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Front Matter

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THE FoundationReview®



In this issue:

Results

Network Strategists, Weavers, and Managers.....	7
Evaluating General Operating Support.....	23
Summative Evaluation of Fifteen Years.....	36

Tools

System Redesign.....	53
Collaborative Processes for Systems Change	64
Assessing Foundation Capacity	77

Sector

What Are Foundations Risking?	93
Perpetual... Or Not?.....	109
A Foundation's Blended Performance	119

Reflective Practice

Staying the Course.....	134
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Executive Summaries.....	144
--------------------------	-----

Call for Papers	148
-----------------------	-----

The Peer-Reviewed Journal of Philanthropy



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The Foundation Review is the first peer-reviewed journal of philanthropy, written by and for foundation staff and boards and those who work with them implementing programs. Each quarterly issue of *The Foundation Review* provides peer-reviewed reports about the field of philanthropy, including reports by foundations on their own work.

Our mission: To share evaluation results, tools, and knowledge about the philanthropic sector in order to improve the practice of grantmaking, yielding greater impact and innovation.

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We believe that the forthright sharing of information among foundations and nonprofits builds a knowledge base that strengthens their ability to effectively address critical social issues. We encourage foundation donors, boards, and staff to honor this transparency in their own practices and to support others who do so.



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editorial

Dear Readers,

The articles in this issue explore many of the fundamental issues related to how foundations “show up” in their communities.

Nolan, Souza, Monopoli, and Hughes focus on the work of the DentaQuest Foundation in service of a national movement to improve the delivery of oral health services. The foundation focused on building and maintaining a national network of providers and advocates who were able to significantly impact the delivery of oral health care and close gaps in services. The foundation choosing to play the role of network builder and learning coach was critical to achieving success.

On a very local level, **Riemer, Frank, Rublin, and Merrow-Kehoe** share some early results from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving making a shift to offer unrestricted general operating support grants in response to grantees’ expressed need. Both the foundation and grantees were changed by this new-to-Hartford grantmaking process. Grantees were able to make progress on strategic goals, strengthen their infrastructure and be nimble in response to changes in the environment. The foundation revised the way it reviews all proposals, focusing more on the grantees’ strategic plans.

Sanders, Galindo, Vega-Marquis, and Milloy draw from a summative evaluation of fifteen years of work by the Marguerite Casey Foundation to highlight the role of evaluation as a learning practice within the field of philanthropy. The foundation’s successes are attributable in some measure to their ability to learn and adapt strategy appropriately.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, with a subset of its grantees and their program recipients, also teamed with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, & Communities to redesign its evaluation process. **Bowie and Sussman** describe how the foundation’s shift from traditional program evaluation to a participatory, learning-focused approach resulted in new tools to assess variables that were critical to program success. This article examines the redesign process and those new tools.



Teri Behrens

Many foundations are seeking to fundamentally change systems in order to create sustainable positive change. Initiatives that focus on root causes of social issues are typically both technically and socially complicated and past experience is no guarantee of success. **McCarthy, Bornstein, Perrin, James, and Fulton** examine an application of such an emergent strategy at the Colorado Health Foundation. They share tools used to design the funding approach for the foundation's Creating Healthy Schools initiative.

Fine, Raynor, Mowles, and Sood discuss an assessment of 54 foundations that used a new tool, developed for funders by TCC Group, to explore five core capacity areas shown to be central to organizational effectiveness. While foundations have increasingly focused on building grantee capacity, they have not often systematically assessed their own organizational capacity. Understanding how their own strengths and limits impact their ability to effectively work with grantees is an important first step in achieving impact.

Several articles in this issue focus on sector-wide research. **Winkelstein and Whelpton** undertook several research projects to examine risk, contingency funding, and existing foundation policies and procedures related to risk. This article describes the scope of the problem and a framework for philanthropists to adopt risk-management practices that better equip the sector to address the challenges of our time.

Ettinger focuses on an often-overlooked aspect of foundation leadership. Few foundations correctly account for inflation in, for example, analyzing perpetual versus spend-down strategies and in comparing the cost-effectiveness of programs over different time periods. Investment teams are often also provided with return targets, which are highly sensitive to inflation and which in turn determine a risk estimate that must be considered by foundation fiduciaries.

