

Getting Started on Your FIRE Journey



Intro

Getting Started on Your FIRE Journey is the introduction to a series of five primers. It presents the FIRE program and explains the metaphor of organizations and networks as bicycles.

in·no·va·tion (noun)

From the Latin *innovare*, meaning “to renew or change.”

Also “the ability to generate new ways of responding to challenges.”

re·sil·ience (noun)

From the Latin *resilire* and *resalire*, meaning “to rebound, recoil” and “to jump, leap.” Also “a way of being that enables a dynamic, proactive response to ever-changing circumstances.”

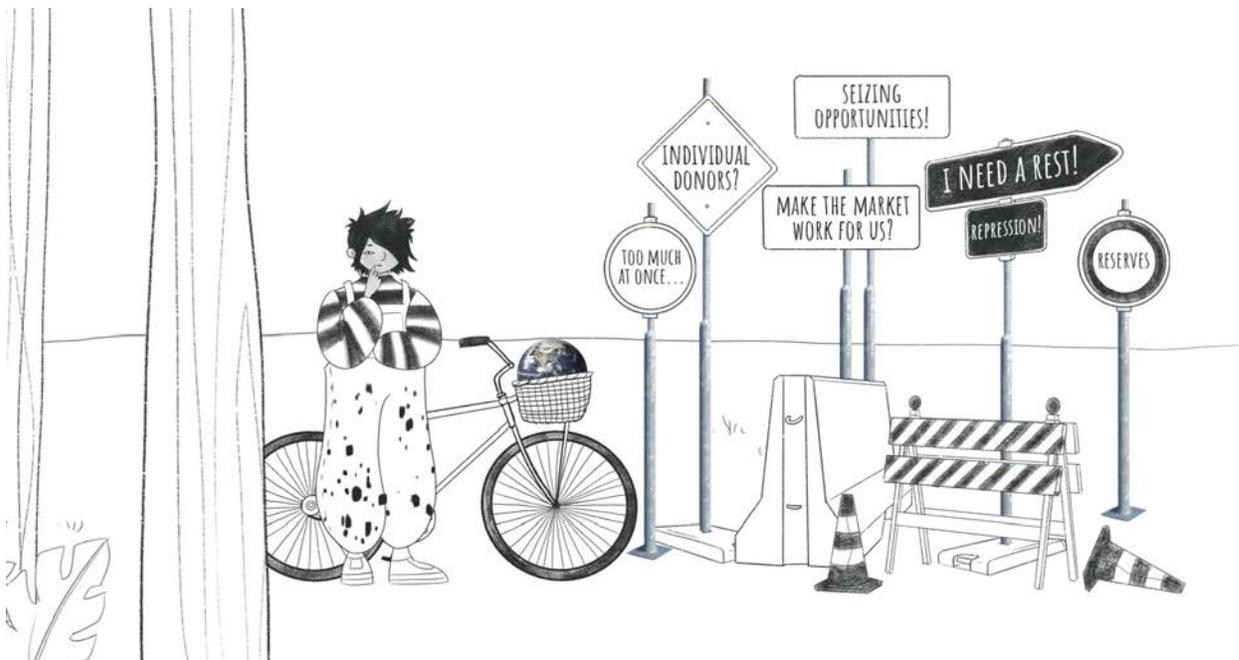


Changing the World Through Innovation and Resilience

One of the biggest transformations we can make in the way we deal with injustice and environmental degradation is to **change our relationship to money**. It is a requirement for a more just and life-sustaining future.

The ongoing accumulation of wealth and power by a very small group undermines human rights and threatens the health of the planet. How money flows around the world — and how governments, corporations and institutions use resources — defines our collective future. **People and the planet should be at the centre of how money moves**. Financial systems should support the type of world we want to create — one where human rights are universally enjoyed and the natural environment is protected and respected.

