

NATION
SWELL

Insights for impact

2022 edition

December 2022



IN 2022, WE DEEPENED OUR INVESTMENT IN DELIVERING INSIGHTS

Members,

Our mission at NationSwell is to provide purpose-driven leaders with the essential support you need to take your impact to the next level of ambition and efficacy. We are deeply grateful that you are a member of this special community of practice for the most committed and cutting-edge leaders in ESG, social impact, and philanthropy.

This year marked a meaningful period of investment in all facets of your member experience. As we share this 2022 edition of **Insights for Impact**, it's my pleasure to report investments we've made in one area in particular: providing you with the most relevant and actionable insights.

Insights have always been in the water at NationSwell. They surface in our events and leadership roundtables, to be codified in the summaries that follow. They surface in the surprising points of connection that we broker between members. They surface in the creative and strategic partnerships our Studio engages in. But this past year we invested significantly in expanding and maturing our research offerings. We invested in our capability to develop insights in ways that are more methodical, more expansive, more rigorous, and more accessible to our members than ever before.

We did so because we understand the power of an idea, one that is backed by evidence and articulated with eloquence, and take seriously our opportunity to source and convey the ideas that will help leaders and organizations take their impact to the next level.

In late 2021, we welcomed our inaugural Vice President of Insights, Nick Cericola. Nick brings years of experience leading teams of researchers to solve problems and unlock opportunities for senior leaders at large, complex organizations. Since joining NationSwell, Nick and his team have introduced you to ten new reports. They cover a range of evergreen and emergent topic areas, including ESG, DEIB, community-centered philanthropy, corporate civic engagement, the future of work, catalytic cross-sector partnerships, and more. By focusing on solutions over exposition, and elevating the most urgent ideas, NationSwell's insights reports showcase our deep commitment to valuing your time and delivering what you need to lead at your best.

As I reflect upon our growing library of research-driven resources, I am thrilled by what we've been able to learn and share with our community this year. I am equally thrilled by this opportunity to share those learnings with you once again. It is my sincere hope – and that of our whole team – that these insights inspire and prepare you to embrace new mental models, to make decisions with clarity, to take action with conviction, and to adopt bold strategies for deeper impact. We look forward to building upon this library in 2023 and continuing to work with you to make your experience an invaluable one.



Greg Behrman,
Founder & CEO

LOOKING AHEAD

Members,

It is a sincere privilege to supply you with information and ideas, two currencies that I believe can power lasting impact. This past year, my first at NationSwell, has strengthened that conviction for me. I've witnessed your appetites to receive bold solutions, your eagerness to share the same, and the magnetism that those two conditions create. Indeed, this community is special on account of the authentic spirit of mutual service you bring. That took much less than a year for me to realize.

As much as I am humbled by what I've observed, I am proud of what we've accomplished. This report is a testament to that.

I am also excited about the road ahead. With that in mind, here's a preview of what you can expect from NationSwell's Insights in 2023:

- New research reports designed to challenge your thinking, inform your decision-making, and show you what works.
- A focus on the topics and issues that you've told us are top of mind for you, including: aligning internally around ESG strategies, fostering economic mobility and opportunity, renewing and advancing commitments to racial justice, and more.
- Easier ways to access, explore, and use our growing library of resources.
- More opportunities to hear from and engage directly with our researchers on the issues you care about.

My commitment is to making NationSwell's Insights an invaluable contributor to your ability to make an impact. If there's anything we can be doing differently to make that happen, please be in touch with me directly at nickcericola@nationswell.com. Your questions, feedback, and wisdom are always welcomed.

For now, I hope you enjoy this final report of 2022.

Be well,

Nick Cericola,
Vice President, Insights

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Surfacing the shifts that matter

NationSwell trend reports provide a nuanced and sharp look into the most notable developments in the social impact space. We use in-depth literature review and market analysis to identify where there is momentum that could reshape the contours of an issue, pairing our observations with guided self-assessments to help leaders evaluate their organization's position relative to the field. Each trend report also includes an organizational spotlight, regulatory and policy updates, and suggestions for further reading.



IN 2022, TREND REPORTS COVERED:

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG).....	p.06
Corporate civic engagement	p.07
U.S. philanthropy	p.08
Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)	p.09

The state of play: ESG in 2022

Published May 2022

ESG has garnered significant attention in the past few years as a critical framework for assessing the non-financial performance of companies in the U.S. and globally. While bold public commitments have earned headlines and investor attention, companies risk failing to meet the mark without greater operational rigor.

In *The state of play: ESG in 2022*, we surface 5 trends that social impact practitioners at companies and investment firms need to know as they chart their course ahead. Download the full report [here](#).

5 trends

1 Social issues are at once more fragmented and more important to the general public than climate concerns.

As companies concentrate their climate commitments around carbon neutrality and net zero, the public is likely to become even less forgiving of those that perform poorly on social factors.

ONE DATUM:

In a 2021 opinion survey of the general public, 5 of the top 10 issues Americans say corporations should focus on relate to workforce issues, while just one relates to the environment ([JUST Capital](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have deep conversations with stakeholders at all levels about designing a future workplace that helps your employees thrive?

2 Dozens of ESG reporting frameworks and regulatory standards exist in jurisdictions around the globe.

Efforts are underway to consolidate and simplify those frameworks for the sake of consistent and universal reporting requirements.

