

# The Foundation Review

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Volume 5  
Issue 4 *Open Access*

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2014

## Editorial

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### Recommended Citation

Behrens, T. R. (2014). Editorial. *The Foundation Review*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1177>

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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>.



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