



At an Inflection Point: TAI Funders for Participatory Governance in 2025



Executive Snapshot

2025 was a year of inflection for participatory governance, and for the role of philanthropy within it. Across regions, pressures on democratic and civic space increased in many parts of the world, public resources for civil society declined, and political pressure on funders intensified. At the same time, fiscal policy, climate finance, and development models moved closer to the center of global debate, creating both new risks and new openings for accountability, equity, and inclusion.

In this context, the Trust, Accountability, and Inclusion Collaborative (TAI) played a critical role as connective infrastructure: helping funders make sense of a fast-moving landscape, and coordinating responses where possible. In 2025 TAI members, with secretariat support, leaned into learning, experimentation, and strategic alignment, [recognizing that business as usual is no longer sufficient](#).



WHAT TAI CONTRIBUTED AS A PLATFORM IN 2025

In 2025, TAI focused on enabling funders to **stay engaged, informed, and connected** at a moment when fragmentation and risk aversion threatened collective action. Key contributions included:

→ **Convening for coordination and learning:**

TAI organized and supported 51 convenings, bringing together funders, practitioners, researchers, and intermediaries to share analysis, surface emerging risks, and explore coordinated responses, particularly on democratic and civic space, fiscal accountability, gender just economy and resourcing civil society.

→ **Building bridges across silos:**

Through initiatives such as the 3D Dialogues, the Fiscal Ecosystems work, the Gender Just Economy Collaborative, and the Funder Roundtable on the Future of Development, TAI connected funders working on democracy, economic justice, climate, and development, looking for relevant touch points across domains.

→ **Supporting informed funding decisions:**

TAI provided targeted advice to funders and philanthropic advisors, including high-net-worth individuals, contributing directly to new grants in areas such as tax justice, fiscal accountability, and civil society infrastructure.

→ **Strengthening shared learning infrastructure:**

TAI hosted its fifth Annual Learning Days in Berlin and introduced the learning questions of a new systems-based Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework. This reinforced TAI's role as a space for collective sense-making and cross-fertilization of ideas.

→ **Influencing the field.**

In 2025, TAI strengthened its field-wide influence through targeted advocacy, thought leadership, and open convenings, generating 11 media outputs, 7 products, including [a podcast](#) and deep [analysis](#), and around 12 external media placements. Across all activities, TAI engaged almost two thousand participants, with participation from non-members and practitioners more than doubling compared to 2024.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES GUIDING THE WORK

In 2025, TAI operationalized its new **Strategic Framework (2025–2029)** and focused its work across four interrelated priorities:



Reinvigorating Democratic and Civic Space:

Supporting funders to understand and respond to shrinking civic space, authoritarian pushback, and funding volatility.



Building Fiscal Funding Infrastructure:

Raising the profile of tax, debt, and fiscal accountability within philanthropy; supporting applied research and dialogue; and facilitating connections that make fiscal justice easier to fund.



Strengthening Climate Accountability:

Bringing accountability, participation, and equity considerations into climate finance and climate governance debates, and connecting climate funders with lessons from democracy and governance practice



Resourcing Civil Society:

Advancing more equitable, effective, and resilient approaches to funding civil society—through learning on intermediaries, government–philanthropy engagement, and collective funder action.

Across all four priorities, TAI emphasized **learning by doing**, recognizing that uncertainty and political pressure require adaptation rather than fixed solutions.

WHAT TAI IS LEARNING

2025 also marked a shift in how TAI approaches monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Rather than focusing only on outputs, TAI began testing the assumptions behind collective programming.

Two learning questions now guide TAI's experimentation:

- What does it take to attract and influence new funders in the current political context?
- What enables funders to act collectively during periods of instability?

Early insights from 2025 suggest that:

- Staying networked, relevant, and responsive creates openings to engage new funders—even in constrained environments.
- Trusted spaces for peer exchange remain essential precursors to coordination and collective action.
- Brokering connections and reducing duplication can be as valuable as launching new initiatives.

TAI's learning in 2025 also surfaced more granular insights from practice across our priority areas. For example, work through the 3D Dialogues and civic space convenings showed that funders need intentional, high-trust spaces not only to coordinate, but to test assumptions and engage

with uncomfortable trade-offs. At the same time, efforts to raise the profile of fiscal issues demonstrated that well-curated engagements, combining accessible framing with strategic advising, can unlock new funding flows, but that sustaining momentum requires building longer-term funding infrastructure rather than one-off interest. Across climate and civil society resourcing work, a consistent lesson was that funders are actively seeking ways to bridge thematic silos and move beyond transactional grantmaking, but doing so depends on dedicated spaces for experimentation, systems thinking, and peer learning that translate insight into coordinated action.

LOOKING AHEAD

As TAI enters 2026, challenges include how to sustain focus amid so many demands on TAI members (and philanthropy writ large) and translating learning into concrete action. TAI will continue to prioritize its role as a facilitator, broker, and learning partner for funders navigating complexity, risk, and opportunity.

In a moment when democratic, economic, and planetary futures are deeply intertwined, TAI remains committed to helping funders act with greater coherence, confidence, and collective purpose. If you would like a deeper look at TAI's work in 2025, the sections below provide a detailed breakdown of our key activities and outcomes.

➔ Read the [full report](#) to get more learnings.