ONE DATUM:

Even if the U.S. does not follow other jurisdictions in adopting the International Sustainability Standards Board's standards, U.S. companies that do significant business in Europe or Asia will likely have to comply with the sustainability disclosure standards of the countries in those regions ([CFO](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have processes and systems for gathering data that anticipate emergent international reporting standards in relevant jurisdictions?

3 Investors and companies are seeking deeper expertise and greater accountability related to ESG on their management teams, staff, and board.

The marketplace for that talent is not yet well established. Soon, that will change.

ONE DATUM:

Pay levels for top ESG positions are up 50% to 100% since late 2020 ([Bloomberg](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your company's management include substantial and relevant expertise related to all ESG factors?

4 More retail investors, small funds, and large institutional investors are embracing an activist posture related to ESG and expressing growing skepticism that companies will make good on their commitments.

The efficacy of ESG motivated investor activism is on the rise, too.

ONE DATUM:

91% of U.S. investors say they are specifically looking for instances when companies fail to deliver on their ESG commitments, and 94% anticipate an uptick in ESG-related litigation activity ([Edelman](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have mechanisms in place to appropriately measure the risk of social backlash to your products and services?

5 Until recently, private markets have taken a back seat to public markets in ESG.

Now, private equity investors are playing a major role in the next chapter of the ESG story.

ONE DATUM:

66% of private equity firms identify "value creation" as a top 3 driver of responsible investing or ESG strategy, while a significantly smaller share (40%) identify risk management as a top 3 driver, signaling a shift toward an upside-orientation ([PwC](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your firm have a playbook for improving ESG performance of portfolio companies in advance of an exit?

The state of play: corporate civic engagement in 2022

Published June 2022

The summer of 2020 sparked a new era of corporate civic engagement — one that has seen companies taking a more vocal stance on a larger portfolio of political and social issues than seen before. Today, those same companies are grappling with the reality of serving a broad spectrum of employees, consumers, and other stakeholders in a politically fraught environment. The current moment — and those on the horizon — will tell us a lot about the social role of the corporation moving forward.

In the wake of *Roe v. Wade*'s repeal, we published **The state of play: corporate civic engagement in 2022** to detail some of the most significant trends in how companies are grappling with social and political forces. Download the full report [here](#).

5 trends

1 Since 2020, more customers than ever want companies to take a stance on social and political issues.

But they may not be aligned on what that stance should be.

ONE DATUM:

In 2021, 80% of global consumers felt that CEOs “should support voting rights legislation as a way to fight systemic racism,” and 59% thought that CEOs should speak out opposing discriminatory or unethical state legislation ([Edelman](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have robust, regular, and data-driven feedback loops to understand and anticipate your customers' expectations of your company on an array of social and political issues?

2 Employees are increasingly willing to leave companies and mobilize their collective strength to force change.

And they're not letting CEOs get away with non-public action.

ONE DATUM:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, employee-led activism has risen by 40%, and 80% of employees anticipate that it will escalate within their companies by 2024 ([SHRM](#)) ([Forbes](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have a policy or playbook on employee activism that embraces openness and tolerance while clearly outlining the who, what, and where of how you act on civic engagement issues?

3 Politicians and companies are confronting one another in uncharted territory.

The risk calculus for corporate leaders is getting scrambled as a result.

ONE DATUM:

In 2021, multiple Georgia-based companies, including Coca-Cola and Delta, spoke out against the state's restrictive voting laws. In response, the Georgia House of Representatives voted to remove Delta's jet fuel tax break equal to tens of millions of dollars ([Forbes](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have open, routine, and effective communications between your social impact team and government affairs team to ensure alignment between ESG and lobbying strategies?

4 Media and third party watch dogs are bringing more transparency to the gap between commitments and actions.

They're revealing that companies still have a ways to go.

ONE DATUM:

In 2021, JUST Capital launched tools to track the racial equity and COVID-19 commitments of the 100 largest U.S. companies; in 2022 they found that only 23% of those large employers disclose diversity targets for hiring, workforce composition, promotion, or retention by race/ethnicity ([JUST Capital](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization hardwire accountability mechanisms – like third party audits and board oversight – when making public commitments to civic action?

5 Partnerships and playbooks are gaining momentum to address political, consumer, and employee challenges.

Though there remains no one-size-fits all strategy.

ONE DATUM:

Companies are locking arms and joining coalitions that promote civic engagement on select issues including supporting the democratic process, protecting voting rights, action against gun violence, among others ([Civic Alliance](#)) ([Everytown](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization share ideas and experiences transparently and generously with other organizations, researchers, and advocates as they search for new approaches and solutions?

The state of play: U.S. philanthropy in 2022

Published October 2022

Philanthropy provides risk capital in a way that government and business cannot. It is a necessary ingredient to solving the world's social and environmental problems. A new wave of giving that can propel projects forward with equity and justice at the fore is increasingly contingent on funders not only donating their financial resources but also embedding the values of trust-based approaches into their overall strategy.

In *The state of play: U.S. philanthropy in 2022*, we surface 5 trends that leaders need to know as they consider their own impact. Download the full report [here](#).

5 trends

1 Funders have increased their giving over the last two years, sometimes significantly.

But growth in nominal giving hides the fact that funders are donating less of what they earn.

ONE DATUM:

Despite giving more in absolute dollars, corporate donations as a percentage of pre-tax profits fell to 0.7% in 2021, matching the lowest level since 1981 ([Giving USA](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization benchmark your philanthropic spending against organizations like yours and use that data to inform your goal-setting and funding strategy?

