THE STORY OF CARE:

A Snapshot of the Care Narrative Change Landscape

ASSET FUNDERS NETWORK | Care for All with Respect and Equity Fund | Disability & Philanthropy Forum | Early Childhood Funders Collaborative | EOF Economic Opportunity Funders | Grantmakers in Aging | Grantmakers Health

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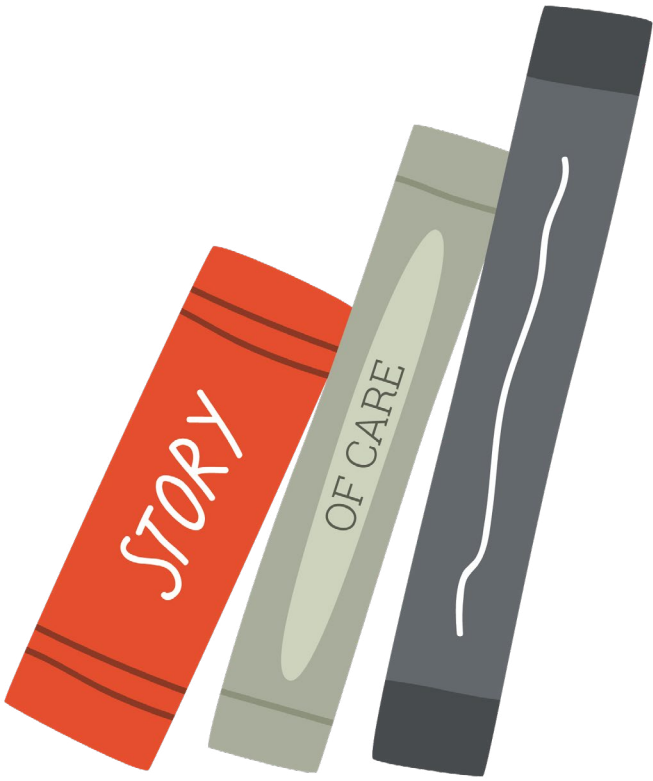

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Introduction

At some point, every one of us will need care or need to provide care. This became even more clear as the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to witness the extraordinary contributions of caregivers and exposed the failings caused by our nation's lack of care policies, especially for communities of color. At the height of the pandemic, the United States made unprecedented progress on care policies, but the progress was temporary and insufficient, especially compared to the need. Today, advocates, philanthropy, organizers, and policymakers have an opportunity to build on the heightened awareness in the United States of the central role care plays in families, communities, and the economy to set the stage for ongoing, sustainable policy progress.

Over the past three years, we have seen a **President pushing a comprehensive care agenda**, **unprecedented federal pandemic-relief investments in care**, vital **state-level progress,** and sustained national and local media attention on care issues. This forward movement on the **care economy** resulted from a combination of coalition work, organizing, communications savvy, and advocacy supported by diverse funders over many years, and the catalyst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Care Can't Wait Coalition** has brought together organizations supporting care issues across siloes and generations, including **child care and early learning** (CCEL), **long term services and supports** (LTSS) for older adults and people with disabilities, **paid leave**, supports for **unpaid family and friend caregivers**, and endeavors to improve the quality of **paid care workers**' jobs. The coalition has led strategic and tactical efforts to fight for permanent investments in the care infrastructure, pass and successfully implement pandemic-relief funding for care, and promote President Biden's **Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers**. And since 2021, the **Care for All with Respect and Equity (CARE) Fund** has organized funders to collectively support Care Can't Wait and other organizations that are building the movement for a universal, publicly-supported care infrastructure that fuels the economy, improves family well-being, creates millions of good jobs, promotes equity, and helps people with disabilities and older adults live independently with safety and dignity.

As these entities have demonstrated, breaking down silos across care issues is powerful. Instead of treating care issues as distinct topics supported by separate organizations, bringing them together under the narrative umbrella of the "care infrastructure" and the "care economy" is one of the most effective ways to make progress. Care and caregiving are undervalued and chronically underfunded due to systemic racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and other intersecting oppressions. Even with the progress made over the past few years, there is much further to go. In 2022, after making substantial policy progress, Congress left on the cutting room floor funding to build a comprehensive care infrastructure. In addition, the backlash against progress on care is well funded and growing. Leaders of the culture wars are trying to divert attention from the topic and instill fear and division instead of lifting up the pillars of care – love and community.

Policy progress on care policies requires a major shift in values and cultural conditions that disrupts oppressive systems. Addressing care as a systemic, societal, and communal responsibility using narrative change strategies will pave the way for seismic cultural, political, and economic shifts in the United States.

Using narrative change strategies to address care as a systemic, societal, and communal responsibility will pave the way for seismic cultural, political, and economic shifts in the United States.

