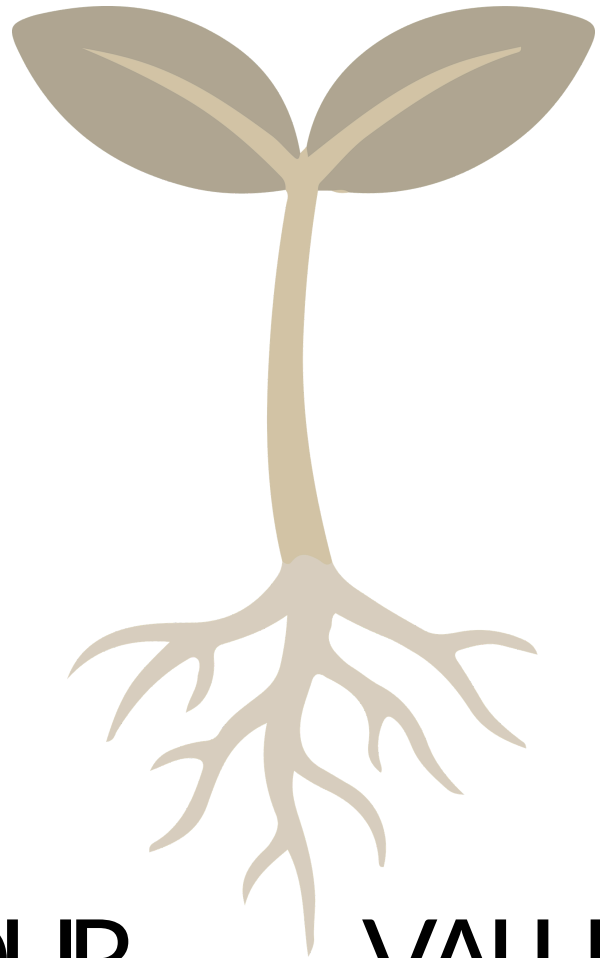


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# FUNDING OUR VALUES: ECONOMIC JUSTICE, SOLIDARITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY



CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL

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# INTRODUCTION

*This resource is part of a set of toolkits aimed at dismantling barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions.*

Economic justice is not separate from social justice - it is its infrastructure.

Budgets, wages, honorariums, hiring practices and resource distribution are where our stated values are tested. Our budgets and our policies are where our accountability lives, this is both a spiritual and a political practice.

This toolkit will pull largely from activists and educators who center mutual aid and solidarity frameworks as part of our economic responsibility towards collective justice. With information for both individuals and communities, this toolkit will help further understanding around:

- Economic positionality
- Practicing solidarity over charity
- Aligning financial decisions with justice commitments
- Build accountability through material action

As Unitarian Universalists, our principles point us towards care, dignity, and respect for the interdependent web of existence, things that guide us towards mutual responsibility and shared resources. Let this toolkit demystify what that is in practice, and embolden your decisions moving forward towards our collective well being.

# DEFINITIONS

**Solidarity:** a practice of aligning with others in mutual struggle

**Mutual Aide:** a collective system of care where people and communities share resources directly to meet each other's need without gatekeeping or conditions

**Charity:** the redistribution of resources in a top down structure without systematic changes

**Economics:** the study and practice of how resources are produced, distributed, and consumed

**Scarcity:** the belief that there is “not enough” (time, money, resources). Often artificially created or reinforced by systems to justify inequality and control

**Capitalism:** an economic system where resources and production are privately owned and profit is prioritized over all else.

**Reparations:** Financial compensation to address systematic injustice.

**Colonialism:** The domination and exploitation of peoples, lands, and cultures, historically and in the present.

**Commodified:** Treating something as a product for sale, often reducing its intrinsic value.

**Marginalized:** Communities or individuals pushed to the edges of society, denied access to resources and power.

**Hierarchy:** A system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority.

**Extractive:** A way of acting that takes without offering fair compensation or reciprocity.

**Positionality:** Where someone is located in terms of their socio-political identity (race, gender, class, ability, location, etc.)

# The Sacred Pause

*a somatic sex education skill for  
empowered choice & voice*

1) When making or receiving a request, take a moment to **stop and breathe**

2) **Scan your body** - if receiving the request, are you feeling a **yes, no, or maybe?** If making the request, **what are you sensing from the other person?**

3) Make a decision based on **empowered choice and voice** - will you move forward, stop, or do something else?

