnerships
• More diversity **within** priority countries – not just apex or well-known organisations
• Diversify points of views
• Diversity in research approaches or methods/disciplines
• Working with different types of organisations – universities, think tanks, NGOs
• Greater DEI – e.g. gender of leaders or researchers, younger leaders or researchers
FIRST ASK YOURSELF: What is your temperature on diversification?
WHY DIVERSIFY?

Funders can:

• Be better informed if the evidence and advice they use come from more sources of evidence

• Achieve greater influence if their partners belong to different political, economic and social spaces:
  ▪ Proximal partners know best
  ▪ Different partners cultivate different networks of influence. A single think tank only reaches part of the political, economic and social space.
  ▪ More partners means the foundation has a greater reach

• A way to implement DEI principles in grant-making
WHY IT MAY BE HARD?

Inertia in how things are done:
• Wholesale v retail funding mandate
• Risk aversion leads to a preference to work within familiar networks
• Costly to develop new investments
• Building a local sustainable think tank community is not the funder’s objective

Barriers for new partners:
• Hard for most organisations to learn how to apply successfully
• Costly to most organisations to apply successfully
• For new organisations it is particularly hard to work with project funding
WHAT CAN A FUNDER DO?

Awareness within the Funder:

• Map policy research organisations: Who is out there? Who is the Funder funding? Who is funded by other foundations/research funders? Are there any wholesale organisations that could be used – more, differently?

• Map funders: Who are other funders in the same field/region/country? What/how are they funding? Are there opportunities to collaborate?

Awareness about the Funder:

• Communicate the Funder’s agenda and “policy questions” beyond their grantees

• “Go to” more national and regional policy research spaces
WHAT CAN A FUNDER DO?

Funding:
• Fund more proximal wholesale organisations at the regional or national level
• “Piggy-back” on the grantees of other policy research funders (e.g. IDRC)

Beyond the dollar support:
• Direct (e.g. inviting non-grantees to events, to submit evidence, etc.)
• Indirect (e.g. expecting grantees to invite non-grantees to events, to collaborate in projects, to benefit from capacity building activities, etc.).

Collaborate:
• Join or promote networks that have adopted explicit recommendations to diversify education policy research partners in Africa.
WHAT CAN A FUNDER DO?

New funding and support processes:
• Review investment processes to make it easier for organisations to apply
• Mandate POs and government liaison officers with finding new partners
• Avoid using current partners as intermediaries

New funding and support criteria:
• Look at reserves – 6-months operating budget “enough”
• Look at gender of leadership and research team
• Look at the potential of teams
HOW CAN OTT HELP?

- Do the mapping building on and updating the Open Think Tank Directory
- Find entry points, low hanging fruits, wholesalers within markets or sectors
- Make introductions, broker new relationships and help develop new investments (+ monitor those investments)
- Continue to raise visibility of research, authors, organisations beyond a Funder’s partners through our Research Support Service
- Review investment practices – with an emphasis of reaching others/new organisations and explore innovating funding practices for policy research organisations
- Strengthen capacity – personal and organisational
- Convene spaces to facilitated engagement with a diversity of organisations