In 2018, we launched a new and ambitious theory of change. Developed with substantive input from our Steering Committee and our 2017 member survey, this guiding framework will enable us to better orient our programming to desired outcomes. We move forward with a commitment to promoting more and better funding for human rights.

In 2018, 305 new individuals participated in our network, bringing our total reach to over 1,800 grantmakers from approximately 450 institutions across 70 countries.

“[The 2018 conference] was more international and more activist. More progressive and radical conversations and more communities engaged, directly speaking, participating than I had ever experienced it before.”
— HRFN 2018 Conference Evaluation

Building Trust and Facilitating Learning

Our 2018 annual conference, “Reimagining Human Rights: New Energy for a New Era,” hosted in Mexico City, was our first held outside of the United States in HRFN’s almost 25-year history. Attended by over 300 people representing 50 countries, it showcased current global trends and critical perspectives from Latin America and the Global South. The event was featured in Mexico’s progressive newspaper, La Jornada, and a new report to the UN Human Rights Council by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders highlighted the pledge presented by girl activists to funders at the conference closing.

Our 11 webinars—which garnered excellent or very good ratings from 90% of respondents—fostered dialogue on a range of topics, including funders’ roles in movement building, climate justice and the threats facing indigenous human rights defenders.

We launched our first-ever Advancing Human Rights funding trends analysis at our San Francisco event, Mapping the Money: A Changing Landscape of Human Rights Funding. HRFN members wrote our accompanying blog series, Trends in Human Rights Funding, to illustrate the context behind funding shifts, while a second series, Data in Dialogue, used interviews to highlight a range of funders’ perspectives on regional and population-based trends. An in-depth evaluation of the research and related tools, confirmed the impact the initiative has had on funders’ knowledge, collaborations, and practices.

“We are no longer a small group of funders getting together to share learning and discuss ways to work together. We are a vibrant, mission-oriented field coming together to strategize, build, protect and fight for our democracies and lead with our hearts, our hope and our vision for human rights for every individual across the globe.”
— Mona Chun, Executive Director, HRFN
Amplifying and Influencing

HRFN provides a unique space for funders to come together and seed new ideas. For example, over the past four years, our Participatory Grantmaking Working Group co-hosted with Ariadne served as a forum for information sharing and experimentation that evolved into a platform for action. In 2018, in partnership with GrantCraft, these funders released a groundbreaking guide Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking. Read more about the journey from a community of practice to sphere of influence in this recent Inside Philanthropy article.

Our Foundation Leaders’ Circle strengthens relationships among heads of philanthropic organizations and has the potential to shift institutional agendas. Our Early Career Professionals Initiative is building a supportive community of young professionals committed to social justice philanthropy.

In the context of shrinking civic space, HRFN’s leadership in the Funders’ Initiative for Civil Society (FICS), in partnership with Ariadne and Global Dialogue, remains vital. FICS has led the development of key resources for funders seeking to respond to closing space for civil society, including an April 2018 report “What is closing space grant-making?” which analyzed strategies to support resistance and resilience and a December 2018 report documenting trends in closing space grantmaking.

“[Quantitative data from HRFN’s Advancing Human Rights research] begins to ground conversations in the reality of what’s really happening, and provide a benchmark to measure change over time to see how the field is evolving.”

— Advancing Human Rights Research Evaluation

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

HRFN’s 2018 operating expenses totaled $1,190,800. Our 2018 income breakdown was approximately 60% general operating, 21% membership dues, 17% conference (restricted support and registration fees), and 2% in-kind. HRFN received voluntary dues from 95 participating institutions.
HRFN thanks the following members for their support through voluntary dues:

Access Now
African Women’s Development Fund
American Jewish World Service
Angelica Foundation
Appleton Foundation
Arcus Foundation
As You Sow
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Both ENDS
Brazil Fund for Human Rights
Bright Horizon Fund
Bulgarian Fund for Women
CarEth Foundation
CASA Socio-Environmental Fund
Channel Foundation
Chino Cienega Foundation
Christensen Fund
Compton Foundation
Danielle Kraaijvanger
Disability Rights Fund
Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation
EMpower – The Emerging Markets Foundation
Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to Support Human Rights Defenders
Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises
Ford Foundation
Foundation for a Just Society
Freedom Fund
Freedom House
FRIDA – The Young Feminist Fund
Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
Fundacion Avina
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Global Dialogue
Global Fund for Children
Global Fund for Community Foundations
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Instituto Betty e Jacob Lafer International Center on Nonviolent Conflict
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
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Media Democracy Fund
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Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust
NEO Philanthropy
New Israel Fund
Nexus Fund
NoVo Foundation
Overbrook Foundation
Partners Asia
Peace Direct
Porticus
Rawa: Creative Palestinian Communities Fund
Renewable Freedom Foundation
SAGE Fund
Seattle International Foundation
Semillas – Sociedad Mexicana pro Derechos de la Mujer
Sigrid Raising Trust
Stewart R. Mott Foundation
Sum of Us
The Summit
Charitable Foundation
Tamalpais Trust
Taso Foundation
TCC Group
Tevah Fund of Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Thousand Currents
True Costs Initiative
UHAI – The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative
Unbound Philanthropy
Unitarian Universalist Holdeen India Program
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Until There’s a Cure Foundation
Urgent Action Fund – Africa
Urgent Action Fund – Asia and Pacific
Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights
Urgent Action Fund - Latin America
Wallace Global Fund
Wikimedia Foundation
Women’s Fund Asia
Women’s Fund in Georgia

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HRFN Staff - 2018

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