



Longitudinal evaluation of BUILD

Final report

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Acronyms, abbreviations, and glossary of key terms

BUILD	Building Institutions and Networks Initiative
BUILD 1.0	The first round of the BUILD program (2016–21)
BUILD 2.0	The second round of the BUILD program (2022–26)
CCTA	Cohorts, convenings, and technical assistance
CEO	Chief executive officer
CEP	Center for Effective Philanthropy
FGD	Focus group discussion
FLUXX	Ford Foundation grant management system
GN	Global North
GS	Global South
ISLA	Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa
LABS	Life After BUILD 1.0 Support
LDF	Legal Defense and Educational Fund
LUNA	Liquid unrestricted net assets
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PO	Program officer
PPAT	Program partner advisory team

Cohorts, convenings, and technical assistance (CCTA): CCTA provides learning, training, accompaniment, and support to two or more BUILD grantees at a given time. Offerings focus on a particular geographic context, line of work (e.g., networks), and/or institutional-strengthening topic (e.g., leadership, governance, resource mobilization). CCTA programming offers a range of commitments from periodic webinars to regular facilitated peer learning to blended options that include some individualized coaching with cohort-based technical assistance.

Global North (GN): The area of operation of grantee partners based in the US, Canada, and Europe.

Global South (GS): The area of operation of grantee partners that do work in, are based in, and are led by people in Indonesia, Mexico and Central America, the Middle East and North Africa region, South America, and Africa. The distinction between GS and GN recognizes the difference in funding and resource environments.

Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS): A planning process between BUILD grantee partners and their program officers (POs) at the Ford Foundation to support their offboarding from BUILD support. The aim of the support is to help grantee partners transition beyond their BUILD 1.0 support while maintaining gains and preserving successes.

Program partner¹ advisory team (PPAT): The program partner advisory team is composed of 15 partners who are representative of the universe of 289 BUILD grantee partners by region, years with BUILD, and future funding status. The PPAT reviewed and provided feedback on the evaluation tools, helped with making sense of the data, and identified areas of value in the evaluation findings for other organizations and philanthropy.

¹ The evaluation team referred to the organizations receiving BUILD support as “program partners” to emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship they have with the Ford Foundation and its strategic and programmatic goals, as well as the evaluation’s commitment to equitable evaluation and partnership. Thus, the advisory team, which comprised staff from these organizations, was referred to as the program partner advisory team (PPAT). This report employs a more widely used term, “grantee partners,” to reflect the partnership as well as the reality of the power differential between organizations receiving grant support and the Ford Foundation, which provides that support.

Executive summary

The Building Institutions and Networks Initiative (BUILD) was launched by the Ford Foundation in 2016 to support social justice organizations and networks globally to become more durable, more resilient, more effectively networked, and better able to enact real change. The BUILD grant-making approach provides long-term, flexible general operating support, as well as core support for institutional strengthening priorities that are determined by the organizations supported by BUILD (referred to as “grantee partners” in this report). BUILD grants seek to enable social justice organizations to innovate, collaborate, learn, and take risks, seize moments of opportunity, and respond quickly to unexpected challenges.

The BUILD longitudinal evaluation began in 2022 as a continuation of the previous developmental evaluation (2018–22) and focused on long-term changes resulting from BUILD support. The longitudinal evaluation examined the impact of the Ford Foundation’s BUILD program on grantee partners’ organizational resilience and mission impact over time. The Evaluation looked in particular at areas that require an extensive time frame to observe change, such as the effects of receiving a second BUILD grant following the first one. “BUILD 1.0” refers to grants made in the first phase of BUILD (2016–21) while “BUILD 2.0” refers to grants made in the second phase of the BUILD program (2022–27).

This longitudinal evaluation explored the following **key learning questions**:

1. What, if any, is the relationship between BUILD support, increasing resilience, and mission impact for partner organizations?
2. Does BUILD contribute to strengthening and sustaining mission impact for partner organizations? If so, how and to what extent?
3. Does BUILD contribute to long-term organizational resilience for organizations? If so, how and to what extent?
4. What are the differences in BUILD’s influence between partners who received five years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0) and those who received ten years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0)?

The evaluation universe included 289 grantee partners from the 2016–19 BUILD 1.0 grant-making years, operating in the Andean Region of South America, Brazil, East Africa, Indonesia, Mexico and Central America, the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), Southern Africa, the United States and West Africa. These partners were quite varied in *size*, with annual organizational budgets ranging from \$200,000 to \$239,600,000; they also varied in the *share* that BUILD represented in their annual budget. All partners had received a BUILD 1.0 grant during 2016–19, and partners were at different stages of their BUILD 1.0 grant during the evaluation. Some received a second BUILD grant after the end of BUILD 1.0, others moved to non-BUILD funding (from the Ford Foundation), and some received no further funding after their BUILD 1.0 grant ended.

The evaluation focused on BUILD’s influence on grantee partners and their outcomes. The data collection documented the grantee partners’ experiences of BUILD. It is important to note that the evaluation was not an assessment of individual partner organizations’ performance but rather an evaluation of the impact of the BUILD model on partners and their work.

At the start of the assignment, the evaluation team designed a data matrix tailored for the BUILD longitudinal evaluation. The matrix aligned the learning questions, proposed indicators, data collection methods to be used, and the source of information, including the universe and sample size for each method, as well as a description of the triangulation and validation process. This matrix was refined during the co-creation process with input from the Ford Foundation, philanthropic partners, and BUILD grantee partners.

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach that included:

- **Primary data collection:** Online survey (110 partners), interviews (27 partners), focus groups (4 groups), and regular, structured discussions with a program partner advisory team (PPAT) of 15 partners. The interviewees and group participants were selected to be representative of the evaluation universe in terms of geography, cohort year, grant size, and post-BUILD 1.0 funding status. In total, 160 individual partners contributed data to the evaluation.
- **Secondary data review:** Reports from grantee partners, financial statements, and third-party sources from the media, government, and organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the CEP. The evaluation team also reviewed eight evaluations of Ford Foundation strategies, three of which included light-touch assessments of BUILD grantee partner work.
- **Validation processes:** Data triangulation and sense-making sessions with grantee partners and Ford Foundation staff. Secondary data was primarily used to verify primary information collected from the survey and interviews. All data collected during this evaluation were analyzed in conjunction with the findings from the original developmental evaluation (2018–22), to emphasize the longitudinal perspective.

The vast heterogeneity of the grantee partners supported by BUILD presented opportunities and limitations to the evaluation. This heterogeneity enabled the evaluation to compare BUILD’s impact across different regions, fields, and organizational types and sizes. The limitations related to the challenge of measuring and comparing impact, especially across many different fields in many unique contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a universal, shared experience and test of resilience through which all grantee partners in the study universe had to navigate. Teasing out the BUILD effect on grantee partners who have multiple multiyear, unrestricted grants from other funders was not possible as the evaluation team was not able to systematically access this information.

Key findings

1. BUILD was a significant contributor to grantee partners’ ability to achieve impact.

83% of grantee partners stated that BUILD contributed to their ability to achieve mission impact “to a large extent.” BUILD supported an expansion of impact, with partners reporting that BUILD contributed to their ability to consolidate and/or deepen existing strategy and/or programs. Partners did more of what they were doing or had an impact in an additional area of focus (strategically or geographically). BUILD also contributed to partners’ ability to sustain impact in the face of significant external challenges and attacks—e.g., attacks on freedom of expression, restrictions from authoritarian governments, unpredictable political and economic environment, and the COVID-19 health crisis.

Over time, BUILD grantee partners shifted from reporting early signs of impact to reporting actual impact. Partners experienced a shift from establishing the conditions and pathways for impact, as observed in the first BUILD evaluation (2018–22), to observing actual and measurable gains in their fields.

The evidence shows BUILD contributed to grantee partners’ ability to achieve impact across contexts, organizational sizes, BUILD’s share of the annual budgets, geographies, and cohort years. The BUILD approach was flexible enough to enhance the impact of a large range of organizations addressing social inequalities from different angles and in varied contexts.

While BUILD contributed to partners’ ability to achieve impact in varied contexts, partners in the Global South reported higher levels of BUILD’s contribution to mission impact compared to US-based organizations. The scarcity of BUILD-like funding (long-term, flexible, and in support of organizational strengthening) in various regions of the Global South may explain why GS partners reported a higher contribution from BUILD to their impact. Organizations for which BUILD was a high share of their annual budget (>30%), and organizations that received their BUILD grant early on (2016) also reported that BUILD contributed to mission impact to a greater extent than other organizations.

2. BUILD contributed to grantee partners’ organizational resilience, which led to stronger and more sustained mission impact.

BUILD’s predictable and flexible funding enabled partners to shape a clear and coherent strategy, stay true to their core purpose, and make choices consistent with that purpose. Nearly all partners (94%) reported that their ability to strengthen strategies and increase strategic clarity was instrumental to their organization’s mission impact. The predictability and flexibility of BUILD grants also provided the “spaciousness” and latitude to experiment. In addition, BUILD grants provided partners with the stability and confidence to adapt to changes in the external environment. Partners’ ability to respond to new opportunities or adapt to contextual threats contributed to their mission impact.

BUILD also provided foundational support and stability, enabling partners to facilitate the development of key organizational structures and systems in areas such as financial resilience, human resources, organizational culture, governance, monitoring and evaluation, and security. This support allowed organizations to manage risks better, improve operational efficiency, enhance their ability to withstand external challenges, and implement their work more impactfully. In short, BUILD gave grantee partners the latitude to dedicate resources to institution building—a critical area often overshadowed by the imperative to achieve program objectives.

Grantee partners also used their emerging capabilities and resilience to enhance the networks and fields in which they work. 81% of grantee partners stated that BUILD enhanced their ability to support their fields and networks, and 89% reported that this was instrumental to their mission impact. Partners developed new and/or strengthened existing strategic partnerships, invested in the capabilities of network members, and/or produced and shared knowledge with other stakeholders, including funders, government agencies, and community groups.

3. A second BUILD grant through BUILD 2.0 appears to consolidate gains made from a BUILD 1.0 grant.

For BUILD 1.0 partners who received a second BUILD grant, funding was used to build directly on the previous investments, allowing organizations to move beyond the foundational work of strengthening internal systems and focus more on strategic growth and programmatic expansion. While organizational capacity remained a priority, a second BUILD grant allowed for a greater emphasis on mission-driven work, advancing organizations' programmatic and political visions.

The evaluation team also asked partners with a BUILD 2.0 grant, *"What would have happened if you had not received a second BUILD grant?"* Partners replied they would have been forced to reduce the scope and ambitions of their work. Organizational strengthening efforts would have been at risk, and sustaining the same level of attention to institutional strengthening would have been challenging. Several organizations also expressed that they would have needed to downsize, lay off staff, and rethink financial viability without BUILD funding, highlighting its crucial role in sustaining their long-term agendas and strategies.

Organizations that did not receive a second BUILD grant reported challenges to sustaining institutional investments made during the first funding phase. BUILD partners who transitioned to non-BUILD Ford Foundation funding noted that the shift came with challenges, such as a decreased ability to allocate funds for institutional priorities. Organizations not nominated for BUILD 2.0 faced tough decisions regarding how to sustain the progress made under BUILD 1.0.

4. Grantee partners need transparent and timely communication about post-BUILD funding to plan and sustain the positive impacts of a BUILD 1.0 grant.

The lack of clarity on whether there would be additional BUILD or other Ford Foundation funding made it difficult for partners to make long-term strategic decisions. This was reported as disrupting forward planning for an increasing number of partners over the years. Global South partners, who are more dependent on BUILD-like funding, faced heightened financial uncertainty due to a lack of alternative funders providing similar flexible, multiyear support.

Especially for organizations that rely heavily on BUILD funding as part of their financial strategy, clear funding timelines and renewal information are essential for making informed decisions about resource allocation, staffing, and budgeting—all of which directly influence their ability to achieve their mission. Throughout the evaluation, partners emphasized the positive role of program officers in supporting sustainable planning during transparent and collaborative discussions about their organizational strategies and challenges.

Insights for change

The BUILD model continues to be an initiative that has strengthened organizational resilience and enhanced mission impact for grantee partners. However, challenges related to partners' funding dependency and long-term sustainability remain. By leveraging the following insights, the Ford Foundation and the philanthropic community can refine funding strategies to ensure lasting benefits for social justice organizations worldwide.

- **Institutional strengthening is key:** BUILD's focus on governance, leadership, human resources, organizational culture, and financial resilience has long-term benefits for organizational sustainability and effectiveness in achieving impact.

- **Flexible, multiyear funding drives impact:** BUILD partners reported that unrestricted, multiyear funding enabled them to respond strategically to opportunities and challenges.
- **Mission impact takes time:** The evaluation found that significant mission impact often emerges after multiple years of funding and related institutional strengthening, reinforcing the value of long-term funding commitments.
- **Institutional strengthening, organizational resilience, and mission impact are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing:** When partners are more resilient and impactful, they invest further in strengthening their organizations so they can seize opportunities and take on further challenges.
- **A second BUILD grant helps partners move from the foundational work of strengthening internal systems and clarifying strategy toward focusing more on strategic growth and programmatic depth:** The evaluation found that partners who received a second BUILD grant were more likely to report that BUILD contributed to their organization's ability to achieve mission impact than those who moved to non-BUILD funding or those still awaiting notification.
- **Clarity on post-BUILD funding is essential:** Transparent and timely communication about future funding opportunities allows organizations to plan effectively and sustain progress, even when they do not receive subsequent BUILD funding.
- **The relationships between grantee partners and Ford Foundation program officers have an influence on BUILD's effectiveness:** During BUILD's early years, the relationships between program officers and partners became stronger when BUILD created the time and space for transparent and collaborative discussions about partners' organizational strategies and challenges. When relationships between grantee partners and program officers weaken, it becomes difficult for program officers to fulfill their roles as thought partners and co-strategists.

1. Context

The ***Building Institutions and Networks (BUILD) initiative*** was launched by the Ford Foundation in 2016 to support social justice organizations and networks to become more durable, more resilient, more effectively networked, and better able to enact real change. The BUILD grant-making approach provides long-term, predictable, and flexible general operating support, as well as core support for institutional strengthening priorities that are determined by the grantee partners. BUILD grants seek to enable social justice organizations to innovate, collaborate, learn, take risks, seize moments of opportunity, and respond quickly to unexpected challenges.

The BUILD longitudinal evaluation began in 2022 and built on the work of the prior developmental evaluation (2018–22).² This evaluation focused on areas that required more time to observe change. Specifically, it focused on BUILD’s contribution to its grantee partners’ mission impact and organizational resilience over time, including the effects of receiving BUILD 2.0 (a second BUILD award to follow the first one).³

The report is organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Context: Brief context to frame the evaluation

Chapter 2: Introduction: Introduction with a description of BUILD, its Theory of Change, and the scope of the evaluation, including data sources and data collection methods

Chapter 3: Methodology: Overview of methodology and data sources

Chapter 4: Major findings: Four major areas of findings

Chapter 5: Insights for change: Insights for change describing how change happened, what is replicable, and areas for further inquiry

Appendices: Detailed methodology (appendix 1), emerging findings on financial resilience (Appendix 2), and further examples about types of impact (appendix 3)

2. Introduction

The premise of BUILD is that by providing organizations with five years of general operating support, combined with targeted investments and support in organizational strengthening, these organizations will become stronger, more resilient, and more effective at achieving their social justice missions. The observed, detailed Theory of Change developed by the evaluation team is shown below.

² [Developmental evaluation](#) is an approach to evaluation that seeks to support innovation development and guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. It provides real-time feedback, centers on the values and commitment of the innovators, and develops measures as outcomes emerge, while responding to unfolding processes and contexts.

³ BUILD 2.0 refers to grants made in the second round of the BUILD program (2022–26); BUILD 1.0 refers to grants made in the first round of BUILD (2016–21).

The 2018–22 developmental evaluation confirmed that predictable multiyear, flexible funding combined with dedicated resources for institutional development leads to stronger, more resilient organizations and networks. This central finding held true across the highly heterogeneous range of social justice organizations supported by the Ford Foundation.^{4, 5} That evaluation examined all the components of BUILD support, including funding, organizational assessments, peer exchange (cohorts and convenings), technical assistance, and program officer roles. All were found to have had a positive influence on a majority of grantee partners.



Figure 1: BUILD Theory of Change, as observed by the evaluation team

This longitudinal evaluation built on the findings of the first evaluation and further interrogated how the last two boxes in the Theory of Change, organizational resilience and mission impact, were impacted by BUILD over time. This required studying the experiences of BUILD grantee partners who had finished or were near the end of their first BUILD award. The evaluation universe included 289 grantee partners from the 2016–19 grant-making years, operating in the Andean Region of South America, Brazil, East Africa, Indonesia, Mexico and Central America, the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), Southern Africa, the United States, and West Africa. These partners were quite varied in size,⁶ sectors where they operate, and the degree of dependency⁷ their budget had on BUILD funding.

The evaluation inquired into **four learning areas**:

1. What, if any, is the relationship between BUILD support, increasing resilience, and mission impact for partner organizations?
2. Does BUILD contribute to strengthening and sustaining mission impact for partner organizations? If so, how and to what extent?
3. Does BUILD contribute to long-term organizational resilience for organizations? If so, how and to what extent?

⁴ [BUILD Developmental Evaluation: Final Report](#) (Mar 2022).

⁵ [BUILD Developmental Evaluation: Final Report Annexes](#) (Mar 2022).

⁶ Annual budgets of organizations in the universe ranged from \$200,000 to \$239,600,000, with a median budget of \$2,318,487 at the time of award.

⁷ Dependency was calculated as the percentage of the organization's budget, at time of award, that BUILD represented times five years. The universe of dependencies ranged from under 1% to 191% with a median of 18%.

4. What are the differences in BUILD’s influence between partners who received five years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0) and those who received ten years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0)?⁸

Through a co-creation process with the Ford Foundation and a representative group of grantee partners, the evaluation team developed working definitions for the key focus areas:

Mission impact: Observable changes for people, communities, institutions, laws, policies, and the planet. In addition, the evaluation team reported changes in the “enabling environment,” which refers to formal societal structures such as institutions, laws, and policies, as well as contextual elements such as social, cultural, and economic norms, narratives, and the functioning of actors, networks, and systems.

Organizational resilience: The ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond, and adapt to unforeseen circumstances in ways that enable the organization to move forward, thrive, and flourish so it can seize opportunities while staying true to the mission over the long term.

These definitions were constructed to allow the evaluation to interrogate these elements separately while recognizing their deep interrelationship, as illustrated in the Ford Foundation’s “BUILD Wheel”.



