

The Kendeda Fund Spending Down with Principle and Purpose



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The Kendeda Fund's Girls' Rights grantees, reflecting on their experience of our spend out, articulated their own guidance of how a limited-life foundation can spend out respectfully and with impact. We offer their words as an additional reference point for funders on a spend out journey.

On Principled Spenddown

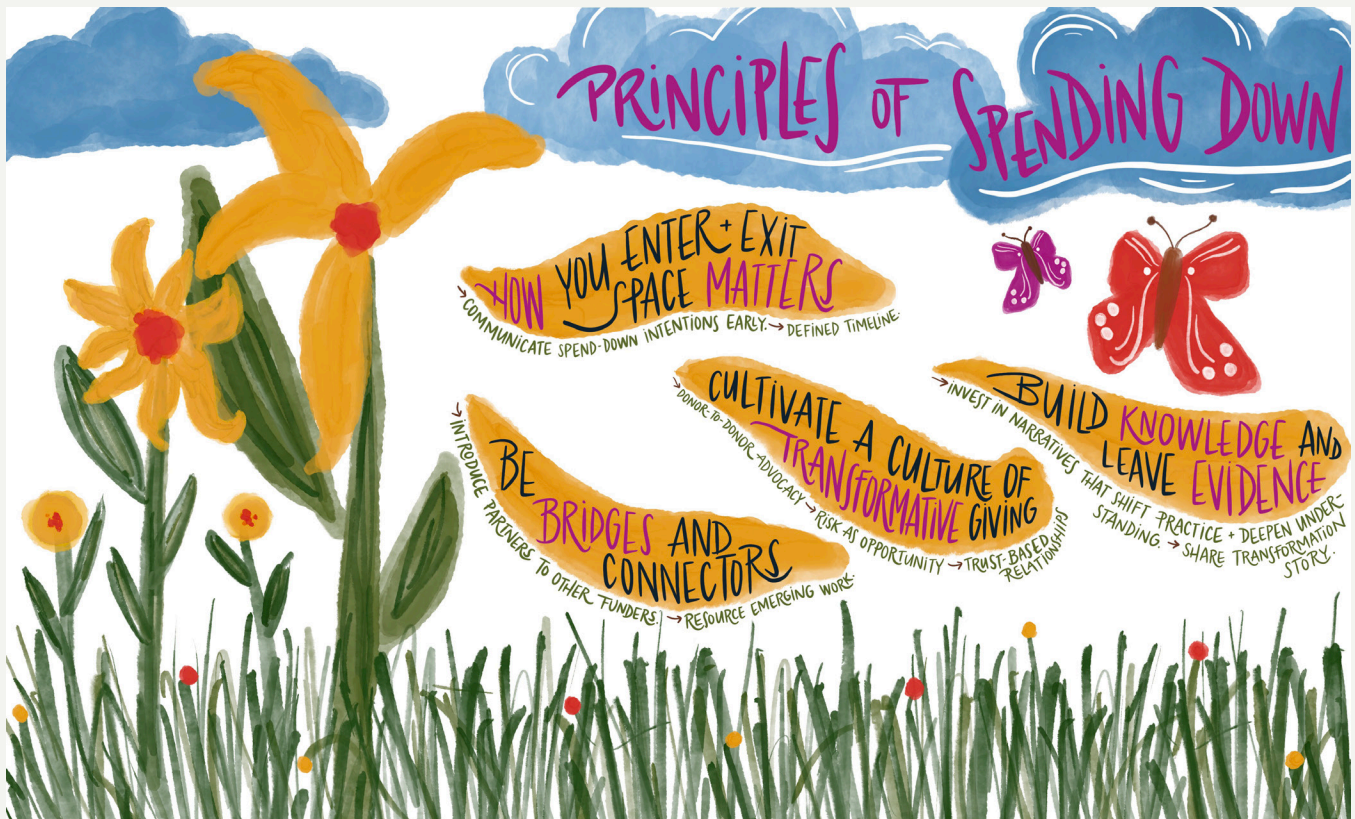
While much has been written about the best practices of grantmaking, little has been articulated about the ways to engage with spending down. Conversations with both funders and practitioners have shed light on many important lessons concerning the politics of spenddown. Given the current political climate in the girls' rights ecosystem, with the rise of fundamentalism and the closing of civil society spaces, there is a welcome invitation for foundations to invest more in frontline and movement partners by spending down their endowments. The commitment to invest more money and be more intentional about addressing pressing issues is seen as an act of trust, solidarity, and an opportunity to stand with and support frontline actors at this critical time. By investing strongly and intentionally in frontline and movement partners, foundations have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to social justice and the leadership of those articulating necessary solutions. Financial support today through a spend-down fund is an important backbone and has the potential to compound the impact of this space, better positioning girls' rights advocates overall.

