

A Feasibility Study to Explore the Potential for Participatory Grantmaking (PGM) in North Yorkshire



MODELS & PROCESSES

Supported by North Yorkshire Council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

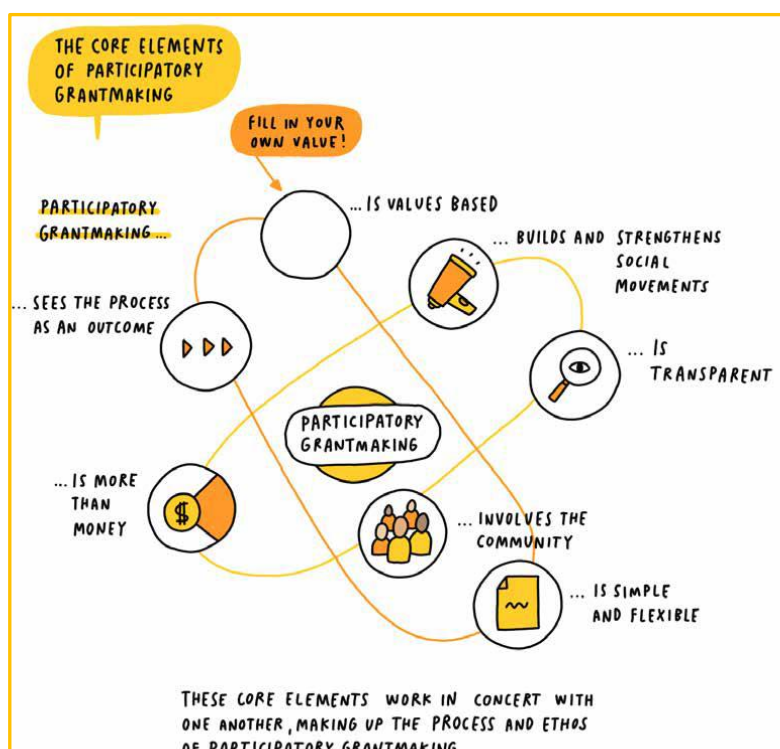
Skyblue Research Ltd

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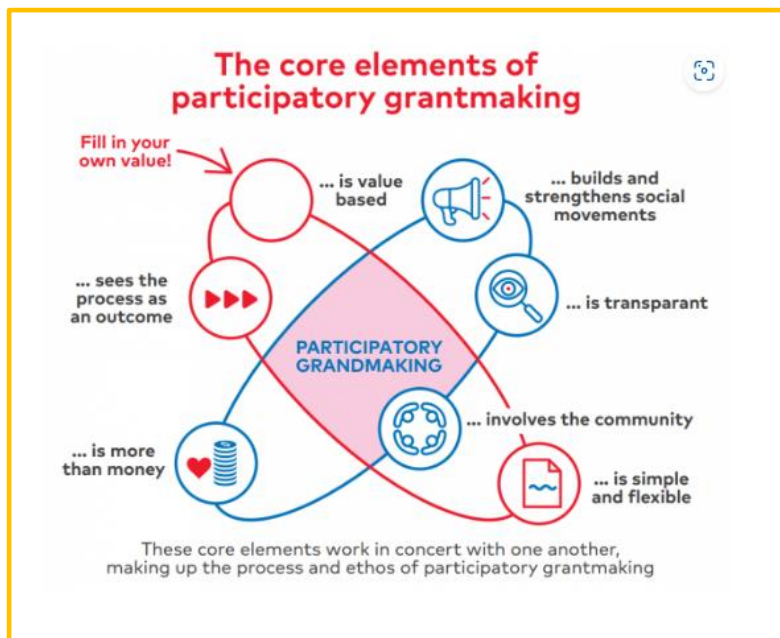
‘Participation teaches everyone that people are worthwhile, and they matter. Who makes the decisions is really important¹.’

1.0 Chapter 4: PGM models and processes

There are a variety of PGM models and processes practised around the world. Here is one illustration of the core elements of PGM.



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Following on the next pages are some descriptors of the different PGM models available and their key characteristics. The 'Participatory Grantmaking:UK Landscape Mapping Survey' (February 2023) found that over a third of (40 responding) organisations across all levels of PGM funding use **community boards** as part of funding decision making, which entails members of the community directly allocating grants. The next most common model is the **representative board**, whereby a mixture of funders join community members in making funding decisions.

What? Types of PGM Participatory committees



Participatory Committees: this form, which is the most common in the PGM movement (*globally*), mimics traditional philanthropy in that proposals are submitted based on a set of criteria/guidelines, and then a committee reviews those proposals and makes decisions (Source: [A Primer for Participatory Grantmaking - Non Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly](#), November 2021).

Subcategories:

- **Representative participation models:** Having sector experts, individuals with lived experience or community members on decision making panels, committees or boards.
- Similarly known as: **Representative Committee:** committee includes community representatives *together with* traditional decision makers (donors, board members, program officers). Having donors on the committee can be strategic in some cases and can risk more complicated power dynamics. It can also be necessary to involve donors for ongoing fundraising purposes.

As mentioned, **community board** is the most common model amongst the UK-based organisations. Examples of community committee: [North Star Fund](#), [Chinook Fund](#), [Global Greengrants](#), [The Equality Fund](#), [Trans Justice Funding Project](#), [Pawanka Fund](#), [Arctic Indigenous Fund](#)).