Why Care About Care

In June 2021, **Asset Funders Network** (AFN) and **Economic Opportunity Funders** (EOF) jointly released "**Why Care About Care: Our Economy Depends on It**,"[1] a brief, webinar, and video aimed at deepening funders' understanding of the intersectional and intergenerational issues related to the care economy and the need to build a robust care infrastructure – a publicly funded system that recognizes care as both an individual and social responsibility, values care workers, and supports family members to both care and provide financially for each other. The project highlighted key policies and programs that address the economic inequities arising from these issues and proposed a diverse set of impactful investment strategies, including progressive policy and programmatic solutions.

To build on this effort, a group of six philanthropy support organizations (PSOs) – AFN, EOF, **Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, Grantmakers In Aging, Grantmakers In Health**, and **Disability & Philanthropy Forum** – began meeting in late 2021. Through discussion about shared interests and priorities, and with input from members and field partners, the PSOs agreed to collaborate to develop a national landscape analysis of care economy narrative change efforts, including child care and early learning, paid leave, long-term services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities, unpaid family and friend caregivers, and supports for paid care workers, including higher wages, benefits, and workplace rights and protections. Their goals were to learn and share with funders what kinds of narrative change strategies and tactics are being employed, which care funders and grantees are already supporting and using them, where the most significant gaps and opportunities are, and how philanthropy can best support this work.

Using grant funding secured from the CARE Fund, the PSO collaborative hired consultants Padmini Parthasarathy, Sāmya Strategies, and Julie Kashen, The Century Foundation, to conduct this research and analysis. This report describes (1) the framework for this landscape analysis, (2) its methodology, (3) key findings from online and qualitative research, and (4) areas for further learning and action.

Landscape Analysis Framework

Narrative change work can be a valuable tool for advancing policy and cultural changes. The co-authors of *Funding Narrative Change, An Assessment and Framework by the Convergence Partnership*, Mik Moore and Rinku Sen, explain that when audiences are saturated with the ideas and stories that changemakers are promoting, "that kind of saturation, combined with clear paths to action, will change the environment and make more ambitious policy achievable and enduring."[2] The ambition of the care agenda certainly requires this kind of impactful strategy.

Mik Moore and Rinku Sen, explain that when audiences are saturated with the ideas and stories that changemakers are promoting, **"that kind of saturation, combined with clear paths to action, will change the environment and make more ambitious policy achievable and enduring."** The ambition of the care agenda certainly requires this kind of impactful strategy.

Narrative change is an emerging field, with practitioners and funders actively shaping the field as they go. As such, we decided that the most effective approach to developing a guiding framework for the landscape analysis was to build on the latest research on narrative change in the philanthropic and nonprofit sector. This research includes work from Convergence Partnership, a national funder collaborative working to transform systems to be racially just and inclusive and support community health and well-being.[3] and Pop Culture Collaborative, a philanthropic resource and funder learning community working to transform the narrative landscape in America around people of color, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and Indigenous peoples, especially those who are women, queer, transgender and/or disabled.[4]

This analysis uses the definition of **"narrative"** as "the themes and ideas that permeate collections of stories"[5] and as "a story people already know; a story template recurring in a culture over time that people widely recognize and understand, and to which they have a predictable response."[6] **"Narrative change"** involves shifting these stories and requires building narrative power through **mass media**, **mass culture, and mass movements**, as defined by the Convergence Partnership (see chart 1). According to Rashad Robinson, the President of Color of Change, **narrative power** is "the ability to change the norms and rules our society lives by."[7] Similarly, the Convergence Partnership describes it as "the ability to shape public discourse, debate, and imagery."[8]

Our analysis includes efforts that meet the following criteria: (1) narrative change efforts or strategic communications efforts (as defined below) across the United States; and (2) address child care and early learning, paid family and medical leave, and long-term supports and services for older adults and people with disabilities, with a focus on users of care, paid care workers, and unpaid family and friend caregivers.

We use the Convergence Partnership's framework (see chart 1) to define narrative change efforts as long-term efforts that establish new values and conditions that allow for changes to happen, are led by everyday narrators and organizers, and use at least one of three narrative power-building approaches, i.e., mass media, mass culture, and mass movements. In addition, the analysis examines **strategic communications** efforts that support longer-term narrative change. Strategic communications efforts are those that create frames, messages, and stories to influence short- or medium-term public policy campaigns, are grounded in current shared values, and are led by communications experts.