Graphic by  
Kai Cheng Thom

## MOVING THROUGH DISCOMFORT

Talking about money can be nerve wracking! Because we do not all share the same levels of financial security, our experiences for talking about money are different. People may carry some degree of shame, anxiety, and/or fear around this topic and that's normal!

I encourage you to engage in the sacred pause whenever needed as you move through this work. There is much unlearning and relearning to do around economic justice and it's ok for challenging or uncomfortable emotions to come up.

Take your time, speak to people, move your body, take a breath and look out the window when you need to.

More options for regulation can be found in previous tool kits and I encourage you to explore them!

# 1. POSITIONALITY

Positionality is an understanding of where we are in the social landscape. Being familiar with our positionality means being aware of the different privileges we do or don't have, it's where our personal identities come into the conversation to help us make decisions that are aligned with our values and also with our capacities. There is so much at play when we talk about money; our positionality includes the political identities we carry (race, gender, ability, etc.) but it also heavily includes our relationships with money, work, debt, generational history, access to credit, education, and so much more.

Before we are able to discuss redistribution and justice, we have to understand where we're coming from and what we are carrying in terms of our financial histories, needs, and goals. Economic justice does not want you to dismiss your own needs, it wants you to include the needs of others as well. It is important to make sure we are not burning ourselves out or creating financial instability for ourselves in the process of caring for others. This is where positionality comes into play and why it's so important in this context.

## **Reflection Prompts:**

What is my relationship to money? Scarcity, fear, abundance, avoidance, risk?

What forms of economic privilege do I currently hold? (stable income, assets, inheritance, debt free, access to credit, land, owning a home or car, etc.)

Where do I experience economic vulnerability?

How has capitalism, racism, colonialism and/or ableism shaped my financial reality?

What resources do I control directly vs. influence indirectly? (budgets, hiring, programming, etc.)?

# 1. **POSITIONALITY**

## **Creative Prompt: Positionality Mapping Through the Body**

Gather paper and drawing materials

### **Mapping:**

Draw an outline of your body on a piece of paper. Assign different economic elements to body parts

Head = beliefs about money

Heart = emotions about money

Hands = how you earn or control resources

Stomach = survival needs (housing, food, healthcare, etc)

Feet = economic stability/ground

Fill in your body with words, colors, symbols or collage. Whatever helps you explore and express your relationship to the topic.

### **Reflect:**

Where do I feel tension, fear, or numbness?

Where do I feel power or agency?

What parts of my economic experience are visible vs. hidden?

How have colonialism and capitalism shaped my identity and financial narratives?

### **If you're in a group:**

Share an insight you had

Name one resource you can offer (skill, money, networks, time)

Name one need you have

This gets us in the practice of moving into mutual aid.

# 1. **POSITIONALITY**

## **Creative Prompt: Money Timeline**

Create a visual or written timeline of your life through money.

Early memories of money

Moments of financial ease or crisis

Messages you received about wealth, work, worth

Moments when money intersected with justice or injustice in your life

As you create your timeline, pay attention to the feelings that come up. Try to notice where you feel calm or where you feel unease and allow those feelings to pass through as you get to know this part of yourself.

## **Once you've finished your timeline, ask yourself:**

How has my personal history and relationship with money affected my lifestyle?

How has it affected my relationship with abundance? With scarcity?

How has it affected my relationship with vulnerable people and justice movements?

Does my relationship reflect my values?

What do I notice coming up in this process?

# 2. MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS

## Solidarity versus charity?

Solidarity is the idea that we are all fighting against the same systems and we all having something to lose as well as something to gain. Solidarity is the ideology that we support each other because we are all working towards a common goal and want to see each other succeed.

On the other hand, charity is a mindset that has moral superiority built into it. It is a way of giving that is often conditional, controlled in a top down manner, and negates the idea that we are all striving against the same systems. Charity brings us individualism where solidarity brings us community.

We live in a society where charity has been built into our ideologies from our Christian roots. Charity work was popularized alongside Christian missionaries where the top down values often come into play. While the spirit of giving is a beautiful thing that comes in many forms, the question of how generosity is shared is important because it shapes the impact that generosity has.