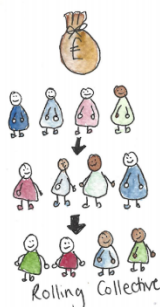
What? Types of PGM Participatory committees



Community Committee: all committee members come from or represent the community they serve. This can be people from a specific neighbourhood, a membership network, or people who come from a particular community

Community Board models: Where the whole decision making board is made up of community members, sector experts or individuals with lived experience. There are various ways of choosing who these people such as interview, selection or democratic election.

What? Types of PGM Participatory committees



Rolling Applicant Committee: Those who receive funding become the committee for the next cycle of funding

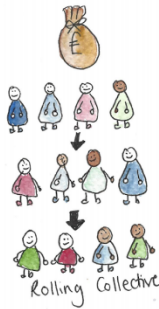
Rolling Collective Model: All grant recipients are involved in the process of both receiving and giving funding. Those who receive funding will then make decisions for the next round of funding.

Flow Funding/Onward Granting: funder selects another individual or nonprofit to pass grant funding forward, giving the individual or organization the opportunity to make their decision independently (example: [Flow Funding](#))

Example of rolling applicant committee: [Thank You Charitable Trust](#)

Example of Flow Funding / Onward Granting: [Flow Funding](#)

What? Types of PGM Collective Groups

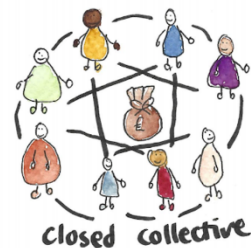


Collective Groups – this form of PGM uses different processes for proposal review and decision making where there are opportunities to include the people and organisations requesting funding, as well as members from the public. Proposals/funding requests are reviewed, and funding decisions made, through a collaborative group process where all participants have equal power.

Examples of closed collectives: [Shared Gifting](#), [Maine Network of Community Food Councils](#), [Action Learning Seed Fund](#).

What? Types of PGM Collective Groups, subcategories

- **Closed Collective:** Applicants review each other's proposals/funding requests and decide together how to distribute funds to each other
- **Closed Collective Model:** Most appropriate for a small place or sector. Involves bringing all relevant organisations together to collectively understand needs and decide how best to spend funding available through consensus decision making.



What? Types of PGM Collective Groups, subcategories

- **Open Collective:** Applicants together with a variety of participants (applicants, donors, community members, etc.) decide together through a collective process
- **Applicant Collective:** all applicants for funding review proposals and decide through a collective voting process

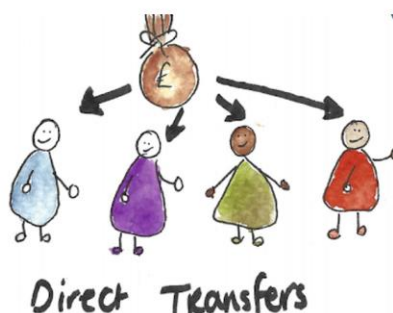


Examples of open collectives: [Fund Action](#), [Edge Fund](#), [New England Grassroots Fund](#).

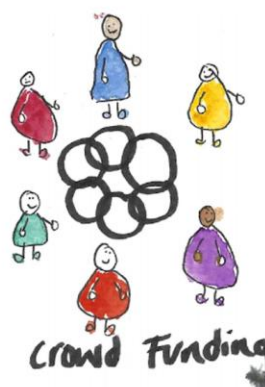
Examples of applicant collectives: [Solidarity Fund](#), [FRIDA](#).

What? Types of PGM. Other categories

Direct Transfers: Looks to alleviate poverty by removing the middle organisation out of the equation with cash going directly from a funder to an individual with no application, monitoring or reporting. It allows the individual to spend the money direction on what they need for their situation.



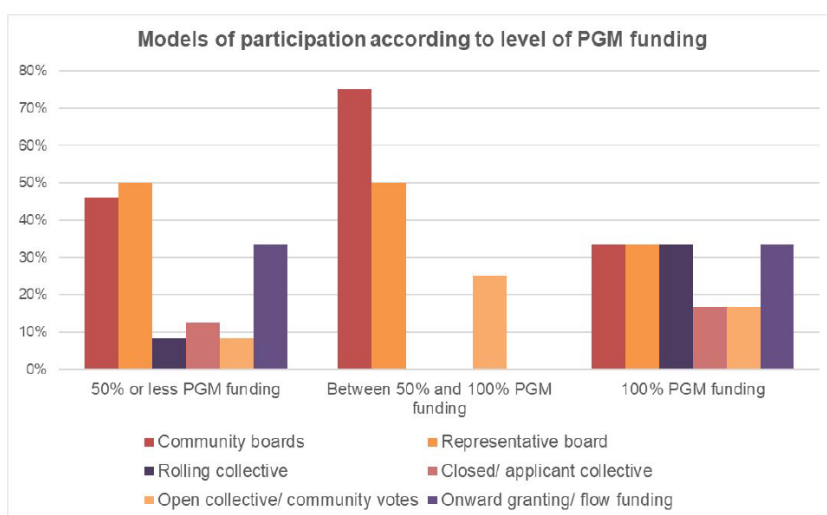
Crowdfunding: Communities come together to fundraise and spend money on issues of importance to them.



For reference, the PGM UK Landscape Mapping Survey found the prevalence of each model amongst its 40 responding organisations as follows.

Survey findings: Models of participation

KEY TAKEAWAY: Over a third of organisations across all levels of PGM funding use community boards as part of funding decision-making. The next most common model is the representative board, followed by the open collective/community vote model.