2 Trust-based philanthropy found its foothold in the midst of crisis.

Today, funders are sustaining and evolving those principles.

ONE DATUM:

The Covid-19 pandemic helped accelerate the adoption of trust-based principles by private foundations; 800+ foundations pledged to make funding more flexible, boost unrestricted giving, ease application and reporting burdens, and more ([Council on Foundations](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Is your organization increasing the level of unrestricted and multi-year funding commitments you make to your grantees and partners?

3 Funders are doing more to prioritize racial and social justice in their giving.

Yet BIPOC voices remain too marginalized in decision-making.

ONE DATUM:

While a majority of the 500 largest foundations report receiving input from at least one person or organization affected by their work, only 10% of foundations reported delegating authority to their grantees through mechanisms like participatory grantmaking ([Giving USA](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization invest time, resources, and strategic attention in finding grantees doing credible, authentic, and impactful work to advance social and racial justice?

4 Funders are realizing philanthropy's potential to support climate interventions.

But their actual investments are incommensurate to the challenge.

ONE DATUM:

While the entrance of new donors and commitments led to a 14% increase in global philanthropic giving to climate change mitigation, it still represented less than 2% of total philanthropic giving in 2020 ([ClimateWorks Foundation](#)) and amounted to less than 1% of U.S. contributions in 2021 ([McKinsey](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization interrogate the alignment between your understanding of climate realities and the financial resources invested in climate interventions?

5 Collaborative approaches are gaining momentum and proving their impact, even among institutional funders.

Collective investing models adopt a power sharing approach, taking learnings from individual giving as well as trust-and place-based initiatives.

ONE DATUM:

In a review of 10 collaboratives, 94% agreed their collaborative was a success overall, 93% agreed they are on track to reach collaborative goals, and 92% of funders and 80% of grantees said their collaboratives benefits exceed the cost of participating ([SSIR](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization embrace the opportunity to scale its impact by aligning and collaborating with like-minded funders, including joining public pledges and/or collectives?

The state of play: DEIB in 2022

Published October 2022

Organizations have taken larger interest in the practice of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging since COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd, and other pivotal events brought long entrenched societal inequities to the spotlight. While their arc of progress is uneven, the simple fact remains: injustice occurs as prominently in the workplaces as anywhere else, affording companies the opportunity — perhaps the responsibility — to model solutions that could ultimately yield a wider societal benefit.

In *The state of play: DEIB in 2022*, we surface 5 trends that social impact leaders need to know as they chart their course ahead. Download the full report [here](#).

5 trends

1 With high expectations from current and prospective employees, companies are revamping recruitment to meet diversity goals.

But they are struggling to employ complete strategies.

ONE DATUM:

According to one study, while 71% of companies track outcomes to check for bias in the hiring process, only 55% do so in performance reviews; relatedly, bias training is given to 63% of hiring evaluators compared to 47% of performance review evaluators ([McKinsey](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization invest as much strategic attention in eliminating bias and promoting equity in performance management systems as it does in hiring?

2 To advance equity and inclusion, companies are leaning into stronger benefits, policy updates, and employee resource groups.

Data on efficacy is scarce, but makes clear that the work is just beginning.

ONE DATUM:

85% of surveyed companies have and 6% are planning to add in the next year non-discrimination, bullying, and harassment policies, and 67% have and 17% are planning to add a DEIB vision statement ([Korn Ferry](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization track the changes in legislation, economic well-being, and other external factors that influence what your employees need from their workplace experience and benefits?

3 Employee perspectives on DEIB effectiveness vary in ways that are unsurprising.

Company leadership has a responsibility for more open and reciprocal communications to better respond to these differences.

ONE DATUM:

When asked about DEIB policies, 59% of frontline hourly employees said their employer's policies are effective, compared to 81% of senior vice presidents and 74% of salaried frontline workers or entry-level employees ([McKinsey](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Do your employees know where to access your DEIB policies and who they can provide feedback to?

4 Reporting and disclosures around DEIB are improving. But the data is inconsistent and incomplete.

ONE DATUM:

JUST Capital's 2022 Corporate Racial Equity Tracker, measuring actions of America's 100 largest employers, found many increases in data disclosures from 2021 to 2022, including workforce diversity (86% to 91%) and board diversity (84% to 95%) ([JUST Capital](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization have mechanisms in place to routinely collect data on employee DEIB beyond the EEOC requirements?

5 DEIB executives are turning over at an increasingly high rate.

Lack of resourcing, insufficient company wide engagement, and burnout are major contributors.

ONE DATUM:

Of S&P 500 DEIB leaders, turnover is most attributed to unrealistic expectations pulling Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) in too many directions, lack of horizontal power that allows CDOs to drive substantive change, and the struggle to create long-term investments when there's a focus on visible results ([Russell Reynolds](#))

ONE PULSE CHECK:

Does your organization's DEIB leadership have adequate financial resourcing, clarity of role and purpose, and the staffing support needed to advance their priorities?

CASE STUDIES

Taking a closer look at what works

NationSwell case studies provide an in-depth look at how one organization is solving a problem so that others might too. We identify organizations that demonstrate novel, replicable, and results-oriented approaches that can be adapted by others in the field. Our case studies focus on teaching the active ingredients of success.