CHART 1.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS VS. NARRATIVE CHANGE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS	NARRATIVE CHANGE
Time bound 6 months to 3 years	Decades broken into smaller chunks
Attached to current policy processes and demands	Can influence policies but tries to create a new lasting authorizing environment for ambitious changes
Run by communications directors, content creators, and message researchers	Led by everyday narrators, long term strategists and organizers
Based on currently shared values	Tries to elevate or establish new values, and get them shared
Is one social change strategy among others, including advocacy, organizing, and cultural change	Helps shape storytelling across all social change strategies, including communications

FUNDING NARRATIVE CHANGE
An Assessment and Framework by the Convergence Partnership

The Convergence Partnership lays out the following framework for how to use the combination of mass media, mass culture, and mass movements to achieve narrative power and generate narrative change (see chart 2). The Partnership advises that *"part of philanthropy's role here is to ensure that the entire ecosystem is robustly funded."*[9]

CHART 2.

NARRATIVE POWER-BUILDING FRAMEWORK

NARRATIVE POWER BUILDING: A FRAMEWORK	MASS MEDIA	MASS CULTURE	MASS MOVEMENTS
PURPOSE	Shift narratives through journalism and nonfiction media, such as books and documentary film	Shift narratives through storytelling in entertainment venues such as TV, film, and music	Shift narratives through new stories by organizing and inspiring collective action, art, and culture
TACTICS	Subsidies for high-impact non-fiction books or podcasts Reporter briefings on how to cover an issue Direct funding of outlets such as hyper local and Spanish-language news	Staff in production centers like Los Angeles Place issue and community experts into writers rooms Challenge mass culture misrepresentation of communities	Organizing mass protests Local, community-based art and culture production Crafting demands that stretch the system in desired direction
EXAMPLES	Solutions Journalism Project Media Matters National associations of reporters of color	National Domestic Workers Alliance *Roma* Campaign Define American work on Superstore Color of Change report "Race in the Writers Room"	Public journeys (immigrants "walk to stay home") AIDS Quilt "Defund the Police" demand of racial justic uprisings
INDICATORS OF IMPACT	Increase in community voices and stories Reduction in racial code words Greater focus on systems, less on individuals, as root cause of challenges	Increase in stories by and about groups and their experiences Compelling, empathetic dramatization of controversial issues Reduction in number of character stereotypes	Visibility of BIPOC-led grassroots organizations Stories from everyday people New concepts/ language go mainstream

FUNDING NARRATIVE CHANGE
An Assessment and Framework by the Convergence Partnership

This project also informed by the narratives that currently shape the national stories about care and a vision of shared values towards which the philanthropic and nonprofit sector is working (see table 1). In "Why Care About Care," we noted that developing a clear vision for a culture that views care as a community matter requiring a collective investment is a crucial first step in disrupting the sexist, racist, and classist status quo.[10] We can also add ageist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic to that list, acknowledging that the current reality is grounded in many intersecting oppressions. This vision has been updated to include feedback from all six PSOs supporting this report, and it is a living, breathing work in progress as we work together to iterate on this vision.

NARRATIVE CHANGE IN ACTION

PAID LEAVE FOR ALL

BABY BOOK SERIES

To activate parents and other voters still angry about the lack of support during the pandemic, **Paid Leave for All** teamed up with Glamour to launch a **nationwide petition and public awareness campaign** featuring a series of satirical, interactive baby books called Get Your Sh*t Together, Baby. The fabricated books "teach" newborns everything they need to care for themselves when their parents have been forced back to work, including how to boil water for their own bottle and how to go into debt to pay for their own care. The series of books were read in storytime videos across internet and social media platforms by comedians, actors, television hosts, and parents, such as Jenna Dewan, Karamo Brown, Stephanie Beatriz, June Diane Raphael, and Lisa Ann Walter. The series was promoted with digital display, video, audio, podcast, and print ads across Condé Nast titles, as well as a takeover in Times Square.

This project combines a number of tactics – partnership with mass media, creative content, and leveraging the social media platforms and voices of folks known from television to reach a widespread audience.

TABLE 1.

VISION OF SHARED VALUES

CURRENT REALITY	THE VISION
Care is the responsibility of individuals, families, and women.	**Care is a collective responsibility and is supported by public dollars.**
Users of care are a burden to society.	**We all provide and benefit from care at some point in our lives. Users of care have agency and can fully participate in and contribute to society.**
Caring for children, older adults, people with disabilities, and oneself are separate issues.	**We can transform the way we care for one another at every age and every life stage.**
Care work is underpaid.	**Care work is valued. Care jobs are well-paid, safe, family-supporting jobs.**
Care responsibilities are inconsistent with paid work.	**The workplace accommodates the needs of caregivers because caregiving is important, and caregivers should be able to remain connected to the workplace.**
Family and friend caregivers are unpaid and must sacrifice their short- and long-term financial security.	**Family and friend caregiving is valued, and therefore family and friend caregivers are integrated into health care teams, have access to the supports they need, and are provided with some level of stable income and long-term economic security.**
Care is a niche issue.	**Care is essential to health; early childhood; youth development; education; aging; and racial, economic, gender, immigrant, and disability justice.**
Caregiving is seen as unskilled, low-wage labor.	**Caregiving is a skilled profession and should be paid as such.**

Methodology

We reviewed publicly available information (such as websites, reports, and articles) and the results of the funder survey to identify care economy narrative change efforts around the country. We did not survey or interview all the listed organizations and projects. As such, this analysis is a snapshot of projects at a specific point in time, with the analysis completed in June 2023. It is not exhaustive or inclusive of all care economy projects in the field.

