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Editorial

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DEAR READERS

In order to respond to readers and authors' requests, we are launching Volume 2 of *The Foundation Review* with an unthemed issue. Submissions for this issue were open to any relevant topic, and the articles cover a broad spectrum. Interestingly, the majority of articles were submitted for the TOOLS section. As foundations engage in seeking to change systems and have an impact on entrenched problems, the strategies they are using are becoming increasingly complex. Perhaps it is because foundations are moving into new ways of working that the interest in tools to navigate the way is so high.



Stevens, Hoag, and Woolridge report on work supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to increase the enrollment of eligible people in social programs. The program encouraged grantees to use multiple strategies – outreach, simplification, and coordination – to ensure that a higher percentage of those eligible were accessing needed services. Not only is choosing strategies and tactics important, but the authors suggest that these must be considered in the context of the program life-cycle.

As demands for accountability have increased (e.g., Obama's call to replicate programs that can be *demonstrated* to be effective), new tools for assessing results are being developed. **Baum, Gluck, Smoot and Wubbenhorst** report on work they have done to demonstrate program return on investment. Using data from state and federal sources on the costs of being fatherless, they demonstrate that outcomes of fatherhood programs can be monetized. They report that grantees welcomed the opportunity to learn to use this approach and found that it enabled better conversations with funders.

Reinelt, Yamashiro-Omi, and Meehan report on a very different way of bringing funders and grantees together. They utilized learning circles as part of the evaluation of boundary crossing leadership programs. These learning circles promoted learning *about* leadership and contributed *to* the leadership development experience. Grantees were able to learn from each other in a forum that reduced the impact of power and status differences.

In another view of collaboration, **Frusciante and Siberon** share their experience of developing a way for community organizations to assess their own collaborative efforts, putting the power back in their hands. The power of this tool is that it lets a community track its own functioning readiness or need to take up grant or capacity building opportunities.

Also in the spirit of self-assessment, **Whatley, Hershey, Coffman and Oliver** have developed an on-line tool can be used by nonprofits to assess their own communications capacity. The self-assessment tool allows organizations to compare their practices to those who participated in a national survey. An index based on six indicators can help both nonprofits and their funders identify capacity development needs.

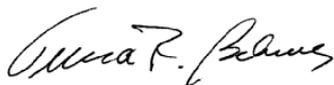
Stauber tackles one of the underlying tensions in philanthropy: is grantmaking a profession, or a task that certain people do? Since one of the premises of this journal is that there is a set of knowledge and skills that can be developed, this article poses some interesting challenges. Does the field have a core of knowledge that can be transmitted to new practitioners? Are there grantmakers who can be equally effective across topics, because of their basic grantmaking skills? Is a person with knowledge of a particular issue able to make effective grants without having any specialized training or knowledge? These questions seem worthy of debate as the number of foundations continues to expand.

In the final article, **Yegian** describes the challenges of starting an evaluation function within a foundation. Questions of what to evaluate, who should do it, what the standards of evidence are, and how to use evaluation and assessment for learning are brought to the fore. The California HealthCare Foundation found ways to tackle these issues by defining three purposes of evaluation and developing tools for each purpose.

Although these articles cover widely disparate topics, there are some commonalities. One is the need for funders and grantees to work collaboratively. Given the power dynamics, this is not always easy, but there are ways of focusing the collaboration – using tools as varied as learning circles and communications self-assessments – to maximize the ability to work together effectively.

A second, and somewhat related, commonality is the tension between learning and accountability. An impetus for developing tools may be to create ways to manage this tension. Learning needs can be identified through any of the tools described in this issue; both funders and grantees can then be accountable for learning.

As the field continues to develop and refine tools for various purposes, does that move it closer to being a profession? It does create a body of knowledge that can be readily disseminated. Academic programs in philanthropy are beginning to emerge, in which tools and frameworks are being taught. It remains to be seen if these beginning stirrings of professionalism will be broadly embraced.



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