IN 2022, CASE STUDIES INCLUDED:

- How Verizon engaged 89,000 employee volunteers in the middle of a global pandemic p.11
- How the Bush Foundation's \$100 million community trust funds are decolonizing philanthropyp.12

How Verizon engaged 89,000 employee volunteers in the middle of a global pandemic

Published April 2022

Between 2020 and 2021, Verizon mobilized 89,000 of its employees to volunteer over 1,000,000 hours. Far exceeding the industry average of 1.4 hours per employee per year and the average annual volunteer participation rate of 17%, Verizon’s success demonstrates how taking a human-centered and empathetic approach can tap into employees’ diverse motivations for volunteering. Download the full case study [here](#).

Moving forward, together

SCENARIO

Verizon welcomed a new Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Hans Vestberg

Launched “Citizen Verizon” and “Citizen Verizon Volunteers” to mobilize its 135,000 employee workforce to complete 2.5 million volunteer hours by 2025

EARLY
2018

Adopted new brand purpose: “We create the networks that move the world forward”

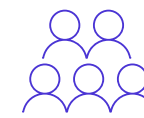
DECEMBER
2021

Close to 66% of Verizon employees engaged in volunteer work over 2 years. By comparison, the average annual employee volunteerism rate for large companies in 2020 was 17%

APPROACH

- 1. Cascade volunteerism strategy from the organization’s broader societal purpose.**
Verizon linked goals to the time and talents of its employees.
- 2. Develop a volunteerism-oriented RFP that’s empathetic and transparent toward applicants.**
Verizon designed a partner selection process that mitigates legacy deficiencies.
- 3. Over-index to existing employee skills and organizational capabilities.**
Verizon harnessed features intrinsic to the organization and its people.
- 4. Use metrics to elevate the strategic importance of volunteerism.**
Verizon actively promoted the strategic value of volunteerism to the business, its employees, and the communities they serve.
- 5. Plan to tap diverse motivations among employees.**
Verizon used a varied toolkit as opposed to relying on a single engagement lever to bring employees forward.
- 6. Make participation as easy as possible for employees and partners.**
Verizon lifted barriers to entry for participants and created opportunities for engagement that were highly responsive to the current environment.

RESULTS



1,000,000

Total volunteer hours logged from December 2019 – December 2021



7 hours / employee

Average time spent volunteering in this time period, compared with an average **1.40 hours** spent volunteering per employee at large companies in 2020

Verizon’s progress on 3 pillars of social responsibility

Citizen Verizon prioritizes three pillars directly related to the brand’s core operations and capabilities. Their deep volunteer commitments have enabled significant progress on each::

DIGITAL INCLUSION

178,286 beneficiaries served | 10,943 blind and low vision individuals helped | 2,461 hours spent engaging young individuals in STEM

CLIMATE PROTECTION

107,781 beneficiaries served | 15,274 pounds of litter collected from employee neighborhoods | 150,000 trees planted across five national forests

HUMAN PROSPERITY

278,282 beneficiaries served | 2,132 hours spent helping individuals use technology to gain access to resources and services | 2,500 relief kits distributed for communities in the wake of a natural disaster



TIME MACHINE:

One thing Verizon would do differently

Invest in a best-in-class, Verizon-specific web experience to meet the needs of the volunteer program from the outset of Citizen Verizon Volunteers.

How the Bush Foundation's \$100 million community trust funds are decolonizing philanthropy

Published September 2022

Spurred by the global resurgence of the movement to demand bolder action against structural racism, the Bush Foundation designed an innovative approach to redistribute wealth to Black and Native American communities. Called community trust funds, the model disburses \$100 million dollars to two steward organizations from these communities. Those steward organizations will use the trust funds to support educational attainment, home ownership, and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals. Download the full case study [here](#) to learn more.

A catalytic decision

SCENARIO

During its August 2020 board meeting, the Bush Foundation made the catalytic decision to make a one time investment—equivalent to 10% of the Foundation's assets at that time—to address wealth disparities in Black and Native American communities.

From that moment forward, the Foundation prioritized designing a strategy to put \$100 million toward enabling generational wealth through educational access, homeownership opportunities, and entrepreneurship opportunities for individuals from Black and Native American communities.

In 2019, the typical Black household had 13 cents of wealth for every dollar of wealth owned by white American households ([US Federal Reserve, 2020](#)).

As of 2000, the typical Native American household had 8 cents of wealth for every dollar owned by the average white American household. (Note: Native American wealth data is not available from the U.S. government, so Native Americans are excluded from most research on racial wealth gaps) ([Center for Community Economic Development, 2010](#)).

APPROACH

1. Issue a social impact bond to dramatically increase funding capacity.

By relying on debt financing to fund new grants, the foundation was able to urgently increase its support to the Native American and Black communities while still investing in other projects using their endowed assets.

2. Engage directly with community members to design a funding strategy.

The Bush Foundation structured a deep engagement process with 28 community members including leaders, elders, and experts on reparations and philanthropy. Their guidance helped the organization arrive at a community trust fund model for investing the \$100M bond proceeds in Native American and Black individuals.

3. Invite expressions of interest from potential steward organizations.

The Bush Foundation cast a wide and inclusive net to invite interest from potential steward organizations. Their request for proposals focused on organizations' capacity to credibly steward the funds and their demonstrated ability to engage deeply with community members in informing their work.

4. Select two steward organizations with guidance from community members.

The Bush Foundation recruited a representative community panel with understanding of the lived experiences and needs of the Black and Native American community to advise their selection process by interviewing finalist organizations. They helped identify NDN Collective and Nexus Community Partners as the two steward organizations for \$50M community trust funds.