We also conducted interviews with selected care economy narrative change field experts and a focus group with selected funders to inform this analysis (see **Appendix A**).

Further details about the methodology for this analysis can be found in **Appendix B**.

NARRATIVE CHANGE IN ACTION

EQUIMUNDO

STATE OF AMERICA'S FATHERS 2023

A recent report from Equimundo, **State of America's Fathers 2023: Mobilizing Men for a Better Care Ecosystem**, shares findings from a study of men's caregiving in the United States that starts from the belief that empowering and supporting men to be caregivers is necessary for all of us. The report makes several recommendations based on its research findings, including supporting the media to tell men's caregiving stories and ending harmful, racist stereotypes about fathers of color. Discussing men's caregiving is, among other things, an opportunity to break out of political polarization, call all men to be their most connected, empathetic, equity-seeking selves, and achieve the care policy advances we all need to thrive. This project helps change the norms of society by demonstrating what else is possible – men as caregivers.

This project helps change the norms of society by demonstrating what else is possible – men as caregivers.

Key Findings

We describe below the key findings from our analysis of this landscape snapshot.

Care economy areas of focus include: child care and early learning (CCEL); long-term services and supports (LTSS) for older adults; LTSS for people with disabilities and chronic illness; paid care workers; unpaid caregivers; and paid leave.

Online Research and Funder Survey

We identified 81 care economy narrative change organizations and projects through the funder survey and online research. They represent a mix of organizations and projects with varying focus areas, sizes, scopes, and structures. The list also includes multiple projects for some organizations. An online, searchable table of these projects can be found **here**. As described in the Methodology section, each project was categorized by areas of focus, type of narrative change strategy, type of approach or product, intended audience, geographic focus, and time period. A project could be assigned multiple attributes within each category. A summary of these findings follows.

A total of 71 organizations were working on two or more of the care economy areas of focus (see table 2). More specifically, 12 organizations and projects were working on both child care and early learning and long-term services and supports, either as distinct strategies or integrated into a broader care economy strategy.

A small number of organizations identified in this analysis were conducting substantial, sustained care economy narrative change work as a core organizational strategy. Most of the identified efforts were short-term, timebound, or one-time efforts, such as documentary films, reports, online videos, and podcasts.

TABLE 2.

PROJECTS WORKING ON MULTIPLE CARE ECONOMY AREAS OF FOCUS*

NUMBER OF AREAS OF FOCUS	#
Two	17
Three	24
Four	13
Five	9
Six	8
Total	**71**

**CCEL, LTSS for older adults; LTSS for people with disabilities and chronic illness; paid care workers; unpaid caregivers; and paid leave*

Most of the projects (70) employed narrative change strategies, with a smaller number (24) employing strategic communications strategies. Of those engaged in narrative change, 27 used the narrative power-building approach of mass culture, 21 used mass movements, and 16 mass media (see table 3). Only four projects were using two of these power-building approaches, and one was using three. For 23 narrative change projects, the information available was insufficient to determine their narrative power-building approach.

TABLE 3.

NARRATIVE POWER-BUILDING APPROACHES

APPROACH	#
Mass culture	27
Mass movements	23
Mass media	13

The two most common tactical approaches and types of products employed were storytelling (24) and research/reports (22). These were followed by video (13), messaging guidance (12), and film (11).

TABLE 4.

PROJECTS' APPROACHES AND PRODUCTS

APPROACH OR TYPE OF PRODUCT	#
Storytelling	24
Report/research	22
Video	13
Messaging guidance	12
Film	11
Visual art	8
Policy advocacy	8
Organizing and power building	7
Podcast	6
Collaboration/coalition	5
Journalism	5
Social media	4
Consulting	3
Capacity building/infrastructure	1
Award	1

Note: Projects were assigned as many approaches or types of products as were applicable; some projects were assigned more than one.

Policymakers and the public were the predominant audiences for projects, at 30 and 28 projects respectively. This may be driven by the types of groups conducting care economy narrative change projects, i.e., those focused on policy advocacy and organizing. The entertainment industry was the third most common audience.

TABLE 5.

