Eleven considerations on the Social Investment Fund

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Good morning everyone. Thank you for inviting me to this retreat. It is a pleasure to be here. I will be brief. I would like to suggest to you eleven points to consider in relation to the issue that brings us together today, which is the potential design of a new decision-making model for the SIF. I hope that some of these points are useful.

1. “Ain’t broken, don’t fix it.” I would suggest that the first point to consider is whether it is necessary to design a new process for the SIF, or to improve the model that is currently in place. For this, I suggest that we explore two questions: a) What aspects of the process are presently working well and should be preserved?, and b) What aspects need to be changed? For instance, how can the process be more participatory and inclusive?

2. The moment of inclusion/participation. When is it more important to include different constituencies (staff and tenants) in SIF process? At what stage of the process is more valuable or desirable this participation? What type of democratic participation is most appropriate for each stage of the process? For instance, the SIF may not need a long process of deliberation and decision-making to by paper clips.

3. Size and composition of decision-making body. What is the appropriate size and composition of the decision-making body? Should the entire tenant population of TCH be invited to vote? Some models of electronic voting, like the UK Lottery or the Aviva Community Fund in Canada (which allocate £50 million and $500,000 annually respectively) may provide some workable ideas. If a smaller decision-making body is more appropriate for the SIF, what should be the most effective size? Should there be a representation by areas (West, Central, East) and/or by sectors (e.g. youth, seniors)?

4. Selection mechanism. Once the composition of the decision-making body is agreed upon, it will be necessary to choose among at least four possible selection mechanisms: i) self-nomination; ii) appointment; iii) elections; iv) “randomocracy” (random selection, like the Citizens Assemblies). What are the pros and cons of each?
5. **The role of technical expertise.** What are the best spaces and moments for TCH staff to participate in the SIF process? For instance, it makes sense that staff are involved at the screening stage, to ensure that applications fulfill all required criteria. Any other moments? Which ones should be «mixed spaces» (staff and tenants together) and which ones «single spaces» (staff/tenants alone)?

6. **Terms and duration of mandate.** What is the appropriate length of commitment? If the mandate is too short, it could prevent people from having enough time to learn and apply their learning. If it is too long, participants may experience meeting fatigue or accumulate excessive power. Should positions rotate to prevent accumulation of knowledge and power in a few people? If so, how many times could participants be re-elected, and what should be done to attract newcomers to the process?

7. **Scope of decision making.** Should tenant participation in decision-making occur only at the budget allocation stage, or at other stages as well, like the determination of funding criteria?

8. **Criteria for budget allocations.** What should the main criteria be? Quality of the proposal? Equity? Should criteria have a scoring system (e.g. privileging certain demographic groups, or underserved areas? Should allocations be distributed thematically (sports, arts, food, etc.) using quotas for each theme? Should allocations be distributed by geographic districts? By demographic characteristics? Should there be a quota for 'internal' proposals and for 'external' proposals? Who should participate in developing new policies and criteria, and who should be involved in making final decisions?

9. **Issues of transparency and accountability.** How does the SIF ensure that the process is transparent, especially in budget allocations? How does monitoring occur throughout the process (from allocation to evaluation of activities)?

10. **Quality of deliberation.** Is there enough time and information to make sound decisions? Is there a good space to deliberate? Is there support for participants (e.g. food, transportation)? Is there good facilitation (through a staff or tenant leader)? Are there opportunities for mentoring and learning?

11. **Appropriate investment in the process.** What should the process of deliberation and decision-making cost? What amount of time is appropriate to invest in this process? For instance, it may not be cost-effective to dedicate more resources to the decision-making process than to the SIF allocations themselves.