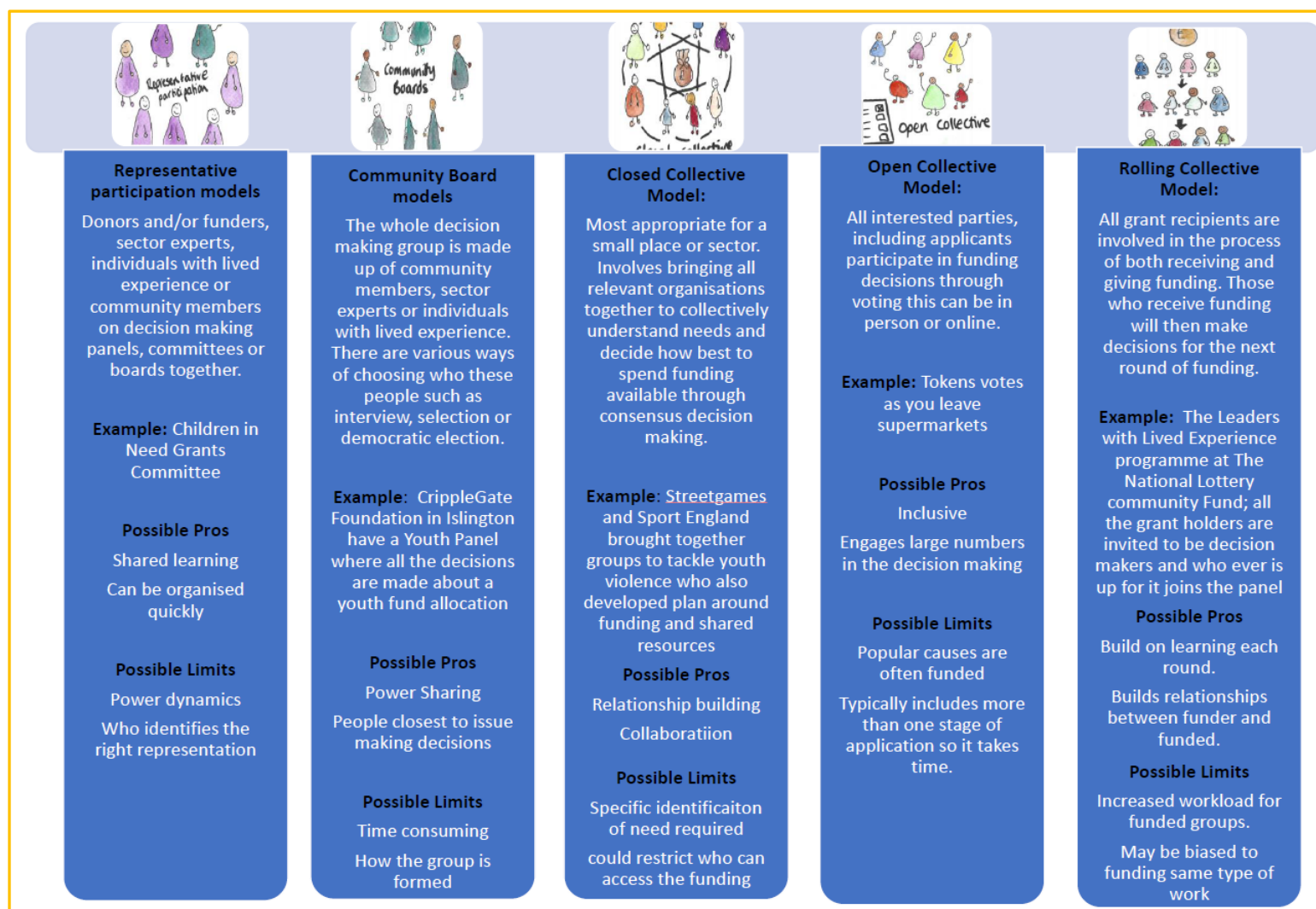


Definition of models:

- **Community board:** only community members make decisions on funding. No donor or funder has a decision on where the funding goes.
- **Representative board:** a mixture of funders/donors join community members in making decisions.
- **Rolling collective:** a cohort of grantholders make the decisions about who the following cohort of grantholders will be.
- **Closed/applicant collective:** the applicants to a programme make the decisions together, by vote or deliberation.
- **Open collective/community votes:** community members vote on the decisions made.
- **Onward granting/flow funding:** funding other organisations to distribute the funding on their behalf.

Models drawn from *Grassroots grantmaking embedding participatory approaches in funding*, by Hannah Paterson, [link](#).

As part of the **York Deciding Together** PGM activity, participants pulled together this useful overview to guide their decision making about what model might be most appropriate for their context.