Figure 2: BUILD Wheel, developed by the Ford Foundation

⁸ While organizations that received second BUILD awards will have received ten years of BUILD support, this evaluation only considered a maximum of seven years due to the time frame of the evaluation: 2016–early 2024.

The evaluation focused on BUILD and its influence on grantee partners and their outcomes, so the data collection documented partners' experiences of BUILD.⁹ The evaluation team collected **primary data** (via an online survey, interviews, focus groups, and regular, structured discussions with a representative PPAT^{10,11}) and **secondary data** (review of grantee partner and program officer reports to the Ford Foundation, financial statements, and third-party reports from the media, government sources, and field actors—used to verify primary information collected from the survey and interviews).

The vast heterogeneity of the grantee partners supported by BUILD presented opportunities and limits to the evaluation. This heterogeneity enabled the evaluation to compare BUILD's impact across different regions, fields, and organizational types and sizes. The limitations included the challenge of measuring and comparing impact, especially across many different fields in many unique contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a universal, shared experience and test of resilience through which all grantee partners had to navigate.

The major findings of the longitudinal evaluation were:

Finding 1: BUILD was a significant contributor to the increased effectiveness of grantee partners in achieving impact.

Finding 2: BUILD contributed to grantee partners' organizational resilience, which led to stronger and more sustained mission impact, as reported in Finding 1.

Finding 3: A second BUILD grant through BUILD 2.0 appears to consolidate gains made from a BUILD 1.0 grant.

Finding 4: Grantee partners need transparent and timely communication about post-BUILD funding to plan and sustain the positive impacts of a BUILD 1.0 grant.

These findings and accompanying sub-findings are presented in chapter 4 "Major findings."

With the clarity of findings and many actionable areas coming out of Phase 1 of the BUILD longitudinal evaluation, and in consideration of the time and effort that will be required to address the upcoming leadership transitions at the Ford Foundation expected in the coming year or so, the foundation adjusted the scope and timing of the evaluation to conclude after the first phase of data collection.

3. Methodology

The evaluation team used a **mixed-method approach** to data collection. Data collection tools were piloted and tested with the program partner advisory team (PPAT) and the Ford Foundation BUILD team before launching data collection. Each successive layer of engagement with BUILD grantee partners—from the survey to the interviews to the focus group discussions—enabled the

⁹ The evaluation was not an assessment of individual grantee partner organizations' performance.

¹⁰ Four online convenings were arranged with the program partner advisory team (PPAT), in Sept and Dec 2023, and May and Oct 2024.

¹¹ All quotes and examples from grantee partners are part of the primary data collection process and used with their permission.

evaluation team to probe more deeply into the experiences of partners and give nuance to the analysis and study findings. It is important to note that all data collected during this evaluation were analyzed in conjunction with the findings from the original developmental evaluation, as well as additional secondary sources, for comprehensive context. The evaluation collected and analyzed data from the various sources presented below. More details about the evaluation approach, co-creation process, learning questions, evaluation stages, data matrix and indicators, sampling, triangulation, and limitations are presented in appendix 1.

Online survey: The universe for this study was all BUILD partners who received BUILD grants in 2016 (n=141), 2017 (n=56), 2018 (n=21), and 2019 (n=71) for a total universe of 289 partners. The online survey tool is an important data source for the longitudinal evaluation since it includes questions asked in the earlier developmental evaluation and was used to track change over time. The survey was sent out to all 289 grantee partners from BUILD cohorts 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. 118 grantee partners responded (110 complete responses were included in the analysis). This represents a usable response rate of 38% and a survey margin of error of 6% (at a 90% confidence level). The survey responses were representative of the universe across cohort, grant size, program, annual budget size, and post-BUILD 1.0 funding status, except for an underrepresentation of US partners (38% responded, the universe was 57%) and a slight overrepresentation of Global South partners (48% responded, the universe was 39%).

Virtual semi-structured interviews with BUILD grantee partners: We interviewed 27 partners, selected randomly from the universe, stratified by geography, cohort year, grant size, and post-BUILD 1.0 funding status. Each interview was conducted virtually using Zoom and lasted 90–120 minutes. The interviews were with the CEO/executive director and/or another senior executive staff member with deep knowledge of the BUILD grant and how it influenced the organization. In some cases, the staff members who had initially worked with BUILD had moved on and the lessons learned were as conveyed by newer staff. The interview questions were designed to go deeper into issues asked about in the survey.

Focus group discussions: We conducted four different focus groups in February 2024. 27 grantee partners participated. Many, but not all, focus group participants had participated in the survey or interview stage of data collection. The first two groups focused on the most significant ways BUILD contributed to supporting their mission impact. One of these groups comprised only grantee partners who had received further Ford Foundation support after their BUILD grant, and the other comprised partners who either did not know the status of additional support or had been informed they would not receive any future Ford Foundation support after BUILD 1.0. The other two focus groups focused on financial resilience for organizations based and operating outside of Europe, Canada, and the United States. One of them comprised organizations from Africa, Indonesia, and MENA, and the other was conducted in Spanish and made up of groups from Central and South America.

Third-party data: Secondary data was gathered from the Ford Foundation, grantee partners, and third parties and reviewed to confirm or elaborate on the stories of impact shared by BUILD grantee partners and patterns observed in the primary data. This data included evaluations, news articles, government reports, social media, and websites.

Other data sources: The evaluation team was able to draw on **evaluations of other Ford Foundation programs** for a comparative analysis, deepening the rigor by contextualizing BUILD's outcomes within the Ford Foundation's broader philanthropic strategies.

The analysis of grantee partners' organizational and financial resilience relied partly on FLUXX data,¹² including **narrative and financial reports**, which provided longitudinal data that offered both qualitative and quantitative insights into grantee partners' strategic and operational growth over time.

Finally, the evaluation team used findings from the **previous BUILD evaluation** as a critical point of comparison, ensuring that the current evaluation built on past learning and offered continuity and a baseline from which changes and improvements could be measured.

4. Major findings

Finding 1: BUILD was a significant contributor to the increased effectiveness of grantee partners in achieving impact.

1.1 BUILD grantee partners are more effective at achieving impact after receiving BUILD support.

In our 2024 survey, **83% of grantee partners stated that BUILD contributed to their ability to achieve mission impact “to a large extent,”** as shown in figure 3 below. In addition, our representative sample of 27 BUILD grantee partners who participated in qualitative interviews all stated that the degree to which their impact had changed since receiving BUILD funds was *significant*.¹³

To what extent has BUILD support contributed to your organization's ability to achieve mission impact?

While most grantee partners reported that BUILD contributed to their increased effectiveness in achieving impact compared with pre-BUILD, a few partners stated that it was too early to tell (3%) or that BUILD did not contribute to their organization achieving mission impact (1%). Looking more closely at these cases, the evaluation team found

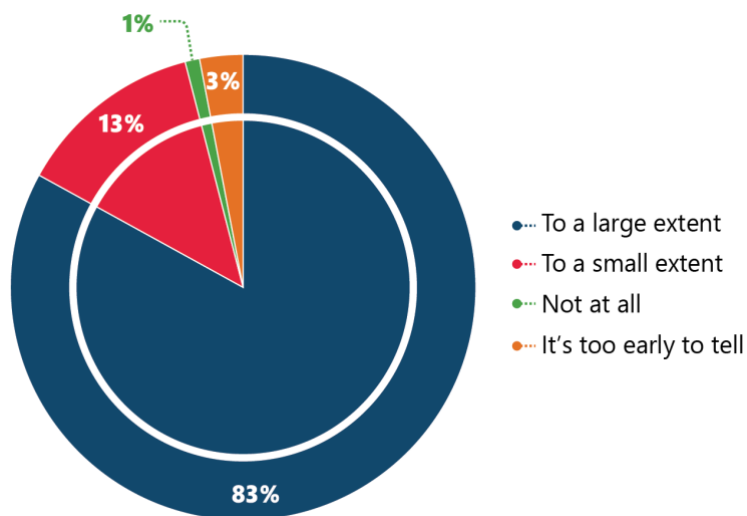


Figure 3: BUILD influence on mission impact among grantee partners. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

¹² FLUXX is the Ford Foundation's grant management system.

¹³ The question posed was, “Which best describes the degree to which your impact has changed (either in quantity or quality) since [insert year grantee partner started BUILD]?”; answer options: “Significantly,” “Moderately,” “About the same,” or “Reduced.”

that these partners had been awarded their BUILD grants more recently (2019 grants) than the rest of our sample, which suggests that they may not have experienced additional mission-related impact yet. Among the partners who reported that BUILD contributed to their mission impact only “to a small extent” (13%), there is no apparent pattern of commonality, nor were there any apparent differences between them and those who responded, “to a large extent” (83%).

1.2 BUILD contributed to a variety of types of impacts and advances in the social justice field.

BUILD supported many different types of impact. 70% of grantee partners reported that BUILD contributed to their ability to consolidate and/or deepen existing strategies and/or programs, as they implemented more programs and strategies and/or achieved additional impact in existing programs and strategies (strategically or geographically).¹⁴ For instance, FUNDAR—a Mexico-based organization that promotes democracy and citizen participation through applied research, critical reflection, experimentation, and linkage with civil, social, and governmental actors—explained that BUILD supported them to “*bet on something new, [...] that perhaps other organizations that do not have support like BUILD could not decide [to] respond to.*”¹⁵ With BUILD funding, FUNDAR was able to follow up and support the fathers and mothers of the victims of the Ayotzinapa case,¹⁶ even though this was an area that they had not previously worked in. The FUNDAR team reported that “*we decided to conduct a diagnosis of the psychosocial impacts and not to let go of this work. [...] We saw the situation, we knew it was necessary, and we were able to respond to it. And in the end, this had an impact on our mission.*”¹⁷

BUILD also contributed to partners’ ability to sustain impact in the face of significant external challenges and attacks—e.g., attacks on freedom of expression, restrictions from authoritarian governments, unpredictable political and economic environment, COVID-19 health crisis, etc.: 84% of partners reported that BUILD contributed to their ability to adapt their strategy and/or programs in the face of these types of challenges.¹⁸

One grantee partner that used BUILD to sustain impact in the face of significant challenges and attacks was the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF). The LDF fights for racial justice through litigation, advocacy, and public education. BUILD’s multiyear support enabled the organization to strengthen itself to the point that, when COVID-19 threatened the Black community, the LDF could respond.

LDF staff shared the following example: “*BUILD contributed to the organization’s ability to hire critical staff to expand its footprint, engage in additional data collection and research, and elevate this vital work to national audiences through strategic communications. The devastating impact of*

¹⁴ Survey data (2024).

¹⁵ Grantee partner interview (2024).

¹⁶ Also known as the Iguala mass kidnapping. On September 26, 2014, 43 male students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College disappeared after being forcibly abducted in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. They were allegedly taken into custody by local police officers from Iguala and Cocula in collusion with organized criminals, with later evidence implicating the Mexican Army and other state and federal authorities. Officials have argued that there is no indication the students are alive, but as of 2024, only three students’ remains have been identified and their deaths confirmed. However, the families have responded that until the government presents scientific evidence proving otherwise, they will keep demanding that the students be returned alive. The case is still open, and the families are still fighting for truth and justice.

¹⁷ Grantee partner interview (2024).

¹⁸ Survey data (2024).

the COVID-19 epidemic on Black communities and the challenges the pandemic presented for education, voting, criminal justice and housing forced the organization to deepen and expand our existing portfolio of work at a time of great uncertainty for our staff. But while many organizations faced cuts, the LDF was able to hold our staff steady and push forward to meet the demands of the moment because the BUILD grant provided a reliable source of funding and had allowed us to build our reserve ('rainy day') fund. This enabled us to stay fully engaged and to lead at a critical time, until donations from funders resumed in the summer of 2020.”¹⁹

1.3 Over time, BUILD grantee partners shifted from reporting early signs of impact to having created actual impact.

In the previous BUILD evaluation, grantee partners reported the ability to establish conditions and pathways for change. In this later period and longitudinal evaluation, grantee partners reported actual and measurable gains. BUILD grantee partners from the earliest cohort (with a BUILD grant that started in 2016) were more likely to report that BUILD contributes to mission impact compared to grantee partners from the later cohorts (2017, 2018, and 2019), suggesting that mission impact takes time to happen. This was also confirmed by the increased proportion of grantee partners reporting that BUILD contributed to their mission impact “to a large extent” over time—from 70% of partners in 2021 to 83% in 2024. A good example of this came from the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA). Based in South Africa, it is the first Africa-based and -run strategic litigation initiative with a regional focus and expertise on women’s human and sexual rights. ISLA uses a feminist and pan-African approach to strategic litigation as a powerful tool for social change.

In 2021, ISLA reported that “through BUILD, we have been able to take advantage of sudden opportunities to advance advocacy, and we have also been able to organize to push back against threats and attacks. BUILD supported our core feminist litigation network. We have been able to transition the first cohort of lawyers [to be] full-time strategic litigation lawyers in their organizations. Our strategic collaborations have enabled us to partner with a variety of organizations to support and enhance our [programs] and our innovation. The ISLA Panel of Experts [has allowed] us to work with feminist African scholars to produce feminist knowledge and to surface the intellectual contributions of feminist African scholars in the development of the African human rights systems.”²⁰

Three years later, in 2024, ISLA—through its Feminist Litigation Network—has identified 42 strategic litigation cases to develop feminist jurisprudence on the thematic areas of violence against women and women’s socioeconomic rights across Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda.²¹ They also started strategic litigation cases focused on protecting women’s rights in the extractives industry and defining legal strategies to ensure equal benefits for women. This included

¹⁹ Evidence from the previous BUILD evaluation (2018–22).

²⁰ Evidence from the previous BUILD evaluation (2018–22).

²¹ Narrative report submitted to the Ford Foundation by ISLA (2022). Further examples can be found on the pan-African feminists digital platform “[African Feminism](#).”

developing jurisprudence on how compensation plans by state and nonstate actors should include the harm that women suffer because of exclusion and discrimination in the extractives industry.

In a current example of these cases, an ISLA cohort alumnus is serving as a co-advocate for a woman who charged her employer, a local security company, with violating her constitutional rights and failing to protect her from sexual harassment. ISLA partnered with the Center for Rights, Education, and Awareness (CREAW) to litigate the case.²² In another example, ISLA advocates secured a settlement for a woman whose mobility rights were violated via harassment and abuse while using the local transit network.²³ ISLA is also working with another BUILD grantee partner, FIDA-K, to challenge the constitutionality of a law regarding matrimonial property at divorce or separation that disadvantages women.²⁴

1.4 BUILD supported initiatives that could not be funded through other sources and enabled organizations to achieve impact in a shorter period of time.

For a majority of partners interviewed,²⁵ BUILD provided funding stability for efforts that no other funders would support, including internal organizational priorities, programming, and external partnerships. These themes were also emphasized in program partner advisory team (PPAT) and focus group conversations. For instance, one partner followed an important, iterative, and experimental design for a program that required testing and piloting, which could not be funded “if we had a project-based grant.”²⁶ Grantee partners also said BUILD enabled continued impact during COVID-19 due to its flexibility, which allowed organizations to quickly pivot funding, support staff working from home, support constituents, and, as one partner stated, “We had a supply of personal protective equipment, sanitizers, gloves, and masks which no grant [but BUILD] then had provided.”²⁷ One grantee partner pointed out that “the 5-year commitment give us confidence to perform restructuring processes that demand a period of time longer than most project [funders] would allow. Rather than making [on the spot] improvements we could review our strategic planning and go for structural changes that will enhance our work. With BUILD, we were able to dedicate our efforts to the organization itself and, with it, expect a general strengthening of our initiatives.”²⁸

For some grantee partners, BUILD supported them in establishing better internal systems, which helped them attract other funders, leading to further programmatic impact. In these cases, BUILD supported what was previously deemed “un-fundable” by other funders (e.g., institutional strengthening or certain impact areas), which in turn led to attracting new resources. As explained by one partner, “[What we have done with BUILD] makes it easier for them [other funders] to want to deal with us now.”

²² [“Constitutional Petition in the Employment and Labour Relations Court seeking redress for the violation of a former employee’s constitutional rights and sexual harassment,”](#) press release, CREAW, 28 Apr 2021.

²³ [“Wachira & another v Director—Super Metro Sacco & 10 others,”](#) KEHC 56 (KLR), Constitutional and Human Rights, 15 January 2025.

²⁴ Press release, ISLA (3 Feb 2025) and [“Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa \(ISLA\) v Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya \(FIDA - Kenya\) & another”](#) KECA 181 (KLR) (23 Feb 2024).

²⁵ 20 out of 27 partners who participated in in-depth interviews.

²⁶ Grantee partner interview (2024).

²⁷ Grantee partner interview (2024).

²⁸ Survey data (2024).

Finally, many grantee partners highlighted how BUILD enabled them to accelerate the timeline for achieving impact.²⁹ In the words of one grantee partner, “[Without BUILD] it would have taken us a lot more time to position ourselves as a leading civil society organization, and much longer to reach our strategic objectives.”³⁰ Another grantee partner reflected, “We would have gotten there eventually, but I think it would have been much slower.”³¹

1.5 While grantee partners in all contexts reported that BUILD contributed to their ability to achieve impact, organizations based in the Global South reported increased mission impact as a result of BUILD to a greater extent than organizations based in the US.

The evidence shows that BUILD contributed to grantee partners’ ability to achieve impact in all contexts, across organizational size, and in BUILD’s share of the annual budget, geography, and cohort year. The BUILD approach was flexible enough to enhance the impact of a large range of organizations, working across varied contexts and addressing social inequalities from different angles. The following types of impact were most common: policy change, capacity strengthening of communities and partner organizations, increased public awareness and narrative shifting on social justice issues, stronger and sustained direct services, increasing the voice and impact of marginalized community members toward self-determination and collective action, government and corporate accountability and transparency, and systems change including challenging structural inequalities and promoting alternative models of governance.

However, it is noteworthy that organizations based in the Global South, organizations where BUILD was a high share of their annual budget (>30%), and organizations that received their BUILD grant early on (2016) reported that BUILD contributed to mission impact to a greater extent than other organizations. Our 2024 survey data (see figure 4 below) show that:

- **GS** partners were more likely to report that BUILD contributed to their mission impact than US partners (GS 91%, US 74%).
- Partners with **high dependency on BUILD** (>30% of annual budget) were more likely to report that BUILD contributed to their mission impact than low (<15%) and medium (15% to 30%) dependency partners (high dependency 97%, medium 78%, low 78%).³²
- Finally, partners from the **2016 and 2017 cohorts** were more likely to report BUILD having contributed to their impact than 2019 partners (2016 cohort 85%, 2017 89%, 2019 74%).³³ This suggests that BUILD’s contribution to increased mission impact may only occur after several years of funding.