Dean Spade, author, educator and activist, offers a simplified chart to explore on the key distinctions:

Charity:	Solidarity:
Top Down	Horizontal
Temporary Relief	Long term Transformation
Donor Controls	Community Led
Often Conditional	Based in trust

# 2. MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS

## What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is a kind of solidarity practice, it is the act of giving to your peers and community members as a premise to support the wellbeing of the community and the people who are part of it. But mutual aid is not only about money, there are an infinite number of ways we can participate in mutual aid and the more we can use our imagination around what we can offer and how we can help, the stronger our networks of support and care become.

Mutual aid is important because when disasters strike, our neighbors are often the first responders. Even outside of crises, mutual aid is a way forward from within our own communities to support people who are struggling. Mutual aid also has a long history, especially in vulnerable and marginalized communities who have had restricted or non-existent access to government supports. Who helps you when institutions and governments aren't available? Who do you help when you notice institutions and governments falling short?

Mutual aid efforts are built on trust and relationships, getting people what they need and being a good neighbor. Most of them are grass root projects built by volunteers looking to fill needs they see in their community. The keys to successful mutual aid projects come from the spirit of reciprocity, direct action, decentralized leadership, and collective care. Whether you're involved in a group or not, there are so many ways to participate in mutual aid.

### Some Examples:

- Sharing Food
- Exchanging household goods
- Sharing tools and transportation
- Creating free stores
- Skillsharing
- Helping people access healthcare
- Community gardens
- Rapid response teams
- Shared childcare

## 2. MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS

When you look to create a mutual aid initiative, it's important to listen and follow leadership of those you are trying to support. Track your program and adjust for your own sustainability by paying attention to resources shared, volunteer hours, number of people served, and then adjust based on your capacity and impact.

Make sure you are open and actively seeking feedback from people you are supporting to make sure you're offering what is really needed. It is also important to get feedback from your volunteers and be proactive about having clear boundaries to prevent burn out as much as possible in order to be sustainable. Remember that mutual aid is about relationships and community; it is solidarity in action and burn outs are not sustainable.

Consider being involved in mutual aid networks and programs as a way to invest into our collective wellbeing, an investment for our interdependent future.

### **Reflect:**

When have I participated in charity rather than solidarity in my giving?

What would it mean to follow the leadership of those most impacted?

Where does my giving reinforce power imbalances?

What does accountability look like beyond intention?

What resources and assets do I have that I could share?

What are my own needs for support that I could share?

Where or when does my own comfort stop me from engaging in mutual aid or solidarity?



# 2. MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS

This is an example of a sliding scale system created by Envy the Clown for the purpose of demonstrating how to decide how much to give based on your positionality and capacity. Remember, consistency is the important factor - any amount you can give is always ok.

Recurring contribution	\$1-\$25	\$25-\$50	\$50-\$100	\$100-\$250	\$250-\$400	\$400+
<p>This end of the scale is for those who are unable to or struggle to meet their basic needs, and have little to no expendable income.</p>			<p>The middle of the scale is for those who are able to meet their basic needs, and have some expendable income.</p>		<p>This end of the scale is for those who are comfortably able to meet their basic needs, and have ample expendable income.</p>	
<p>Pay less on the scale if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive public assistance, support dependents (children, parents, anyone else relying on your money),</li> <li>• Don't have savings,</li> <li>• Are formerly incarcerated,</li> <li>• Do illegal work for survival,</li> <li>• Have significant debt that interferes with being able to access your basic needs,</li> <li>• Have less access to money because of abuse,</li> <li>• Have a chronic illness or disability that impacts your ability to earn money,</li> <li>• Have immigration-related expenses,</li> <li>• Are an elder with limited financial support, and/or are unable to access healthcare.</li> </ul>			<p>Pay more on the scale if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have few or no dependents,</li> <li>• Have savings, investments, inherited money, and/or retirement accounts,</li> <li>• Can ask people in your life for money,</li> <li>• Own the home you live in or rent by choice,</li> <li>• Own commercial or rental properties,</li> <li>• Travel recreationally,</li> <li>• Have access to family money and resources in times of need,</li> <li>• Work part time by choice,</li> <li>• Have more possible earning power (even if you aren't using it right now) from: being able bodied, having a college degree, social networks, family connections, gender, race, etc., and/or are able to access health care.</li> </ul>			

## 2. MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS

### Reparations and Redistribution

What are reparations?

