TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY
INITIATIVE

Funder Collaborative

TAI Strategy

2020–2024

From learning to action

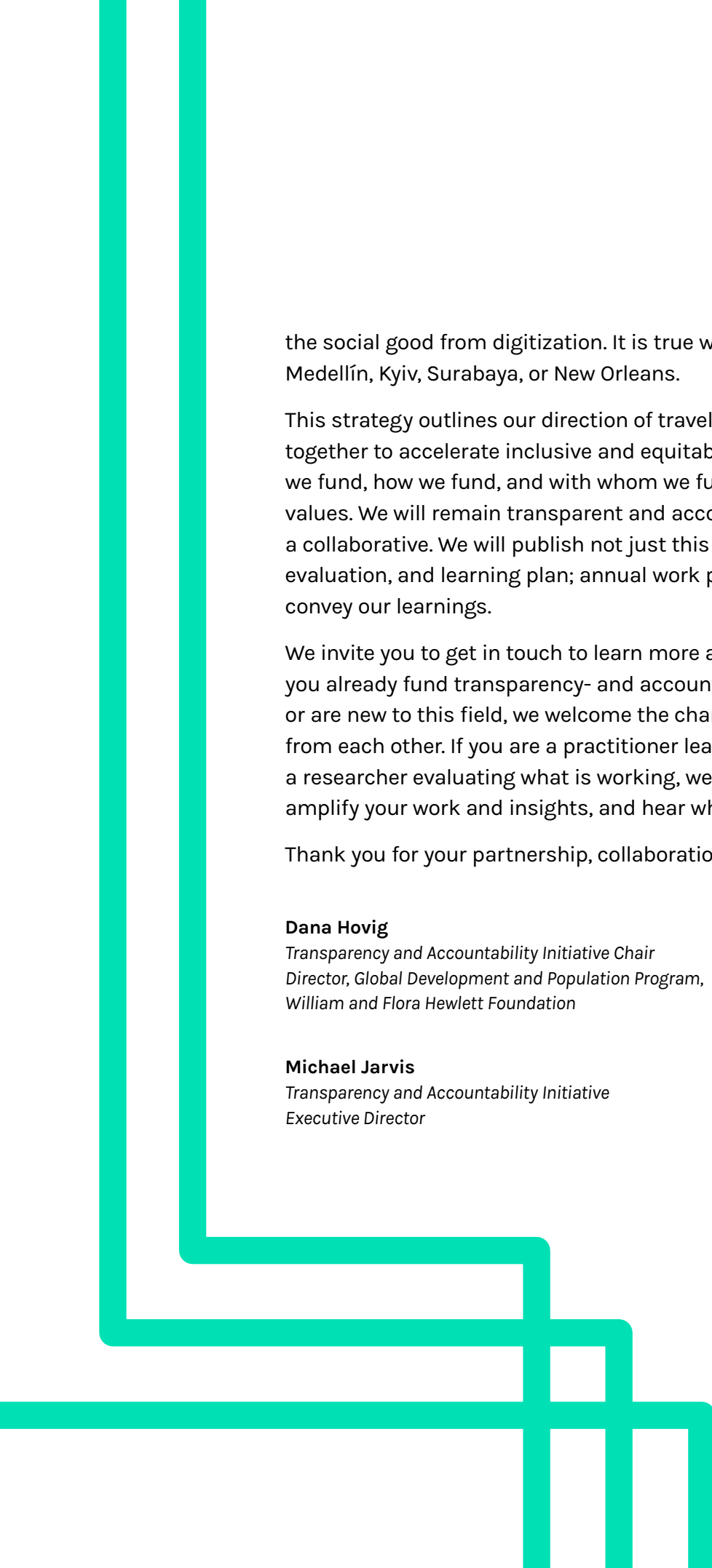**Reinforcing what we fund, how we fund, and our funder connections.**

Welcome

On behalf of our donor membership, we are excited to introduce the 2020–2024 strategy for the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI) collaborative.