²⁹ 18 out of 27 grantee partners who participated in in-depth interviews and were selected to represent 2016–19 BUILD partners.

³⁰ Grantee partner interview with Rinku Sen, executive director, Narrative Initiative (2024).

³¹ Grantee partner interview (2024).

³² This is true across the full sample, not only for Global South organizations.

³³ The 2018 cohort is excluded from this analysis because of a very low sample size (21 grantee partners only).

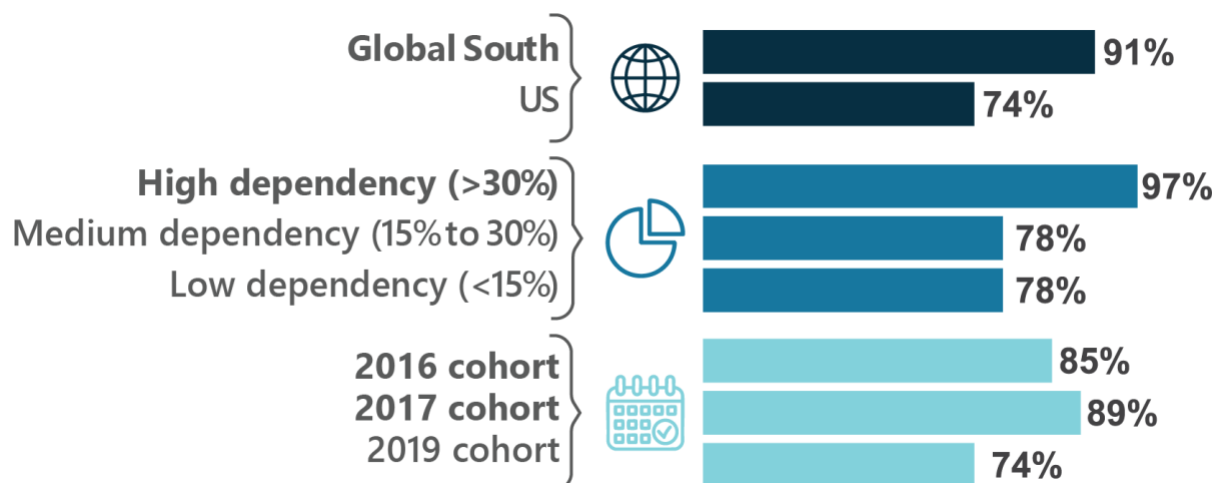


Figure 4: Reports that BUILD contributed to grantee partners' mission impact, disaggregated by geography, dependency level, and cohort. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

Differences in funding contexts in the US and the Global South may explain why GS partners reported a higher contribution from BUILD to their impact. The scarcity of BUILD-like funding in various regions of the Global South means that the BUILD grant is more difficult to substitute for compared to the US and other Global North contexts. As evidenced by focus group discussions with GS organizations, grantee partners experienced the certainty of multiyear BUILD funding as a form of financial resilience and stability that allowed them to build and grow programs and strengthen a comprehensive range of institutional priorities. Additionally, reserves funded with BUILD grants helped sustain GS organizations for longer-term program vision and planning.³⁴

Finally, it is important to note that US partners were more likely to have low dependency, and GS partners were more likely to have high dependency, as illustrated in the table below. This suggests that while both geography and BUILD dependency influence the effectiveness and impact of BUILD, these two factors are strongly correlated. **Further analysis indicates that BUILD's share in the organization's annual budget is slightly more influential than geography:** 97% of high-dependency grantee partners reported that BUILD contributed to their mission impact "to a large extent," while 91% of GS partners reported that BUILD contributed to their mission impact "to a large extent."³⁵

³⁴ Focus group discussions with Global South organizations (2024).

³⁵ Survey data (2024).

Table 1: BUILD grant share of partners' budget: US vs. GS partners. Source: Ford Foundation data from grant proposals

Geography	Average BUILD share (grant as % of annual budget/5 years)	Low share of BUILD in annual budget (<15%)	Medium share of BUILD in annual budget (15% to 30%)	High share of BUILD in annual budget (>30%)
US partners	19%	49% of US partners	32% of US partners	19% of US partners
GS partners	34%	21% of GS partners	32% of GS partners	47% of GS partners

Finding 2: BUILD contributed to grantee partners' organizational resilience, which led to stronger and more sustained mission impact, as reported in Finding 1.

This section presents findings related to the mechanisms at play and how grantee partners used their BUILD grant to increase their organizational resilience and mission impact.

2.1 BUILD supported grantee partners to strengthen strategic clarity and coherence.

BUILD's predictable and flexible funding enabled grantee partners to shape a clear and coherent strategy, stay true to their core purpose, and make choices consistent with that purpose. Nearly all grantee partners used their BUILD grants to enhance strategic clarity and coherence.³⁶ 90% reported that strategic clarity and coherence was either a primary or a secondary focus of their grant.

Consistent with these investments, nearly all grantee partners (94%) reported that their ability to strengthen strategies and strategic clarity was instrumental to their organization's mission impact to a large or some extent. This was especially true among partners in the Global South (GS 91%, US 74%).³⁷

³⁶ We refer to strategic clarity and coherence as an organization's ability to focus on its core purpose, develop strategies and make choices that advance this purpose, build integrated systems and practices to implement these strategies, and secure funding that aligns with its core mission. The lack of strategic coherence is one of the biggest barriers to organizational effectiveness. As noted by the donor collaborative Co-Impact, "Unfortunately, too often, social change leaders are pulled in a hundred directions and unable to align the organization with its purpose. These demands on leaders tend to be both internal distractions (wanting to do too many things) and external (fundraising, reporting, and responding to donor priorities), and distract from the core work. These distractions fragment priorities and create divergence between the organization's core purpose and the way it spends its time and money." [Co-Impact Handbook](#), 2021.

³⁷ Survey data (2024).

In terms of contributing to your organization’s mission impact, to what extent has each of the following aspects been instrumental?



Figure 5: Aspects contributing to mission impact. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

The predictability and flexibility of BUILD grants provided the “spaciousness” and latitude to experiment. As one grantee partner’s executive director shared, BUILD gave them room to be “very, very imperfect ... *I don’t think we would have been as free to do our own creating, testing, iterating if we had a project grant. The difference is [the] spaciousness in your head. And there’s the one person’s head who is the executive director. But there’s also the collective brain of the team and the partners together, and additional people, that our stakeholders might have something to contribute to the strategy.*”³⁸

Strategic clarity and coherence, and strategic planning positively influenced a range of core capabilities for grantee partners,³⁹ including to:

- Define and focus priorities, set clear goals, and develop road maps for internal development and external impact, including risk-taking and innovation.
- Better choose in which partnerships and networks to invest and where to focus their organizing and mobilizing work.
- Identify which aspects of organizational development and institutional systems to improve or develop for greater impact.
- Develop and align organizational culture to a coherent strategy.
- Improve financial resilience by attracting donors to a well-articulated and coherent strategy.

³⁸ Grantee partner interview with Rinku Sen, executive director, Narrative Initiative (2024).

³⁹ Grantee partner interviews (2024), program partner advisory team (PPAT) discussions, evidence from the previous BUILD evaluation (2018–22).

An example of this comes from the organization Family Values @ Work, a national network of 27 state and local coalitions dedicated to advancing family-friendly workplace policies such as paid sick days and family leave insurance. These efforts aim to improve individual and public health while enhancing financial security for families, businesses, and the nation. In discussing the evolution of Family Values @ Work toward stronger resilience and mission impact, their executive director, Josephine Kalipeni reflected: *“There are often these moments where people are asking about ‘how do we slow down and pause the work?’ My assessment of what people really mean by that is, ‘How do we pause to assess our work? How do we pause to assess whether or not the systems and processes are working? And how do we iterate forward, based on our new learnings?’ There was a moment for us to pause and staff to be able to assess systems and processes, to be able to ask the questions of values and alignment versus practices. And then to be able to analyze the outcomes of those assessments in order to put together an implementable plan. I think that’s been incredibly valuable. And there’s certainly moments where we feel the benefit of that, and [also] the need to sort of stretch and grow into this next phase ... I think that’s another highlight and impact of the BUILD grant.”*⁴⁰

2.2 BUILD strengthened grantee partners’ financial resilience on the balance sheet and/or in the organization’s strategic position and capacity for future funding.

Alongside the *“ability to strengthen strategies and strategic clarity,”* the most cited impact of BUILD on grantee partners was on their **ability to strengthen their financial situation**. When asked if their organization was more financially resilient today than before the start of BUILD, 85% of grantee partners said yes in 2024, an increase from the 76% that responded affirmatively in 2021.⁴¹ In the 2024 survey, 94% of respondents stated that BUILD enhanced their ability to strengthen their financial situation to some or a large extent.⁴² Building on the prior evaluation and working through the co-creation process, the evaluation defined financial resilience as *“freedom, over time, to make financial decisions and power to conduct programs in line with strategic objectives rather than having to implement external priorities such as those held by funders, public pressure, and governments.”*

This definition was affirmed in interviews and focus groups as inclusive of formal financial resource metrics such as liquid unrestricted net assets (LUNA) as well as organizations’ ability to advance strategic objectives in ways that do not increase LUNA. For example, one grantee partner cited the ability to regrant BUILD funds to network partners as critical to its financial resilience, even though its bottom-line LUNA did not change over time. Another partner cited its ability to build and bring together a national board that included grassroots leaders with limited incomes as important to its long-term financial objectives, even though this required spending some of its BUILD support that otherwise would have been booked as a liquid unrestricted asset.

⁴⁰ Grantee partner interview with Josephine Kalipeni, former executive director, Family Values @ Work (2024).

⁴¹ Partners were first asked about financial resilience through surveys and interviews. Based on those responses the evaluation team conducted two focus groups on financial resilience.

⁴² 66% said, “to a large extent,” and 28% said, “to some extent.” The figures for “strengthen strategies and strategic clarity” were 78% and 16% respectively.

Most grantee partners reported that BUILD helped secure new funding (60% in 2019, 70% in 2021, 76% in 2024)—this was especially true for GS partners (GS 83%, US 62% in 2024). BUILD also helped over half of the grantee partners convince other funders to make their grants more flexible and/or longer-term (31% in 2019, 53% in 2021, 54% in 2024). Only 4% of respondents reported that funders cited BUILD as a reason not to give funding. Those four worked in four distinct regions of the Global South but did not offer any other details.

All of these factors trended upward over time, indicating that **leveraging the capacity and confidence needed to secure more, or more flexible, funding takes time to develop but does result in more flexible and/or longer-term funding**.

As expressed by a representative of an African women’s rights organization, “*At the heart of achieving organizational resilience is financial resilience. It starts from that, because from the financial resilience you have independence to make those very important decisions. Because you have that luxury you can decide whether it’s human resource, whether it’s investing in infrastructure adaptability, whether it’s investing in technology, whether it’s being able to quickly innovate around, how you deliver your work. For me, this speaks to financial resilience, not just the money that you are able to get but financial resilience is getting money that works for you.*”⁴³

When asked how they have been able to strengthen their financial resilience with their first BUILD grant, grantee partners reported the following abilities.

Which of the following aspects of financial resilience have you been able to strengthen with contributions from your (first) BUILD grant, if any?



Figure 6: Aspects of financial resilience strengthened by BUILD (first grant). Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

⁴³ Grantee partner interview (2024).

One partner who rated BUILD’s impact on their financial resilience as significant stated that “we would not have been able to buy our office building. It used to be a cost center (rent) and now it is a profit center because we can rent the rooms.”⁴⁴ Another partner noted that “[BUILD’s impact on our financial resilience] is phenomenal, excellent, on more than one level, including our ability to attract additional funding, including core funding, and including our growth in budget and staffing levels. During a couple of years, we were able to get an average of 1.5 million USD with a few more core funders. Last year we actually had a new income of 2.8 million USD.”⁴⁵

The evaluation team also analyzed grantee partners’ LUNA and the corresponding “survival ratio.” The **survival ratio** is the number of months an organization could survive on its LUNA, with no additional funds received, based on its current expenses. It does not consider non-liquid assets or restricted assets.⁴⁶ Out of 22 organizations analyzed (for which the evaluation team were able to retrieve adequate financial data), 17 grantee partners showed an increase in their LUNA, and 5 experienced a decrease. The median change in survival ratio was 3.7 months over the course of a five-year BUILD grant. This appears significant given that prior to BUILD, the Ford Foundation found that 40% of its grantee partners had fewer than three months of LUNA.⁴⁷

For those whose LUNA increased, the average increase was 2.1 times the size of their BUILD grant.⁴⁸ For others, their LUNA decreased because their asset growth was accompanied by an increase in annual expenses and sometimes even an operating deficit. The evaluation team does not know what other factors influenced the growth or contraction of LUNA. This data, with its limits, points to BUILD grantee partners being likely, but not guaranteed, to increase their total LUNA and their survival ratio. The limitations of LUNA as an indicator of financial strength can be illustrated by this one US-based BUILD partner, who stated: “We now have a reserve, the first in our organization’s history. We have also grown the development team from 2 to 6 staff members.” In this case, their LUNA survival rate growth has been less than one month per annum since the start of BUILD, but it is at a solid six months now, and the strengthened fund development team continues to grow both the annual budget and the organization’s LUNA survival rate.

While BUILD’s contribution to grantee partners’ financial resilience appears to have increased over time, 85% also reported some form of negative financial experience when asked, “Have you experienced any of the following negative effects on financial resilience due, in part, to BUILD?”⁴⁹ Interview and focus group data revealed that the primary negative experiences were attributed to the impact of **a lack of clarity on future BUILD funding and uncertainty around the sustainability of growth.** In 2024, over one-third (38%) of grantee partners reported that a lack of clarity on future BUILD funding disrupted forward planning. This was an increase from 2021, where

⁴⁴ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁴⁵ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁴⁶ Note this caution when reading LUNA data: One month of LUNA does not mean the organization can only survive a month without new funding. Most organizations have restricted monies as well. It is simply an indicator of cushion that enables comparison across organizations or within an organization over time.

⁴⁷ Reich, Kathy, and Hilary Pennington, “[How Grant Makers Can Tune In to What Nonprofits Need Most](#),” Chronicle of Philanthropy, 12 Feb 2019.

⁴⁸ Median was 1.9 times BUILD grant.

⁴⁹ Answer options (multiple answers allowed): “Lack of clarity on future BUILD funding disrupting forward planning” (38%, 2024), “Growth funded by BUILD not sustainable past the grant period” (30%, 2024), “Greater financial dependency on the Ford Foundation” (19%, 2024), “Other funders pulling back as BUILD program partners are seen to have enough money” (13%, 2024), and “None of the above” (15%, 2024).

one-quarter (25%) reported this to be true. There was also an increase in partners reporting that growth funded by BUILD was not sustainable past the grant period, from 16% in 2021 to 30% in 2024. This was more likely to be true for Global South partners (GS 35%, US 24% in 2024). Some grantee partners stated that they wished their program officer had worked with them to plan for sustaining the growth BUILD fueled from the beginning of the grant. Others noted that their program officer helped them plan from the beginning, highlighting a variety of experiences.

As one grantee partner explained, “*BUILD was not enough, but it assisted us to get other resources so that we can do other work and continue to be resilient. Even the fundraising—the BUILD grant gave us power. Not power like strength, but to fundraise, because [we were seen] as someone who could be trusted. If you have a donor already, it means you are trusted ... So, through the BUILD grant, we were able to attract many donors.*”⁵⁰

For most grantee partners, BUILD strengthened their financial resilience through stronger balance sheets, improved financial management systems, diversified sources of funding, and/or the ability to leverage other funding, including flexible and long-term support. For many, their financial strength improved in multiple areas. Importantly, the most cited ways BUILD strengthened financial resilience was through “*supporting the existing level and quality of programmatic work*” and “*increasing the organization’s ability to freely make financial decisions on programs and institutional priorities due to a higher percentage of unrestricted/flexible funding.*”⁵¹ Further details related to the financial resilience analysis can be found in appendix 2.

2.3 BUILD supported grantee partners to adapt to changing circumstances.

BUILD grants provided grantee partners with stability and confidence to adapt to changes in the external environment. Over the course of the evaluation, these changes were often rapid and severe, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and unpredictable political and social threats. **Nearly all grantee partners reported that their organization’s ability to respond to new opportunities (93%) or adapt to contextual threats (91%) contributed to their mission impact to a large or some extent.**⁵²

⁵⁰ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁵¹ Survey data (2024).

⁵² Survey data (2024).

Has BUILD contributed to your ability to respond and adapt to unforeseen circumstances such as the challenges of COVID-19, political and economic threats, etc., in any of the following ways?



Figure 7: How BUILD contributed to grantee partners' adaptation ability. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

Grantee partners commonly reported that a crucial feature of BUILD support is flexible funding for priorities determined by the organization. An example of this comes from CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society worldwide. When asked about the influence of the BUILD grant on the organization, CIVICUS's secretary general at the time reflected: *"Core, flexible funding remains a critical component for our organization to respond and adapt to changing contexts. Through our core grants we were able to adjust program and engagement approaches and timelines to respond to the largest disruptor during this period—namely the COVID-19 pandemic. BUILD's greatest strength was that it gave us enormous flexibility to invest in traditionally under-resourced organizational development initiatives ... at a time when the predilection of most funders is to focus on implementation of programmatic activities through their grants."*⁵³

2.4 BUILD supported institutional strengthening in ways that led to organizational resilience over time.

BUILD enabled grantee partners **to develop key organizational structures and systems** such as financial resilience, human resources, organizational culture, governance structures, monitoring

⁵³ Survey data (2024); open-ended response.

and evaluation systems, and security protocols. 98% of grantee partners cited dedicated funding for institutional strengthening as having a large positive (87%) or some positive (11%) influence on their organization.⁵⁴ This support allowed organizations to manage risks better, improve operational efficiency, enhance their ability to withstand external challenges, and implement their work more impactfully.