While some foundations have put their entire focus on impact investing, philanthropy still lacks the tools that enable such investments to be made with the same rigor as the best financial investments and philanthropic grants. **Aggarwala and Frasch** propose a framework for evaluating a foundation's blended performance that enables both grantmaking and endowment investing to be evaluated jointly, and thus also allows a complete evaluation of how impact investments could improve — or fail to improve — overall impact.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The largest of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation's environmental initiatives is the Andes Amazon Initiative, which has invested nearly \$369 million over its first 15 years to protect the forest cover and biodiversity of the Amazon. **Hardner, Gullison, and O'Neill** examine how the design principles of this major philanthropic initiative influenced its performance, and provides a practical example of strategic philanthropy that can contribute to the ongoing debate over the merits and flaws of this approach.

What foundations do, what roles they choose to play in a community, and how they play those roles matter to those communities. The types of grants they make, their approaches to engaging community and how they structure their funding make a difference in their effectiveness and in the sustainability of results. We hope the articles in this issue will encourage more systematic thinking about these practices and provide tools to support change.



Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D.

Editor in Chief, *The Foundation Review*

Director, Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning,

Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University

Results

7

Foundations as Network Strategists, Weavers, and Managers: Learning From One Foundation's Journey and Results

Clare Nolan, M.P.P., Engage R+D; Brian Souza, M.S.W., and Michael Monopoli, D.M.D., DentaQuest Foundation; and Marianne Hughes, Interaction Institute for Social Change

23

A Community Foundation's Experience Implementing and Evaluating General Operating Support

Annemarie Riemer, M.Plan, and Erika Frank, M.S., the Hartford Foundation, and Hedda Rublin, M.P.P., and Susan Merrow-Kehoe, B.S., Technical Development Corp.

36

Marguerite Casey Foundation: Reflecting on 15 Years of Philanthropic Leadership Through a Summative Evaluation

Mavis Sanders, Ph.D., University of Maryland-Baltimore County; Claudia Galindo, Ph.D., University of Maryland-College Park; and Luz Vega-Marquis, M.A., and Cheryl Milloy, Ph.D., Marguerite Casey Foundation

Tools

53

A Neighborhood-Based Family Center Redesign Process: Taking a Systems Perspective

Patricia Bowie, M.P.H., UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, & Communities; and Richard A. Sussman, Ph.D., Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

64

Insights From Deploying a Collaborative Process for Funding Systems Change

Alison McCarthy, M.S.W., and Jacob Bornstein, M.S., Spark Policy Institute; Tiffany Perrin, M.S.W., Colorado Health Foundation; Jennifer James, M.A., Harder+Company Community Research; and Bill Fulton, Ph.D., Civic Canopy

77

The Missing Link for Maximizing Impact: Foundations Assess Their Capacity

Melinda Fine, Ed.D., Jared Raynor, M.S., Jessica Mowles, M.P.A., and Deepti Sood, M.A., TCC Group

Sector

93

Foundations Don't Know What They're Risking

Maya Winkelstein, MSc, Executive Director, Open Road Alliance, and Shelley Whelpton, M.Ed, Managing Director, Arabella Advisors

109

Why Some Perpetual Foundations Aren't (Perpetual): Observations on the Importance of Inflation Effects on the Economics of Foundations

John Riche Ettinger, J.D.

119

Philanthropy As One Big Impact Investment: A Framework For Evaluating A Foundation's Blended Performance

Rohit T. Aggarwala, Ph.D., Columbia University, and Claudine A. Frasch, M.B.A., Gensler

Reflective Practice

134

Staying the Course: How a Long-Term Strategic Donor Initiative to Conserve the Amazon Has Yielded Outcomes of Global Significance

Jared Hardner, M.S., and R.E. Gullison, Ph.D., Hardner & Gullison Associates LLC, and Elizabeth O'Neill, M.S., Elizabeth O'Neill Impact Consulting

Plus

144

Executive Summaries

148

Call for Papers

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