



# CATALYTIC LEADERSHIP IN PHILANTHROPY

2025 Mid-Year Update

June 2025

## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Exponent Philanthropy launched the [Catalytic Leadership in Philanthropy](#) (CLIP) initiative, a robust and ever-expanding suite of publications, programs, and resources to support and amplify the impact of our 1,500+ members as they strive to transform their communities through informed giving.

Guided by our [2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#), we are deepening our offerings and expanding CLIP's reach, influence, and impact as a guiding practice not only for our members but also for the broader philanthropic sector. This progress is only possible because of key partners (like you!) who champion this work and help bring it to life with sustaining philanthropic investments.

We are pleased to share this mid-year update with you, highlighting our activities and accomplishments over the last few months.

## ADVOCACY INTENSIVE: DEVELOP YOUR POLICY ACUMEN (Fall 2024)

We're living through a critical time for philanthropy and civil society. To help prepare lean funders for their critical role in policy advocacy and encourage their participation in 2025 Foundations on the Hill, we **hosted our first-ever advocacy cohort last fall**. Sixteen funders participated in this eight-week virtual training titled [Developing Your Policy Acumen](#).

Tailored to the unique needs and powers of lean funders, the program offered:

- Four facilitated learning modules based on Exponent Philanthropy's [Advocacy Field Guide for Lean Funders](#).
- Hands-on fieldwork and skills practice, including interviews with grantees and policy leaders to uncover opportunities and identify needed and powerful roles their foundations could play.
- Coaching from peers who have deep experience driving change through advocacy.

The program explored ways to get involved in advocacy, through grants as well as convening, nurturing collaborations, and raising public awareness of community issues and solutions.

**Results:** Participants reported increased confidence and clarity about their role in advocacy. They valued the peer support structure and hands-on experience, and many are continuing to explore and invest in advocacy as a core element of their catalytic work. We know of at least one funder who attended Foundations on the Hill as a result of her participation in the cohort.

## INTRO TO CATALYTIC LEADERSHIP IN PHILANTHROPY (April – June 2025)

Fifteen funders, including staff and trustees, participated in the third offering of our signature cohort program, [Intro to Catalytic Leadership](#). This six-part workshop delivers hands-on learning and peer coaching to help lean funders strengthen their skills and confidence in pursuing catalytic approaches to philanthropy.

To plan and deliver this high-touch, high-value experience, the Exponent team:

- Partnered again with facilitator Laura Gale to further refine the program based on recent participant feedback and experiences.
- Recruited and trained four Exponent members to serve as Catalytic Guides, coaching small peer groups throughout the 10-week experience.
- Managed the delivery of the six core modules and provided tools and guidance for participant fieldwork.
- Supported participants with resources and facilitation for peer conversations and community engagement efforts.

**Next Steps:** We will offer an additional coaching session in July for cohort participants and will continue to evaluate outcomes over the summer and fall through one-on-one interviews designed to help us understand how the program has shaped participants' philanthropic approaches.

## CATALYTIC PHILANTHROPY PODCAST

The [Catalytic Philanthropy Podcast](#) continues to attract listeners in the U.S. and globally with 5 new episodes and over 1,200 downloads so far this year.

2025 topics have included:

- Recruiting community leaders to foundation boards with Malcolm Macleod of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation
- Giving 100% of profits to philanthropy with Alex Amouyel of Newman's Own Foundation
- Responding deeply to community needs with Fayth Paekukui of the Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation and Jennifer Barborak of the Buhl Regional Health Foundation
- Entrepreneurial philanthropy and investing in new models for family childcare businesses with Kimberley Russo of the Fund for Greater Hartford

Be sure to [tune in each month](#) for new stories from some of the most creative, resourceful, and catalytic philanthropic leaders in the country!

## EXPONENT PHILANTHROPY BLOG

Our popular blog features insights, stories, and practical guidance for lean funders. It's a space for sharing lessons learned, elevating member voices, and exploring the mindsets and practices of Catalytic Leadership in Philanthropy. So far this year, **we've featured 10 blogs focused on CLIP mindsets and practices:**

1. [Funders and Public Policy: Why Your Voice Matters](#)
2. [Philanthropy's Responsibility Persists: Staying the Course Amid Change](#)
3. [Lessons in Board Recruitment from Malcolm MacLeod](#)
4. [Philanthropy's Advocacy is Needed Now More Than Ever](#)
5. [Lean Funders Making a Difference: Real Stories, Real Impact](#)
6. [Funding in Uncertain Times: Anchoring Principles for Responsive Philanthropy](#)
7. [How Philanthropy Can Help—or Hurt—Right Now](#)
8. [Building Bridges: The Power of Social Capital in Grantmaking](#)
9. [Philanthropy in Flux: Key Resources to Help Funders Navigate Disruption](#)
10. [How to Simplify Grant Applications and Reports for Nonprofits](#)

## 2025 FOUNDATION OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT REPORT

Catalytic Leadership in Philanthropy featured prominently in this year's [Foundation Operations and Management Report \(FOMR\)](#). With nearly 700 downloads so far, the FOMR is by far our most popular publication. Based on our annual survey of members, this report has insights into the grantmaking, operations, and management of foundations with few or no staff.