Grantee partners described how distinct institutional capabilities compounded into a deeper and more sustained resilience over time and continued financial and human investment. One grantee partner described: *“For us, resilience encompasses having sufficient funding to carry out our work and the freedom to innovate and explore new approaches that may require initial testing before securing funding support. It’s about having the financial stability to take calculated risks, experiment with new ideas, and ultimately secure the necessary resources to scale impactful initiatives.”*⁵⁵

The experiences of grantee partners in deepening organizational resilience reflected the priority areas of the BUILD Wheel (see figure 2), BUILD’s framework for growing the impact of social justice organizations so they become *“more durable, more resilient, more effectively networked with each other, and better able to enact real change over time.”*⁵⁶

Grantee partners reported deepening resilience across:

- **Strategy:** Clear, coherent, intentional strategies enabled grantee partners to stay true to their purpose and advance their mission impact. As noted above, grantee partners reported that strategic clarity and coherence was the primary (75%) or secondary (15%) focus of their BUILD grant; was the area BUILD enhanced to a large extent (78%) or some extent (16%); and was where BUILD contributed to their organizations’ mission impact to a large extent (79%) or some extent (15%).⁵⁷
- **Finances:** Improved financial management systems allowed organizations to allocate resources efficiently and sustainably, mitigating the impact of financial shocks: 92% of grantee partners reported that their ability to strengthen their financial situation contributed to mission impact to a large extent (63%) or some extent (29%).⁵⁸
- **Systems:** Stronger systems, especially human resource and governance, enabled organizations to make timely and informed decisions during crises or periods of change: 96% of grantee partners reported that leadership and governance were a primary (66%) or secondary (30%) focus of their BUILD grant, and 85% reported that their ability to improve their governance contributed to mission impact to a large extent (54%) or some extent (31%).⁵⁹
- **People:** When aligned with mission and values, organizational culture was a driving force behind partners’ experiences of increased collective effort, enhanced staff well-being, and

⁵⁴ Survey data (2024).

⁵⁵ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁵⁶ [The BUILD Wheel](#).

⁵⁷ Survey data (2024).

⁵⁸ Survey data (2024).

⁵⁹ Survey data (2024).

greater achievement of organizational objectives and mission impact. This was especially important in cases where BIPOC individuals assume new leadership roles:⁶⁰ 83% of grantee partners reported that their ability to ensure continuity in their organization's leadership contributed to mission impact to a large extent (53%) or some extent (30%).⁶¹

As stated by one partner: *"BUILD was not just about building infrastructure. It asked, 'To what end?' Right-build infrastructure, to build out the field and to (be) more impactful together. The first thing was getting funding for work we were already doing. The next thing was leveling up our work. And so, with each infusion of funding, I tried to make strategic investments internally."*⁶²

2.5 BUILD grantee partners were able to expand networks to create shared impact.

BUILD grantee partners used their emerging capabilities and resilience to enhance the networks and fields in which they work. 81% of grantee partners stated that BUILD enhanced their ability to support their fields and networks, and **89% reported that this was instrumental to their mission impact to some or a large extent.**⁶³ Partners developed new or strengthened existing strategic partnerships, invested in the capabilities of network members, and/or produced and shared knowledge with other stakeholders, including funders, government agencies, and community groups.⁶⁴

For instance, before 2016, ISIAH was primarily a collection of urban, white, Christian congregations based in Minnesota (US). BUILD funding contributed to their ability to hire organizers from other communities and build strength in those communities. They now represent a strong multiracial, multifaith coalition that includes Muslim congregations and small businesses, young adults, barbershops, childcare centers, a Black church cooperative, and a statewide rural project. This diversity of membership has enabled ISIAH to play a major role in bringing diverse groups of people together to advance a shared mission in Minnesota.⁶⁵ Last year they trained 800 leaders and had 7,000 individual members act and support this work. On numerous occasions, they organized meetings where hundreds and thousands of people met with elected officials and candidates and discussed issues of equity and justice.⁶⁶ They invested in training thousands of community-based leaders in how to use narrative to bring together diverse, multiracial interests and act together. ISIAH used BUILD's flexibility to expand, diversify, and strengthen its grassroots base, leading to concrete impacts in rights, childcare funding, and resisting Islamophobic narratives that had led to violence against Muslims in Minnesota.

⁶⁰ "Organizations going through a leadership transition," case study, BUILD Developmental Evaluation Final Report Annexes (2022) and grantee partner interviews (2024).

⁶¹ Survey data (2024).

⁶² Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁶³ Survey data (2024).

⁶⁴ "Networks and grassroots mobilizing organizations," case study, BUILD Developmental Evaluation Final Report Annexes (2022) and grantee partner interviews (2024).

⁶⁵ Some of these events were covered in the local news: For instance, ISIAH and the Muslim Coalition held [a meeting to discuss how to make Rochester a better place](#), drawing over 200 people (ABC 6 News, KAAL TV, 22 Oct 2023); also, ["Faith in Minnesota scores a clean sweep. Will Rochester's politics ever be the same?"](#) Post Bulletin (7 Nov 2024).

⁶⁶ "Thousands expected for Super Eid in Downtown Minneapolis," Minnesota Public Radio (20 Aug 2018) and "Case Study: The ISIAH Trash Referendum," Elizabeth McKenna and Peter Levine, Johns Hopkins University SNF Agora Institute (Dec 2020).

These organizing and communications investments in shifting narratives and perceptions of key issues have enabled ISAIH to lead coalitions of partners that have created changes that are stabilizing the childcare sector, expanding rights, dedicating funding for public transit, expanding access to clean energy, and establishing paid family medical leave in Minnesota. One grantee partner stated that *“These impacts come from grassroots organizing and shifting narrative power in the field, which were both significantly supported by flexible, long-term BUILD funding.”*⁶⁷

2.6 Global South grantee partners’ experiences differed in several ways.

As described above, BUILD had several types of impacts on the organizational resilience of grantee partners in the Global South relative to partners based in the US and Europe.

GS partners described the contextual challenges they faced in building organizational resilience, especially financial resilience, which made BUILD grants important to their funding portfolio.⁶⁸ Economic challenges such as currency fluctuations and tax regimens targeting NGOs tend to significantly affect partners’ budgets and reserves. The governments in several countries of the GS require official approvals to receive funds and/or conduct programs. These financial challenges compound societal and political oppression and dangerous narratives about civil society organizations. In some cases, grantee partners have experienced crackdowns on civil society organizations.⁶⁹

The BUILD funding approach contrasts with the practices of many funders in the GS, who often direct or control the work of social change actors through highly restricted funding requirements.⁷⁰

BUILD partners in the GS experienced the certainty of multiyear BUILD funding and support for institutional strengthening as a form of financial resilience that allowed them to invest in core institutional capabilities, develop resilience, and increase impact.⁷¹

Lastly, GS grantee partners benefited disproportionately from BUILD-supported peer networking (GS 74%, US 45%) and the organizational mapping tool (GS 51%, US 31%). As shown in table 2, partners in the GS were also more likely than US-based partners to report that BUILD contributed to their ability to support organizational and financial resilience.⁷²

⁶⁷ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁶⁸ Focus group discussions (2024).

⁶⁹ Grantee partner interviews (2024); program partner advisory team (PPAT) discussions.

⁷⁰ [“Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking,”](#) Human Rights Funders Network (2020) and [“Ford Foundation Puts the Grantee in the Driver’s Seat,”](#) Devex, (4 Oct 2019).

⁷¹ Focus group discussions (2024).

⁷² Survey data (2024).

Table 2: Reports that BUILD contributed to partners' ability to support organizational and financial resilience, disaggregated by geography. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

Area of organizational and financial resilience	GS grantee partners	US-based grantee partners
Improve the governance of the organization	67%	31%
Ensure continuity in the leadership of the organization	75%	40%
Invest in retaining and developing staff	54%	38%
Strengthen organizational culture	58%	43%
Strengthen financial resilience	67%	57%

Finding 3: A second BUILD grant through BUILD 2.0 appears to consolidate gains made from a BUILD 1.0 grant.

This section explores how the mission impact and organizational resilience to which BUILD contributed lasts over time. The findings show the **emerging differences in BUILD's influence between partners who received five years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0) and those who received ten years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0)**. While organizations that received a second BUILD grant will have received ten years of BUILD support, this evaluation only considered a maximum of seven and a half years due to the evaluation timeline (2016 to first quarter of 2024). Figure 8 shows the grantee partners' status after BUILD 1.0, based on the 2024 survey.

Two factors limited our analysis. First, not all partners in our sample (2016–19 cohorts) had completed their BUILD 1.0 grant, and partners from the earlier cohorts (e.g., 2016) that also received a second BUILD grant were only in the early stages of implementing their second BUILD grant. Those partners that did not receive a second BUILD grant or other further Ford Foundation support have had limited time to reflect on whether the BUILD effects are being sustained in their organization after BUILD 1.0. Second, the rationale for awarding a second BUILD grant was neither clearly documented by Ford Foundation program officers nor appeared to follow a common set of criteria from one program team/regional office to another. This made it difficult for the evaluation team to detect patterns of differential influence, as specific patterns observed regarding post-BUILD 1.0 effects could not be correlated with (and, even less so, attributed to) the reasons behind a partner being awarded a second BUILD grant or not.

Following your initial BUILD grant (BUILD 1.0 grant received in 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019), your organization has ...

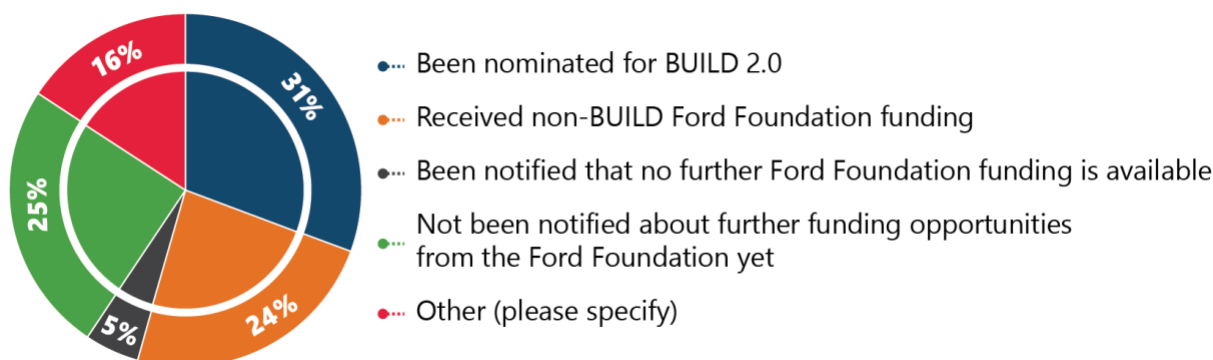


Figure 8: Grantee partner status after BUILD 1.0. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

3.1 Receiving a second BUILD award appears to correlate with enhanced mission impact.

Emerging themes from the data collected provided insights into how organizations are experiencing the transition between BUILD 1.0 and subsequent funding. When partners were asked if they “consider [their] organization to be more financially resilient today compared to pre-BUILD,” there were no statistical differences between organizations receiving a second BUILD grant, organizations receiving other non-BUILD Ford Foundation funding, and those partners who were not yet notified about further funding (see table 3 below).⁷³

In contrast, there was a difference between the three groups in terms of their experience of BUILD contributing to their ability to achieve mission impact. **Partners who received a second BUILD grant were more likely to report that BUILD support contributed to their organization’s ability to achieve mission impact (91%) compared to those who moved to non-BUILD funding (84%) or those still awaiting notification (77%).**

⁷³ 84%–88% (within the margin of error) of all groups considered their organization to be more financially resilient today compared to before receiving BUILD support.

Table 3: Differential effects on mission impact and financial resilience reported by grantee partners by type of “life after BUILD 1.0.” Source: Survey data from 2024

Relationship between future Ford Foundation funding status, financial resilience and BUILD’s effect on mission impact	Awarded BUILD 2.0 grant (n=32)	Receiving non-BUILD Ford Foundation funding (n=25)	Not been notified about further funding opportunities at the Ford Foundation yet (n=26)
Consider their organization to be more financially resilient today compared to pre-BUILD	88%	84%	88%
Report that BUILD support contributed to their organization’s ability to achieve mission impact to a large extent	91%	84%	77%

Note: Only respondents who (1) were awarded a BUILD 2.0 grant, (2) received non-BUILD Ford Foundation funding, or (3) have not been notified about further funding opportunities at the Ford Foundation yet are included in this table. The number of survey respondents notified that no further Ford Foundation funding is available is too small (five respondents) to carry out this analysis in a meaningful way.

This contrasting experience of mission impact may indicate that BUILD is more likely to contribute to mission impact when partners receive a second BUILD grant, but it may also reflect program officers being more likely to renew BUILD or provide other Ford Foundation support to organizations perceived to have grown their mission impact; it may also reflect that program officers were taking longer to make funding decisions or notify grantee partners of decisions to discontinue Ford Foundation support for organizations making less mission impact.

3.2 For grantee partners who received a BUILD 2.0 grant, funding was used to build directly on the previous investment.

For organizations that received a BUILD 2.0 grant, this additional funding helped consolidate and deepen the gains made during BUILD 1.0. Partners reported that BUILD 2.0 builds directly on the previous investment, allowing organizations to move beyond the foundational work of strengthening internal systems and focus more on strategic growth and programmatic expansion. According to one partner, “There are elements that we focused on with the first BUILD grant that are now working smoothly and have retreated to being secondary—e.g., human resources and governance. Other than that, we are consolidating and deepening the work we started with BUILD 1.0.”⁷⁴

Further examples highlighted how **BUILD 2.0 complemented and advanced the progress made during BUILD 1.0.** This reflects the added value of BUILD 2.0, which enabled organizations to refine their strategic direction and further institutionalize their values and missions. One partner shared that “the systems were already consolidated during the first grant; therefore, we considered advancing more in terms of our strategic planning. For instance, improving our dialogue and impact

⁷⁴ Survey data from 2024; open-ended response.

processes, developing more humanized communication strategies, and advancing toward shaping ourselves as a feminist human rights organization. Finally, having advantageous and sustainable financial and fundraising strategies in place.”⁷⁵

Several partners noted a shift in focus **from organizational development to deeper, more programmatic work**. While organizational capacity remained a priority, BUILD 2.0 allowed for greater emphasis on mission-driven work, advancing organizations’ programmatic and political visions. As one grantee partner shared: *“During BUILD 1.0, the main focus was institutional strengthening. With BUILD 2.0, it continues to be institutional strengthening (institutional management, human resources, communications) but it also became about programmatic activities.”⁷⁶*

3.3 For grantee partners who did not receive a BUILD 2.0 grant, sustaining BUILD-enabled improvements was challenging.

The evaluation team also asked in interviews, *“What would have happened if you had not received a second BUILD grant?”* Grantee partners replied they would have been **forced to reduce the scope and ambitions of their work**. Organizational strengthening efforts would have been at risk, and sustaining the same level of attention to institutional strengthening would have been challenging. Several organizations also expressed that they would have needed to **downsize, lay off staff, and rethink financial viability without BUILD funding**, highlighting its crucial role in sustaining their long-term agendas and strategies.

These answers were echoed by organizations that did not receive BUILD 2.0. Grantee partners who transitioned to non-BUILD funding already noted that the shift came with challenges. For example, one organization shared that *“we underwent a strategic shift toward specific geographies as a result of the [BUILD] grant and have been streamlining efforts in those areas. However, there was a shift in the [post-BUILD 1.0] funding, with slightly less money and an absence of specific institutional revenue, posing challenges in allocating funds for institutional priorities.”⁷⁷* Another partner expressed frustration with what they experienced as **a shift back to managing multiple project grants**: *“The BUILD grant had initially provided efficiency by consolidating multiple grants into a single, less burdensome reporting process. However, the return to managing multiple grants post-BUILD has increased staff time and involvement, reintroducing complexities in relationships with multiple program officers.”⁷⁸*

Organizations that were not nominated for BUILD 2.0 faced tough decisions regarding **how to sustain the progress made under BUILD 1.0**. Grantee partners that did not have a strong Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS) plan in place often faced the reality that some of the planning and strengthening done with BUILD 1.0 support would need to be scaled back in the absence of future BUILD or similar Ford Foundation support. As one grantee partner explained, *“The whole point of BUILD is to make you less dependent on project-based funding. But we still need committed donors*

⁷⁵ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁷⁶ Survey data (2024); open-ended response. program partner advisory team (PPAT) discussions.

⁷⁷ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁷⁸ Survey data (2024).

behind us. We spent five years developing a strategy; what can we do with it now if we don't have a BUILD 2? After all the hard work, you want to reap the results. We want to see the practical impact of all the hard work done through this process.”⁷⁹

Finding 4: Grantee partners need transparent and timely communication about post-BUILD funding to plan and sustain the positive impacts of a BUILD 1.0 grant.

4.1 BUILD’s positive impact was limited for some grantee partners by the Ford Foundation’s lack of clear communication about and planning for post-BUILD 1.0 funding.

Although the BUILD team’s internally stated goal is to have transition conversations at least a year before the end of the first grant, **a quarter of BUILD partners reported that they had not been informed about their Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS) status** with the Ford Foundation in early 2024. Among the 2019 cohort, 56% of partners had not yet been notified in early 2024, even though their BUILD grant was about to end that year.⁸⁰

In addition, **the lack of clarity on LABS was reported as disrupting forward planning** for an increasing number of partners over the years (from 25% of partners in 2021 to 38% in 2024),⁸¹ with potentially reduced gains in mission impact and organizational resilience. The lack of clarity on whether there would be additional BUILD or other Ford Foundation funding **made it difficult for partners to make long-term strategic decisions**, especially as they approached the end of their initial grant period. One partner expressed the frustration of working without clear guidance, stating, *“Not knowing what the future holds in terms of these large multiyear grants can be very destabilizing.”⁸²*

Another partner remarked, *“It would have been important if Ford had had an open conversation with us at the beginning of our BUILD grant about what the end of the grant might mean.”⁸³* Other partners echoed this sentiment, feeling that they were not adequately prepared for the possibility of not receiving a renewal of their BUILD grant. One partner stated, *“We were expecting to be renewed for BUILD, and we were never informed of transition possibilities or told that there was a chance we would not be renewed.”⁸⁴*

For organizations that relied heavily on BUILD funding as part of their financial strategy, clear funding timelines and renewal information was essential for making informed decisions about resource allocation, staffing, and budgeting—all of which directly influenced their ability to achieve their mission. One grantee partner described the **impact on its long-term planning and strategic operations**, stating that *“we didn’t have enough time to know if we would have BUILD; it impacted our long-term strategy. We needed to know if we were going to hire more people. It was very*

⁷⁹ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁸⁰ Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS) is understood as comprising either (1) a BUILD 2.0 award, (2) additional non-BUILD funding from the Ford Foundation, or (3) no additional funding from the Ford Foundation. For many grantee partners, LABS status was unknown at the time of data collection. As some LABS decisions were postponed, some partners were operating under a one-year extension of BUILD 1.0.

⁸¹ Survey data from 2021 and 2024.