5. Provide initial funding and guidelines to steward organizations for their program design phase.

The Bush Foundation provided an up front \$500,000 to each steward organization to support their work designing a grantmaking program for each community trust fund, as well as support around grant management, evaluation, and legal issues. The design phase funding is in addition to the \$50M each steward organization will receive to seed their community trust fund.

RESULTS

\$100 million

Amount split between two community organizations to steward as trust funds for individuals from the Black and Native American communities

2x \$500,000

Grants to two steward organizations to support the completion of a design phase

\$50 million

Additional commitment involving BIPOC communities through the Foundation's regular grantmaking programs



TIME MACHINE:

One thing the Bush Foundation would do differently

Consider redefining wealth to include forms of capital that extend beyond financial resources, such as human capital, social capital, and cultural capital to encompass a more holistic and culturally informed understanding of the long-standing equity needs of the Native American and Black communities.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Revealing practitioners' views and actions

NationSwell's ecosystem consists of influential thinkers, corporate executives, nonprofit leaders, grassroots organizers, and others who are shaping social and environmental impact. Our researchers tap into their expertise and experience to develop a more nuanced understanding of the issues, challenges, and opportunities in the field.



IN 2022, WE CONDUCTED TWO SURVEYS:

- Social impact professionals' views on the changing talent pipeline..... p.14
- Private sector social impact leadership survey..... p.15

Social impact professionals' views on the changing talent pipeline

Published July 2022

To better understand the sentiments and priorities of purpose-driven professionals, individuals who are often at the vanguard of social impact and innovation, NationSwell partnered with Lydia Loizides, president of Talentedly. Together we surveyed the NationSwell Council, a diverse community of individual changemakers, to learn more about their unique perspective on the evolving demands of the talent pipeline in the United States. Our findings explore three themes that emerged from the 123 responses: transforming the way we educate the future workforce, hiring and recruiting diverse talent, and increasing job commitment among existing employees. Download the full survey report [here](#).

Select findings

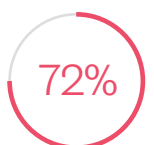
EDUCATING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE



65% of surveyed social impact professionals view some college majors as more useful than others in preparing young adults for the workforce and 57% believe new job credentialing programs are needed for workers



61% of surveyed social impact professionals have not removed or altered criteria around educational credentials in job postings, and just 37% believe that their employers value non-college credentials equally to college degrees



72% of surveyed social impact professionals agreed that private and public companies should be influencing post-secondary institution's curricula and the development of skills training for workers

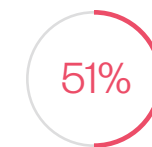


72% of surveyed social impact professionals agree that skills like adaptability and critical thinking are more important than hard skills to their organizations

HIRING AND RECRUITING TALENT



75% of surveyed social impact professionals report that their organizations are evaluating their recruiting and retention strategies, yet less than half responded that their organizations train HR business partners and hiring managers on unconscious bias, have removed education requirements from job postings, practice blind-screening, or partner with 2-year educational institutions to increase candidate diversity



Of those that could identify their organization's plans for hiring and recruitment practices in the coming year, the biggest investment is seen in organizations (51%) planning to partner with vocational institutions and non-profit organizations to increase candidate diversity

RETAINING AND ENGAGING EMPLOYEES



In the past 12 months, 76% of social impact professionals say their organizations improved communications between the company and employees



Close to half (46%) of all surveyed social impact professionals selected increased compensation as a top priority that should be offered by their organization in the next 12 months



“Workers should continue to ask for (and expect) the things that allow them to have a high quality of life, whether it be pay, benefits, or flexibility. Maybe we can shift capitalism from a zero sum game between companies / organizations doing well and workers getting what they need to everyone—shareholders, CEOs, managers, line workers—really seeing their quality of lives as inextricably linked.”

-survey respondent

Private sector social impact leadership survey: 2022 findings

Published November 2022

In the past year alone, we have seen the emergence of the Russia-Ukraine war, the highest daily case counts of the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple mass shootings, deadly instances of extreme weather, and the repeal of Roe v. Wade – all followed closely by ever-louder calls for the private sector to speak out and step up. Leaders in corporate social responsibility and ESG were on the receiving end of those calls, setting the priorities and making the decisions that shaped their organization's actions. To understand how social impact leadership is evolving, NationSwell fielded a survey of our institutional member community and beyond. Our analysis explores three themes that emerged from the responses of forty-seven leaders: how leaders assess their environment and grade their performance, the forces and moments that are shaping leadership, and the ways leaders are evolving their priorities to meet the moment. Download the full survey report [here](#).

Select findings

GENERAL SENTIMENTS



While nearly 65% of leaders characterized the environment as challenging over the past year, three-quarters (75%) were satisfied with their organization's social impact



Compared to 75% of leaders who felt satisfied with their organization's general social impact, only 58% of leaders said their company's response to social and political moments was strong during the past year

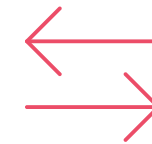


Only ~30% of leaders see contributions to overall economic growth and individual economic opportunity as among their company's greatest value-adds to society, compared with larger proportions who identified "developing products and services that solve social and/or environmental challenges" (53%) and "influencing the positive social and/or environmental behaviors of other companies" (49%) as core to their societal value

HEADWINDS AND TAILWINDS



Leaders pointed toward COVID-19 surges (34%) and the Russia-Ukraine conflict (26%) as the events with the greatest influence on their work in the past 12 months, far more than said the same of the repeal of Roe vs. Wade (9%)