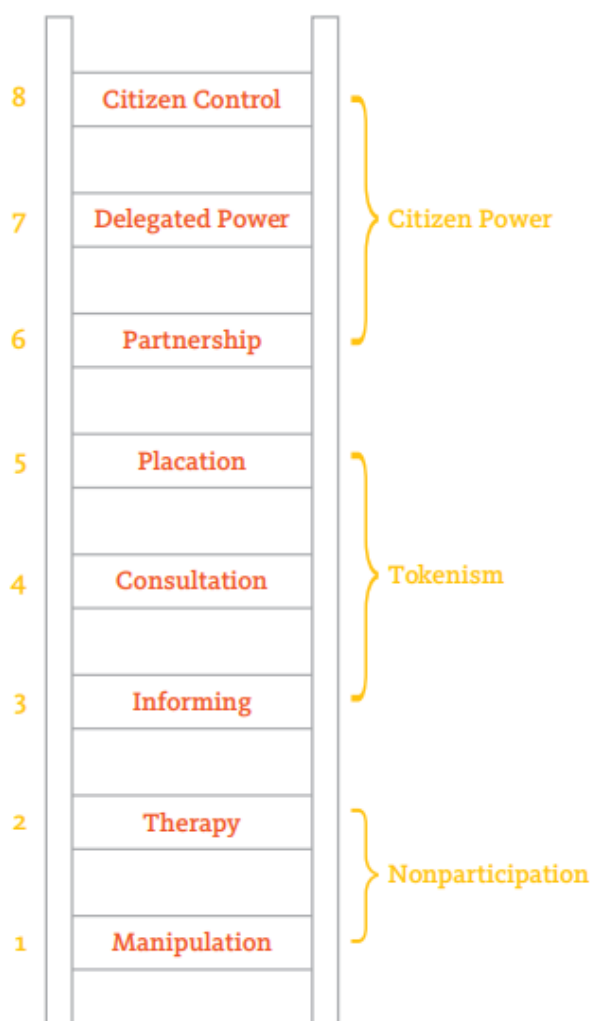
There are also relevant models outside of philanthropy that are about encouraging **public participation in decision making** used in the fields of community organising, community development and deliberative democracy – the most referenced in the literature being **Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation.'**

What Are Some Participatory Models and Frameworks Developed Outside Philanthropy?

There are scores of frameworks for encouraging public participation in decision making that can be (and have been) used by a variety of fields. Below are two frameworks that have become standards, as well as one that is less well-known but that captures the core components of participatory practice across many fields.

Arnstein Ladder of Participation

While working at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the 1960s, Sherry Arnstein developed an influential model for understanding citizen involvement in planning and policy-making processes. Her "ladder of citizen participation" created several categories of involvement ranging from a high to low participation.



Citizen Control. Participants ("the public") handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a program or initiative with no intermediaries.

Delegated power. Participants have a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions and assure accountability.

Partnership. Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared through joint committees of participants and public officials/experts.

Placation. Participants can advise but public officials and other power holders have the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the input.

Consultation. Public officials and other decision makers use surveys, community meetings and public inquiries to elicit and gauge participants' opinions.

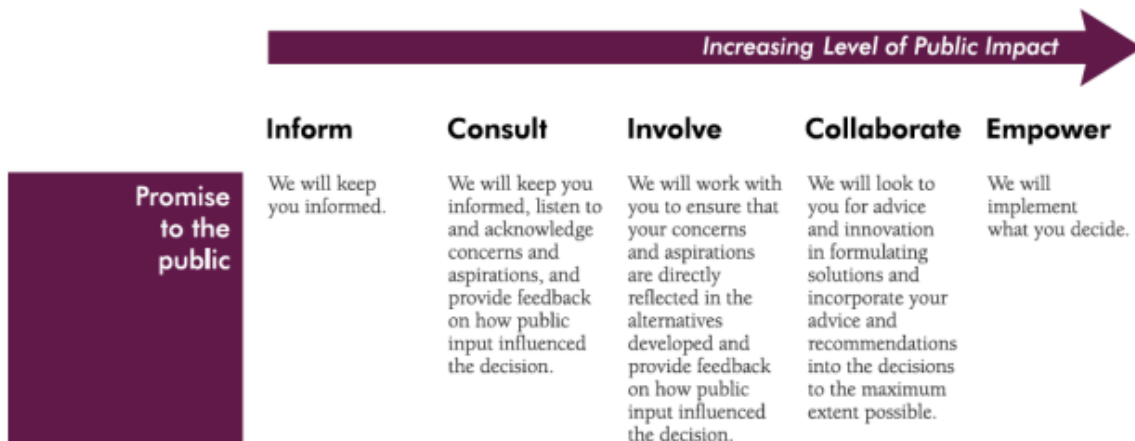
Informing. Public officials and other power holders create a one-way information flow with no feedback channels for participant reactions or input.

Manipulation and Therapy (Nonparticipatory). Public officials and other power holders seek to "cure" or "educate" participants, using public relations strategies to build public support.

IAP2 Public Engagement Spectrum

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed the Spectrum of Public Participation to define the varying roles of the public in participatory processes. The spectrum is

non-judgmental and based on IAP2's belief that participatory approaches depend on factors such as goals, timeframes and available resources. Over time, the spectrum has been used to shape public participation plans around the world.



Della Rucker/Wise Economy

In work with [Wise Economy](#), Della Rucker offers a framework for participation that boils it down to four key components that consistently emerge in participatory research and practice, no matter what the field or discipline. The framework Rucker developed reflects how participatory options can range along a spectrum from generally less to more active engagement. Like the IAP2 framework, Rucker's makes it clear that no one form of participation is more valuable or "right." Rather, all four participation types have appropriate uses depending on the circumstances.

The four types are:

Telling – Information is shared in a one-way direction—from informants to the public. The public are not active participants in decisions, nor can they ask questions or challenge the presenters. If participants are asked for feedback, there is no expectation that their comments will be used to influence decisions.