⁸² Survey data (2024); open-ended response.

⁸³ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁸⁴ Survey data (2024); open-ended response.

complicated to develop a budget with the flexibility and how many people would be impacted if we didn't have those people—how were we to deliver on our mission? It was very complicated. [...] BUILD was about 20% of our budget, and that was a lot of impact.”⁸⁵

4.2 For some grantee partners, program officers played a positive role in supporting sustainable transitions and navigating complex funding environments.

Throughout the evaluation, grantee partners emphasized the **role of program officers (POs) in supporting sustainable planning**. Having early knowledge of funding outcomes allowed some organizations to make informed decisions about resource allocation and sustainability strategies.

For instance, one organization reported connecting with their program officer four to six times per year and having annual in-person meetings which allowed for intensive communication and more adaptive planning. Similarly, a participant in the program partner advisory team (PPAT) stated that *“we knew earlier on [...] that there would not be any more BUILD funding, so that helped. This is about 10–15% of our budget. It pays for a lot of non-programmatic stuff [...]. It was knowing at the beginning and having a close relationship with our program officer [that helped].”⁸⁶*

Other grantee partners experienced limited contact. Some reported difficulty reaching their program officer, and others only had one or two check-ins per year, which led to uncertainty and limited their capacity to plan and maintain mission-critical activities. Some grantee partners experienced frustrating changes from having program officers who were engaged “thought partners” to new program officers who did not communicate as often, seemed disinterested, and/or were unavailable. Data from the *Grantee Perception Report* published by the CEP in 2022 indicated a similar trend toward more limited contacts between BUILD partners and their program officers over time. When asked, *“How often do/did you have contact with your program officer during this grant?”* BUILD partners went from reporting monthly interactions (56%) or every few months interactions (44%) in 2017 to reporting every few months interactions (72%), monthly interactions (20%), and yearly or less interactions (7%) in 2022.⁸⁷

While it is difficult for program officers to determine the appropriate level of contact for each grantee partner to best support their mission impact, the evaluation team noted that some organizations benefit from more frequent engagement while others may require different forms of communication to ensure they have the clarity and adaptability needed to sustain their work effectively.

As illustrated in figures 9 and 10, data from the 2024 survey also showed a decline in the **“large positive influence” of program officers**, dropping from 83% in 2019 to 61% in 2024. The decline was particularly pronounced among US-based partners, where only 45% reported a large positive influence by their program officer, compared to 74% of partners from the Global South.

⁸⁵ Program partner advisory team (PPAT) convening participant Dr. Sekou Siby, former president, ROC United.

⁸⁶ PPAT convening participant Raphael Koenig, finance and administration manager, Fern.

⁸⁷ The significance level of these CEP results is above 0.05, which implies that the confidence level is lower than the conventional 95%, meaning that the observed results are not statistically significant and should be interpreted with caution.

Please tell us how much various components of BUILD have influenced your organization.

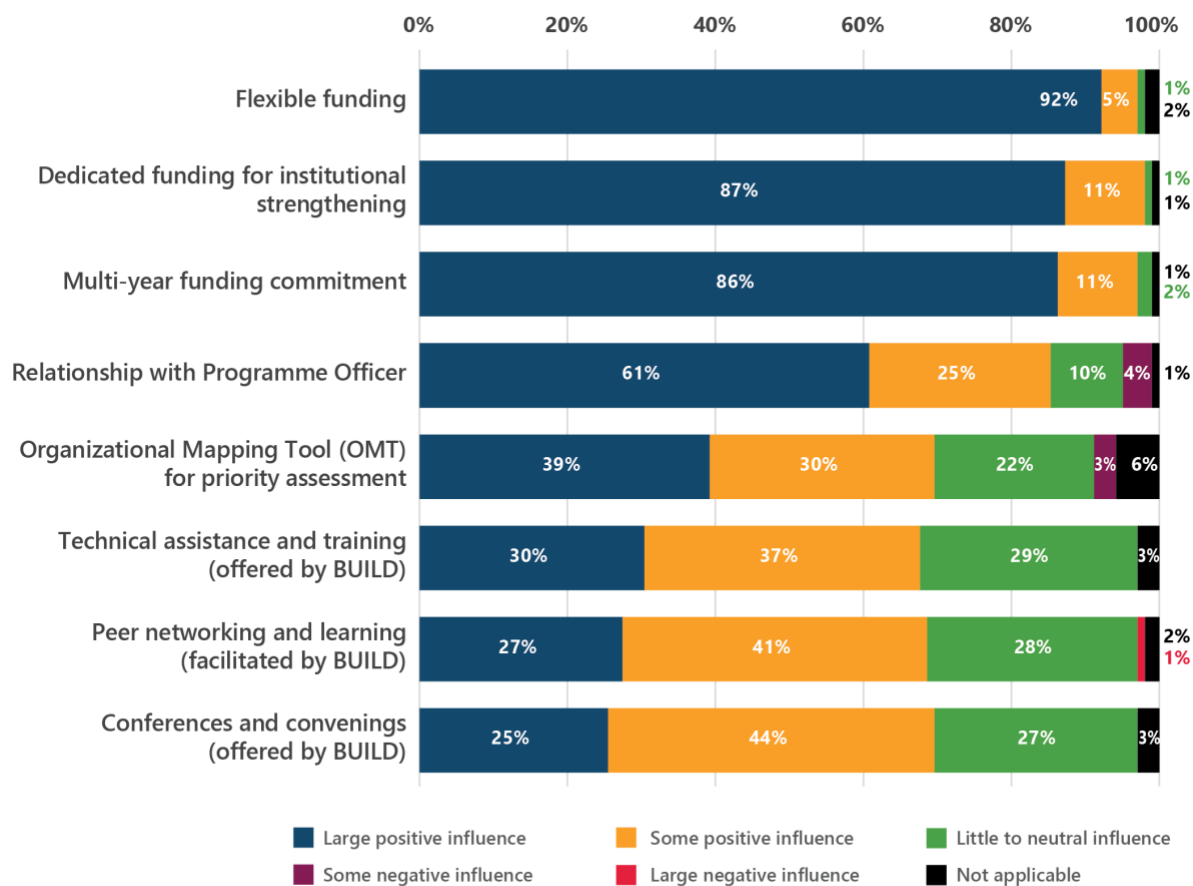


Figure 9: Different BUILD components' influence on grantee partners. Source: Survey data from 2024, n=110

Please tell us how much the relationship with your program officer has influenced your organization.

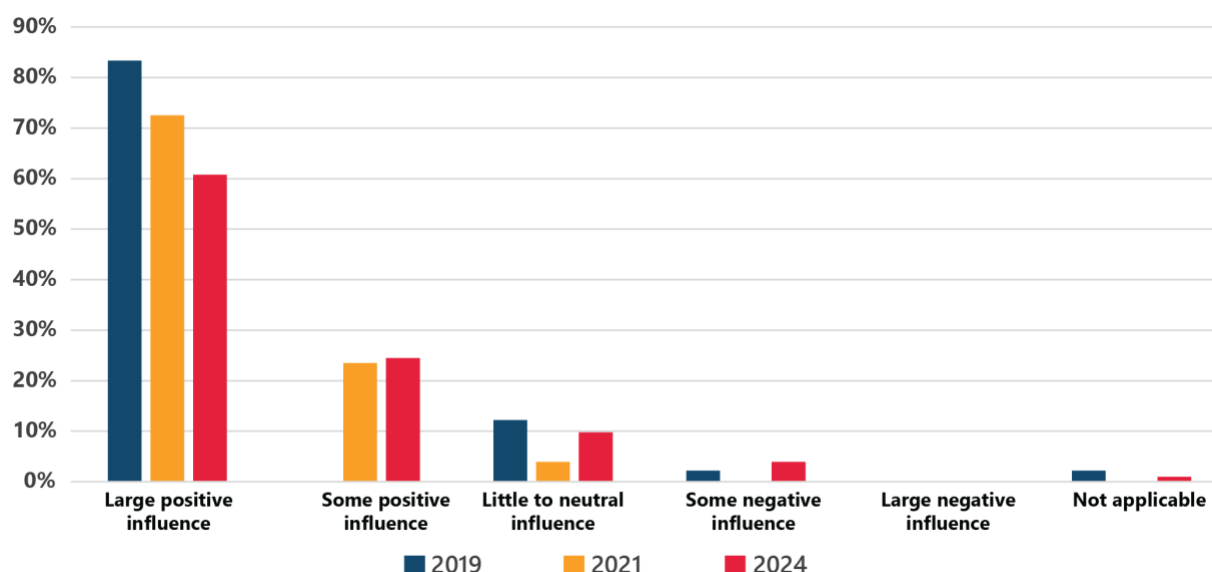


Figure 10: Influence of relationship with program officer on grantee partners over time
Source: Survey data from 2019, 2021, and 2024, n=110

This decline in the Ford Foundation/PO’s positive influence was also echoed by data from the Grantee Perception Report published by the CEP in 2022. When asked, “*How comfortable do you feel approaching the Foundation if a problem arises?*,” BUILD grantee partners rated their level of comfort on a scale from 1 (“Not at all comfortable”) to 7 (“Extremely comfortable”) at 6.38 in 2022, compared to 6.44 in 2020 and 6.45 in 2017. The same slight downward trend was also observed for answers to the questions “*Overall, how responsive was Foundation staff?*,” “*To what extent did the Foundation exhibit trust in your organization’s staff during this grant?*,” and “*To what extent did the Foundation exhibit respectful interaction during this grant?*”⁸⁸ While this was not a dramatic decline in trust between the foundation and its grantee partners, it did underline a change in PO-grantee partner relationship for some BUILD partners over time.

Additionally, as shown in figure 11, the evaluation team found that **the absence of further funding and the lack of clarity about Life After BUILD Support (LABS) status both strongly correlated with a less positive reported influence of the program officer (PO) on BUILD partners.**

⁸⁸ The significance level of these CEP results is above 0.05, which implies that the confidence level is lower than the conventional 95%, meaning that the observed results are not statistically significant and should be interpreted with caution.

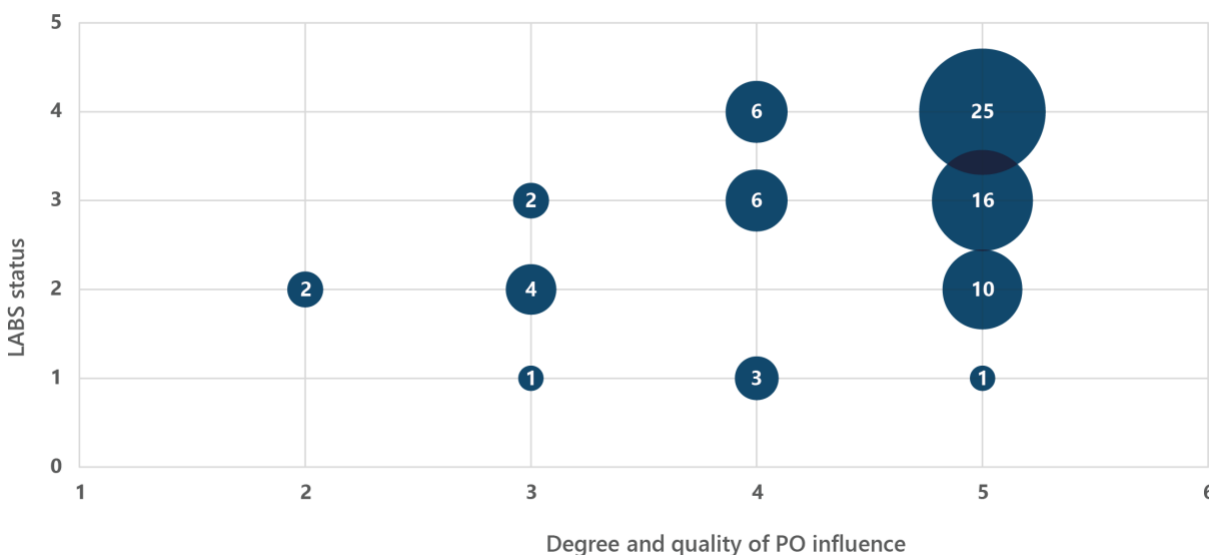


Figure 11: Correlation between PO-grantee partner relationship and LABS

Degree and quality of PO influence measured using the scale: 1=Large negative influence; 2=Some negative influence; 3=Little or neutral influence; 4=Some positive influence; 5=Large positive influence. **LABS status** measured using the scale: 1=No further Ford Foundation funding; 2=Not been notified; 3=Received non-BUILD funding; 4=Nominated for BUILD 2.0. Source: Survey data (2024), n=100

While the relationship with program officers remained one of the most positively influential components of BUILD (as shown in figure 9), the decline over the years, from 83% in 2019 to 61% in 2024 (as shown in figure 10) seems to be driven by grantee partners who experienced a lack of clarity or limited communication related to the end of BUILD 1.0, highlighting the importance of the role that program officers can play in supporting sustainable transitions and navigating complex funding environments.

5. Insights for change

To conclude, while findings provide rich evidence of the extent to which grantee partners' resilience and impact have changed since BUILD and the multiple ways that BUILD contributed to those changes, future research could explore whether there are additional factors that contribute. This could include interrogating how BUILD supported or interacted with those factors and how different elements of BUILD (multiyear funding, flexible funding, peer support, program officer relationship, timeliness and content of conversations about Life After BUILD 1.0 Support [LABS], etc.), specifically contributed to sustaining or hindering mission impact in the long term.

We also have emerging evidence that a second BUILD grant supports consolidated gains made, reflecting the fact that for many organizational and mission impact changes, five years is a good start but not long enough to fully institutionalize and sustain change. The lack of planning for or clarity about Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS) has disrupted some partners' progress in ways that seem avoidable. Future inquiry could look at which LABS practices and program officer actions were most effective at identifying and implementing ways to sustain progress for long-term change.

In this section, we present the evaluation team’s reflections and insights regarding the influence of the BUILD approach on social justice organizations over time. They are based on the findings of this longitudinal evaluation (2022–25) and the developmental evaluation of BUILD, which took place between 2018 and 2022.

Insight 1: BUILD’s support for institutional strengthening enabled grantee partners to become stronger and more resilient.

BUILD gave grantee partners the latitude to dedicate resources to institution building—a critical area often overshadowed by the imperative to achieve program objectives in traditional funding approaches. The financial and human investments in institutional strengthening **compounded over time into deeper and more sustained organizational resilience**. Grantee partners reported deepening resilience across strategic clarity and coherence, internal systems and processes, people and organizational culture, leadership and governance, and strategic partnerships. BUILD grantee partners in the Global South, for whom flexible and multiyear funding is the exception, experienced BUILD support as an important form of financial resilience that allowed them to invest in core institutional capabilities, deepen resilience, and increase impact.

Insight 2: Flexible and multiyear funding grew organizations’ resilience and mission impact.

How the Ford Foundation funded BUILD grantee partners was pivotal to partners’ ability to achieve impact. Grantee partners consistently reported that multiyear, unrestricted, and flexible funding increased their ability to make strategic decisions and **supported organizational priorities that advanced mission impact**. Flexible, long-term funding enabled grantee partners to focus strategically on social change rather than on fundraising and managing the complexity of disconnected projects with short-term funding, unrealistic timelines, and the administrative burden of reporting requirements. These funding features were especially impactful in the Global South, where many funders direct—and sometimes control—the work of social change actors through highly restricted funding requirements.

BUILD grantee partners across regions reported that **the flexibility of BUILD funds often mattered more than the size of the grant**. Organizations with little or no unrestricted funding found a BUILD grant valuable even when it was a small portion of a large annual budget. Flexible, multiyear funding also reinforced the **value of a trust-based approach to grant making**. BUILD underscored the notion that organizations—not just projects and programs—create and sustain change and should receive long-term attention and funding.

Lastly, BUILD’s nonfinancial support also allowed grantee partners to gain new insights, find peer support, establish partnerships, and gain new skills. While access and uptake of BUILD’s cohorts, convenings, and technical assistance (CCTA) offerings⁸⁹ varied significantly, those who benefited from such support valued the thought partnership, capacity strengthening, and collaboration with allies and peers.⁹⁰ Further, institutional strengthening, organizational resilience, and mission impact were highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. When grantee partners became more

⁸⁹ While each BUILD grantee partner was able to use their grant to hire their own technical assistance, the BUILD program provided nonfinancial support in the form of establishing cohorts, organizing convenings, and providing access to technical assistance.

⁹⁰ Evidence from the previous BUILD evaluation (2018–22).

resilient and impactful, they invested further in strengthening their organizations so they could seize opportunities and take on further challenges.

Insight 3: The evidence supported BUILD’s Theory of Change, which states that more resilient institutions and networks lead to mission impact.

BUILD’s flexible, multiyear funding and dedicated support for institutional strengthening enabled grantee partners to invest in key capabilities to better achieve programming goals, reach operational efficiency, manage risks, and withstand external challenges. These capabilities included but were not limited to vision, strategy, and program development; financial systems and policies; leadership and human resources; governance and board development; monitoring and evaluation; and digital security. Over the course of the evaluation, grantee partners shifted from reporting early signs of impact—such as establishing the conditions and pathways for change—to demonstrating measurable organizational and mission impact gains. In some cases, BUILD enabled organizations to achieve impact more quickly than they would have otherwise and supported initiatives that could not be funded through other, more restrictive or shorter-term grants. Additionally, BUILD strengthened grantee partners’ ability to expand partnerships and deepen the work of networks and coalitions, amplifying mission impact beyond what any single organization could achieve alone.

The evaluation provided strong evidence that the **BUILD Theory of Change is effective, particularly in creating the enabling conditions for mission impact.** Grantee partners reported a wide variety of tangible outcomes, including winning key policy reforms and legal challenges, supporting network partners to organize marginalized communities, shaping public narratives, ensuring access to fundamental rights and services, building coalitions for social justice campaigns, and responding to urgent needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, measuring impact beyond the organizational level remained complex. Social change is an iterative, long-term process, and isolating BUILD’s specific contributions from broader systemic forces presented methodological challenges. While some examples suggested that BUILD’s influence extended beyond individual organizations, more time and deeper analysis are needed to fully capture the program’s role in driving field-level and systemic change.

Specifically, two types of mission impact were observed over the course of the evaluation:

- **Expanded impact** through which partners consolidated existing strategy and/or programs and/or created impact in an additional area of focus (strategically or geographically)
- **Sustained impact** in the face of significant external challenges and attacks—e.g., attacks on freedom of expression, restrictions from authoritarian governments, unpredictable political and economic environment, COVID-19 pandemic, etc.

