



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 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



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