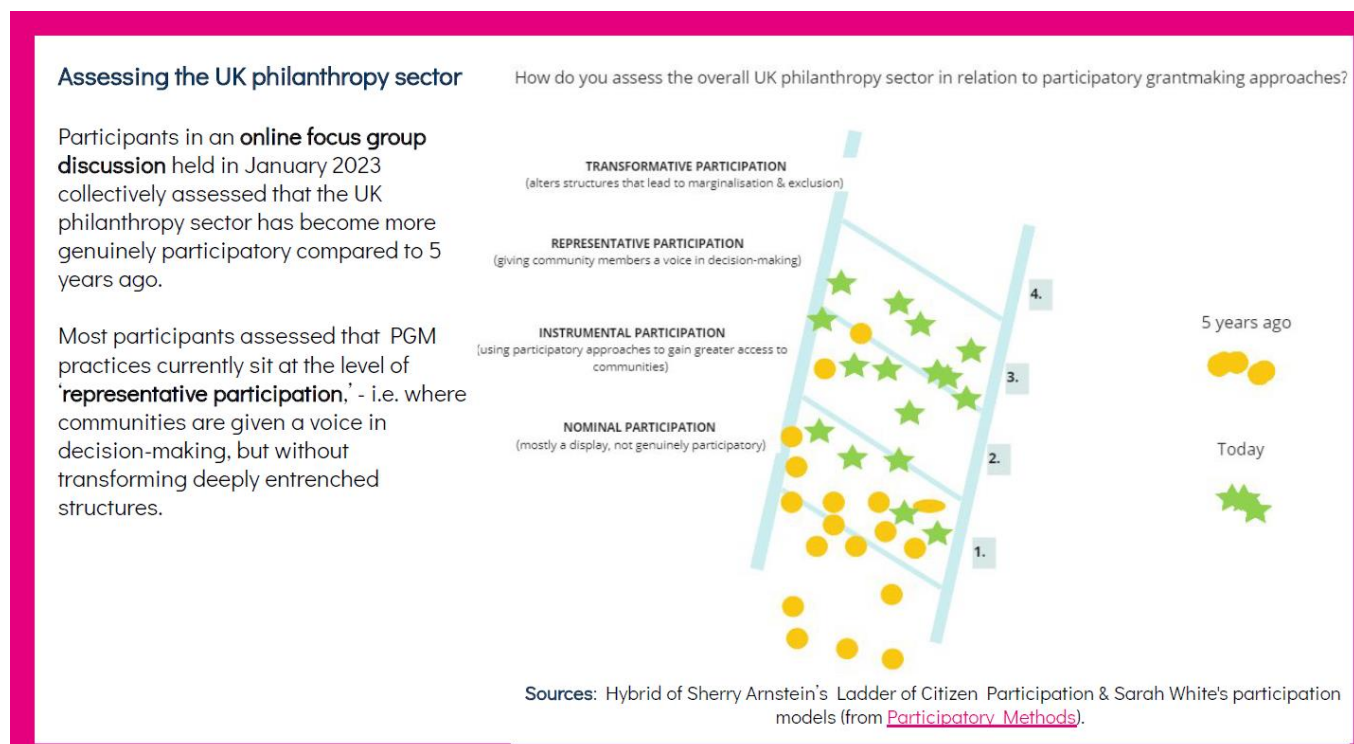
Asking – Information is still one-way but reversed, with participants providing ideas, recommendations or insight

through surveys, brainstorming activities, dialogues, etc. The goal is to give participants the chance to make their voices heard on issues they care about. There is no guarantee, however, that their ideas will be incorporated into the resulting plan or product.