BUILD contributed to organizations’ ability to achieve impact **in all contexts, across organizational sizes, levels of BUILD’s share in the annual budget, geography, and BUILD cohort year.** Notably, BUILD support contributed to mission impact to a greater extent for organizations based in the Global South and for organizations where BUILD comprised a high share of their annual budget (>30%).

Insight 4: Despite the clear successes of the BUILD approach, the evaluation team noted several important limitations.

First, **the relationships between grantee partners and Ford Foundation program officers had a significant influence on BUILD's effectiveness over time.** During BUILD's early years, these relationships strengthened as BUILD created time and space for transparent and collaborative discussions about grantee partners' organizational strategies and challenges. However, in recent years, some grantee partners have reported disruptions related to Ford Foundation staff transitions and decreasing dialogue with program officers, particularly toward the end of BUILD 1.0 grants. When these relationships weakened, it disrupted the progress of grantee partners and made it difficult for program officers to fulfill their roles as thought partners and co-strategists.

Second, **the lack of clarity around post-BUILD funding can destabilize partners, interrupting progress and future planning.** Planning for the transition from BUILD to post-BUILD support mattered, regardless of what support followed (if any). Without clear information, grantee partners struggled to plan effectively for the second half of their grant period and beyond, limiting their ability to maximize the benefits of BUILD funding. In anticipation of the end of their BUILD grant and in the absence of clear guidance, some grantee partners began reducing their BUILD investments as early as year three of their five-year grant, curtailing the full potential impact of their work.

Third, while it is too early to determine generalizable patterns of differences between grantee partners who received only one BUILD grant and those who received two, early indications suggested that **additional BUILD support helped organizations transition from strengthening internal systems to focusing on strategic growth and programmatic depth.** Grantee partners who received a second BUILD grant were more likely to report that BUILD contributed to their organization's ability to achieve mission impact than those who transitioned to non-BUILD funding or were still awaiting notification. This may be because program officers prioritized additional BUILD funding for grantee partners demonstrating the most growth or impact, or it may be that known future funding influenced grantee partners' confidence in their long-term sustainability.

Taken together, these findings highlighted the critical role of **program officer relationships, transparent funding transitions, and sustained investment** in maximizing BUILD's effectiveness. Addressing these factors could further enhance the program's long-term impact and ensure that organizations are well-positioned to continue their work beyond BUILD support.

***Insight 5:* The field of philanthropy can accelerate social change by expanding grant-making practices toward multiyear, flexible, institutionally focused grant making supported by nonfinancial support such as networking, cohort learning, technical assistance, and strong, trust-based program officer relationships.**

The promise of BUILD to strengthen organizational resilience and advance mission impact can be subdued if a grantee partner has to manage other short-term and restrictive funding. If a broader spectrum of philanthropy adopted the core principles of multiyear, flexible funding, including support for institutional strengthening, grantee partners could focus more on mission-aligned priorities that advance collective goals for social change. In short, if more philanthropic actors chose to implement BUILD-like support, the field would make more progress in creating positive and equitable social change.

Appendix 1: Methodology

A1.1 Overall approach

In the design of this study, the NIRAS evaluation team, with the Ford Foundation's BUILD team and Office of Strategy and Learning, committed to conducting an evaluation that is:

- Equitable
- Ethical
- Participatory
- Rigorous
- Impartial

Equitable Evaluation means that all voices have an opportunity to be heard and honored, relationships between evaluators and partners are trustworthy and respectful, and the study design is rooted in questions that matter to partners and in methods that enable them to tell their stories fully. Equitable evaluations demonstrate methodological rigor by integrating principles of justice, inclusion, and fairness into every phase of the research process, ensuring that the evaluation is scientifically sound and socially responsible. This approach deepens rigor by prioritizing the perspectives of marginalized groups, particularly those most affected by the issues being studied, thus enhancing the relevance and accuracy of the findings. Equitable evaluations use culturally responsive methods that consider diverse social, historical, and cultural contexts, which helps prevent biases arising from traditional, one-size-fits-all methodologies. They also emphasize transparency, reflexivity, and accountability by ensuring that power dynamics are addressed and that all stakeholders, including participants, have meaningful input in shaping the evaluation process. Our team valued both qualitative and quantitative data equally and ensured that the evaluation was participatory and inclusive. Our team held as a value that equitable evaluations offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding, which is essential for producing valid, reliable, and actionable insights for the Ford Foundation.

NIRAS evaluations are conducted with **integrity, respect, and high ethical standards**. The design of the evaluation is attentive to the cultural, political, socioeconomic, and environmental contexts in which the grantee partners operate. The evaluation team respects the grantee partners' right to provide information in confidence, commits to protecting any sensitive data so that it is not traceable to its source, and always ensures written consent before quoting any respondent.

The evaluation's **participatory approach** has been materialized mainly through extensive co-creation during the design phase, the data collection phase, and the reporting phase (see A1.4 Co-creation section below). The NIRAS evaluation team has kept the Ford Foundation informed about the progress regularly through monthly virtual meetings, and annual in-person meetings (in June 2023 and March 2024).

The evaluation has applied **methodological rigor** throughout the evaluation process, mainly through triangulation of data sources and validation of findings. Data sources are cross-validated, and their validity and reliability are critically assessed. Evaluative findings are evidence-based and quality-assured. The data sources that have been collected and analyzed in the evaluation are described in detail in this appendix.

Finally, the evaluation team maintains **independence, impartiality and objectivity**, by ensuring the evaluation limits bias and external influences; promoting a transparent evaluation process; co-creating methods; and communicating limitations to the Ford Foundation and its grantee partners.

A1.2 Key objectives

Overall, the study seeks to fulfill **two objectives** presented in the Ford Foundation’s request for proposals:

1. To measure and describe whether, how, and to what extent BUILD supports partners to demonstrably increase their resilience and leverage it to deepen their impact on people’s lives and reduce inequality.
2. To generate learning about BUILD-like grant making for partners and their fields. The key audiences for this learning include partners, the Ford Foundation, and the broader philanthropic community. The aim of the study is to provide the Ford Foundation with valuable information as the Foundation seeks to mainstream the BUILD program across the organization.

The study includes partners that have received both BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0 funding, as well as BUILD 1.0 partners that did not receive a BUILD 2.0 grant or additional Ford Foundation support.

Given the heterogeneity of the partners, their work, and their contexts, there is no single measure of impact or BUILD contribution to be “tested” in the evaluation. Rather, the evaluation findings point to patterns of BUILD’s contribution to organizations’ abilities and effectiveness at creating impact in the world.

The original proposal for this study included four learning questions (with sub-questions). **These questions were revised and updated through the co-creation process** (described below) as the evaluation team, BUILD partners, philanthropic partners, and the Ford Foundation program staff and BUILD team worked to best reflect the purposes and objectives of the study. The original evaluation design and plan included two waves of data collection. It was later decided by the Ford Foundation that the evaluation would be concluded after the first wave and hence that this report would constitute the end report rather than an interim report.

A1.3 Learning questions

Theory of Change questions: What, if any, is the relationship between BUILD support, increasing resilience, and mission impact for partner organizations?

1. Mission impact: How and to what extent did BUILD support increase mission impact?
2. Organizational resilience: How and to what extent did BUILD support increase organizational resilience, including financial resilience?

Mission impact questions: What has been the BUILD partner organization’s impact since beginning to receive BUILD support?

1. To what extent has the impact changed from pre-BUILD?
2. Does BUILD contribute to strengthening and sustaining mission impact for partner organizations? If so, how and to what extent?
3. What contributed, and how, to BUILD partner organizations’ mission-related impacts? To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to the organizations’ ability to achieve mission impact?

Organizational resilience questions: Does BUILD contribute to long-term organizational resilience for organizations? If so, how and to what extent?

1. How has the BUILD grantee partners’ resilience evolved since beginning BUILD support?
2. What has contributed to or enabled BUILD grantee partner organizations’ resilience to evolve?
3. To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to the BUILD partner organization’s ability to sustain changes in organizational resilience?
4. To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to the BUILD partner organization’s ability to sustain advances in the organization’s financial resilience?

Differential influence questions: What are the differences in BUILD’s influence between partners who received five years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0) and those who received ten years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0)?⁹¹

1. How long does a BUILD investment continue to impact a BUILD grantee partner organization? Does the impact wane over time, compound/increase, or remain steady?
2. What factors affect the duration and nature of BUILD’s long-term effect?
3. What is the relationship, over time, between resilience and mission impact?

A1.4 Co-creation

The evaluation team’s approach to designing the study has been based on the understanding that **a collaborative framework identifies the best approaches and methods** for collecting meaningful and pertinent insights. The collaboration framework included six co-creation convenings with partners, the philanthropic community, and Ford Foundation program officers and directors, specifically:

- One virtual convening with Ford Foundation peers in the philanthropic community (February 2023)
- Two virtual convenings with BUILD partner organizations (April 2023)
- One in-person convening with BUILD partner organizations (April 2023)
- Two virtual convenings with Ford Foundation staff (May 2023)

⁹¹ While organizations that received second BUILD awards will have received eight years of BUILD support, this evaluation will only consider a maximum of eight years, aligned with the duration of the evaluation: 2016–24.

- Two virtual meetings⁹² with a program partner advisory team (PPAT) to review evaluation plan and methodology, including a mid-data collection meeting to advise on survey implementation. (September and December 2023)

The convenings were designed for stakeholders to think together about the learning questions and the best ways to measure and communicate mission impact, organizational resilience, the relationship between the two, and the sustainability of both. The process was also designed to ensure that the evaluation provides value to BUILD grantee partner organizations, philanthropic colleagues, and the Ford Foundation staff. The discussions also had ample space for participants to raise additional considerations for the evaluation.

A1.5 Indicators and data matrix

During the collaborative planning phase, and informed by the co-creation processes, the evaluation team designed **a data matrix tailored for the BUILD longitudinal evaluation as part of the evaluation plan**. The matrix aligned the learning questions, proposed indicators, data collection methods to be used, and the source of information, including the universe and sample size for each method, as well as a description of the triangulation and validation process. This matrix was refined during the co-creation process with input from the Ford Foundation, philanthropic partners, and BUILD partners. The three matrices below outline the data collected and analyzed.

Table A1: Evaluation data matrix: Mission impact

Mission impact: What has been the BUILD grantee partner's impact since beginning to receive BUILD support?	
Evaluation question	Themes and indicators
To what extent has the impact changed from pre-BUILD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts, and levels of impact, BUILD grantee partners contributed to during (and after where applicable) receiving BUILD support • Changes in these impacts during and after BUILD 1.0
Does BUILD contribute to strengthening and sustaining mission impact for partner organizations? If so, how and to what extent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUILD contributions to mission impact • Elements of BUILD that contribute to sustained mission impact
What contributed, and how, to BUILD grantee partner organizations' mission-related impacts? To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to the BUILD grantee partners' ability to achieve mission impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional contributors to mission impact • Connection between BUILD support and additional contributors

⁹² The PPAT was also convened for two more virtual meetings during the data collection and reporting phases (May and Oct 2024).

Table A2: Evaluation data matrix: Organizational resilience

Organizational resilience: How has the BUILD grantee partner organization's resilience evolved since beginning to receive BUILD support?	
Evaluation question	Themes and indicators
How has the BUILD grantee partner organization's resilience evolved since beginning to receive BUILD support? Does BUILD contribute to long-term organizational resilience for organizations? If so, how and to what extent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements of organizational resilience identified by BUILD grantee partners BUILD's contribution to supporting the different elements of organizational resilience
To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to or enable BUILD grantee partners' resilience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability of the changes in resilience to which BUILD contributed Elements of BUILD that contribute to sustained resilience
To what extent, if any, did BUILD contribute to the BUILD grantee partner organization's ability to sustain advances in the organization's financial resilience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements of financial resilience identified by BUILD grantee partners Contribution of financial resilience to organizational resilience

Table A3: Evaluation data matrix: Differential influence

Differential Influence: What are the differences in BUILD's influence between partners who received five years of BUILD support (BUILD 1.0) and those who received ten years of BUILD support years (BUILD 1.0 and BUILD 2.0) ⁹³ ?	
Evaluation question	Themes and indicators
How long does a BUILD investment continue to impact a BUILD grantee partner organization? Does the impact wane over time, compound/increase, or remain steady?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term impact of BUILD support on organizational resilience and mission impact Additionality of the second BUILD grant compared to the first BUILD grant
What factors affect the duration and nature of BUILD's long-term effect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors highlighted by BUILD grantee partners that contribute to sustaining the effect of a BUILD investment in the organization
What is the relationship, over time, between resilience and mission impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences in organizational resilience and mission impact between partners who received different types and length of funding

⁹³ While organizations who received second BUILD awards will have received 10 years of BUILD support, this evaluation will only consider a maximum of 8 and a half years: 2016-2025.

Data sources:

- Online survey
- Virtual semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- BUILD 1.0 evaluation findings
- Ford Foundation program evaluations
- FLUXX data including grantee partner narrative reports and financial reports
- Third-party data (evaluations commissioned by BUILD grantee partners of their work, news articles, government reports, social media, websites)

Universe and sample size:

- All 2016–19 BUILD 1.0 grantee partners (n=289); disaggregation by geography, Ford Foundation program, BUILD grant size, annual budget, length of BUILD support. Survey responses collected: 118 responses, 110 of which were complete, for a 38% response rate
- Interview sample of 32 representative partners; 27 interviews were completed
- Four focus group discussions with a total of 27 participating partners

Data collection methods:

- Online survey with all 2016–19 BUILD 1.0 grantee partners
- 90–120 minutes virtual semi-structured interviews with representative grantee partners focused on mission impact, resilience, and the relationship between them
- Online focus group discussions on:
 1. BUILD’s influence on financial resilience for Global South grantee partners
 2. The relationship between BUILD and changes in mission impact
- Review of third-party data as well as material referenced by grantee partner during or following their interview
- Review of FLUXX data
- Online focus group discussions on selected themes based on survey analysis (e.g., focus group with grantee partners about how long a BUILD investment continues to have an impact on their organizations)
- Online grantee partner interviews to understand the difference between those who received BUILD 1.0 only or BUILD 1.0 and 2.0, other Ford Foundation support, or no additional Ford support

Triangulation and validation:

Triangulation between:

- Online survey
- Focus group discussions
- Third-party data
- Ford Foundation evaluations
- FLUXX data
- BUILD grantee partner interviews
- Site visit
- BUILD 1.0 evaluation findings
- Co-sense making of the data with Ford Foundation team and partner advisory group

A1.6 Data sources and data collection methods

The evaluation team made use of learnings from the previous evaluation and piloted the data collection tools with the BUILD Program Partners Advisory Team (PPAT) and the BUILD team before launching data collection. Each successive layer of engagement with BUILD grantee partners—from the survey to the interviews to the focus group discussion—enabled the evaluation team to probe more deeply into the experiences of partners and give nuance to the analysis and study findings so far. It is important to note that all data collected during this evaluation were analyzed in conjunction with the findings from the original developmental evaluation, as well as additional secondary sources, for comprehensive context.

The evaluation collected and analyzed data from the following sources:

- Online survey
- Virtual semi-structured interviews with BUILD grantee partners
- Focus group discussions
- Third-party data (evaluations, news articles, government reports, social media, websites)
- Ford Foundation program evaluations
- Ford Foundation FLUX data (Ford Foundation grant management system; grantee partner and program officer reports and financial reports to the Ford Foundation)
- BUILD 1.0 evaluation

To effectively explore the evaluation objectives for the BUILD program, each method contributed to both methodological rigor and equity by ensuring that diverse voices and experiences were captured and that the findings were comprehensive, reliable, and actionable.

Online survey

The universe for this study was all BUILD partners who received BUILD grants in 2016 (n=141), 2017 (n=56), 2018 (n=21), and 2019 (n=71) for a total universe of 289 partners. The online survey tool is an important data source for the longitudinal evaluation since it includes questions asked in the earlier developmental evaluation and can be used to track change over time. The survey was sent out to all 289 grantee partners from BUILD cohorts 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

The online survey allowed for the collection of data from a wide range of BUILD partners, ensuring broad representation and inclusivity. We also provided the survey in English and Spanish. The survey's structured format ensured that all participants answered the same core questions, allowing for systematic comparisons across partners. It also provided the opportunity to gather both quantitative data and qualitative data through open-ended questions. The online format allowed for participation regardless of physical location or resources, minimizing logistical barriers.

We received 118 responses (110 complete responses were included in the analysis) from BUILD partners. The survey responses were representative across cohort, grant size, program, annual budget size, and post-BUILD 1.0 funding status, with an underrepresentation of US partners (38% instead of 57%) and a slight overrepresentation of Global South partners (48% instead of 39%).

Virtual semi-structured interviews with BUILD grantee partners

Following the completion and analysis of surveys, our team crafted interview protocols to delve deeper into understanding BUILD's unique contributions to grantee partners' endeavors. BUILD grantee partner interviews served to provide clarifying examples of the relationship between organizational resilience and mission impact, and BUILD's influence.

Semi-structured interviews, conducted virtually, enabled the evaluation team to gather stories and narratives directly from the grantee partners and ask follow-up questions when relevant. They offered the depth needed to explore context-specific experiences and nuances that cannot easily be captured through a survey. The semi-structured nature of the interviews enhanced rigor by allowing for a combination of fixed and flexible questioning, which probed deeper into participants' unique situations and uncovered rich, detailed qualitative data. For example, interviewees described how BUILD had supported their organizational resilience in ways specific to their local contexts. By conducting interviews virtually, equity was advanced by reducing barriers such as travel costs, making it easier for partners with limited time and resources to participate. Additionally, interviews allowed participants to share their experiences in a conversational format, which was more culturally responsive and respectful of diverse communication styles. The rigorous approach in this method came from the depth of engagement and the ability to follow up on specific themes that emerged from the participant's responses. As necessary, participants were able to conduct the interview in Spanish or English.

We interviewed 27 partners, selected randomly, stratified by geography, cohort year, grant size, and post-BUILD 1.0 funding status. Each interview was conducted virtually using Zoom and lasted 90–120 minutes. The interviews were with the CEO/executive director and/or other senior executive staff with deep knowledge of the BUILD grant and how it influenced the organization. In some cases, the staff members who had initially worked with BUILD had moved on and the lessons learned were as conveyed and perceived by newer staff.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview tool with 22 questions organized into three main groupings: Mission Impact, Organizational Resilience, and Financial Resilience. Each group of questions sought to understand the grantee partner's overall experience of the topic, changes over the past five to eight years (since pre-BUILD), how and how much BUILD influenced the topic, and specific examples of their experience. We also discussed their insights into a counterfactual question about what would have been different if they had received support that had been restricted, annually renewable, programmatically focused, and absent of any CCTA opportunities. The interviews finished with a discussion of the partner's process of planning for the end of their BUILD 1.0 grant.