PROJECTS' AUDIENCES

AUDIENCE	#
Public	30
Policymakers	28
Entertainment industry	12
Field of advocates and practitioners	6
Men	5
Advocates	4
Employers	3
Black women	2
Journalists	2
Workers	2
College students	1
Members of coalition	1
Parents	1
Philanthropy	1

Note: Projects were assigned as many audiences as were applicable; some projects were assigned more than one.

The analysis also found that a small proportion of projects were place-based or local in nature, 66 projects were national in scope, and 21 were engaged in work in states (California, New York, Georgia, Maine, Montana, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Washington). Three projects had a global focus, as well.

Most of the projects identified in this analysis have occurred recently, indicating that this is indeed an emerging field. Of those projects for which the time period is known, one was conducted in 2017, two were conducted or started in 2018, and the rest were conducted or launched in 2019 or later. In fact, 32 projects started in 2022 or later, and 17 are current, ongoing projects.

NARRATIVE CHANGE IN ACTION

CALIFORNIA WORK & FAMILY COALITION

CAREGIVER NARRATIVE PROJECT

The **California Work & Family Coalition**, a statewide coalition fighting for paid leave for all, launched its **Caregiver Narrative Project** in Fall 2022. The project created a learning circle of 15 Coalition members with diverse professional and personal backgrounds who met over four sessions in Fall 2022 to design narratives, messages, and images that shift the current narrative around caregiving to one that values family caregivers, professional care workers who also need time to care for their own families, and care work itself. Now, project findings are being shared with the broader Coalition and the group is considering how to translate its learnings into action. This project is a great example of engaging diverse impacted individuals to learn more about what narratives work with a focus on both paid and unpaid care work. It will be exciting to follow how the learnings translate into action.

This project is a great example of engaging diverse impacted individuals to learn more about what narratives work with a focus on both paid and unpaid care work. It will be exciting to follow how the learnings translate into action.

Interviews With Field Experts

The seven field expert interviews revealed several key themes about the lessons practitioners are learning about narrative change:

- Existing narratives related to the care economy, such as those that frame care as an individual responsibility and devalue the women, immigrants, and people of color who provide care, are entrenched in our society and resistant to change. Changing these narratives requires persistent effort by multiple actors through multiple methods over a long period of time.
- Narrative change work must center those who experience the greatest inequities related to care and elevate their voices.
- Target audiences should extend beyond those already inclined to support messages and values that promote care. For example, narrative change could place more focus on persuading people who are "on the fence" on these issues and could be persuaded to be receptive to these messages and values.
- Working across care economy sectors is essential to making change, because care issues and the way people experience them are interconnected.
- Policy campaigns – such as those to expand paid family and medical leave and increase wages for paid care workers – are key drivers of strategic communications and narrative change efforts.
- Efforts are growing to engage the entertainment industry in telling more effective stories about care.
- Research is critical to understanding the current state of care economy narrative change related issues, relevant history and context, public opinion, effective messaging strategies, and other factors.

NARRATIVE CHANGE IN ACTION

CARING ACROSS GENERATIONS

CREATIVE CARE COUNCIL

In March 2023, Caring Across Generations introduced its **Creative Care Council**, a cohort of arts and entertainment creatives who are helping to amplify caregiving stories; advocate for affordable childcare programs, paid leave for all, and accessible in-home care for older adults and people with disabilities; and shift the way our society thinks about care. The inaugural cohort includes Yvette Nicole Brown, Bradley Cooper, Brandee Evans, Yves Mathieu East, Richard Lui, Lauren Miller Rogen, Seth Rogen, and Megan Thee Stallion. The council aims to make caregiving more visible and transform cultural norms. This is an example of a mass culture strategy – engaging people with a following from television, film, and music to tell care stories and be care story ambassadors. Creatives are able to reach a much wider audience, including people who are not politically engaged.

This is an example of a mass culture strategy – engaging people with a following from television, film, and music to tell care stories and be care story ambassadors. Creatives are able to reach a much wider audience, including people who are not politically engaged.

Interviewees emphasized that there is simply not enough philanthropic funding available for basic care economy narrative change efforts, let alone to increase the scope and improve the effectiveness of this work. They shared that this scarcity of financial resources creates unnecessary and harmful competition between groups, restricting effective collaboration.

