

# The Foundation Review

a publication of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University

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Volume 7  
Issue 4 *Open Access*

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12-2015

## Front Matter

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### Recommended Citation

(2015). Front Matter. *The Foundation Review*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1276>

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# THE FoundationReview®



IN THIS ISSUE

**SPECIAL SECTION**

- 7 What is a Theory of Philanthropy?
- 21 Alberta Family Wellness Initiative Case Study
- 43 The Blandin Foundation Case Study
- 54 Reflections and Commentary

**RESULTS**

- 66 Venture Philanthropy and Nonprofits' Funding

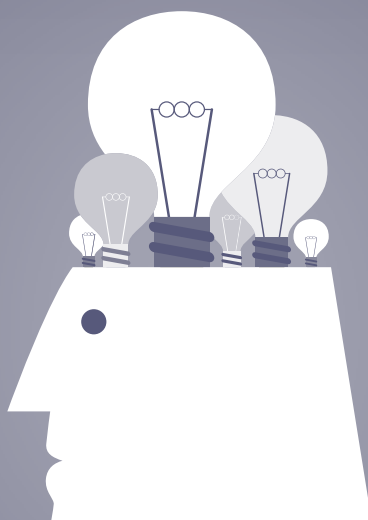
**SECTOR**

- 81 Funder as Backbone Organization
- 97 Place-based Initiatives

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

- 110 Women's Funding Network
  - 128 Collective Impact in a Rural Funding Collaborativ
  - 155 Finding a Strategic Focus
- 
- 170 Executive Summaries
  - 175 Call For Papers

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# THE Foundation Review®

VOL. 7 ISSUE 4

DECEMBER, 2015

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**Assistant Editor**

Michael Pratt

*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.

*The Foundation Review* is a proud product of the Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University.

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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

The end of the year is a good time to thank everyone who contributes to getting *The Foundation Review* into your hands. Our authors and reviewers are of course the heart of the journal. A list of all of our peer-reviewers for Volume 7 appears at the end of this issue. Authors often tell me how much they appreciate the thoroughness and helpfulness of our reviewers. Our thanks to you all!

Domenica Trevor copyedits every article; our authors love her work, too!



The staff at Allen Press manages the manuscripts, communicates with authors and produces and mails our beautiful print version. Thanks to Debby Mosher, Jonathan Witteman, and Keith Parsons for all you do. Thanks to Bob Rooney at Turpin Distributors for managing our subscription process.

Alisa Bobzien designs each issue – we love the look of *The Foundation Review* and owe it to her.

In-house at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy, Pat Nanzer keeps everything moving and coordinated, from choosing photos to making sure the executive summaries are written. Both she and Michael Pratt are expert proofers – my thanks to them for the fact that there are so few errors in each issue.

This final issue in Volume 7 once again includes articles that address the breadth of philanthropy. **Onishi** updates research on venture philanthropy and how funders are using business tools in their grantmaking.

The *Sector* section includes two articles on place-based philanthropy—the theme of our last issue. **Lynn, Breckinridge, Denault, and Marvin** explore the complexities of funders also serving as backbone organizations in collective impact efforts. **Ferris and Hopkins** conducted a year-long study of place-based philanthropy and offer seven key lessons to inform the next generation of work.

Three experienced practitioners offer their reflections on major issues in philanthropy. **Brilliant** provides an in-depth look at women's funds. Other issue funds may find it instructive to consider how these funds evolved over time. **Milleson** analyzes a rural funding network using lenses from different models of collaboration. **Medinger and Logan** share the process by which one family foundation decided on a strategic focus for their work, noting that the first decision is whether to have a focus.

This issue begins with a special section on *Theory of Philanthropy*. Michael Quinn Patton was the force behind this section, and I now turn the editorial over to him.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Teresa R. Behrens".

Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D.

EDITOR IN CHIEF

## Special Section: Theory of Philanthropy

This special section features four articles about theory of philanthropy, an approach to identifying and articulating a comprehensive and integrated synthesis of how and why a foundation operates as it does, for use internally and externally to improve the foundation's overall impact. As we use the term, a theory of philanthropy is specific to a particular foundation, the way a theory of change is specific to a particular program.



The opening article explains what a theory of philanthropy is, how it contrasts with theory of change, and how it is more than but incorporates a foundation's philosophy and strategy. The three authors have more than 100 combined years of organizational consulting experience. The theory-of-philanthropy approach emerged from their work with foundation leaders who were seeking ways to more effectively integrate all aspects of their work – mission and values; governance, strategy, and staffing; resource allocation and evaluation – to increase effectiveness and impact. This need for better integration grew out of the complexity of these foundations' operations and of the external environment they aimed to benefit.