The first chapter of this year's report highlights how our community of lean funders is embracing the principles and practices of Catalytic Leadership. Some of the highlights include:

- 66% of foundations reported having board and staff members who maintained authentic relationships with the communities the foundation seeks to serve
- 62% of funders streamlined/simplified grant application requirements
- 46% of funders convened grantees and/or nonprofits
- 67% of foundations connected grantees with other funding opportunities

## LOOKING AHEAD: EXPANDING CLIP'S REACH & INFLUENCE

We are excited to continue amplifying catalytic leadership as a vital, values-driven approach with our members and the broader field of philanthropy! Here are just a few of the ways we're achieving this over the coming months:

### Exponent Philanthropy's Annual Conference

Our [2025 Annual Conference](#) (November 11-13 in Columbus, OH) will feature 18 sessions focused on CLIP mindsets, practices, and skills. Topics in development include:

- Community listening and trust-building
- Convening and collaboration
- Capacity building
- Advancing equity
- Advocacy and public policy engagement
- Board leadership development
- Leveraging foundation powers beyond grantmaking

### Speaking Engagements

In July, we are cohosting an in-person Regional Gathering for lean funders in partnership with Philanthropy Colorado. A key element of our presentation will center on CLIP skills and practices.

In October, our team will present a session at the Council of Michigan's 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference titled: *From Grantmakers to Changemakers: Catalyzing Leadership in Philanthropy*.

### CLIP Book

Next year, we plan to release a book titled [From Grantmaker to Changemaker: The Power of Catalytic Leadership in Philanthropy](#) (currently in draft form) that will provide readers with the information and inspiration needed to fully embrace and implement catalytic leadership practices, mindsets, and skills into their work.

Once our new Managing Director of Knowledge is on board later this summer, he will begin designing a thought leadership strategy that will help us fully leverage and activate the book with our members and the broader philanthropic sector. This might include, for example, speaking engagements, media coverage, book club discussions, and content and programming partnerships with peer organizations to co-host trainings or webinars. We also envision integrating the book's content across our programs and resources—such as the Catalytic Leadership Academy, blog, podcast, and conference—to reach the broadest audiences.

### Expanding Funding

So far this year, we've secured \$120,000 to support our CLIP-related work. This includes \$80,000 in new funding and \$40,000 in previously committed pledges from our multi-year funders. This increased philanthropic support is thanks to our generous, committed funders as well as our focused development strategy which includes a pipeline of more than 20 CLIP funding prospects, a compelling case for support (see attached), and a committed staff team who is working across departments to secure the resources needed to advance this important body of work.

## CONTACT US

Thank you for your continued investment and partnership in expanding Catalytic Leadership in Philanthropy's reach and influence. Together, we truly are transforming communities through informed giving! Please reach out to us anytime – we'd love to hear from you!

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# Join us as a CLIP Champion

If you or your organization would like to join with Exponent Philanthropy to expand CLIP's reach, influence, and impact as a guiding practice not only for our members but for the entire philanthropic sector, please complete the commitment form below.

## Contact Information

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Amount:

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \$25,000
- \$15,000
- \$10,000
- \$7,500
- \$5,000

## Years:

- 2025
- 2026
- 2027
- 2028
- 2029

## Payment Options

- My/our check is enclosed in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I/we will contribute online at [www.exponentphilanthropy.org/donate](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org/donate).
- I/we will recommend a donation be made from our donor advised fund.
- Please contact me/us about Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) payment.

## Acknowledgement

- Please include me/us in Exponent Philanthropy's list of CLIP supporters.
- I/we request that this gift be treated as anonymous.
- This gift is a personal donation from: \_\_\_\_\_

## Approval

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Please return this form to:

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Exponent Philanthropy's EIN is #65-0617866. To view our IRS determination letter and other legal documents, please visit [www.exponentphilanthropy.org](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org).



## ABOUT EXPONENT PHILANTHROPY

Exponent Philanthropy is the largest philanthropic network in the country and the only membership association that specifically focuses on foundations, families, and individuals who practice philanthropy with lean operations. With more than 1,500 members representing every corner of the U.S., we are a nationwide network of community-connected philanthropy leaders. Since our founding nearly 30 years ago, our work has focused on amplifying and increasing the impact of lean funders and transforming communities through informed giving. We do this by fostering a vibrant philanthropic network, gathering and sharing innovative and promising philanthropic practices, conducting robust field-wide research, and producing dozens of valuable programs, publications, and resources each year to help funders – regardless of their size or structure – make informed decisions, maximize their impact, and effectively serve their communities.

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