The interviewees also recommended that funders interested in advancing narrative change around the care economy provide funding in a format that allows for launching and sustaining true narrative change efforts as defined in the framework earlier in this report, e.g., long-term projects aimed at creating new values and new conditions that enable change. Specifically, they advocated that funders:

- Provide sustained, general operating support over several years to support both organizational infrastructure needs and programmatic efforts.
- Foster experimentation, as the narrative change field is actively evolving and learning what works.
- Support grant evaluation and measurement approaches that are appropriate for the long-term, uncertain, iterative, and qualitative nature of shifting care economy narratives.
- Center people with lived experience.
- Fund collaboration above and beyond supporting individual organizations' work.
- Communicate transparently with grantees, allowing them to adequately plan for program development, operations, and fundraising.
- Learn about the issues in which grantees are engaged and use that learning to help grantees advance their work, e.g., by introducing grantees and other nonprofits doing related work who are not already connected.
- Convene care economy narrative change organizations and support organizations to organize their own meetings and conferences.
- Expand grantmaking strategies beyond current topical siloes and fund efforts that cross care sectors.
- Collaborate with other funders to support these efforts.
- Fund 501(c)(4) organizations, which can conduct more lobbying than 501(c)(3) organizations, and pursue electoral strategies and political campaigns that support care economy narrative change.
- Use both grantmaking dollars and influence in the field to eliminate the scarcity paradigm described above.

Funder Focus Group

The funder focus group participants represented foundations that are (1) working at the local, state, and national level; (2) supporting child care and early learning, paid leave, long-term services and supports, paid care workers, and unpaid caregivers; and (3) embedding care economy funding, including narrative change, in broader portfolios, i.e., healthy children and families, aging, economic security, health, and gender and reproductive equity. The funders expressed that because there are diverse angles from which to approach the care economy, any funder can find a niche that fits its mission and strategy. They also agreed that philanthropy needs to seize the pandemic-fueled momentum on care, which has been reflected in public interest, policy discussions, and media coverage.

Of note in the focus group discussion was that many of the funders' comments mirrored those shared by the field expert interviewees (see table 6). They agreed that funders should (1) rethink how they measure success, as progress on narrative change is not linear; (2) pay attention to who owns and tells stories, centering people with lived experience; (3) support longer-term narrative change with flexible funding over multiple years, while also funding shorter-term organizing and public policy efforts; (4) help nonprofits strengthen their organizational infrastructure and capacity, including media and communications, hiring and development of staff, and evaluation and learning; and (5) promote cooperation between nonprofits instead of perpetuating competition for resources, including providing funding for groups to collaborate with each other, especially across sectors.

TABLE 6.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY FROM FIELD EXPERT INTERVIEWEES AND FUNDER FOCUS GROUP

RECOMMENDATION	FIELD EXPERTS	FUNDERS
Provide sustained, multiyear, general operating support	✓	✓
Support evaluation approaches that are appropriate for narrative change	✓	✓
Center people experiencing the greatest inequities and having lived experience	✓	✓
Fund collaboration	✓	✓
Use grantmaking dollars and influence to eliminate scarcity paradigm	✓	✓
Foster experimentation and innovation	✓	
Communicate transparently	✓	
Learn about grantees' issue areas	✓	
Convene grantees and support them to convene with each other	✓	
Fund across care sectors	✓	
Foster experimentation and innovation	✓	
Fund 501 (c)(4) organizations	✓	

Areas For Further Learning and Action

This landscape analysis was designed to be the first step in a longer exploration of care economy narrative change. The process and findings reveal several potential areas for further learning and action for funders interested in changing care economy narratives, in partnership with practitioners and advocates in the field:

1. **Study care economy narrative change efforts more comprehensively.** As described in the methodology section, this analysis primarily relied on online research and captured efforts at a specific point in time; thus, it has merely scratched the surface of the care economy narrative change field. We spoke directly with only the seven organizations that participated in the interviews. In-depth study of additional groups and projects could collect more detailed data on projects' strategies, audiences, outcomes, leadership demographics, and equity and justice approaches. It could also examine the following questions:

   - What are the current narratives about the care economy and how do they align with or contradict each other?
   - What are the specific narratives about the care economy that the field is trying to change, and what are the new narratives it wants to see?
   - What is the impact of single-sector narrative change efforts vs. cross-sector efforts?
   - How do narrative change efforts connect with broader systems-change goals and outcomes for care?
   - How do narrative change projects integrate trauma-informed principles and practices (those rooted in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of historical trauma and oppression and adapt approaches to emphasize the safety, power, and self-worth of impacted communities)?
   - How are organizations focused on children, older adults, and people with disabilities approaching the care economy and working to advance the vision of shared values described earlier in this report?

2 **Engage funders further to gain a deeper understanding of the funding landscape.**

This analysis obtained valuable but limited data from philanthropy through the funder survey and focus group; it was just enough to spark more questions. For example, in the survey, several funders reported that they fund care economy narrative change efforts yet provided no details. In addition, several others said they are not yet funding in this area but are considering it. Collecting more information from these funders about their work would yield a clearer picture of the funding landscape in this field, including identifying projects we have not yet captured, and it would build on the initial learnings gathered by this analysis on effective care economy and narrative change grantmaking.

