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Editorial

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editorial

Dear Readers,

In 2016, the Council on Foundations themed its conference around **The Future of Community** in order to elevate the changing nature of our global communities. More than 1,400 philanthropic leaders examined the field's ability to meet both collective and individual community needs. Following the conference, The Council on Foundations supported the development of a special issue of *The Foundation Review* to encourage deeper exploration of the topics that the conference programming raised.

This special issue focuses on philanthropy's adaptation to changing communities. The seven articles each explore an aspect of the relationship between foundations and communities, addressing topics such as the redefinition of community, the effect of evolving demographics, and potential solutions to climate change.

Wardrip, Lambe, and de Zeeuw's work addresses the geography of funding. They challenge the perception among some in the field of community and economic development that small and socioeconomically distressed metro areas do not attract a proportional share of grant capital from the nation's largest foundations. The authors reviewed nearly 169,000 community and economic development grants that the largest foundations made between 2008 and 2013 to identify metro area characteristics associated with higher levels of grant receipt. Rather than poverty rates, it is the density of nonprofit organizations and the presence of large foundations in the locale that best predict who receives grants.

Two articles focus on the effects of changing community demographics. As younger generations seek greater connection to their work, finding ways to engage youth meaningfully in community is critical. **Richards-Schuster and Brisson** examine the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan's launch of a broad-based, multilayered strategy to promote youth leadership in the region. The foundation helped develop comprehensive programs aimed at building the capacity of youth-serving organizations to engage youth as leaders, support a youth-driven research assessment and social-justice project, and provide funds for youth-run efforts aimed at strengthening the region's schools and communities.

Martin-Rogers, Evans, and Mattesich provide insight into the needs of immigrant communities and offer suggestions for how foundations can consider immigrant and refugee communities in their work. While immigrants, and especially refugees, are often viewed from a deficit model, the cultural strengths in their communities are often integral parts of the solution.



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One article details the development of new funding mechanisms. **Peterson** shares a case study in which the McKnight Foundation entered into a unique cross-sector partnership to develop market-driven solutions to global climate change. The case represents a trend in which impact investing is drawing a new pool of funders — beyond traditional grantmakers — into innovative social change solutions. As next-gen family funders move away from place-based communities to issue-based communities — and as global issues such as climate change begin to have local impact — this funding model may appeal to a broader range of funders.

Finally, three articles in this issue address the relationship of foundations to the communities in which they work. **Phillips, Bird, Carlton, and Rose** focus on how the concept of “community” in community foundations is being reframed not only as a place, but as a *process* of engagement and a resulting sense of belonging. Their article explores the Canadian network of community foundations’ pivot to a knowledge-driven approach to leadership and how they are using this knowledge in more inclusive, engaged models of community to drive change agendas.

Moore, Klem, Holmes, Holley, and Houchen report on the REACH Healthcare Foundation’s initiative to encourage the development of innovative strategies to improve access to health care and reduce health inequities in three rural counties in Missouri and Kansas. The intent was to develop a systematic, sustainable, and coordinated approach to community change that would increase the odds of breaking through the persistent barriers to health care access for the rural poor and medically underserved in these counties. The focus was on changing how the healthcare system worked rather than on funding new services, which made the foundation’s strategy one of network and capacity building.

Markley, Macke, Topolsky, Green, and Feierabend suggest that *economic development philanthropy* is a new way for place-based foundations to support their local economies by filling gaps that other organizations and agencies are not addressing. To ensure that a foundation is playing this value-added role requires identifying what others are doing and the outcomes they are seeking or achieving — thereby clarifying the gaps and leverage points in the system. Playing this role requires different skills for foundation staff — especially systems thinking and analysis skills.

A crucial take-away from these articles is that in order to be relevant and effective, foundations must be *connected* to the communities they seek to serve. In the face of ongoing and rapid change — whether it be changes in the climate, in community demographics, or in economic conditions — it is the connection to community that enables foundations to gain a deep understanding of today’s toughest challenges and potential responses to them. Connections to young people, immigrants and refugees, to new funders and to the current players — all are part of how foundations gain a systems-level perspective that lets them be effective. As communities change, foundations must change themselves in response, whether by offering new funding mechanisms or by rethinking the role they play in the overall community system.

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This issue has made clear that there is no shortage of work that needs to be done to ensure a vibrant future for communities. To drive meaningful impact, funders will need to leverage the best thinking from practitioners, scholars, and other community leaders. That's why it is so important that foundations of all types — private, corporate, and community — contribute to the strategies that will ensure that The Future of Community is bright.

We are grateful that the contributors to this issue have contributed in such significant ways to moving this thinking forward, and we look forward to continuing our joint efforts to develop and elevate the ideas that will strengthen philanthropy.



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