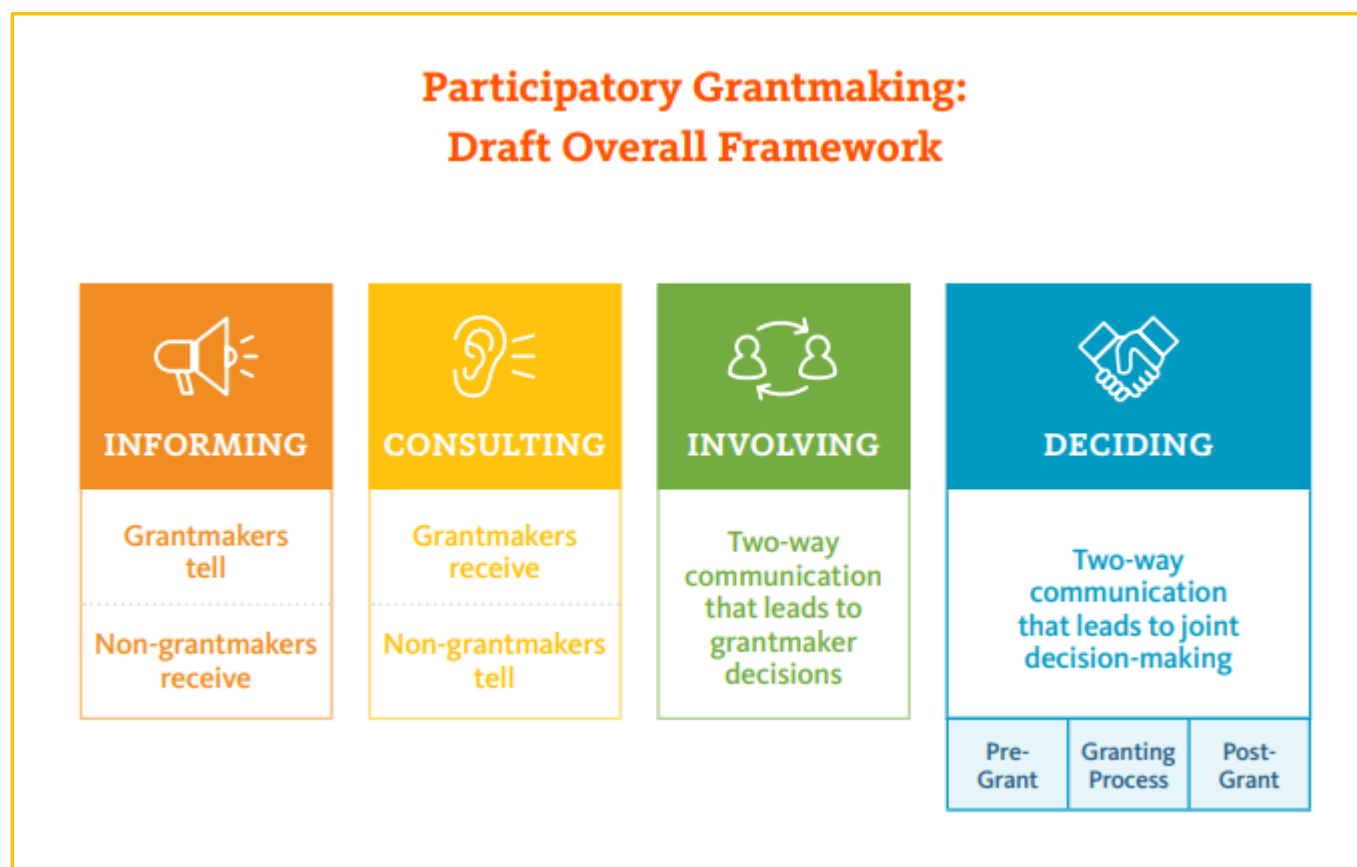
Discussing – There is a two-way exchange of information and ideas between the public and decision makers. The goal of this process, which is usually conducted in smaller groups, is to forge more understanding of the variety of perspectives of different people in the community. These discussions often require more time than the approaches above and are limited to a smaller set of participants. Also, while discussions can surface a wider variety of insights and ideas, they do not necessarily result in a strong sense of direction, priorities or concrete action steps.

Deciding – This is a collaborative decision-making process involving the public and officials about priority setting, strategies, and resource allocation. The key difference between discussing and deciding is that the latter leads to "[a clear, well-informed and defensible guide to next steps, allocation of resources and other decisions that were directed and generated by the public.](#)" If participation is not fully inclusive or representative, the results can be skewed toward special interests, and decisions may not reflect what the larger community actually needs.

The PGM Landscape Mapping Study in the UK (February 2023) found this self-reported assessment of the state of participatory approaches within the philanthropy sector.

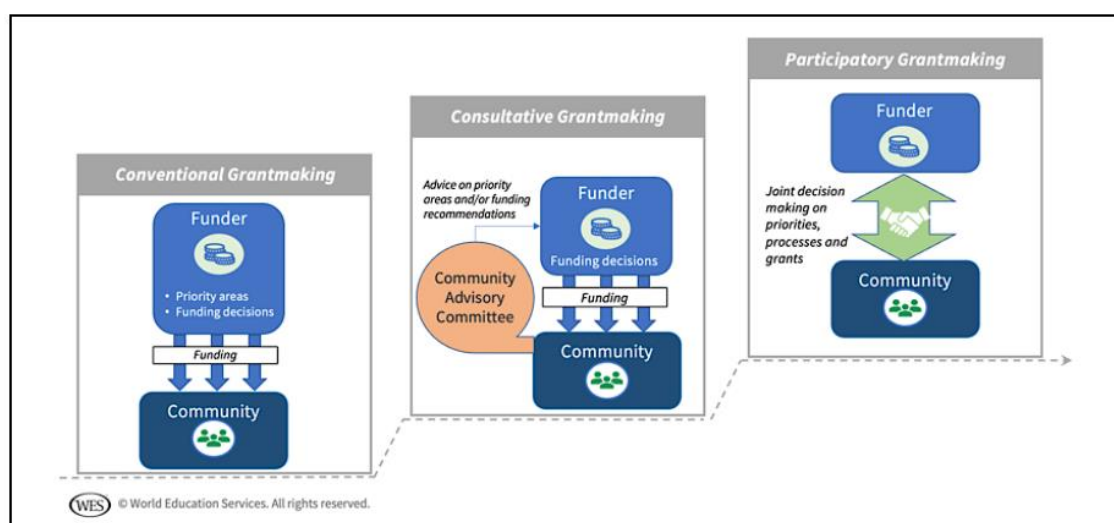


Cynthia Gibson^{iv} has proposed this PGM 'starter framework' to benefit institutional philanthropy.



Other interpretations mirror the framework above, but illustrate the difference in approach to, for example, conventional or consultative grantmaking as seen in the example below from Canada.