However, it's important to acknowledge that the work of transformation is inherently long-term, and spenddown may raise concerns about the future of funding under such circumstances. While the principled underpinnings that inform spenddown are well noted and respected, partners have rightful questions and concerns about sustainability and continuity in the face of ongoing systemic challenges. Here, we uplift a few lessons that partners have identified as critical to principled spenddown practice.

How you enter and exit space matters: How a foundation enters and exits a space can have a significant impact. To build trust and ensure continuity, it is crucial to communicate early and clearly about the intention and reasons for spending down, as well as having a well-defined sunset timeline. This is an extension

of trust-based grantmaking and should be embedded within the broader practice of trust-based approaches, including general, level, and multi-year commitments.

Cultivate a culture of transformative giving: As a principled practice of spenddown, there is an invitation for funders to prioritize actively engaging with other funders and creating spaces for deep learning on values-aligned philanthropic practices. Donor-to-donor advocacy has already produced important shifts in how girls' rights movements are being funded, but there is more work to be done to ensure that a growing pool of funders are committed to trust-based and long-term relationships with frontline organizations. This includes encouraging bolder risk-taking and investing in the leadership and ideas of girl leaders on the frontlines. There is an invitation to build out a practice (early when possible) of bridging and bringing more funders along. This includes values-aligned funders, but also others, for example in the education and reproductive health spaces. It may also involve board transformation in the development arenas and with ministries who hold a lion's share of direct girls' rights work and funding at national levels. Ultimately, the goal is to create a community of funders committed to advancing social justice and supporting those at the frontlines of the issue.



Principles of Spending Down ([view full-size version online](#))

Be bridges and connectors: In addition to actively participating in donor-to-donor advocacy, funders are encouraged to facilitate resource generation for the field by creating opportunities and spaces for partners to connect with other donors. Thus fostering a larger community of funders who are committed to transformative girls' rights work. It also generates a pool of funding that is sequenced and in concert, such that the most critical and emerging work in girls' rights organizing continues to be seen and resourced.

Build knowledge and leave evidence: Advancing girls' rights work is reliant on a culture of learning, of leaving evidence, and building knowledge. Philanthropy has played an important role in this area, including funding research like the multi-country study on the economic impact of child marriage, which has helped make the case for investing in promising policy and programmatic strategies. And, there is a need to further invest in knowledge production and storytelling, and to think more intentionally about building narratives that shift practice and deepen understanding. **As civil society spaces continue to close, we must capture, share, and build on those lessons, approaches, and practices that strengthen women and girls' political power.** What's more, there is an important opportunity for Kendeda to embody transparency and share the full story of their institutional transformation, including their learning journey and commitment to listening to those at the forefront. This story of change has significant power to inform and inspire others. ■



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VIOLENCE

FREEDOM TO BE
DIFFERENT +
HONOR OUR
DIVERSITY

FREEDOM IS
A BIRTHRIGHT;
IT IS ACCESSIBLE TO
EVERYONE
ESSENTIAL
TO LIFE.

FREEDOM TO IMAGINE
TOGETHER THE
FUTURE

FREEDOM TO GROW
LEARN, TO BE SEEN
AND BE SUPPORTED,
AND TO ACT ON YOUR
GOALS.

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CONNECTED TO FEELING
LIKE I BELONG, MY WAY
SELF, THE ANCESTRY
HISTORY I
BRING.



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