3 **Encourage philanthropy to transform how they fund care economy narrative change.**

Both the funders and nonprofits we spoke with agreed that resource scarcity and the format and content of current grantmaking are hindering these efforts and preventing substantial change. Funders must consider how to adapt their grantmaking practices to fit narrative change. The report "From Stories to Systems: Using a Narrative Systems Approach to Inform Narrative Change Strategy"[11] asserts, "Widespread cultural change is most reliably achieved when millions of people are immersed, over time, in new narrative oceans powered by a multitude of coordinated story experiences and organized communities (e.g., pop culture fandoms) that express diverse and complex perspectives while also holding the same core ideas. . . . Funding narrative change work involves simultaneously supporting efforts to achieve narrative immersion (coordinated content) and the narrative infrastructure (research, pipelines, networks, convenings, core capacity) needed to achieve this immersion. What portion of your grantmaking will you allocate to each of these areas?" We recommend applying the six grantmaking practices of Trust-Based Philanthropy[12] as a key place to start: (1) give multiyear, unrestricted funding; (2) do the homework, (e.g., making it the funder's responsibility to get to know prospective grantees); (3) simplify and streamline paperwork; (4) be transparent and responsive; (5) solicit and act on feedback; and (6) offer support beyond the check.

4 **Support the building of synergy between the varied efforts across sectors and the country.**

As described in these findings, currently, most care economy narrative change projects are discrete and short-term in nature. In contrast, the narratives they are attempting to change are entrenched, persistent, popular, and grounded in the founding of our nation almost 250 years ago based on racial capitalism. To shift these narratives, it is essential for philanthropy to support the field to create synergy between single efforts, connect their strategies and outcomes, and act collectively to increase public and political will to create a stronger care economy and generate new societal values around care.

Conclusion

Achieving a system supported by robust public funding that recognizes care as both an individual and social responsibility, values care workers, and supports family members to both care and provide financially for each other will not be easy. Despite significant progress over the past three years, many of the wins gained during the pandemic have ended or will expire soon, and American families again will be left without the care infrastructure they need. The relatively new field of narrative change is an encouraging avenue for change. Creating the conditions to imagine what's possible and shifting our nation's values and culture to prioritize care and community will set us on a path not only towards transformational policy changes, but also towards a more equitable society that does what's best for its people. Significant philanthropic investments are needed to move forward, innovate, and catalyze synergy across the care field.

Significant philanthropic investments are needed to move forward, innovate, and catalyze synergy across the care field.

ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX A: FIELD EXPERT INTERVIEW AND FUNDER FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

FIELD EXPERT INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

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Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, **MomsRising**

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KRISTA SCOTT
Senior Program Officer, **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

AMBER SLICHTA
Vice President of Programs and Learning, **The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**

RACHEL WICK
Senior Program Officer, **Blue Shield of California Foundation**

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

FUNDER SURVEY

We designed and implemented a survey to identify which funders are supporting care economy narrative change work and what projects they are funding. The project's six PSO partners sent the survey to their members. A total of 62 individuals provided complete responses to the funder survey. Of these, 31 responded that they currently fund care economy narrative change efforts, and 12 said they have considered or are considering funding narrative change. Of the 31 funders who indicated currently funding such efforts, 15 provided information about the efforts. We assessed the information they submitted and determined that nine of these funders are supporting projects that fit this analysis's definitions of care economy narrative change and strategic communications. We added any projects not already captured by online research to the project database.

ONLINE RESEARCH

We reviewed publicly available information (such as websites, reports, and articles) and the results of the funder survey to identify care economy narrative change efforts around the country. We did not survey or contact these organizations and projects. Thus, this analysis provides a snapshot of projects at a specific point in time, with the analysis completed in June 2023. It is not exhaustive or inclusive of all care economy projects in the field. We catalogued for each project the following categories: (1) care economy areas of focus (child care and early learning, paid leave, long-term services and supports for older adults, long-term services and supports for people with disabilities, paid care workers, and unpaid family and friend caregivers); (2) type of strategy (narrative change or strategic communications); (3) if applicable, type of narrative change power-building approach (mass media, mass culture, or mass movements); (4) tactical approach used by or type of product produced by the project; (5) audience; (6) geographic focus; and (7) the time period in which the project took place.

INTERVIEWS WITH FIELD EXPERTS

We conducted interviews with seven experts in the field of care economy narrative change representing a variety of care economy sectors, narrative change and strategic communications strategies, and geographies (see Appendix A). The goal of the interviews was to understand what these experts are learning from their work, what strategies have proven successful thus far, where opportunities for improvement are, and what recommendations they have for philanthropy regarding care economy narrative change.