Figure 1: The Participatory Grantmaking Model



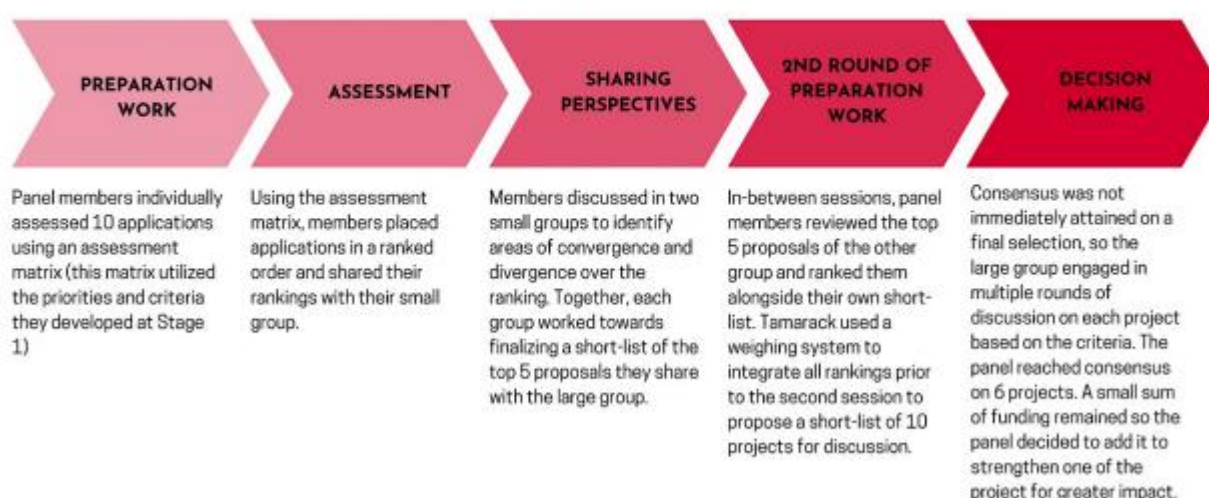
PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING IN PRACTICE: PEEL REGION'S EXPERIENCE

Source: Tamarack Institute's insights and learnings from a PGM pilot project that focused on building equitable economies for immigrants and refugees in the Peel Region (Ontario, Canada) in partnership with the WES Mariam Assefa Fund.

PGM processes are well documented in the many practical resources found in the literature. The first illustration continues the example above used by the Tamarack Institute for its two year PGM pilot in Ontario.

The grantmaking process is summarized below.

Figure 3: The Grantmaking Process

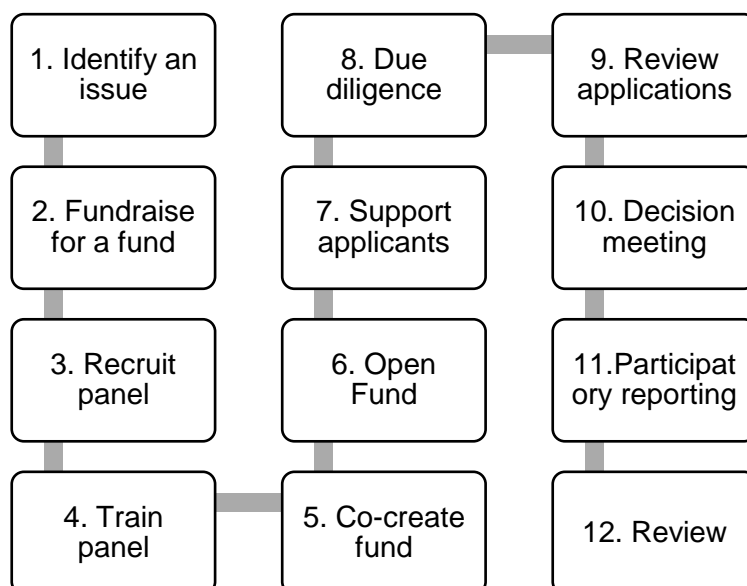


However, the example above is quite limited as, different guides and primers emphasise other elements of the process not reflected – for example, much greater preparatory work before the process of having panel members being in place to assess applications; all the activity to engage with communities in an authentic and non-extractive way, shaping the agenda and priorities as well as the significant work that is required to recruit the panellists and all the support that is required to create positive conditions for people to trust, learn and decide how to decide together. Similarly, other PGM process maps add many more activities beyond the decision making visual above, including ways in which panellists and PGM participants work together beyond the decision to award funds. We present below, by way of example, an abbreviated set of process flow diagrams from the Camden Giving Practical Ideas for PGM Toolkit.

Process example:

For a fund where the panel meet over a shorter period to award grants, typically taking a few months to award grants at one panel meeting.

In this example it should be noted that Camden Giving tends to have to fundraise rather than rely on an endowment. Foundations practicing PGM that we have spoken with during this study tend to have funding in place already and pilot PGM without that extra requirement to fundraise locally from businesses and other donors. *Please see the Camden Giving Toolkit for more precise timelines between processes.*

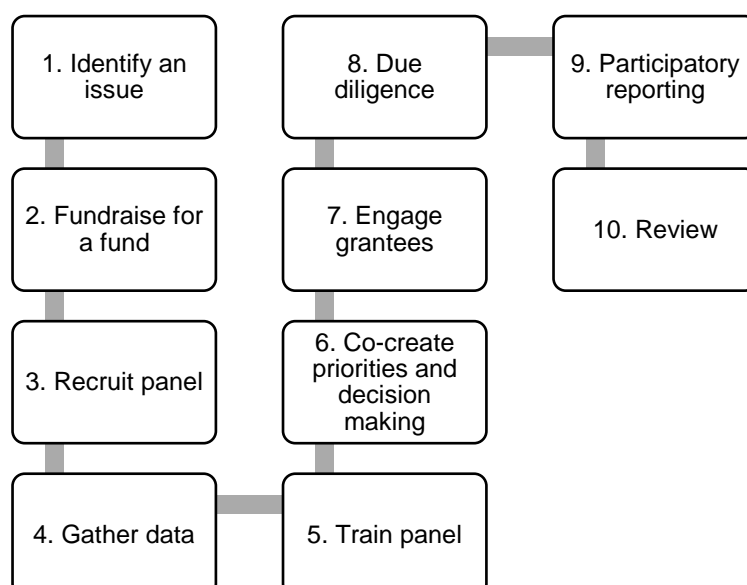


Rolling Fund process example. For a fund that is open or the duration of the fund and where the panel meet more frequently to award grants the processes are the same as for the first example, but the time taken can be longer for some of the activities associated with each process, as can their frequency.