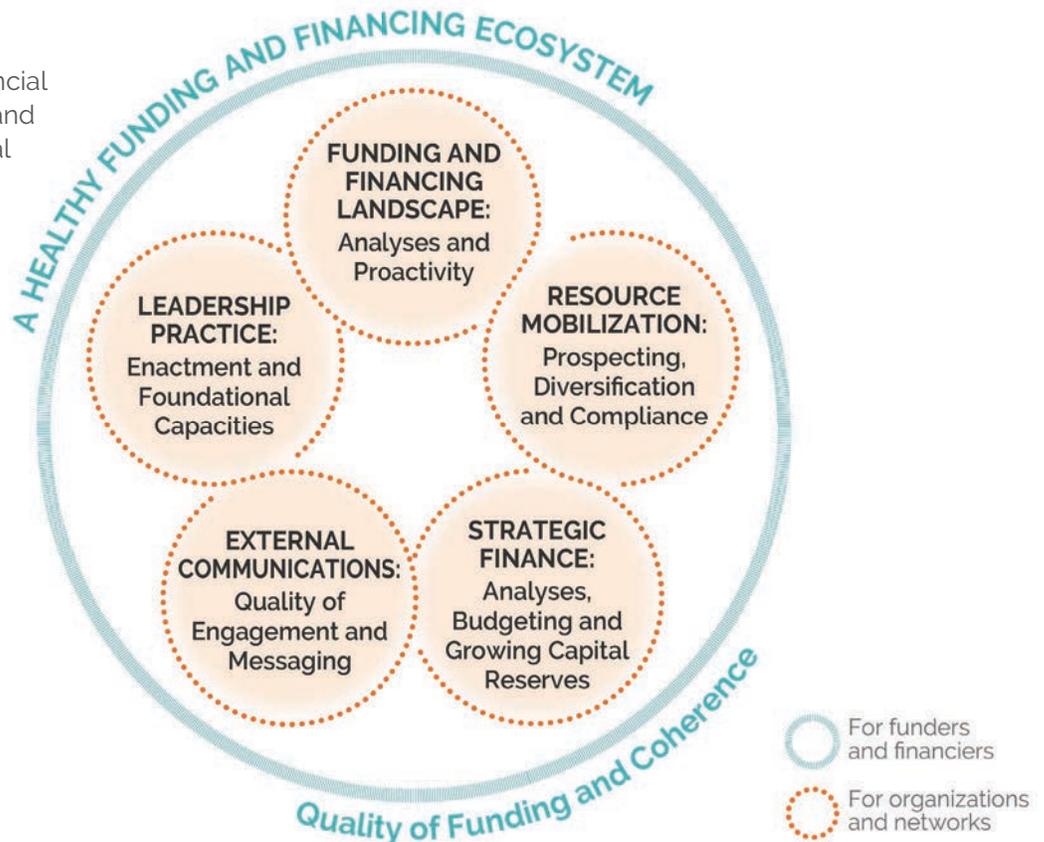
For any social or environmental justice effort to have real impact, it needs funds, structures and processes supporting it. Civil society organizations work in difficult circumstances, including volatile political contexts, shifting funding landscapes, civic spaces under attack, pushback from right-wing forces, and other unexpected crises. Leaders must be able to raise funds in order to do important work. That is why financial innovation and resilience is critical in these precarious times. **Raising mission-aligned funds is an integral part of the work**. And the way money is generated to support the purpose and mission of an organization presents an opportunity to make positive change.



Spring's Financial Innovation and Resilience (FIRE) Program

The FIRE program enables engagement with a unique set of funding and financing tools and techniques in order to facilitate independence, mission alignment, and longevity for social and environmental justice organizations. Fundraising cannot be compartmentalized as separate from programming. **Financial health, resilience and strength are integral to purpose and strategy and must therefore be embedded in organizational cultures, structures and practices.** This enables the organization or network to attract more flexible, long-term funding, become more diversified, and create capital reserves, which in turn help organizations thrive in changing environments and ultimately generate greater mission-aligned impact. This is the goal of the FIRE program.

Organizations and networks see financial health, resilience and strength as integral to their purpose and strategy



The FIRE Primer Series

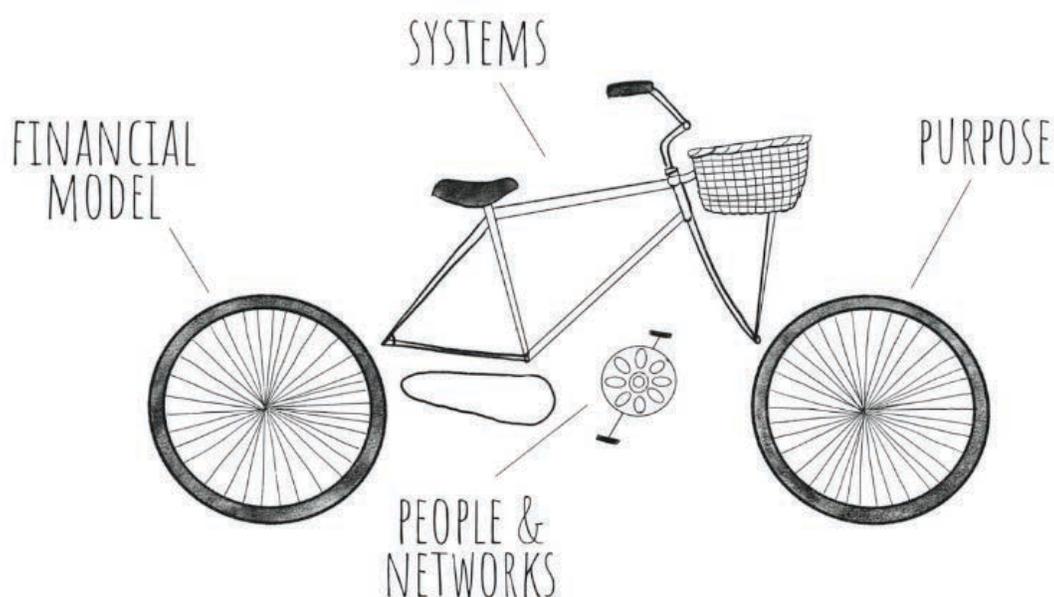
The FIRE Primer series addresses each component of the Financial Innovation and Resilience Framework (see diagram above). Each primer outlines foundational concepts and highlights action opportunities for one of the components. They provide orientation and guidance as you chart your own unique FIRE journey.