The year 2020 marks ten years of operation for TAI and our efforts to expand effective transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) work. The value proposition of the collaborative has continued to evolve over the past decade as we have learned how best to support funder learning and collaboration. We originally formed to fill a void in the funding landscape and set a clear agenda to help target TPA funding. Now, we have a complementary emphasis on our grantmaking practice and broadening funder engagement. This is all geared toward increasing the effectiveness of our individual and collective giving so that governments are more responsive and accountable to their people, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Our operating context has shifted significantly since we last updated our strategy in 2016. We are adapting to macro trends, such as rising authoritarianism and repression of civil society. We have new insights on how TPA interventions make a difference. The funding world has diversified. On top of this changing context is the need to respond to and recover from the coronavirus pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 has further spotlighted deep inequities in our societies, and brought into even greater relief how important it is to have responsive, accountable, transparent and effective governments to protect their populations and enhance well-being.

In this context, we believe that turning our collective vision into reality is all the more critical. People need, and indeed have the right, to be well informed and empowered. Public and corporate power holders need to be both open and responsive. This belief is true whether one wishes to fight climate change, reduce inequality, combat corruption, or maximize

the social good from digitization. It is true whether one is living in Nairobi, Medellín, Kyiv, Surabaya, or New Orleans.

This strategy outlines our direction of travel. We are committed to working together to accelerate inclusive and equitable development based on what we fund, how we fund, and with whom we fund. We will do so in line with our values. We will remain transparent and accountable in how we operate as a collaborative. We will publish not just this strategy, but also our monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan; annual work plans; and reports designed to convey our learnings.

We invite you to get in touch to learn more and collaborate with us. Whether you already fund transparency- and accountability-related programming or are new to this field, we welcome the chance to partner with you and learn from each other. If you are a practitioner leading change on the ground or a researcher evaluating what is working, we want to learn from you, help amplify your work and insights, and hear what we can do better.

Thank you for your partnership, collaboration, and inspiration.

Dana Hovig
Transparency and Accountability Initiative Chair
Director, Global Development and Population Program,
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Michael Jarvis
Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Executive Director

Who we are

TAI provides a platform for funder learning and collaborative action. It is a space to strategize, ask difficult questions, and interrogate evidence. We share knowledge and insights and align funding choices to increase our individual and collective impact.

We currently have seven members served by a secretariat with three full-time staff based in Washington, DC.

Entering 2020, TAI core members alone had approximately 600 million US dollars committed in active accountability-related grants to close to 700 organizations around the world.

Our members

FORD FOUNDATION

WILLIAM + FLORA Hewlett Foundation

Luminate
Building stronger societies

MacArthur Foundation

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Associate members

CHANDLER FOUNDATION

Department for International Development

"TAI is one of the few donor collectives well-positioned to help address the growing restrictions on civil society through smarter grantmaking to strengthen the resilience of grantees and strategic use of collective voice."

Joseph Asunka, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

TAI members and civil society organizations in Nigeria scope ways to harness data to fight corruption.

Our shared commitment

OUR VISION

A more just, equitable, and inclusive world where people are informed and empowered, governments are open and responsive, and collective action advances the public good.

OUR MISSION

To strengthen the impact of TPA funding in support of inclusive and equitable development. We do that by developing learning infrastructure and facilitating collaboration to optimize funder practice and resources.

OUR VALUES DRIVE OUR WORK

> We are committed to acting with integrity, being transparent, and accountable.

> We are curious and committed to learning, experimentation, and evidence-based decision-making.

> We recognize and respect power dynamics. We always remember that it is grantees (civil society and government actors) who are doing the frontline work and we prioritize their voice, insights, and expertise to help guide our programming.

