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executive summaries

Results

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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

Although most oral disease is preventable, there are profound disparities across populations due to gaps in service delivery. This article shares insights from a five-year evaluation of the Oral Health 2020 network, an effort by the DentaQuest Foundation to align and strengthen efforts in service of a national movement to improve the delivery of oral health services..

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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.

Interest is growing among foundations in assessing whether and how to offer general operating support. In 2013, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving began to offer unrestricted general operating support grants in response to grantees’ expressed need. This article shares early indicators of the impact of the new grantmaking approach on both grantees and the foundation.

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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

Established in October 2001, the Marguerite Casey Foundation has sought to build a movement to transform the lives of poor families and children. This article draws from a summative evaluation designed to capture stakeholders’ perceptions of the foundation’s operations to facilitate organizational learning. In sharing these results, the authors seek to elucidate the role of evaluation as a learning practice within the field of philanthropy.

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Tools

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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

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, with a subset of its grantees and their program recipients, teamed with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, & Communities to redesign its evaluation process. The foundation's shift from traditional program evaluation to a more participatory, learning-focused approach resulted in new tools to assess variables that had been previously unexamined but were critical to program success. This article examines the redesign process and those new tools.

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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

Many foundations are seeking to impact root causes of social issues through funding initiatives that are both technically and socially complicated and where past experience is no guarantee of success. This article looks at an application of emergent strategy at the Colorado Health Foundation. It shares tools used to design the funding approach for the foundation's Creating Healthy Schools initiative.

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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

A rapidly changing, global sociopolitical environment requires foundations to be nimble in maximizing opportunities to advance their agendas. This article discusses an assessment of 54 foundations that participated in taking a new tool, developed for funders by TCC Group, to explore five core capacity areas shown to be central to organizational effectiveness. The Foundation Core Capacity Assessment Tool's findings prompt reflection and collective learning.

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Sector

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Foundations Don't Know What They're Risking

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

Critical gaps exist in philanthropy's definitions of and approach to risk management. The Open Road Alliance and Arabella Advisors pursued 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.

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

John Riche Ettinger, J.D.

This article demonstrates the relevance of correctly accounting for inflation to foundation structure and programs – including, for example, in analyzing perpetual versus spend-down strategies and in comparing the cost-effectiveness of programs over different time periods. Investment teams must also be 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.

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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

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. This article proposes 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 performance.

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Reflective Practice

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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

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. This article examines how the design principles of a major philanthropic initiative have influenced its performance, and provides a practical example of strategic philanthropy that can contribute to the current debate over the merits and flaws of this approach.

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