We analyzed the interviews through a multistep process designed to ensure thoroughness, collaboration, and the incorporation of multiple perspectives. First, we conducted a detailed review of the transcripts from the interviews, paying close attention to recurring themes, key insights, and specific examples shared by participants. To further deepen our understanding, we held two internal sense-making meetings with the interview facilitators and notetakers, where we collaboratively interpreted the data, discussed emerging patterns, and identified areas that required further exploration or clarification.

After generating preliminary findings from the interview data, we shared them with the Ford Foundation for initial feedback. This step ensured that the emerging insights were aligned with the evaluation objectives and allowed us to incorporate any additional context or considerations from Ford. Following this, we hosted a sense-making session with Ford and other stakeholders, including the program partner advisory team (PPAT) members, to collaboratively refine the findings and gather further input.

Focus group discussions

After interviews were completed and initially analyzed, the evaluation team organized focus group discussions to facilitate collaborative exploration of the factors underpinning mission impact, including the influence of BUILD and the significance and dynamics of financial resilience in the Global South.

The focus groups provided a platform for collective learning, where BUILD partners engaged in dialogue, shared experiences, and reflection on the program's impact. Focus groups fostered a sense of shared ownership and contributed to a collective understanding of how BUILD's support affected partners across different sectors and regions. Focus groups added depth by facilitating interactions that brought out insights otherwise not captured in one-on-one interviews or surveys. They allowed for the exploration of differences and commonalities among participants, making it possible to generate more nuanced conclusions. We also provided the opportunity to participate in a Spanish-language focus group and used translation services when needed.

We conducted four different focus groups in February 2024. 27 grantee partners participated.

The first two groups focused on the most significant ways BUILD contributed to the support of grantee partners' mission impact. Additionally, these groups discussed funding changes during and after their BUILD 1.0 grant and plans looking forward. One group comprised only grantee partners who had received further Ford Foundation support after their BUILD grant. The second group comprised partners who either did not know the status of additional support or had been informed that they would not receive any future Ford Foundation support after BUILD 1.0.

The second pair of groups focused on financial resilience for organizations based and operating outside of Europe, Canada, and the United States. One group was made up of organizations from Africa, MENA, and Indonesia. The other group was conducted in Spanish and made up of groups from Central and South America. Because of the decision to focus on these types of organizations in the focus groups discussing financial resilience, a smaller share of focus group participants was made up of US-based organizations.

These groups discussed the meaning of financial resilience and how BUILD may or may not have contributed to and/or challenged each organization's financial resilience. They also talked about the financial and donor context in which they work, as well as local and national political constraints on funding sources. Finally, the participants discussed how they planned or were planning for the end of their BUILD 1.0 grant and the impact of that transition on their financial resilience.

Third-party data (evaluations, news articles, government reports, social media, websites)

Secondary data was gathered from the Ford Foundation, grantee partners and third parties and reviewed to confirm or elaborate on the stories of impact shared by BUILD partners and patterns observed in the primary data. This data was gathered from the following sources.

- Grant reports and financial reports generated by grantee partners and assembled by Ford Foundation program officers
- Ford Foundation program evaluations that included BUILD grantee partners and considered BUILD's effects
- Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) grantee perception reports
- News articles and reports from third parties, such as media or governmental agencies
- Independent evaluations commissioned by BUILD grantee partners of their work
- Professional articles and other studies that deal directly with the topics related to our learning questions

This third-party data provided an external, independent perspective that supported the triangulation of findings. The research drew on multiple types of data to validate or challenge findings from the primary data collection. This external validation was key to ensuring that the findings were not limited to the perspectives of BUILD partners alone. Third-party data allowed for the inclusion of voices and contexts beyond the immediate BUILD network, such as media reports on how partners' work was perceived publicly or government reports highlighting broader societal impacts. This holistic approach ensured that a diversity of perspectives was considered.

Ford Foundation program evaluations

The evaluation team was able to draw on evaluations of other Ford Foundation programs for a comparative analysis, deepening the rigor by contextualizing BUILD's outcomes within the broader philanthropic strategies of the foundation. This cross-program comparison helped gather further information and evidence about the BUILD approach in different contexts. In terms of equity, this method allowed the evaluation to explore whether BUILD was uniquely positioned to serve certain types of partners (e.g., smaller, community-based organizations) compared to other initiatives by the Ford Foundation.

FLUXX data (grantee partner narrative and financial reports)

FLUXX data from the Ford Foundation grant management system, which included partners' narrative and financial reports, provided longitudinal data that offered both qualitative and quantitative insights into partners' strategic and operational growth over time. This analysis was limited by the fact that annual organizational financial reports were not available from most sampled grantee partners and were seldom available from multiple years (for more information, see A1.9 Limitations section below). Narrative reports allowed partners to tell their own stories in their own words, ensuring that their voices were central to the evaluation. The available combination of financial and narrative data contributed to the evaluation's understanding of how BUILD's support was leveraged, balancing quantitative measures of progress with qualitative stories of change.

BUILD 1.0 evaluation findings

Using findings from the previous BUILD evaluation provided a critical point of comparison, ensuring that the current evaluation built on past learning, offering continuity and a baseline from which changes and improvements could be measured. The ability to assess shifts in resilience and impact provided a more thorough understanding of the program's long-term effectiveness.

A1.7 Triangulation

To enhance the rigor of the analysis, we triangulated the interview findings with data from the online survey, the interviews, the focus group discussions, and the third-party sources. This triangulation allowed us to validate or challenge the emerging themes, ensuring that the conclusions were supported by multiple data sources and offering a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. This layered approach to analysis strengthened the reliability and depth of our conclusions.

Triangulation of quantitative data (online survey) with qualitative data (focus group and interviews) and third-party data including verification, helped the evaluation team determine where and how BUILD contributed to organizational strength, resilience, and mission impact among BUILD partners.

A1.8 Sampling and representation

By the completion of the data collection phase, we had a total of 246 grantee partner engagements with 160 different grantee partners (55% of the full cohort).

The interview sample was selected using a stratified random sample to ensure representation by geography, cohort year, size, and status of post BUILD 1.0 support from the Ford Foundation (e.g., received BUILD 2.0 funding, other Ford Foundation funding [non-BUILD], or no further Ford Foundation funding). When a sampled organization was not able to complete the interview, another organization was substituted from the random sample list, prioritizing representation in terms of geography and cohort year.

Focus group participants were also invited based on a similar stratified random sample that also prioritized diversity of program office. In the case of focus groups, we invited 15 representative participants to each group to account for schedule conflicts (wide range of time zones) and declined participation.

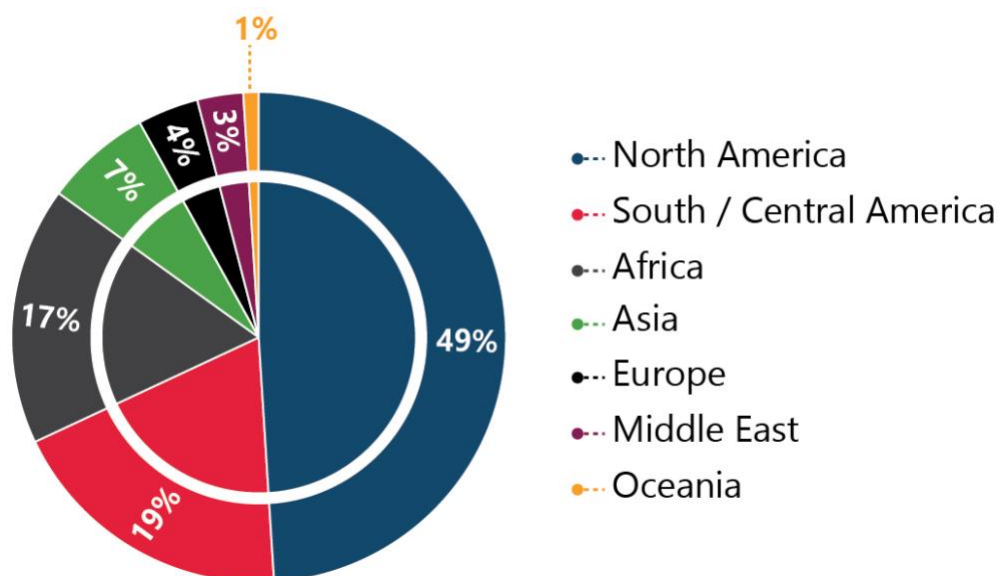


Figure A1: Geographic representation (home base) of BUILD grantee partners participating in data collection (n=160)

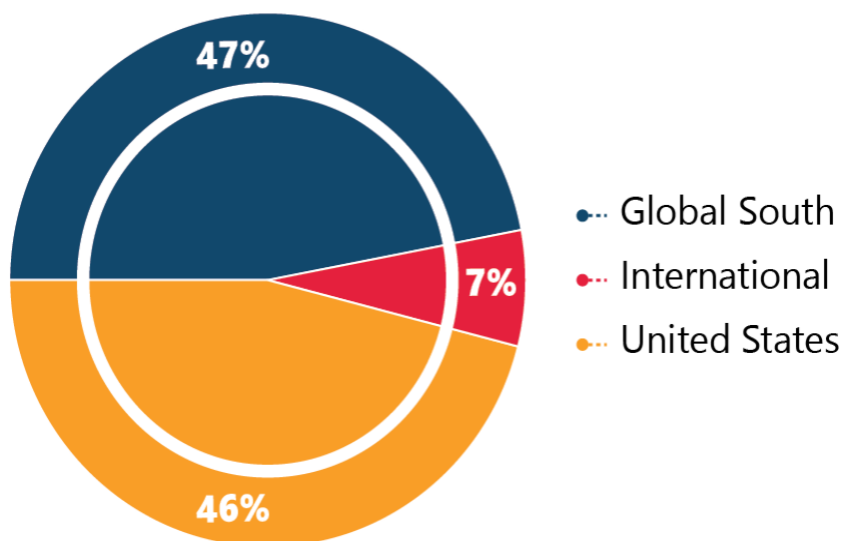


Figure A2: Division of BUILD grantee partners participating in data collection between main geographic categories (GS; International; US) (n=160)

Figure A3 below presents the number of grantee partners who participated in the program partner advisory team (PPAT), co-creation events, interviews, focus group discussion, and survey. Several grantee partners participated in multiple activities. 160 individual grantee partner organizations (55% of the sample universe) engaged 246 times in one or more of the data collection points. 118 individual grantee partner organizations participated by responding to the survey, and out of those, 110 complete responses were collected and included in the evidence base/analysis.

<i>Advisory team</i>	15
<i>Co-creation (online)</i>	37
<i>Co-creation (in Dakar)</i>	26
<i>Interviews</i>	27
<i>Focus groups</i>	23
<i>Survey</i>	118

Figure A3: Number of participating BUILD grantee partners per evaluation activity
 *Note: 160 individual grantee partners participated in one or several evaluation activities.

A1.9 Limitations

All participation was voluntary, and grantee partners had no obligation to participate. This introduced some self-selection bias, although no bias patterns emerged beyond the large geographic location categories. The evaluation team mitigated possible bias using stratified random sampling, representative substitution of sample nonparticipants, and compensation for time spent. Importantly, grantee partners that received further funding, those that had not been notified of future funding status, and those that received no further funding were all equally likely to respond.

The ratio of Global North to Global South-based grantee partners participating in any type of evaluation activity was largely representative (see figure A2 above). All three primary data sources achieved a high degree of our desired representation except for US-based and GS-based grantee partners in the survey. For the survey, the sample is representative of the study universe across the following variables: cohort, grant size, program, annual budget size, and Life After BUILD 1.0 Support (LABS) status—with an underrepresentation of US partners (38% instead of 57%) and a slight overrepresentation of GS partners (48% instead of 39%).

The nature of the Ford Foundation’s grant making and BUILD grantee partners’ work make experimental or quasi-experimental designs impossible, limiting the evaluation’s ability to identify isolated cause and effect. There is no, and can be no, control group. We believe that with multiple methods, layered analysis, varied advisory perspectives, and triangulation/verification of data, we have been able to observe consistent patterns and make valid statements around BUILD’s contributions to organizational strength, resilience, and mission impact.

Our examination of financial resilience was limited by a lack of access to most grantee partners’ annual, organizational financial statements, making it impossible to measure change in that dimension. We did collect data that indicated that some grantee partners’ assets might not be reflected on their financial statements and that many partners’ indications of financial strength and resilience were not fully captured in these documents. For grantee partners whose organizational

financial statements we were able to access, the varied and inconsistent formats of data hindered comparability between partners over time.

Finally, the evaluation findings are limited or influenced by:

- Lack of time, budget, and methods to obtain deeper or wider third-party verification of impact beyond the BUILD grantee partners interviewed
- The unique nature and role of many BUILD grantee partners in their field, which affects their ability to leverage the impact of their own strengthening
- Importance of networks and movements in creating impact, and how BUILD grantee partners “sit” within these networks⁹⁴
- Challenge in untangling impact achieved by BUILD grantee partners and impact achieved by the broader field
- Heterogeneity of BUILD grantee partners, which can result in differentiated impacts of BUILD by factors such as region, field, organizational size, organizational type, and program office ecosystems
- Ability to distinguish the impact of large external forces such as COVID-19, racial reckoning, climate change, shrinking civil space, expanding influence of nationalism and authoritarian governments, and related backlashes to all these forces
- Ability to tease out the BUILD effect on some BUILD grantee partners who have multiple multiyear, unrestricted grants from other funders

A1.10 List of BUILD grantee partners who participated in the evaluation

Cohort Name of grantee partner

2016	A Better Balance
2016	Accountability International
2016	Akili Dada
2016	Al-Fanar Media
2016	Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS)
2016	Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC)
2016	ARTICLE 19
2016	Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)/Asian Law Caucus
2016	Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)
2016	Beijing Social Work Development Center for Facilitators
2016	Black Youth Project 100 Education Fund (BYP100)
2016	Capacity Building and Assessment Center
2016	Citizen Lab
2016	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
2016	Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG)

⁹⁴ This was explored in the “Networks and grassroots mobilizing organizations” case study in the 2022 BUILD Developmental Evaluation Final Report Annexes, p28, but was beyond the scope of the longitudinal evaluation (2022–25).

2016	Combine Resource Institution (CRI)
2016	Coordinating Body of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA)
2016	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
2016	Ettijahat- Independent Culture
2016	Family Values @ Work: A Multi-State Consortium
2016	Fern Foundation
2016	Firelight Media
2016	Fund for Global Human Rights
2016	Fundación PRISMA
2016	Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación
2016	Global Rights
2016	Global Witness
2016	Grounded Solutions Network
2016	Groundswell Fund
2016	Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH)
2016	Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
2016	Indonesian Forum for Budget Transparency (FITRA)
2016	Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA)
2016	Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir A.C. (ILSB)
2016	Instituto Socioambiental aka Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA)
2016	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
2016	Inuka Kenya Ni Sisi!
2016	Katswe Sistahood
2016	Kota Kita Foundation
2016	Mesoamerican Alliance for Peoples and Forests/Association of Forestry Communities of Petén
2016	Migration Policy Institute
2016	Mission Investors Exchange (MIE)
2016	Ms. Foundation for Women
2016	Muslim Advocates
2016	Narrative Initiative/New Venture Fund
2016	National Employment Law Project
2016	National Immigration Law Center
2016	National Women's Law Center
2016	ONG Derechos Digitales
2016	Open Government Partnership (OGP)
2016	People's Action Institute
2016	PowerSwitch Action
2016	ProPublica
2016	Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI)
2016	Rainforest Action Network (RAN)
2016	Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales (R3D)
2016	Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) United
2016	Rimisp

2016	Rockwood Leadership Institute
2016	Social Equity and Participation Center
2016	SocialTIC
2016	South Saharan Social Development Organisation (SSDO)
2016	Sphinx Organization
2016	Stichting International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
2016	StriveTogether
2016	Studio Museum in Harlem
2016	Third World Network (TWN)
2016	Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)
2016	Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)
2016	United We Dream Network
2016	Washington Center for Equitable Growth
2016	Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
2017	African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)
2017	America's Voice Education Fund (AVEF)
2017	Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
2017	Center for the Study of Law, Justice and Society (Dejusticia)
2017	Docubox - East African Documentary Film Fund
2017	ESCR-Net: International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
2017	Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
2017	Friends of Lake Turkana (FoLT)
2017	Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)
2017	Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP)
2017	Interfaith Stewardship and Advocacy on Issues Affecting Human Needs (ISIAIH)
2017	LEAP Africa
2017	Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
2017	Legal Resources Centre (LRC)
2017	Movement Strategy Center/Positive Women's Network
2017	National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
2017	Nelson Mandela Foundation
2017	PAWA254 (PAWA Initiative)
2017	Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)
2017	Purpose. Dignity. Action. (PDA), formerly, the Public Defender Association
2017	Resilience Force / National Guestworkers Alliance
2017	Shack Dwellers International (SDI)
2017	Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC)
2017	Tenure Facility
2017	Urgent Action Funds
2017	WITNESS Inc.
2017	Workers Defense Project (WDP)
2017	Yayasan Masyarakat Mandiri Film Indonesia
2017	Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)
2018	Advancement Project

- 2018 Allied Media Projects
- 2018 Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)
- 2018 CHIRAPAQ, Center for Indigenous Cultures of Peru
- 2018 Elas+ Giving for Change (Fundo Elas)
- 2018 Foro Nacional por Colombia
- 2018 Interstate Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers (MIQCB)
- 2018 Legal Agenda
- 2018 Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia
- 2018 Southern Coalition for Social Justice
- 2018 Southern Vision Alliance
- 2019 Action Center on Race and the Economy
- 2019 Alternate ROOTS
- 2019 Asociación Comisión Paz y Ecología (COPAE)
- 2019 Association for Progressive Communications
- 2019 BlackStar Projects
- 2019 Border Network for Human Rights
- 2019 Bufete Jurídico de Derechos Humanos
- 2019 Center for Reflection, Education, and Action (CREA)
- 2019 Center for Rural Strategies
- 2019 Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)
- 2019 Community Development Advocates of Detroit
- 2019 CooperAcción
- 2019 Coworker
- 2019 Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz A.C. (Serapaz)
- 2019 Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
- 2019 Disability Rights Fund
- 2019 Documental Ambulante, A.C.
- 2019 Efforts of Grace, Inc./Ashé Cultural Arts Center
- 2019 First Peoples Fund
- 2019 Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM)
- 2019 Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP)
- 2019 Gemawan
- 2019 High Country News
- 2019 If Not Us Then Who?
- 2019 Institute for Southern Studies
- 2019 Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST)
- 2019 Koahnic Broadcast Corporation
- 2019 Long-Term Investment Organization (LTIO)
- 2019 Maynard Institute
- 2019 Mexican Association for Women's Rights (Fondo Semillas)
- 2019 National Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CONPA)/Afro-Colombian Pastoral Center (CEPAC)
- 2019 National Center for Youth Law
- 2019 Native American Rights Fund (NARF)

2019 NDN Collective
2019 Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF)
2019 Paradigm Initiative
2019 Prospera: International Network of Women's Funds
2019 Public Accountability Initiative aka LittleSis
2019 Right to the City Alliance (RTTC)
2019 Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation
2019 Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO)
2019 Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic and Social Justice (SRBWI)
2019 State Voices
2019 United for Respect

Appendix 2: BUILD and financial resilience

A2.1 Defining financial resilience

A significant component of organizational resilience is financial resilience. The first evaluation (2018–22)⁹⁵ used Barbera et al.’s framework⁹⁶ for financial resilience focusing on organizations’ anticipatory and coping capabilities in response to environmental conditions and vulnerability to potential shocks from external and internal sources. This framework focuses on the organization’s financial resources. Over the course of that evaluation, the evaluation team heard grantee partners applying expanded definitions of financial resilience, which we combined into the following definition:⁹⁷

Financial resilience is the freedom, over time, to make financial decisions and the power to conduct programs in line with strategic objectives rather than having to implement external priorities such as those held by funders, public pressure, and governments.

