

The Foundation Review

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Open Access*

2009

Editorial

Teresa R. Behrens

Johnson Center for Philanthropy, Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr>



Part of the [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Behrens, T. R. (2009). Editorial. *The Foundation Review*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1142>

Copyright © 2009 Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University. The Foundation Review is reproduced electronically by ScholarWorks@GVSU. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr>

DEAR READERS

Thank you for joining us for the first issue of *The Foundation Review*. I hope you will also join us in congratulating the foundations who took the risk of being among the first to share their work in this public format.

Although it has its critics, the peer review process is still the best mechanism we have for building knowledge in specialized areas of expertise. At the core of this journal is a belief that grantmaking *is* an area of expertise, with a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary in order to do it effectively. Our goal is that *The Foundation Review* becomes THE journal for philanthropic professionals — as readers, as reviewers, and as authors — to help build the knowledge base. By openly sharing what was done, why it was done, what was accomplished, and what was learned, we can increase the impact of the sector as a whole. As financial resources become more uncertain, it is even more crucial that foundations use them more wisely — it is time to get very serious about learning.



As an undergraduate, I double majored in English and psychology. What attracted me to both fields was the interplay between big concepts and small details. In literature, themes of what it means to be human, the nature of love, or the role of the divine are played out in the details of individual stories. In psychology, researchers develop ways to measure concepts like “motivation,” “organizational climate,” or “social support.” Philanthropy holds the same tension. Donors and foundation staff and boards are motivated by a passion for improving the human condition, but have to struggle with the details of how the resources of time, talent, and money are used and what results are attained. I hope this journal both inspires at the high concept level and informs in the details.

The first several issues of TFR will focus on community change — the goal of much philanthropic work. How can foundation resources be used to improve the lives of people in communities? Recognizing the complexity of communities, many foundations have adopted a strategy of supporting broad or deep change in targeted geographical areas. This issue focuses on these efforts, commonly called comprehensive community initiatives, or CCIs.

In the RESULTS section, six articles focus on specific CCIs. Each of these shares the theory of change, the strategies and partnerships created, and the results achieved. Different CCIs have much in common, such as building partnerships across sectors, setting shared goals, and developing action plans to achieve those goals. The details of how these ambitious initiatives play out, however, are instructive. Each of these articles highlights specific challenges or strategies. **Walker, Gibbons, and Navarro** describe Children’s Futures, an initiative that targeted a specific age group (0 to 3 years) and focused on implementing evidence-based practices; they found some support for being focused. **Conner and Easterling** describe the Colorado Healthy Communities Initiative; among their suggestions: use a well-specified and professionally facilitated planning process, rather than letting each community develop their own process.

Meehan, Hebbeler, Cherner, and Petersen's study of Community Partnerships for Healthy Children suggests that community building may not be an effective strategy to achieve all types of community health outcomes. **Frost and Stone** describe how a catalytic incident can create an opportunity for systems change.

The next two articles focus on the issue of place more specifically. **Foster-Fishman and Long's** report on *Yes we can!* identifies some of the unintended consequences of focusing at the neighborhood level, while **Silver and Weitzman** explore the tradeoffs made when focusing at city or neighborhood levels.

Finally, **Trent and Chavis** look across 11 CCIs to identify six factors that contribute to lasting change in communities, as well as factors that differentially contribute to scope, scale, or sustainability.

In the SECTOR section, **Giloth and Gewirtz** tackle the issue of "mistakes" very directly — we know foundations make mistakes; it is how they are handled that matters. In this section, too, **Brown, Colombo, Curnan, and Hughes** discuss changes one foundation made in order to learn and respond more quickly as it undertook a CCI in Detroit, Mich. In the final article in this section, **Auspos, Brown, Kubisch, and Sutton** explore the roles beyond grantmaking that a foundation can play within a community to contribute to change.

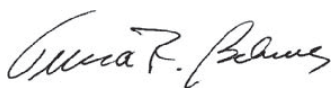
In the TOOLS section, **Aldrich, Silva, Marable, Sandman, and Abraham** describe a framework for evaluation that is aligned with and contributes to CCI work.

Our next issues will focus on civic engagement (Issue 2 – Spring) and advocacy and policy change (Issue 3 – Summer). The final issue in Volume 1 (Fall) will focus on communications.

Your feedback is very important. Please email me at behrenst@foundationreview.org with your comments and suggestions. What topics or themes would you like to see in future issues? Is the thematic focus helpful? On a more mundane level, we mailed this issue WITHOUT the plastic bag in order to reduce waste. Let us know if your issue arrived damaged!

Over the course of the year, we will be adding features and sections and creating a Web site where the peer review and discussion process can continue. Visit www.foundationreview.org regularly for updates.

Finally, thank you to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the California HealthCare Foundation for their support of this venture.



Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D. EDITOR IN CHIEF