The International Center for Transitional Justice, states: “*Reparations are meant to acknowledge and repair the causes and consequences of human rights violations and inequality in countries emerging from dictatorship, armed conflict, and political violence, as well as in societies dealing with racial injustice and legacies of colonization.....All victims of human rights violations have a right to reparation. Different victims have different needs, and those needs can change over time. The type of reparation required can also vary according to the victim’s economic class, gender, age, and social identity. Women, for example, experience violations in significantly different ways than men, and their experiences should not be limited to sexual or gender-based violence and its consequences. Landless communities will have reparative needs different from displaced urban families...*”

It is important to remember that compensation—or the payment of money—is only one of many different types of material reparations. Other types include the restitution of civil and political rights; physical rehabilitation; and granting access to land, housing, health care, or education.

Reparations can also take the form of revealing the truth about the violations themselves and providing guarantees that they will not be repeated. Symbolic reparations—such as apologies, memorials, and commemorations—are other important reparative measures that can be more meaningful when conferred alongside material reparations.

Source: <https://www.ictj.org/reparations>



## 2. **MUTUAL AID, SOLIDARITY, AND REPARATIONS**

Reparations (and redistribution) are important to mention in this toolkit about economic justice because they are a huge part of creating justice where it has been historically missing.

When we reflect on our positionality and all the inherited factors that go into that, we shine a light on how systems impact generational wealth as well as the prejudices and biases that impact how people are paid and treated. Being engaged in reparations and redistribution are also part of mutual aid efforts and our spiritual practice. They are a way to engage in relational repair and extend to financial, emotional, time based, and other material offerings.

### **Reparations can be acted on through:**

- Paying a land tax to Indigenous communities whose land you're on
- Donating to Black/racialized organizations on a regular basis
- Offering your time and skills to people or organizations that have less privilege than you
- Advocating for acknowledgement and apologies in support of Black and Indigenous communities looking for both symbolic and material reparation
- And so much more!

# 3. WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

If it's not in the budget, it's not a priority. When we talk about accountability and social justice, our budgets and our policies are the things that hold us to our commitments and to our stated values. If something isn't written into the budget to be cared for the long term, it lacks the infrastructure to thrive in sustainable and authentic ways.

Our budgets and policies create our infrastructures; in turn, our infrastructures and the actions and behaviours they promote is the difference between performance and genuine investment.

Whether you are considering your own budgeting practices, or those of an organization, it's paramount to consider how your budget reflects and inspires your actions. Budgeting is the material manifestation of what is actually spiritual work. This framework is not intended to go beyond your capacity or to give away all your resources. But if we want to create more equitable and just systems, they have to include a budget line. Justice is not just interpersonal, it must be institutional and ingrained into our structures with accountability measures.

In the following pages there are a few creative and reflective prompts that you are encouraged to explore either on your own, or with your organizational groups. If you plan to do them in a group, I would suggest you also do them for yourself before hand to help you feel grounded when you come together.

# 3. WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

## **Organizational Audit Checklist:**

- What percent of the budget is allocated to justice work?
- Who is expected to be paid versus who is expected to volunteer?
- Is there accessibility specific funding? (transportation, childcare, food, honorariums, etc.)
- What is the difference between pay across staff and leadership?
- Do you have emergency or mutual aid funds set up?
- What are our investment policies?
- What are our land use and rental practices?

## **Personal Finance Audit Checklist:**

- What percentage of my income/resources can I commit to redistribution and reparations?
- What feelings, concerns or fears arise when I consider giving more?
- What practices help me stay accountable to this commitment?
- Who am I in relationship with and not “just” donate to?
- Where am I letting fear of discomfort create barriers to connection?
- What are my intentions with my personal budget?
- What does it mean to view collective security as personal security?

# 3. WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

## **Reflect:**

What does our budget reveal about our actual values?

Who benefits most from our financial decisions?

Who is missing from our financial priorities?

Are we resourcing harm reduction, accessibility, and care?

What are the material impacts of our budget?

Who is harmed by our current structures?

What would it mean to divest from harm and invest in liberation?

## **Creative Prompt #1**

This can be done alone or in a group or both! If you know your organization's budget, use that; otherwise explore with your personal budget.

1. Gather paper and drawing materials.
2. Create two versions of your budget; current reality and liberation aligned vision
3. Include: redistribution, reparations, accessibility, community care funds. Remember reparations and redistribution applies to money but also other time, skills and material things. Consider all your assets when you create your budgets.

