



# What's Possible...

when donors follow young people's lead?

---

What's Possible is an Experiential Pooled Fund & Donor Learning Community Brought to the world by [CRIF](#) in partnership with [We Trust You\(th\)](#).

Under [CRIF](#)'s leadership, twelve youth focused donors have joined together to demonstrate What's Possible when donors follow young people's lead. Donors set intentions and youth activists and organisers decide the strategy and distribution of over **\$1 Million**.



# What inspired What's Possible?

## What we know to be true...

- **Young people's** expansive, joyful, and creative work too often shrinks when a 'project', 'plan' or worse yet, typical grant structures are introduced. The space for possibilities shrinks as youth activists work to 'get it right' and to be 'professional'.
- **Child and youth-focused donors** increasingly recognise the importance of 'shifting power' to young people, decolonising their strategies, and transforming top-down adult-centric grantmaking. Yet, too often, their intentions to take action on this recognition are impeded by a lack of understanding of how to do this well, by fears of causing harm, or of losing power.
- **CRIF** and other justice and decolonisation-focused participatory grantmaking (PGM) funds are increasingly documenting their work, but their learnings are not being applied widely. Young people, like [We Trust You\(th\)](#), are self-organising for donor systems change, but currently lack the collective power to foster accountability.
- **What was done in response?** In alignment with [CRIF's](#) commitment to cultivate courageous and collaborative spaces for the children and youth-focused philanthropic sectors:
- **A guiding framework for What's Possible**– The Tiny Cave & The Magnificent Creatures– was developed in the form of a storybook, the text most singularly associated with childhood. It illustrates the barriers child and youth activists face as they attempt to resource their work for well-being and liberation.
- **The What's Possible four part approach (learn, fund, plan and be accountable)** was developed, enabling donors to learn and plan WHILE funding participatory youth-driven grantmaking and accountability processes.



- **Twelve donors answered the call** to act on their belief in the power of young people and their commitment to see their intentions reflected in their institutions, especially around moving money.

## What's Possible Approach

Four interdependent components, grounded in the Tiny Cave storybook framework, work to protect against extractive learning and inaction, while demonstrating What's Possible when donors follow young people's lead.

### 1. Learn in Community in Real Time.

During the February 2024 [launch in Accra](#), philanthropic practitioners explored ceding power to child and youth activists they have yet to meet. Rather than produce a funding strategy for the fund they have already committed to, they set a collective intention to liberate the fund from the adultism and thematic silos that typically characterise our sector. Focusing on their learning, donors will spend the rest of 2024 participating in a four-part virtual series where they will learn from [CRIF](#)'s signature methodology of strategising and grantmaking with youth as we do it.

### 2. Fund While You Learn - Move Money Now.

Youth organisers will design a grantmaking strategy and call for proposals that [CRIF](#) and donors will follow and learn from. By pooling resources and ceding power to youth working to advance their rights and make social change, donors will move money [collaboratively and meaningfully](#) in ways that respond to the urgency that youth need and deserve.

### 3. Organisational Evolution - Develop an Actionable Plan.

Donors will have the opportunity to apply what they learn by developing an incremental plan to improve your own systems. This plan will be tailored to the needs of each organisation and will be on a timeline that challenges them, but is also realistic.



#### **4. Embedding Accountability.**

Individual, practice and institutional shifts cannot take hold without accountability. But, how does a field without an established and continuous connection to child and youth activists, organisers, and leaders be accountable to those people? [We Trust You\(th\)](#) is collaborating with other young people to develop and launch a new holistic accountability standard. They intend to prioritise equitable and fair partnerships with young people.

#### **What's next?**

While the What's Possible Youth Collaborators will design the strategy and make grant decisions. The donors also have a role; they will continue learning from the decisions youth make, strategising how they can be good allies, aligning what they have learned to their respective roles, and making meaningful shifts in their practices and institutions.

We invite you to follow up our evolution both that of the donors and that of the youth grantmakers. Watch this space and both [CRIF](#) and [We Trust You\(th\)](#) socials.

**Interested in learning more?**

**Add your details [here](#), we'll reach out!**



## What's Possible Donor Collaborators:

African Women's Development Fund	Girls First Fund
Children Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)	Global Fund for Children
Disability Rights Fund	Global Fund for Women
Echidna Giving	Hewlett Foundation
Elevate Children's Funders Group	Ignite Philanthropy
EngenderHealth	Planned Parenthood Great Northwest, Hawai'i, Alaska, Indiana, Kentucky (PPGNHAIK)
Fondation Botnar	