During the current longitudinal evaluation (2022–25), this definition was affirmed as inclusive of formal financial resource metrics such as liquid unrestricted net assets (LUNA) as well as organizations’ ability to advance strategic objectives in ways that do not increase LUNA. For example, one grantee partner cited the ability to regrant BUILD funds to network partners as critical to its financial resilience, even though its bottom-line LUNA did not change over time. Another cited its ability to build and bring together a national board that included grassroots leaders with limited incomes as important to its long-term financial objectives, even though this required spending some of its BUILD support that otherwise would have been booked as a liquid unrestricted asset.

An African women’s rights organization reflecting on their organizational and financial resilience remarked: *“At the heart of achieving organizational resilience is financial resilience. It starts from that, because from the financial resilience you have independence to make those very important decisions. Because you have that luxury you can decide whether it’s human resource, whether it’s investing in infrastructure adaptability, whether it’s investing in technology, whether it’s being able to quickly innovate around, how you deliver your work. For me, this speaks to financial resilience, not just the money you are able to get but financial resilience is getting money that works for you.”*^{98, 99}

A2.2 Extent to which BUILD contributed to financial resilience

Through an online survey and interviews, the evaluation team asked grantee partners to assess the degree to which BUILD contributed to their financial resilience and how. Based on the responses to those tools, the team conducted two focus groups on financial resilience. These focus groups comprised grantee partners from Africa, Indonesia, the Middle East, South America, Central

⁹⁵ Previous BUILD evaluation (2018–22).

⁹⁶ C. Barbera, M. Jones, S. Korac, I. Saliterer and I. Steccolini, “Governmental Financial Resilience under Austerity in Austria, England and Italy: How Do Local Governments Cope with Financial Shocks?” *Public Administration* 95, no. 3 (2017): 670–697.

⁹⁷ This definition was tested and affirmed during the co-creation phase of the longitudinal evaluation (2022–25).

⁹⁸ Grantee partner interview (2024).

⁹⁹ Due to the sensitive nature of organizational finances, quotes and grantee partner examples in this appendix have all been anonymized.

America, and the US and further explored the relationship between BUILD and financial resilience in the Global South.

When asked if their organization was more financially resilient today than before the start of BUILD, 85% of grantee partners said yes in 2024, an increase from the 76% that responded affirmatively in 2021. **This indicates that organizations have built more financial resilience over time.**

In the 2024 survey, 94% of respondents stated that BUILD enhanced their ability to strengthen their financial situation to some or a large extent.¹⁰⁰ Alongside the “*ability to strengthen strategies and strategic clarity*,” this was the most cited impact of BUILD on grantee partners’ organizational resilience.

Most grantee partners reported that BUILD helped secure new funding (60% in 2019, 70% in 2021, 76% in 2024)—this was especially true for GS partners (GS 83%, US 62% in 2024). Conversely, only 4% of respondents reported that funders cite BUILD as a reason not to give funding. BUILD also helped over half of the organizations convince other funders to make their grants more flexible and/or longer term (31% in 2019, 53% in 2021, 54% in 2023–24).

All of the above factors trended upward over time, indicating that **leveraging the capacity and confidence needed to secure more, or more flexible, funding takes time to develop but does result in more flexible and/or longer-term funding.**

When asked *how* they have been able to strengthen their financial resilience with their first BUILD grant, grantee partners reported the abilities reflected in figure A4.

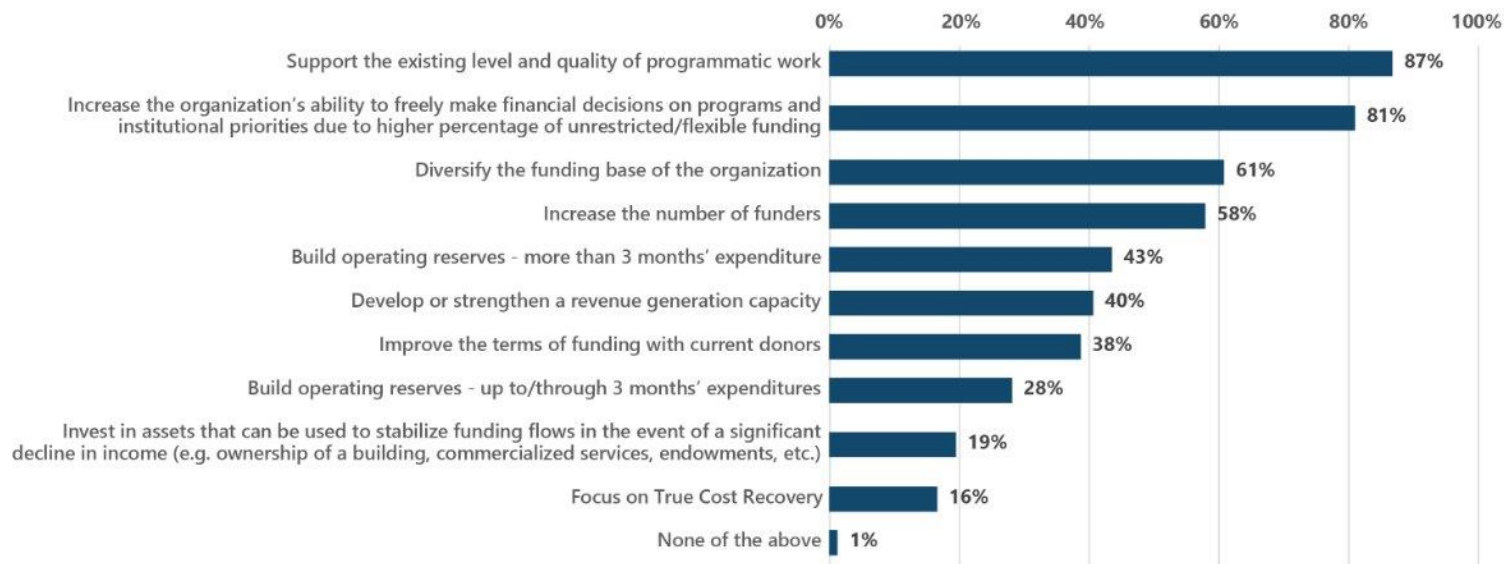


Figure A4: Responses to survey question: “Which of the following aspects of financial resilience have you been able to strengthen with contributions from your (first) BUILD grant, if any?”

¹⁰⁰ 66% said, “to a large extent” and 28% said, “to some extent.” The figures for “strengthen strategies and strategic clarity” were 78% and 16%, respectively.

One partner who rated BUILD’s impact on their financial resilience as significant said, “We would not have been able to buy our office building. It used to be a cost center (rent) and now it is a profit center because we can rent the rooms. Also, we would not have been able to change our financial management from cash basis to accruals. This is enhancing our abilities to work within the whole ecosystem, whether it’s donors, the private sector, government requirements or the economy in the country.”¹⁰¹

Some partners talked about BUILD strengthening their ability to regrant and strengthen the financial resilience of their network as well as their organizations: “[BUILD’s impact on our financial resilience] is phenomenal, excellent, on more than one level. Including our ability to attract additional funding, including core funding, and including our growth in budget and staffing levels. The BUILD brand itself gives us financial resilience. It also enabled us to get our core grants. So, BUILD very much contributed to our financial resilience. One of the things we noted is that we have also been able to increase our overall organizational budget each year. During a couple of years, we were able to get an average of 1.5 million USD with a few more core funders. Last year we actually had a new income of 2.8 million USD.”¹⁰²

A2.3 Evidence of negative effects of BUILD support on financial resilience

While BUILD’s contribution to grantee partners’ financial resilience appears to have increased over time, so did the experience of some negative effects. In 2021, half of respondents reported “no negative effects on financial resilience due, in part, to BUILD.” In 2024, **only 15% reported no negative effects**, suggesting that 85% experienced some negative effects. Interview and focus group data point to a lack of clarity on future BUILD funding and uncertainty around the sustainability of growth as the drivers of reported negative effects.

Over one-third (38%) of grantee partners reported a **lack of clarity on future BUILD funding, disrupting forward planning** in 2024. This was an increase from 2021, where one-quarter (25%) reported this to be true. There was also **an increase in partners reporting that growth funded by BUILD was not sustainable past the grant period**, from 16% in 2021 to 30% in 2024. This was more likely to be true for Global South partners (GS 35%, US 24% in 2024).

Some grantee partners stated that they wished their program office had worked with them to plan for sustaining the growth BUILD fueled from the beginning of the grant. Others noted that their program office helped them plan from the beginning.

As one grantee partner explained, “BUILD was not enough, but it assisted us to get other resources so that we can do other work and continue to be resilient. Even the fundraising—the BUILD grant gave us power. Not power like strength, but to fundraise, because [we were seen] as someone who could be trusted. If you have a donor already, it means you are trusted ... So, through the BUILD grant, we were able to attract many donors.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Grantee partner interview (2024).

¹⁰² Grantee partner interview (2024).

¹⁰³ Grantee partner interview (2024).

A2.4 Liquid unrestricted net assets (LUNA) analysis on a restricted sample of grantee partners

The evaluation team also analyzed the grantee partners' LUNA and the corresponding "survival ratio." The **survival ratio** is the number of months an organization could survive on its LUNA, with no additional funds received, based on its current expenses. It does not consider non-liquid assets or restricted assets.¹⁰⁴

The analysis required detailed financial statements from grantee partners for the year prior to receiving BUILD and the most recent year. In some cases, statements from the most recent year were not available, and in other cases, data from the year before BUILD were not available. Therefore, we only analyzed grantee partner financials if at least three years of statements covering two years of change were available.

We found the requisite data for 22 grantee partners, including 14 from the US and 8 from the GS. The organizations ranged widely in terms of size and BUILD's share in their annual budget.

Out of 22 organizations, 17 grantee partners showed an increase in their LUNA, and 5 experienced a decrease. The mean survival ratio among these 22 grantee partners was 10.6 months, while the median was 10.4 months. This represents an **average increase of 4 months** and a median increase of 0.9 months. For some, this ratio represents their experience over three years and for some over six years. To account for that variability, we calculated an average change in survival rate per annum. The mean per annum change in survival rate was 1 month, with a range from 7 months to -3.7 months. The median was 0.73 months per annum or a projected **increased survival rate of 3.65 months over a five-year BUILD grant**. This appears significant given that prior to BUILD, the Ford Foundation found that 40% of its grantee partners had fewer than 3 months of LUNA.¹⁰⁵

For those whose LUNA increased, the average increase was 2.1 times the size of their BUILD grant (median was 1.9 times BUILD grant). For others, their LUNA decreased because their asset growth was accompanied by an increase in annual expenses and sometimes even an operating deficit. We do not know what other factors influenced the growth or contraction of LUNA. This data, with its limits, points to BUILD grantee partners being likely, but not guaranteed, to increase their total LUNA and their survival ratio. The complexity of LUNA as an indicator of financial strength is found in one US organization that stated: *"We now have a reserve, the first in our organization's history. We have also grown the development team from 2 to 6 staff members."* In this case, their LUNA survival rate growth has been less than one month per annum since the start of BUILD, but it is at a solid six months now, and the strengthened fund development team continues to grow both the annual budget and the organization's LUNA survival rate.

¹⁰⁴ Note this caution when reading LUNA data: One month of LUNA doesn't mean the organization can only survive a month without new funding. Most organizations have restricted monies as well. It is simply an indicator of cushion that enables comparison across organizations or within an organization over time.

¹⁰⁵ Reich, Kathy, and Hilary Pennington, "[How Grant Makers Can Tune In to What Nonprofits Need Most](#)," Chronicle of Philanthropy, 12 Feb 2019.

A2.5 Conclusion

For most grantee partners, BUILD strengthened their financial resilience through stronger balance sheets, improved financial management systems, diversified sources of funding, and/or the ability to leverage other funding, including flexible and long-term support. For many, their financial strength improved in multiple areas. Importantly, the most cited ways BUILD strengthened financial resilience was through *“supporting the existing level and quality of programmatic work”* and *“increasing the organization’s ability to freely make financial decisions on programs and institutional priorities due to a higher percentage of unrestricted/flexible funding.”*¹⁰⁶

This highlights the reality that **social justice organizations’ funding sustainability is closely tied to their ability to produce results, which come from the effectiveness of their programming.** BUILD provided not only an increased quantity of support for program work but also the flexibility to innovate, take risks, and follow the organization’s strategic priorities. As one partner stated, *“We are what we do. Our organizational sustainability is dependent on our [programmatic] success.”*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Survey data (2024).

¹⁰⁷ Grantee partner interview (2024).

Appendix 3: Types of impact

The seven types of mission impact listed below are the most common types of impact emerging from an analysis of the online survey data and interviews with BUILD grantee partners conducted in 2024. Most BUILD grantee partners experienced more than one type of mission impact, reflecting their program strategies that intentionally seek to advance multiple aspects of human rights and social justice.

Given the large number of BUILD grantee partners and their vast heterogeneity, there are a range of mission impacts achieved. The evaluation team offers the examples below as an overview for illustrative purposes.

Building on findings from the first BUILD evaluation (2022), the longitudinal evaluation examined both *near-term program outcomes* and *long-term impact*:

- Near-term program outcomes were defined as meeting the goals set for specific programs and adapting to changing contexts through, for example, local organizing, advocacy campaigns, legal and policy influence, public engagement through arts and culture, collective action in networks, addressing the impacts of COVID-19, etc.
 - Long-term impact was defined as establishing the conditions for change in the “enabling environment,” which refers to formal societal structures, such as institutions, laws, and policies, as well as contextual elements such as social, cultural, and economic norms, and the functioning of actors, networks, and systems.
1. **Policy change:** Partners engaged in advocacy efforts to influence policy at local, national, and international levels. This involved advocating for legislative changes, regulatory reforms, or the implementation of new policies that promote human rights, social justice, and equality.

A grantee partner in Latin America developed evidence, policy proposals, and consultative forums to hold governments accountable for civil rights and climate commitments and strengthened the capabilities of local groups to engage in these actions. A partner in Southern Africa helped to establish a national anti-corruption council and to develop the national anti-corruption strategy in the country and did cutting edge research on the social impacts of the energy transition on people living in poverty.

2. **Capacity building:** Partners focused on building the capacity of communities, grassroots organizations, and other stakeholders.

One US-based grantee partner strengthened the capacities of state-level coalitions to hire, train, and sustain crucial staff and to use data to advance the rights of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. A BUILD partner in Central America accompanied territorial organizations to create livelihood and territorial governance strategies, strengthen their advocacy efforts, and support training for young community researchers.

3. **Awareness and narrative shifting:** Partners aimed to raise awareness about specific issues, challenges, and injustices, and to shift narratives on issues they seek to impact.

One grantee partner based in East Africa supported filmmakers to make high-quality, high-impact documentary films that showcases the realities of life in the filmmakers’ communities. Another

partner based in South Asia developed their organizational infrastructure, networks and partnerships to create a storytelling initiative on issues of civic space, resilience, and gender-based violence.

4. **Direct services:** Partners provided direct services and support to communities affected by social injustices, especially during the global pandemic. These services included legal assistance, health-care services, education programs, social welfare support, and other forms of assistance to address immediate needs and alleviate suffering.

A partner in the US that used the tools of grassroots organizing, research, policy development, and public education helped improve the lives of millions of people, including by alleviating crushing medical expenses and securing state and federal funding for childcare. A grantee partner in the Global South improved reporting of, and follow-up of, human rights incidents by developing an app through which people can report human rights abuses.

5. **Community power shifting:** Partners sought to shift power toward marginalized communities by promoting self-determination, leadership development, and collective action. This involved facilitating community organizing, supporting grassroots initiatives, and fostering networks and alliances to amplify voices and mobilize resources.

A grantee partner working across several regions in the US supported base building and organizational capacity building through regranting to local grassroots organizations, specifically in under-resourced areas. In Latin America, another grantee partner organized laborers to know and defend their rights, promote their political autonomy, and to fight for women's rights and land rights.

6. **Accountability and transparency:** Partners focused on holding institutions, corporations, and governments accountable for their actions and decisions.

A grantee partner with global reach analyzed emerging trends in civic space conditions including freedom of peaceful assembly, advocated to free imprisoned human rights defenders, and created practical resources to support its members in protecting and advancing civic space. Another partner with similar goals in the US supported dozens of state-based organizations with strategic research, training, and partnership to achieve policy and budget wins, including saving consumers millions of dollars in unnecessary rate hikes.

7. **Systems change:** Partners worked toward broader systemic changes aimed at addressing the root causes of social injustices. This involved challenging structural inequalities, advocating for systemic reforms, and promoting alternative models of governance, economic development, and social organization.

In Latin America, a grantee partner supported local Indigenous communities to demand their collective rights and their autonomy by working to eradicate historical injustice and the loss of their people's heritage, and to recover and strengthen their ancestral cultural identity and spirituality. In the US, a grantee partner focused their pandemic-era efforts on ensuring that disabled people received equitable care and that COVID-related standards of care did not discriminate against people with disabilities.