Next come two case studies that illustrate different specific theories of philanthropy and different processes for developing a theory of philanthropy. The first case presents the different theory of philanthropy of the Palix Foundation, which is seeking to improve health and wellness outcomes for children and families in Alberta, Canada, by mobilizing and applying knowledge about brain and early childhood development and the link to lifelong mental health and addiction outcomes. Through years of intuitive exploration and adaptation, the foundation evolved its role to include brokering access to the latest scientific knowledge, convening key players in multiple forums to explore applying that knowledge, and serving as a learning partner to public systems and communities in Alberta working to promote early child development and to prevent and treat addiction. Following a developmental evaluation of a major phase of Palix's work, the foundation's leaders asked the authors to work with them to address questions emerging from the evaluation relating to the next phase in its development. This led to a concentrated effort in a short time to synthesize the foundation's underlying theory of philanthropy and apply it to those questions.

The second case is the Blandin Foundation, based in Grand Rapids, Minn., which over several months undertook a facilitated, participatory, reflective-practice process with its senior leadership team and board to develop its theory of philanthropy. Blandin's passionate commitment to vibrant rural communities in Minnesota emerged as the anchor of its theory of philanthropy.

The final article presents reflections and commentary about the idea, application, and utility of theory of philanthropy from experienced and knowledgeable observers of the philanthropic world, both from within foundations and from the outside working in consultation with foundations.

Michael Quinn Patton

UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION

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## SPECIAL SECTION

- 7** A Foundation's Theory of Philanthropy: What It Is, What It Provides, How to Do It  
*Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D., Utilization-Focused Evaluation; Nathaniel Foote, J.D., M.B.A., TruePoint; and James Radner, M.Phil., University of Toronto*
- 21** The Theory of Philanthropy of the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative  
*James Radner, M.Phil., University of Toronto; Nathaniel Foote, J.D., M.B.A., TruePoint; and Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D., Utilization Focused Evaluation*
- 43** The Blandin Foundation: The Journey to a Theory of Philanthropy  
*Kathy Annette, M.D., Wade Fauth, J.D., and Allison Ahcan, M.A., The Blandin Foundation*
- 54** Reflections and Commentary on a Theory of Philanthropy  
*Michelle Gagnon, Ph.D., Palix Foundation; Nathaniel Foote, Ph.D., TruePoint; Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D., Utilization-Focused Evaluation; and James Radner, Ph.D., University of Toronto; Patricia Patrizi, M.A., Patrizi Associates; John Bare, Ph.D., Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation; Kay Sherwood, M.A., Independent Consultant; Teresa Behrens, Ph.D., The Foundation Review*

## RESULTS

- 66** Influences of Venture Philanthropy on Nonprofits' Funding: The Current State of Practices, Challenges, and Lessons  
*Tamaki Onishi, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

## SECTOR

- 81** When Backbone Organizations Become the Funder: The Use of Fiscal Intermediaries in the Context of Collective Impact  
*Jewlya Lynn, Ph.D., Kirsten M. Breckinridge, Ed.M., Ashley Denault, M.P.P., and Chris Marvin, M.B.A., Spark Policy Institute*
- 97** Place-Based Initiatives: Lessons From Five Decades of Experimentation and Experience  
*James M. Ferris, Ph.D., University of Southern California, and Elwood Hopkins, M.U.R.P. Emerging Markets*

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

- 110** Constancy and Change in the Women's Funding Network: International Horizons and Core Values  
*Eleanor L. Brilliant, D.S.W., Rutgers University*
- 128** Understanding Collective Impact in a Rural Funding Collaborative: Collective Grantmaking in Appalachian Ohio  
*Judith Millesen, Ph.D., Ohio University*
- 155** Creating Choices Before Making Choices: One Family Foundation's Journey to Finding a Strategic Focus  
*Kelly C. Medinger, M.N.A., Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation, and Angela R. Logan, Ph.D., University of Notre Dame*



# contents



170 Executive Summaries

175 Call For Papers

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# THANK YOU REVIEWERS!

We'd like to thank our peer reviewers for Volume 7 of *The Foundation Review* for their time, expertise, and guidance. The peer-review process is essential in 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., Editor in Chief