While almost half (47%) of leaders felt that economic conditions were a significant barrier over the past year, a considerably larger share (68%) anticipate economic headwinds in the next 12 months



In reflecting on the past year and thinking ahead to the next, leaders identified key stakeholders as the top three positive forces behind their work, specifically executive leadership (~50%), employees (~40%), and investors (~25%)

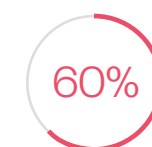
CHANGE AND ADAPTATION



In the last 12 months, 51% of leaders sought to build new or better frameworks for their organization's response to challenging social and political moments



The largest proportion of leaders (34%) indicated that better data on their organization's social impact would boost their confidence, and a similar number (28%) said the same for more clarity on their organization's social impact vision and goals



Close to 60% of leaders say that opportunities for thought leadership and engagement with peers are key priorities for personal growth in the year ahead

EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS

Thought partnership to challenge the conventional wisdom

NationSwell executive briefings deliver insights from interviews with leading thinkers and practitioners in the field. Briefings illuminate paradigm-shifting ideas and innovative strategies, spark critical thinking, and inspire leaders to take their social impact strategy to the next level.



IN 2022, WE PUBLISHED TWO EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS:

- Four imperatives for centering communities in philanthropyp.17
- Eight actions for creating catalytic cross-sector partnerships p.18

Four imperatives for centering communities in philanthropy

Published April 2022

The events of the past few years have shown us that in times of crisis, the inequities facing our most vulnerable populations become exacerbated. To prepare and better respond, traditional philanthropy must deploy a bottom-up approach to shift power back to these populations. This executive briefing provides strategic guidance for funders on how to elevate community voices and agency in their philanthropy. Download the full briefing [here](#).

The four imperatives



Show up intellectually, physically, and emotionally in the community

- Commit to a reallocation of your own time
- Use scaled engagement models to reach deeply and broadly into the community
- Show up on their terms, not yours
- Invest in internal staff literacy on racial and economic justice

T. Rowe Price Foundation

Program officers collectively conduct 1,000 meetings per year with community members, signaling community network development as a key priority

The Foundation provides capacity-building support to nearly 1,000 organizations, including many that are not existing grantees



Radically alter the way funding decisions are made

- Let the theory of change lead the dollars, not vice versa
- Over-index application invitations to community-led organizations
- Design a simplified application process that reduces the burden on small nonprofits
- Involve community members in funding decisions and feedback loops
- Measure and track the diversity of grantees and partners

Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta

Created a resident-led advisory board with the explicit goal of shifting the levers of traditional philanthropy to members of the community



Invest holistically in grantees' financial and social well-being

- Place heavy emphasis on unrestricted general operating support, and grow that support year over year to account for cost of living increases
- Incorporate financial compensation for feedback, reporting, and speaking engagements into funding relationships with partners and grantees
- Support grantees' internal efforts to pursue equity and justice

The Opportunity Network

President and CEO, AiLun Ku, posits that omitting cost of living from multi-year grants perpetuates a "starvation cycle" for nonprofits



Empower communities to own their data, metrics, and reporting

- Foster transparency around mutual accountability from the beginning
- Provide technical assistance and tools to partners and grantees

Student Leadership Network

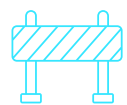
Sets three goals for what new funders should learn about their organization at kick-off meetings: who the people behind their organization are, how they do their work, and what they measure along the way

Eight actions for creating catalytic cross-sector partnerships

Published December 2022

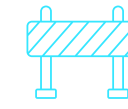
Many of the limitations and challenges associated with cross-sector social impact partnerships are rooted in their points of origin. More intentionality, responsibility, and creativity are necessary to unlock a greater number of truly catalytic opportunities. These barriers to a catalytic result are best addressed at or before the point of partnership inception. This executive briefing presents eight actions that organizations and their leaders can take to raise their ceiling for impact. Download the full briefing [here](#).

The eight actions



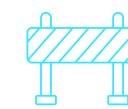
The skills that are integral to intuitive, imaginative thinking and relationship management are often unspoken and lack intentional investment.

- 1. Bring on cross-sector expertise and perspective**
In practice: FUSE intentionally hires people that have worked across sectors as the brokers of their partnerships.
- 2. Place a premium on emotional intelligence (EQ)**
In practice: Merok's social impact team values staff that demonstrate an ability to understand their own perspectives in the context of how other people may be thinking.



Partners-to-be may know too little about themselves to create truly catalytic relationships with others. This lack of knowledge often stems from poor line of sight into the many capabilities that live across complex organizations, and from the assumption that individuals within an organization can see it as clearly as those on the outside.

- 3. Mine ideas from business units and individuals beyond your social impact team**
In practice: Walmart's Shared Value Initiatives team routinely engages with colleagues across the company to find catalytic opportunities.
- 4. Embrace third party views of your capabilities and liabilities**
In practice: Airbnb acknowledges where it does not hold expertise and seeks outside counsel to strengthen ideas before implementing a partnership.
- 5. Open dialogue with partners-to-be about your asymmetrical advantages**
In practice: Schmidt Futures recommends asking potential partners two key questions: what is hard for you, and what is easy for you?



Relationships get more important, but also more difficult to manage, when two unfamiliar organizations enter uncharted waters in search of big, imaginative opportunities. The failure of relationships can put otherwise catalytic opportunities at risk.