> Collaboration is essential. We want to be more than the sum of our parts.
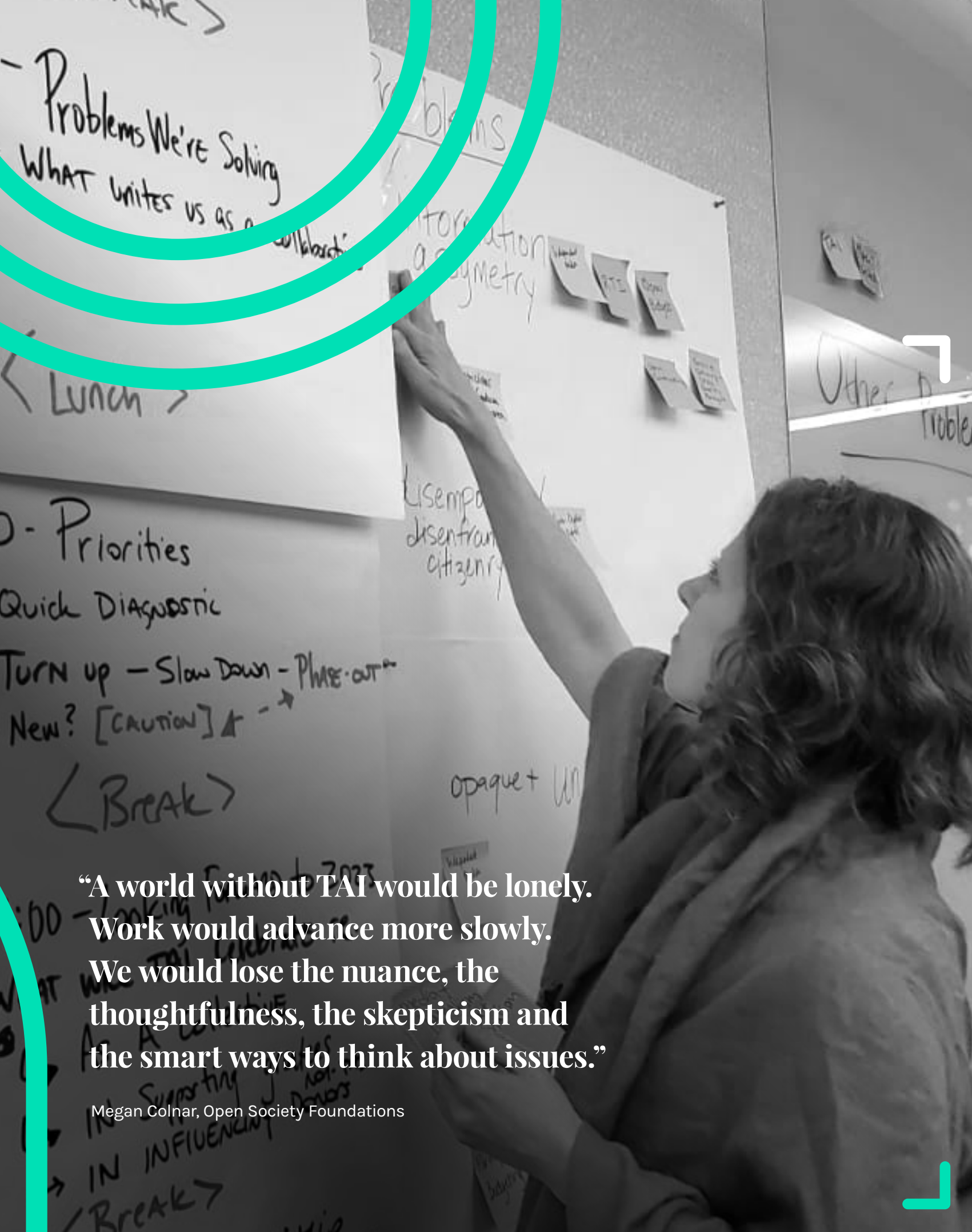
What does TPA funding look like?

When TAI started, there was no established TPA field. The number and capacity of organizations working on these issues has grown fast. Many have been (and continue to be) funded by TAI members.

TPA efforts help secure better societal outcomes in a myriad of ways. These are some examples:

> **ADVOCATES** are helping communities monitor and fight for the maternal health services they were promised and deserve.

> **GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS** are helping indigenous groups to document the plunder of their lands and assert their rights in the courts.

> **INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS** are uncovering dodgy deals that favor the politically connected.

> **RESEARCHERS** are helping prove the value of inclusive participatory processes in shaping government policy.

> **TECHNOLOGISTS** are helping civil society groups use data from multiple sources to back up their policy asks.

> **THINK TANKS** are pinpointing government revenues lost due to loopholes in international tax agreements.

Want to follow transparency and accountability issues more closely?

Join the thousands of subscribers to the TAI Weekly – a curation of all the latest global developments for funders and practitioners. Find a host of more in depth think pieces and reports under TAI Resources.

