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Front Matter

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THE FoundationReview

VOL. 5 ISSUE 4

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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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DEAR READERS

We wrap up our fifth year of publication with an eclectic issue covering a range of topics.

While the importance of foundation learning is a familiar theme for our readers, **Lynn, Kahn, Chung, and Downes** describe a different angle — an effort by The Colorado Trust to integrate learning into their grantmaking by supporting learning coaches for 14 of their grantees. The learning framework consisted of three straightforward steps: systematic data collection, collective interpretation of information, and the use of that interpretation to improve strategies. The “collective interpretation” step is one that is too easy for foundations to skip over. This article describes four cases that illustrate the importance of all three steps.

Ferris and Williams examine the lessons for creating successful offices of strategic partnerships to facilitate government-philanthropic partnerships. These offices have been created at local, state and national levels to facilitate cross-sector partnerships. The authors highlight some of the key characteristics of these offices that help to bridge the cultural gap, such as clarity of roles and having the right staff.

The world of sister-affiliated ministries is likely a new one for many of our readers. **Small, Fischer, Berner, and Cooper-Lewter** describe the important role these organizations play in providing services to the most vulnerable populations. They describe the capacity building efforts of two foundations, working in partnership with sisters themselves, to sustain a diverse set of ministries.

Youker and Ingraham present an intriguing alternative to strategic philanthropy’s focus on measuring goal attainment. Goal-free evaluation (GFE) is a model in which the goals and objectives are screened from the evaluator, leaving them free to discover what the intervention is actually accomplishing.

In their article on the Health Foundation of South Florida (HFSF) initiative Healthy Eating Active Communities, **Pann, Yehl, Wood, Schoepp, Solomon, and Enders** focus on how partnerships can facilitate effective implementation and promote growth and sustainability.

Finally, the Bruner Foundation’s web portal, *Evaluative Thinking*, is reviewed by **Gale Berkowitz**. She concludes that it is “a helpful and practical website for those engaged in the philanthropic sector.”

This issue really highlights the richness of the philanthropic sector and the complexity of the grantmaker's role. Learning (for both foundations and grantees), capacity building, partnering, choosing the appropriate evaluation method — all are components of the toolkit needed by grantmakers today.

I hope you'll agree that the articles in this issue address some cutting-edge issues in philanthropy. We encourage our subscribers to use the commenting feature on our new platform to start a conversation. You can activate your online subscription at <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr>.

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

VOL. 5 ISSUE 4

RESULTS

12 Support for Sister-Affiliated Ministries During Challenging Times: Understanding a Foundation Initiative in Two Regions

Mark Small, Ph.D., Clemson University; Robert L. Fischer, Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University; Lynn Berner, J.D., Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland; and Stephanie Kripa Cooper-Lewter, Ph.D., Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina

The accelerating disappearance of Catholic sister-affiliated ministries that fill an important gap in the social safety net for vulnerable populations has drawn the attention of foundations. This article describes the efforts of two foundations to sustain the ministries of Catholic sisters in two regions: northeast Ohio and South Carolina. Spanning more than 10 years, the initiative has drawn on multiple strategies – including convening, grantmaking, communicating, and research – in partnership with sisters themselves to sustain a diverse set of ministries. The work illuminates an approach to informing capacity development across very different regional contexts. Key lessons presented by the authors include being sensitive to the context, paying attention to both individual and organizational capacity, and the need for data.

24 Offices of Strategic Partnerships: Helping Philanthropy and Government Work Better Together

James M. Ferris, Ph.D., and Nicholas P. O. Williams, M.P.P., University of Southern California

There is a growing interest on the part of philanthropy and government in working together to address problems of common interest. A new organizational structure – the office of strategic partnerships – is emerging that catalyzes, fosters, and accelerates such partnerships. These offices help to overcome the barriers of working across sectors by sharing knowledge and information about the sectors, identifying and convening stakeholders to discuss shared solutions, and leveraging resources to support public-problem solving. The authors examine the lessons for making these offices successful in facilitating government-philanthropic partnerships. In particular, they focus on the need to determine appropriate roles and expectations, match interests, find and field the right leadership, and build a record of success that encourages the sustainability of these offices.

TOOLS

37 If You Build It, They Will Come: Creating the Space and Support for Real-Time Strategic Learning

Jewlya Lynn, Ph.D., and Rebecca Kahn, B.A., Spark Policy Institute; Phillip Chung, M.S.W., and Scott Downes, B.A., The Colorado Trust

Learning is a key tool for foundations seeking to improve their effectiveness, and they are beginning to use evaluation to learn about and improve their strategies. The Colorado Trust took this a step further, and integrated strategic learning into a grant strategy, including supporting learning coaches for 14 of their grantees. The framework consisted of three steps: systematic data collection, collective interpretation of information, and the use of that interpretation to improve strategies. The authors review four of the cases, including three grantees and the foundation as a case, and identify methods of learning and resulting changes in strategies. They found that effective strategic learning in real time requires a comprehensive approach where each element of a funding strategy is aligned around the concept of learning and putting learning to use.

51 Goal-Free Evaluation: An Orientation for Foundations' Evaluations

Brandon W. Youker, Ph.D., and Allyssa Ingraham, B.S., Grand Valley State University

Historically, foundation-supported program evaluations focused on goal attainment. Goal-free evaluation (GFE) is a model in which the goals and objectives are screened from the evaluator. Several obstacles must be overcome in persuading foundations and programs to consider GFE as a viable option, because both tend to view goal attainment as intuitively and inextricably linked to evaluation. These beliefs are contrary to the fact that successful goal-free product evaluations have been done for more than 75 years. This article presents the case for GFE as a perspective that belongs in a foundation's toolbox. The authors demonstrate GFE's use, highlight aspects of its methodology, and detail its potential benefits.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

62 Implementation and Evaluation of a Multidimensional Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative Funded by a Community Health Foundation

James Pann, Ph.D., and Angela Yehl, Psy.D., Research and Evaluation Network; Peter Wood, M.P.A., Janisse Schoepp, M.P.H., and Gabrielle Solomon, M.P.H., Health Foundation of South Florida; and Craig Enders, Ph.D., Arizona State University

Despite significant attention in recent years, obesity continues to be a major public health concern in the U.S. The Health Foundation of South Florida (HFSF) aimed to improve healthy eating habits and physical activity through Healthy Eating Active Communities, a five-year, multilevel responsive grantmaking initiative. The authors give an overview of the program and document the collaborative process that HFSF, the evaluator, and grantees undertook to initiate and sustain this effort. This article provides an example of the potential for partnerships to facilitate effective program implementation in this area, utilize practical program evaluation, and promote program growth and sustainability.

78 Review of *Evaluative Thinking*: The Bruner Foundation's evaluation web portal

Gale Berkowitz

The Bruner Foundation's recently expanded web portal, *Evaluative Thinking*, is part of their longstanding commitment to building the effectiveness and evaluation of nonprofits. The site contains some of what Berkowitz considers key ingredients in communicating about an approach to evaluation: a statement about evaluation values, definitions of key terms, what it takes to get support from the foundation, and purpose of evaluation. While this web portal is not a substitute for foundation websites that Berkowitz regularly consults for evaluation resources and reports, it is a helpful one-stop site for resources on evaluation capacity building and evaluative thinking.

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We'd like to thank our peer reviewers for Volume 5 of *The Foundation Review* for their time, expertise, and guidance. The peer-review process is the key to ensuring the quality of our content. Thank you for your contributions to building the field of philanthropy!

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Teri Behrens, Ph.D.