If you're in a group, share your insights and talk about it!



# 3. WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

## Creative Prompt #2

1. Choose one policy (honorarium, hiring, budgeting, governance, accessibility, etc)
2. Rewrite it through a justice lens. Include accountability mechanisms and center voices of those most vulnerable.

## Example:

**Original policy:** We offer honorarium to guest speakers when budget allows

**Issues:** Vague, inconsistent, reinforces unpaid labor, centers institutional comfort over fairness

## Rewritten:

We compensate all guest speakers, facilitators, and contributors for their labour as a standard practice. Honoraria are built into annual budgeting processes as a core expense. We prioritize equitable compensation with particular attention to historically marginalized communities. When financial limitations arise we will consider alternatives rather than eliminate compensations. We commit to transparency in pay practices and review our honoraria budgets annually to ensure they align with our justice and equity values.

## What changed:

- Turned from optional to mandatory
- Turned from reactive to planned
- Turned from extractive to accountable
- Turned from vague to explicit

If you're in a group, collaborate on this exercise and witness what comes up!

# 5. BUDGETS AND DEFICITS

Sometimes we have the best interests and ideas, but little to no budget. How can we respond in our organizations and congregations when we're in a deficit?

First, let's remember that being in a deficit is not a moral failure. Often, deficits can trigger urgency, fear, and contradiction. But a deficit, like conflict, is an invitation to ask a deeper question;

What do we protect first when resources are scarce?

This is where justice either becomes negotiable, or not. The choices we make with our budgets, including when we are in a deficit, are not neutral and the material impacts they have on our organizations, staff, members, and reputation should be considered. A deficit is not just about what we don't have, it's also about what we refuse to abandon.

## **Reflect:**

How have we historically responded to deficits? What is our reflex/default in those situations?

What does our budget now? Are there items on it being kept out of habit that could be shifted?

What are things that if sacrificed would be a detriment?

Where can we make adjustments without sacrificing our values?

Does our scope need to change?

When considering making cuts, who will be most harmed by the decision?

Are we preserving comfort for some while increasing harm for others?

What are we unwilling to cut and why?

What would it be like to move through deficit in solidarity?

# 5. BUDGETS AND DEFICITS

## Things to consider in a deficit:

- Can we slow down and move away from urgency before we make a decision?
- What fears are coming up?
- Are we engaging those impacted?
- What are we committed to protecting? Why?
- Are we transparent in communicating the financial reality?
- Have we considered all our assets and spoken to people involved?
- Can we consider scaled reductions?
- What can be paused that does not harm vulnerable communities?
- Are there areas of excess? How do we define excess?
- Have we explored transparent fundraising?
- Can we reallocate restricted funds?
- Are there mutual aid partnerships we can join in reciprocity?
- What supports are needed for people to stay engaged in sustainable ways?

## Creative Prompt for Budget Cuts

Do this exercise on your own and then together as an organization to help make decisions. Grab paper and writing materials and make two columns

### Column A

What we are tempted to cut

### Column B

What must remain sacred

### Reflect on each item:

Who does this cut impact most?

Does this reinforce inequity?

What value does this protect?

What would it cost (materially and spiritually) to lose it?

Where are there trade offs possible?

Are there other avenues for revenue we haven't explored?



# 4. ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND UU PRINCIPLES

Our principles as Unitarian Universalists use strong and aspirational language that points us in the direction of solidarity and collective well being. Here is a look at what each of our principles could look like from the framework of economic justice.

## 1- **Inherent worth and dignity for every person:**

### **What this could be:**

- Living wages (not minimum wages)
- Being in reciprocity, financial or otherwise, for labour
- Funding accessibility (transport, childcare, interpretation, etc.)

