

# Misperceptions About Trust-Based Philanthropy

## DEBUNKED

trust-based  
philanthropy  
project

**Misperception:** *Trust-based philanthropy lacks accountability.*



**REALITY:** By prioritizing relationship-building, transparency, and dialogue, trust-based philanthropy enables a deeper sense of accountability between funders and nonprofits.

**Misperception:** *Trust-based philanthropy is not concerned with impact.*



**REALITY:** TBP is geared toward achieving results. In fact, it relies on the premise that philanthropy will be more impactful if it is informed by the perspectives of the people who are closest to the issues.

**Misperception:** *Trust-based philanthropy lacks rigor and strategy.*



**REALITY:** TBP is a deeply rigorous approach that requires self-evaluation, dynamic relationship management, and ongoing learning to sharpen and refine strategies. By shifting funders' focus away from compliance to relationship, it frees them up to think more strategically about their grantmaking.

**Misperception:** *It is not possible to measure impact in a trust-based philanthropy framework.*



**REALITY:** There are many ways to measure impact in trust-based philanthropy. This can include self-reflective measures specific to the funder-grantee relationship (e.g., grantee satisfaction, quality of relationships, new insights gained) as well as using long-term field-level data to assess change over time.

**Misperception:** *Trust-based philanthropy means giving money with no strings attached.*



**REALITY:** Trust-based is a highly relational approach that positions funders as partners who collaborate with nonprofits on a shared vision for change. It focuses on relationship- and trust-building in order to foster a mutual sense of accountability between funders and nonprofits.

**Misperception:** *MacKenzie Scott is the most prominent example of trust-based philanthropy.*



**REALITY:** While Scott's approach of giving large unrestricted gifts with minimal paperwork is in line with some of the trust-based practices, the approach has not modeled the transparency and relational rigor that is essential to a holistic trust-based philanthropy.