FUNDER FOCUS GROUP

We conducted one focus group with four individuals from private foundations who indicated in the survey that they currently support care economy narrative change efforts (see Appendix A). The purpose of the focus group was to understand these funders' grantmaking strategies, what they are learning through their grantmaking, what has worked well thus far, where there are opportunities for improvement, and what recommendations they have for their peers in philanthropy who might want to join them in investing in organizations working to advance the care economy.

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

CARE ECONOMY DEFINITIONS

CARE ECONOMY: The sector of the economy that is responsible for the provision of care, including early learning and child care, paid leave, and long-term services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities, in both paid and unpaid forms and within formal and informal sectors.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING: A range of publicly and privately funded education and child development services, from birth through early adolescence, provided by family, friends, and neighbors; home-based child care providers; child care centers; Head Start and Early Head Start; state preschools; after-school programs; and public pre- or transitional kindergarten. This term includes services and programs that meet the full array of children's care needs, including learning needs from birth and care at older ages, when the same level of supervision that younger children need is no longer necessary.

LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS: A broad range of daily services needed by people with disabilities and older adults, including personal care; complex medical care; help with housekeeping, transportation, paying bills, and meals; and other ongoing social services. Long-term services and supports may be provided in the home, assisted living and other supportive housing settings, nursing facilities, and integrated settings. They also includes supportive services for unpaid caregivers.

PAID CARE WORKER: A paid professional who provides care to a child, older adult, or person with an illness or disability.

PAID LEAVE: Paid time off from work to care for oneself or a family member, friend, or other loved one, such as paid family leave, paid sick leave, or bereavement leave.

UNPAID FAMILY OR FRIEND CAREGIVER: An unpaid person, usually a family member (biological or chosen) or friend, who provides care to a child, older adult, or person with an illness or disability.

NARRATIVE CHANGE DEFINITIONS

NARRATIVE: "The themes and ideas that permeate collections of stories" (**Convergence Partnership**) and "a story people already know; a story template recurring in a culture over time that people widely recognize and understand, and to which they have a predictable response" (**Pop Culture Collaborative**)

NARRATIVE CHANGE: Long-term efforts that establish new values and conditions that allow changes to happen, are led by everyday narrators and organizers, and use at least one of three narrative power-building approaches, i.e., mass media, mass culture and mass movements.

- **MASS MEDIA:** Narrative power-building approach that shifts narratives through journalism, social media, and non-fiction media, such as books and documentary film.

- Mass culture: Narrative power-building approach that shifts narratives through storytelling in entertainment venues such as television, film, and music.
- Mass movements: Narrative power-building approach that shifts narratives through new stories by organizing and inspiring collective action, art, and culture.

NARRATIVE POWER: "The ability to change the norms and rules our society lives by" (**Pop Culture Collaborative**) and "the ability to shape public discourse, debate, and imagery" (**Convergence Partnership**).

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: Efforts that create frames, messages and stories to influence short- or medium-term public policy campaigns; are grounded in current shared values; and are led by communications experts.

APPROACH OR TYPE OF PRODUCT DEFINITIONS

AWARD: Public recognition of the work of a care economy expert that helps shift care economy narratives.

CAPACITY BUILDING/INFRASTRUCTURE: Resources and support that help groups engaged in narrative change build their capacity and infrastructure to conduct that work.

COLLABORATION/COALITION: Individuals or groups working together in partnership to achieve shared goals on care economy narrative change.

CONSULTING: Provision of expert advice on care economy narrative change to relevant stakeholders.

FILM: Longer films (vs. the shorter length of videos aimed at communicating or shifting narratives about the care economy.

JOURNALISM: The use of print or broadcast news reporting to change care economy narratives.

MESSAGING GUIDANCE: Expert guidance on how to effectively communicate care economy narratives, including language, framing, storytelling, and other aspects of these narratives.

ORGANIZING AND POWER BUILDING: Efforts that help people build and use their power through collective action to change care economy narratives.

PODCAST: A digital audio program focused on the care economy.

POLICY ADVOCACY: Efforts to change policies and systems that shape the care economy.

REPORT/RESEARCH: Quantitative or qualitative research, toolkits, reports, and other published products focused on care economy narrative change. Research is not listed in the Convergence Partnership's narrative change framework, but it is critical to narrative change and was included in this analysis.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Care economy narrative change efforts that use social media strategies – e.g., X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn – to disseminate their messages and advance their goals.

STORYTELLING: Efforts elevating first-person stories from caregivers, users of care, community leaders, employers, and other narrators about their experiences with the care economy.

VIDEO: Short video productions aimed at communicating or shifting narratives about the care economy.

VISUAL ART: Art forms such as painting, murals, and photography that help advance care economy narrative change.