## 2- **Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations:**

### **What this could be:**

- Sliding scale pricing models
- Mutual aid funds
- Prioritizing resources for those most impacted by harm

## 3- **Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations:**

### **What this could be:**

- Normalizing conversations about money and class
- Removing financial barriers to participation
- Creating non-judgmental spaces around debt, poverty, and wealth

## 4- **A free and responsible search for truth and meaning:**

### **What this could be:**

- Challenging work=worth narratives
- Examining colonial and capitalist systems critically
- Learning from alternative economic models (mutual aid, cooperative economics)

# 4. ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND UU PRINCIPLES

**5-The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large:**

**What this could be:**

Participatory budgeting processes

Community input on financial priorities

Transparency in salaries, spending and staffing decisions

**6-The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all:**

**What this could be:**

Ethical sourcing and vendor choices

Supporting global mutual aid and justice movements

Rejecting extractive practices

**7-Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part:**

**What this could be:**

Divesting from harmful industries

Investing in sustainable and community based economics

Supporting land-based and Indigenous sovereignty efforts

**8-Individual and communal action that accountably dismantles racism and systemic barriers to full inclusion in ourselves and our institutions:**

**What this could be:**

Allocating a percent of budget to justice work

Reparations and redistribution commitments

Regular accountability check ins

**Choose 1-2 UU principles and map for yourself or your group:**

-What they mean to you economically

-What they are like in the budget

-What changes are required to live them sustainably



# 6. COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

Accountability and feedback measures are imperative for this work. Accountability is how we show our devotion to our values and uphold the commitments we make to ensure they move from aspirational to actionable.

There is much more on this subject in the [Assessment and Accountability tool kit](#) I encourage you to explore. In the meantime, here is a short list to consider:

- Annual justice budget review
- Community feedback systems
- Transparent reporting on spending
- Shared decision-making structures
- Mutual aid partnerships/collaborations

## **Reflect:**

Who can hold us/me accountable?

Who am I/are we accountable for?

Am I/are we willing to change materially and not just symbolically?

What personal comforts am I willing to risk for justice?

How do I see myself/this organization as part of the interdependent web of existence?

# 7. DECISION MAKING FLOW CHART

When you need to make a financial decision, consider using this flowchart to help decide if something aligns with your values or just your habits?

**Start:** a decision needs to be made!

(budgeting, hiring, honoraria, pricing, purchasing, etc.)

1. Is this decision about allocating or controlling resources?

No- reassess: where are resources being allocated here?

Yes- continue

2. Who is most impacted by this decision?

Primarily those with existing power: pause and reassess

Primarily marginalized or impacted communities: continue

3. Were those most impacted involved in the decision?

Yes- continue

No- can they be meaningfully included?

Yes- pause and include them

No- name the limitation and build an accountability plan

4. Is this redistributing resources or maintaining existing power?

Redistributing : continue

Maintaining - why? (capacity, fear, policy constraints?) what would redistribution look like here?

5. Are people being compensated fairly for their labor?

Yes- continue

No- can we allocate funds? If not, can we scale down the project instead of underpaying?

6. Does this decision increase accessibility?

Yes- continue

No- what barriers are being created or maintained? What would it take to remove at least one?



# 7. DECISION MAKING FLOW CHART

7. Is this rooted in solidarity or charity?

Solidarity (shared power, relationships, accountability)- continue

Charity (top down, temporary, controlled)- how can we shift toward mutual aid or shared decision making?

8. What fears are influencing this decision? Scarcity? Control? Reputation? Name them.

Ask: are these fears aligned with our values?

9. Does this align with our stated values and our UU principles?

Yes- continue

No- which principle is being compromised? What change would bring it into alignment?

10. Is this decision reflected in the budget?

Yes- continue

No- if it's not funded, it's not prioritized. Where can funds be shifted?

11. What accountability structures are in place?

Clear and ongoing - proceed

None, unclear, or conditional - add transparency, create feedback loops, review timelines, hire someone with this mandate in mind

**End:** take action!

Implement your decision with transparent communication and a scheduled review point for the decision.

**Reflect:**

What did we choose not to do and why?

Who benefits from this decision?

Who might be harmed?

What could be done differently?



# Resources and Further Learning

- Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next) by Dean Spade
- Emergent Strategy by adrienne maree brown
- The Revolution Will Not be Funded by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
- Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- Decolonizing Wealth by Edgar Villanueva
- Movement Memos Podcast with Kelly Hayes: An ongoing call to action for movement work and mutual aid efforts
- The Next Economy Now Podcast: To explore regenerative ideas and leadership
- Social Enterprise Business Model toolkit to explore
- <https://www.mutualaidhub.org/> For finding and joining mutual aid networks
- <https://commonslibrary.org/> For exploring social change
- <https://www.nonprofitaf.com/> For exploring nonprofit systems
- <https://resourcegeneration.org/> For engaging in redistribution
- <https://cuc.ca/dismantling-barriers/> To explore more toolkits