Process timeline 3: Non-Competitive Funding

For a non-competitive funding approach, the processes are slightly different to the other PGM fund examples.

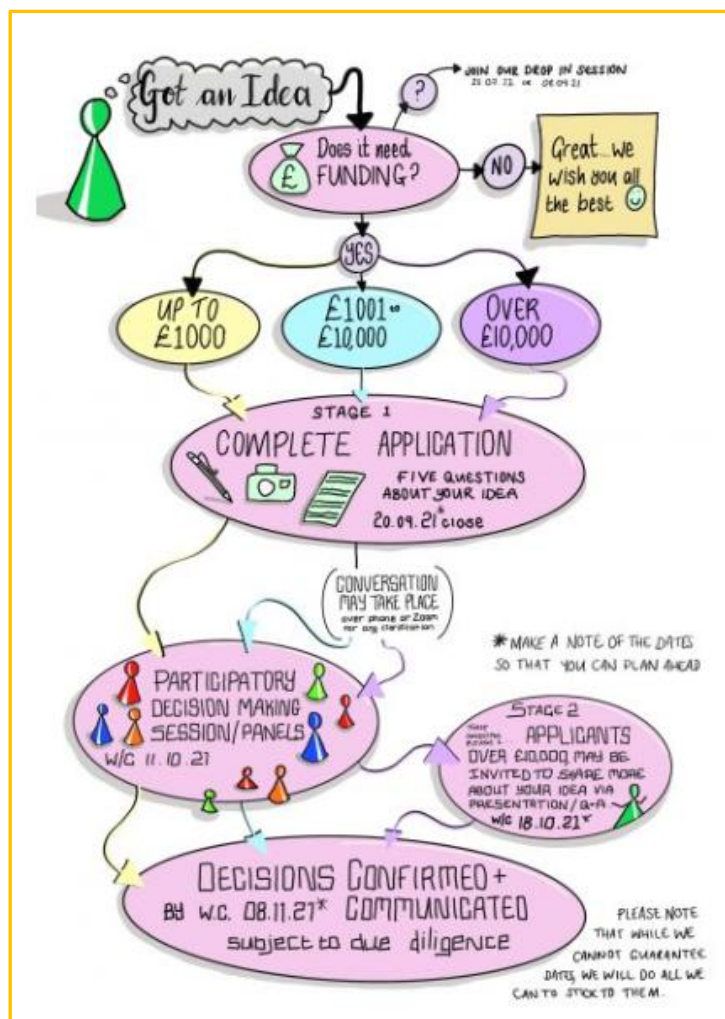
This is also being referred to in Camden Giving as ‘trust based funding.’ and commands a great deal of additional learning for any funder thinking of this type of PGM in future. See their guide, page 17-19 and how this approach has been trialled to fund **local food provision**.



The illustration below is a visual representation of the grant application and decision making process publicised by 'York Deciding Together' in 2019. But there was also a huge amount of work before and after this part of the process was 'ready to go' out to the communities with.

All of the example illustrations in this chapter perhaps lack some of the detailed activity that appears to be required to create positive conditions for PGM – *indeed DDM, PDM or PRA* – to take root in a place or community of interest or identity for the longer term.

As such, we feel there are additional processes that need to be highlighted in this feasibility study for any reader to know the true extent of requirements to develop good PGM practices – particularly in the **preparatory and post-decision making** phases of activity. These additional processes were kindly shared with the consultant in the primary research phase of the project, which readers can review from insights shared in section 9.4 of the main report.



Summary: PGM models and decision making

There are multiple PGM models in practice including the size of community grants that are decided upon by 'community panellists' (ranging from less than £1,000 to £1.5 million in the case studies reviewed for this study).

The adoption of a PGM model differs in each context. No single model is evidentially more efficacious than another.

Evidence is mixed about decision making 'quality' with some published studies suggesting the best decisions and ideas emerge when both experts and 'real people' are involved in exploring them^v; whilst others feel that the best decisions are made by those who have deep knowledge of the intersections of inequality and barriers which may not typically be held by traditional grantmakers.

This paper was produced by Alan Graver of Skyblue Research Ltd, January 2024

¹ A compelling quote from one of the respondents generously sharing their rationale for PGM in their locality as part of this feasibility study in 2023/24

² Source Participatory Grantmaking presentation by Hannah Peterson whilst at The National Lottery

³ Source (right): Participatory grantmaking: rethinking our role as funder | Aidsfonds.org

^{iv} Participatory Grantmaking: Has its time come? Cynthia Gibson, October 2017

^v Participatory Grantmaking: Has its time come? Cynthia Gibson, October 2017, page 21