"A world without TAI would be lonely.
Work would advance more slowly.
We would lose the nuance, the
thoughtfulness, the skepticism and
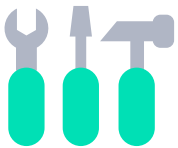the smart ways to think about issues."

Megan Colnar, Open Society Foundations

What we fund

How we fund

Funder landscape

2020–2024

Strategic framework

As funders of accountability programming, we want to make sure we optimize our collective resources. With that goal in mind, in 2019 we commissioned an evaluation of our work as a collaborative. This strategy is informed by the evidence and insights gathered through that process and subsequent conversations.
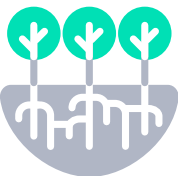
There are many competing demands on our resources. We each set priorities in line with our respective institutional strategies. Yet there is a cross cutting set of problems that make sense to tackle through TAI.

Priority problems include the following:

> Myriad global crises (and the pandemic above all) divert funder attention and resources away from the TPA field.

> A lack of sufficient, long-term, and aligned funding to help reformers successfully challenge policy capture.

> Funder-grantee power imbalances hamper joint learning and adaptation in the face of current and emerging threats.

> Institutional incentives hinder sustained funder collaboration and collective learning.

In response, we believe the collaborative can make a difference across three mutually reinforcing fronts— what we fund, how we fund, and the funder landscape.

We invite funders to join our conversations. We encourage practitioners and researchers to tell us what we can be doing to better support your efforts.
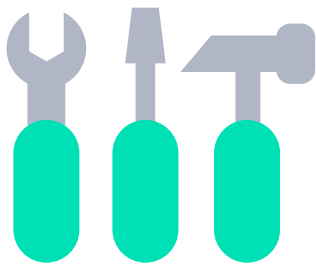
What we fund—
optimizing impact of thematic portfolios

As TAI members, we fund intersecting portfolios of programming to engage elected officials and bureaucrats, private sector actors, and both organized and grassroots civic groups. These programs range from strengthening independent media, to advocating for greater financial transparency and equitable public resource allocation, to equipping communities with the skills to demand and analyze information to assert their rights. Collectively, we want to see greater impact across these portfolios.

Specifically, we aim to accomplish the following:

> Connect different types of organizations bridging expertise and skills to boost field-wide impact.

> Encourage complementarity across funder strategies and coordination around co-funding.

> Ensure that diverse evidence and voices inform funder learning and choices.

> Identify and work to close funding gaps for global TPA priorities.

> Respond to opportunities to apply TPA work in other sectors.

> Uplift the importance of civil society and civic space as a global public good.
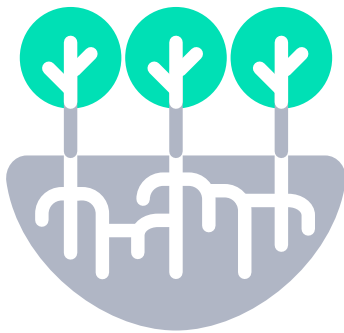
How we fund—
reinforcing effective grantmaker practice

We offer a range of support to our grantees so that they are well equipped to shape and advance their agendas. TAI offers us a platform for candid, constructive exchange, to learn from each other and to test ways to strengthen the health and effectiveness of grantee organizations. We find it helpful to have these conversations with our direct peers funding similar issues and organizations. Through TAI, we want to hold each other accountable to be more inclusive, equitable and effective grantmakers, especially in support of those leading change in the Global South.

Specifically, we aim to accomplish the following:

> Collaborate on selected projects, initiatives, and campaigns that require greater collective action and attention.

> Enhance diversity, equity and inclusion practices in our own foundations and in our partners.

> Exchange experiences and test ways to enable more equitable funder-grantee relationships.

> Expand the proportion of our grantees receiving flexible support.

> Improve our use of both financial and nonfinancial tools, such as dedicated organizational health funds and strategic communications, to strengthen grantee organizational effectiveness and agency.

> Learn from each other (and other nonmember funders) to inform our strategy designs, explore complementarities, and test assumptions, for example, around entering and exiting fields.

Funder landscape—
expanding and enhancing funder connections

As a collaborative, we see the value of mutual learning and how we positively influence each other. Beyond TAI, the pool of funders explicitly supporting TPA programming is small. We want to learn from and with those currently funding complementary fields that seek systemic change. We want to be at the heart of a funder ecosystem that supports the transfer of learning and practices across issue areas, can scale up proven work, and ultimately improves the volume and quality of TPA funding.