- 6. Interlock organizational incentives**
In practice: Tent Partnership for Refugees garners commitments from major companies to hire refugees as a solution to labor shortages and high global levels of displacement.
Engage outside facilitators during (and after) ideation
- 7.** In practice: Annie E. Casey Foundation asks external coaches to intervene when they encounter challenges to successful collaboration, such as holding preconceived notions or expectations that are not being communicated.
Hardwire feedback loops
- 8.** In practice: FUSE conducts a progress assessment with partners every 90 days, allowing an opportunity for candid feedback and reflection about what steps can be taken to strengthen their work moving forward.

STUDIO PARTNERSHIPS

Rolling up our sleeves to move the needle

NationSwell’s Studio partners with purpose-driven organizations to develop transformative social impact strategies and award-winning creative campaigns.



IN 2022, OUR STUDIO’S WORK INCLUDED:

- Just Transition Collaborative: seizing the moment to close the opportunity gap in green jobs.....p.20
- American Family Insurance: expanding the power of Gen Z climate advocates..... p.21
- Walton Family Foundation: cultivating capacity and community in the Delta regionp.22
- Fearless philanthropy: driving impact through innovation.....p.23

Just Transition Collaborative: seizing the moment to close the opportunity gap in green jobs

Published July 2022

The global economy is in a period of major transition from traditional fossil fuel-based industries to more renewable and sustainable processes and accountability systems — what some call a “greening” of the economy. This transition is spurring innovation, job creation, and both the opportunity and responsibility to embed more inclusive approaches into the hiring for fast growing “green” jobs.

In that context, [Autodesk Foundation](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Workday](#) have been working together as part of a Just Transition Collaborative facilitated by NationSwell, with the shared goal to identify opportunities to accelerate more equitable pathways into green jobs by increasing the use of skill-based hiring. Key insights from our work are below.

Top opportunities

1. HUMANIZE WORK FOR HIGHER RETENTION RATES

Findings

- Letting employees select shifts that works for their lives lowers attrition
- Including holistic benefits coverage sets employees up for success
- Providing opportunities for continued education and skills-based career development future proofs the workforce

Case study

Visit the [full report](#) to learn about how the Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center (ISAIC) is innovating to grow with its employees

2. RETHINK RECRUITMENT TO EXPAND YOUR TALENT POOL

Findings

- Communicating with hiring managers about speaking to direct colleagues for the roles in questions to create clear and realistic job descriptions
- Working closely with community partners who offer skills training mitigates perceived risk on assessing talent’s fit for open positions
- Offering paid apprenticeships is an effective way to create entry level positions

Case study

Visit the [full report](#) to learn about how Coalfield Development offers a unique 33-6-3 approach to train, grow, and match up to the industry demand for skills plus experience and soft skills

3. TAP INTO THE NEXT WAVE OF GEN Z JOBSEEKERS

Findings

- Two-thirds of Gen Z say that they need feedback from their supervisor at least every few weeks in order to stay at their job
- Prioritizing safety draws more diverse talent into the industry
- Creating opportunities for employees to take action and get involved locally can help attract and retain younger jobseekers

Case study

Visit the [full report](#) to learn about how Industrial Commons creates opportunities for younger generations to learn trades and transferable skills from experienced workers in their industry by adopting a place-based approach

American Family Insurance: expanding the power of Gen Z climate advocates

Published December 2021

With young leaders like Greta Thunberg and Alexandria Villaseñor playing a greater role in policy advocacy and demanding climate action from governments and corporations, the American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact (AmFam Institute) approached NationSwell to help meet this growing need. Our Studio structured a 12-month deep empathy research project to learn from Youth and Young Climate Advocates (YCA), to inform the future of work as a partner in progress. A selection of findings from the Youth Climate Collaborative are below. To learn more, download the full report [here](#).


Expanding youth power

THE SUPPORT YCAS NEED AND WANT

Findings

- 1. More education and skill-building opportunities around climate and climate justice**

There is a distinct gap between YCA's level of interest in the climate movement and opportunities to learn about climate change and climate justice in formal educational settings. To fill that gap, organizations can learn from initiatives that create curriculums, work with local educators to integrate learning into local students' school experiences, and offer paid internships to young leaders working on social and environmental justice issues.

 "Companies do a lot of greenwashing to look trendy and politically correct, and the non-profit industrial complex has often been a waste of money and harmful to the causes they intend to work for. In order for companies and organizations to play a meaningful role, there needs to be a huge paradigm shift."

- YCA survey respondent

2. More power for diverse leaders and BIPOC-led climate solutions

Gen Z are the most diverse generation ever in America. Many of the YCAs that participated in this Collaborative came to the climate movement via other social justice routes. They are looking for more representation in the environmental movement and more resources for the solutions and needs of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

3. More opportunities to have a seat at the table and have their ideas acted on

YCA participants were clear that—while they were more skeptical of brands and business—they welcomed the support of those businesses who are making real, genuine commitments to climate issues and opening their doors to meaningful collaboration with young people. They wish that more businesses would offer support on more informed, equal terms.



"It is important to distinguish which organizations genuinely want to listen to youth voices. Setting long term goals and having clarity around what young people want ensures that their voices are not exploited for positive publicity."

- Youth advocate

4. More spaces to collaborate across generations, geographies, and sectors

Companies have the means and network to create meaningful opportunities for resource sharing and connections to collaborate, and should do more to support the collaboratives that exist.