Imagining Your Organization or Network as a Bicycle

Civil society organizations and networks are like bicycles.

Bicycles are vehicles that we use to get to our desired destinations. They come in many shapes and sizes, with specialized designs suited to different purposes. Some are more efficient and faster than others; some are sturdier and able to carry more weight, including a passenger. Others may be bigger or more “high tech.” Bicycles all run better with regular maintenance, and they all require new parts and upgrades from time to time... just like organizations and networks.

While there are many different types of bicycles, they are all based on **a common design: two wheels and a connecting frame.**



The Metaphor

Think of the front wheel as your organization's mission, strategy, goals and programs.

A clear and compelling mission and strategy direct everything that the organization does. This front wheel guides where the organization will go and what it will do to get there.

The back wheel is your financial strategy and model.

Funding and financing are critical to the growth and stability of an organization. Financial strength increases with greater diversification, more flexible, long-term funding, and the creation of capital reserves. By setting goals, reducing risks, and detecting problems early, you build financial resilience and capacity for innovation.

The frame and drivetrain are your systems and people.

The power to move and accelerate comes from riders generating momentum by moving the pedals connected to the chain and structure of the bike: *people power*. Systems and internal practices, from accounting and governance, to security measures, human resources management and team building, hold everything together.

When both wheels are inflated, the frame is sturdy, and the bicycle is moving in the desired direction — towards the mission — your organization or network can build momentum, adjust course as needed, and realize powerful and ambitious goals.

Each part of the bicycle is essential and integrally connected to the others. Simply put, it will not work properly if any pieces are missing or out of alignment. Continual maintenance is required to keep the bike functioning optimally.

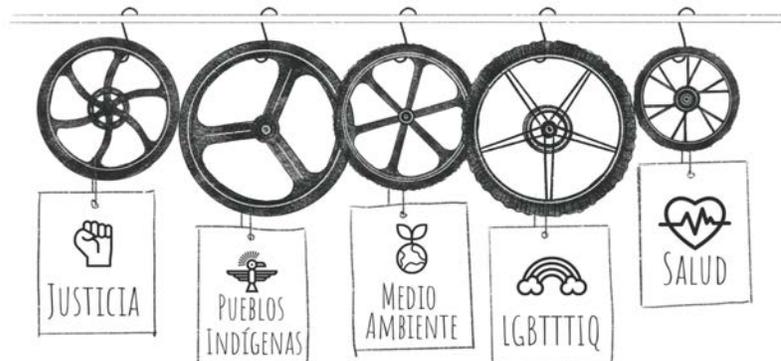
For example, if your back wheel is too small in comparison to your front wheel (meaning that your financial strategy is weak or your funding insufficient), it is much harder to push the bike forward, build momentum, or try new strategies. And if funding received is not mission aligned, the bicycle will go off course. Similarly, if your systems and processes (that is, your bike frame) are wobbly or not proportionate to your wheels, your bike may collapse under the pressure of managing both funds and programs. If your team is not well supported and is unaware of how the bike works, they cannot pedal to build momentum and accelerate towards high impact and innovation.



Becoming Resilient and Innovative Movements

The work of social and environmental justice organizations, networks and movements is more vital than ever as the magnitude and pace of crises, changes and opportunities continue to grow. **To remain relevant and impactful in these volatile times, building your financial resilience and innovation capacities is essential.**

This primer series and the entire FIRE program are designed to support bold, creative and unique FIRE journeys all over the world. Together, we will ride towards a more just and life-sustaining future.



SPRING's FIRE program is internationally renowned and teaches the fundamentals and advanced level capacities of financial resilience. It includes the latest approaches to innovative financing models, transformative partnerships with funders, changing funding and investment landscapes, resource mobilization and diversification, strategic finance, external communications, and leadership practice.

The FIRE program is a collaboration between social justice and climate change leaders, thought leaders, coaches, consultants and funders all over the world. We are joining forces to shift power and money, overcoming immediate threats while simultaneously shaping the world in which we want to live.

Spring offers a range of options for its FIRE program that include virtual and in-person components along with videos, tools, additional resources and coaching. For further information or to explore how you can become a part of FIRE, visit <https://www.springstrategies.org/fire> or contact us by email at fire@springstrategies.org.



FiRE | Financial
Innovation &
Resilience

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