Specifically, we aim to accomplish the following:

> Amplify key messages and evidence-based learnings to promote TPA practices.

> Connect with individual funders and funder groups focused on other issues, such as climate or education, to explore application of TPA approaches and learning to drive positive change.

> Engage more funder voices and perspectives in making sense of evidence and practice from the work we support.

> Leverage our existing relationships to invite more private and bilateral funders to the table and strengthen complementary approaches among funders of government and nongovernment accountability actors.

"We are excited to partner with TAI to address good governance head-on. After many years of working to scale health, education and economic opportunity programs, we learned that we must go upstream and address the root causes, not the symptoms of failed governance."

Leslie Lang Tsai, Chandler Foundation

Victor Casillas suggests the importance of the right to information in his submission to TAI's 2019 photo contest.

Delivering on our aims

To make progress on these three strategic outcome areas, the TAI secretariat will continue to:

> **COLLABORATE** with diverse practitioners, researchers, and allies to amplify their learnings and exchange best practices.

> **CONDUCT** research to inform members' strategic and funding decisions.

> **CONVENE** members for thematic learning events with leading practitioners, researchers and other funders.

> **COORDINATE** TAI members' collective inquiries, action, and impact analysis.

> **CULTIVATE** relationships with other funders, helping to expand TAI's network and further TPA-related funding strategies.

> **CURATE** existing knowledge and evidence around topics of member interest.

The Secretariat leads specific inquiries in response to member requests, scoping opportunities for collective action.

Tracking and assessing our impact

The TAI secretariat will drive the collective's monitoring efforts to track progress, celebrate successes, and detect challenges in our work. These efforts will prioritize data collection that is useful and feasible. The TAI secretariat and members will use these data to inform our decision-making, and adaptation of future initiatives.

We will produce annual briefings that detail and assess the purpose, results, and learnings of specific TAI collaborative initiatives. We will seek and share knowledge, and learn from the evidence that we and others produce and commission.

Five years from now, we want to point to more innovative and effective accountability interventions, increased funding and complementary support for those championing and shaping TPA approaches, and integration of TPA funding into a broader range of international programming. Ultimately, our learning and collaboration efforts aim to accelerate inclusive and equitable development.

Getting involved

Funders

Let's connect. If you are already funding TPA-related efforts, let us streamline our work together. TAI provides a space to exchange insights on the state of the field or select portfolios, compare notes on grantee support, or strategize around a specific opportunity.

If you are new to this field, we want to learn more about your work and help you better understand the landscape. The secretariat can help orient you—be it with regard to current evidence, or matching your interests with individuals and organizations leading relevant programming.

Want to join TAI?

Fantastic. Contact the secretariat for more information on eligibility, benefits, and responsibilities.

"As a newer member of TAI, we have found it invaluable. TAI has enabled us to easily connect with donor peers, to better understand the landscape of the transparency, accountability, and participation field, to get feedback, and to share what are learning from our own work."

Erin Sines, MacArthur Foundation

Practitioners

Some of us fund government agencies, some fund civil society, and some fund both. We welcome the chance to amplify your learning. Take advantage of our research, guidance, and grants data.

While we do not provide funding or other services directly to practitioners through TAI, it is our ambition to offer support that is flexible to grantee needs and ease any burdens we impose as funders. We seek your candid guidance to help us further refine the support we offer to both individual grantees and the TPA field. Tell us what you think.

We are sensitive to the fact that funder collaboratives may raise concerns about accentuating group think or concentrating funding on a few organizations. We will do our best to bring in diverse and dissenting perspectives and make our work and learning visible. We want to challenge each other and be challenged. You can and should push us to do so. We want more practitioners to pursue accountability outcomes from the community level all the way up to global rulemaking. We want new funders to recognize the importance of accountability for development.

How to get in touch?

Email us, explore our website or follow us on social media

@TAInitiative   TAI   TAInitiative

> "I think it's very important to have folks whose main job is to understand the overall landscape… It's a field that is so subject to being siloed that it's very useful to have their broad overview."

TAI Member Grantee

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