THE IMPACT CONTINUES

NationSwell's collaboration with AmFam led to the creation of the NationSwell Fellows. To learn more about this exciting new program visit the website [here](#).



"It's about providing consistency and putting energy where it's needed most. You'll always get a ROI when you invest in the community and the people you love."

- Youth organizer and creator

Walton Family Foundation: cultivating capacity and community in the Delta region

Published May 2022

If there was ever a time to invest in rural America, the time is now. The Walton Family Foundation, alongside a group of committed funders, partners, and advocates is dedicating resources, time, and human capital to people and communities in the Delta region. Their goal is to drive economic revitalization and reinvestment in the region. Using stakeholder interviews, curated convenings, and desk research, NationSwell's Studio produced a report outlining opportunities and insights that, when leveraged, can strengthen the Walton Family Foundation's coalition and capacity-building initiatives in the region. While the full report is not publicly available, we are pleased to share the following topline insights with the hope they may be useful to others in building place-based strategies.

Key insights on place-based coalition building

ENABLE THE COMMUNITY TO LEAD

1. Elevate community leaders by allowing them to lead coalitions and be the faces and voices of the work
2. Create opportunities for promising community members to grow into community leaders
3. Allow community members to invite others to the table
4. Meet the community where they are already showing up (churches, festivals, etc.)
5. Reimagine the grantee reporting process by making to feel like a two way conversation and inviting grantees to influence what success looks like

BUILD ALIGNMENT TO DRIVE CONSENSUS AROUND OUTCOMES

1. Take time to align on a common agenda across all stakeholders
2. Build a stakeholder-led engagement process to define clear and measurable outcomes
3. Introduce ways for community members to advise and advocate for their needs and what they have to offer (e.g., through community circles)
4. Identify indicators to guide long-term outcomes (e.g., what contributing indicators will lead toward longer-term outcomes?)

USE DATA TO DRIVE CHANGE

1. Align on a set of common metrics and definitions of what those metrics and terms mean (e.g., outline what college readiness means and looks like)
2. Agree on a measurement system and scale (e.g., household vs. town vs. state)
3. Use data to help guide the work and decisions being made, not to enforce decisions
4. Reframe the collection of data to allow organizations to contribute data and make the information publicly available



"If we're to spur the kinds of community and economic development investments rural America requires, we need a new lens that looks at rural places on their own terms."

- **Suzanne Anarde**

Chief Executive Officer at Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC),
Former Vice President, Rural LISC

Fearless philanthropy: driving impact through innovation


Published November 2022

Philanthropy, in recent years, has been breaking the mold of traditional paradigms and leveraging a wider array of vehicles and structures for greater impact. Corporate philanthropic and foundation leaders alike are adopting new norms and attitudinal shifts that point to greater collaboration, business alignment, and community engagement. Made possible by Wells Fargo Foundation, NationSwell's Studio, in conversation with leaders in the field, developed an action-oriented report that highlights the importance of a networked, collective impact approach and a greater desire to take risks and spur innovation in business, community, and public policy. Download the report [here](#).

8 recommendations


RECOMMENDATION 1: FOSTER FEARLESSNESS

Embrace failure as a means to making progress and allowing philanthropy to fail forward. The allowance for failure should also take into consideration partner organizations whose projects may be reduced in scope or terminated early.

 **Call to action:**
Ask the hard questions


RECOMMENDATION 2: INTEGRATE IMPACT

Be intentional about integrating impact across the business. Too often philanthropic initiatives, community investments, DEI, improving the well-being of supply chain partners, and environmental innovations are “nice to have” but not seen as essential to the core business. De-siloing them can help them realize their full potential impact.

 **Call to action:**
Rethink infrastructure


RECOMMENDATION 3: THINK BIGGER

Shift structural barriers to social and environmental progress. Systems change will require you to address the root cause rather than tinkering around the edges of the issue.

 **Call to action:**
Focus on outcomes and systems change


RECOMMENDATION 4: LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS

Look at philanthropy and social impact as a partnership and a broader movement beyond what you are donating for as an individual funder or entity. Working with others will likely be a messier and more time-intensive process, but in the long-term, the benefits outweigh the costs.

 **Call to action:**
Invest in collaboration

RECOMMENDATION 5: BE NIMBLE

To be clear, being nimble does not mean making hasty decisions without regard for rigor or structure; rather, it means being thoughtful, agile, creative, and responsive in order to accommodate external circumstances and the changing needs of grantees.

 **Call to action:**
Create mechanisms to be more responsive in your grantmaking


RECOMMENDATION 6: BE PATIENT

There are no shareholders or market forces demanding a financial return, so philanthropy is able to provide patient capital. This long-term mindset spurs greater innovation and fills the gap of risk capital that other investors aren't willing to provide upfront before proof of concept.

 **Call to action:**
Provide flexible funding


RECOMMENDATION 7: BUILD TRUST

We've all heard about things “moving at the speed of trust,” and making progress through philanthropy is no different.

 **Call to action:**
Take a relational approach that genuinely empowers communities

RECOMMENDATION 8: APPLY A VENTURE CAPITAL APPROACH

Despite the stigma associated with elite and exclusive networks, there are redeeming qualities and practices in the venture capital space that we can extend and apply to philanthropy and social impact.

 **Call to action:**
Invest in people and organizational capacity

The team at NationSwell is grateful for the opportunity to support our members and the broader community of purpose-driven leaders through research and insights.

As always, if you have any questions, feedback, or suggestions for us, please don't hesitate to reach out at insights@nationswell.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

