The Foundation Review

Volume 9 | Issue 4

12-2017

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Recommended Citation

(2017). Full Issue. *The Foundation Review*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1397>

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THE

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In this issue:

Results

Community Foundation-Led Giving Days 7

Transforming Coalition Leadership 20

Tools

Measuring the Impact of Research 41

Sector

Investigating Foundation Strategies..... 54

Philanthropy as a Profession 65

Reflective Practice

Funder Collaboratives..... 76

Equity in Practice..... 89

Generative Philanthropy..... 103

Book Review

Generation Impact 121

Executive Summaries..... 123

Call for Papers 126

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PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

VOL. 9 ISSUE 4 | DECEMBER 2017

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.

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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.

editorial

Dear readers,

This issue spans the range from reporting results of a quantitative evaluation to a discussion of broad approaches to philanthropy.

Giving days have been increasing in popularity in recent years.

Bingle present the results of a rigorous evaluation of one community foundation's role in their local giving day. Despite significant challenges with the technology, he found that the day was generally successful and that giving days are not crowding out donations at other times of the year. Research on the trade-offs involved in different approaches to fundraising for community foundations is much needed and should have direct application for community foundation development staff.

Teri Behrens

In another piece of research with direct application, **Kim, Honeycutt, and Morzuch** report on the evaluation of a community leadership program that provides training in collaborative leadership. They suggest that interdependent leadership skills are important in community coalitions and can be taught.

Foundations often argue that much of the important work they support cannot be evaluated.

Collado, Gerlach, Ticse, and Hempstead highlight the findings of an 18-month pilot project conducted to better understand the impact of research grants. They suggest several tools that can be used to assess the impact of policy-relevant research.

Foundations have been described as black boxes — implying that we know very little about what happens between inputs and outputs. **Stewart** used semi-structured interviews to explore how foundations approached grantmaking. Deepening the understanding the motivations and adaptations of foundation strategies helps explain the collective work of the sector.

Carpenter responds to the questions of whether philanthropy is a profession. Based on a literature review and findings from a survey of 500 members of the Council on Foundations, she offers evidence that philanthropic work requires specialized education and training to master a set of core competencies. The existence of this journal is an argument in favor of philanthropy being a profession. While she does not reach a firm conclusion, she does suggest that the stance one takes on this has implications for how people enter and progress through a career in philanthropy.

Porter, James, Medina, and Chow explore why some funder collaborations flourish and others flounder. Reflecting on their experiences, they conclude that these collaborations work best when participants recognize key milestones in a partnership and make decisions at distinguishing stages to set up success. Reflecting on the process as the collaboration develops is a key to long-term success.

As philanthropy struggles to determine its role in combatting systemic racism, understanding equity within its own institutions is a key step in the struggle. **Young, Love, Csuti, and King** describe the efforts of three foundations in various stages of seeing themselves through an equity lens. Their insights can help inform other foundations who have committed to working toward equity.

While acknowledging that the philanthropic sector is already replete with descriptions of different approaches, **Giloth** argues for embracing *generative philanthropy* as a collaborative, incremental, and decentralized approach to investment in communities. He offers examples of the approach related to economic opportunity, and draws lessons for future practice.

We wrap up this issue with Garton's review of *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving* by Michael Moody and Sharna Goldseker.

As we finish our ninth volume, I want to thank the many people who make this journal possible, especially the many reviewers who have given their time and talent to provide constructive feedback to the authors. We couldn't do this without you and your service to the field is appreciated!

Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D.

Editor in Chief, *The Foundation Review*

Director, Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning,

Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University

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Results

- 7** Community Foundation-Led Giving Days: Understanding Donor Satisfaction and Philanthropic Patterns

Benjamin S. Bingle, Ph.D., DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership

- 20** Transforming Coalition Leadership: An Evaluation of a Collaborative Leadership Training Program

Jung Y. Kim, M.P.H., Todd Honeycutt, Ph.D., and Michaela Morzuch, M.P.P., Mathematica Policy Research

Tools

- 41** Considerations for Measuring the Impact of Policy-Relevant Research

Megan Collado, M.P.H., Lauren Gerlach, M.P.P., and Caroline Ticse, B.A., AcademyHealth, and Katherine Hempstead, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Sector

- 54** Inside the Black Box: Investigating Philanthropic Foundation Strategies in a Dynamic Environment

Amanda J. Stewart, Ph.D., North Carolina State University

- 65** Philanthropy: Evidence in Favor of a Profession

Heather L. Carpenter, Ph.D., Notre Dame of Maryland University

Reflective Practice

- 76** Funder Collaborations – Flourish or Flounder?

William Porter, B.A., Kelly James, J.D., and Robert Medina, M.A., Education First; and Barbara Chow, M.P.P., William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

- 89** Looking in the Mirror: Equity in Practice for Philanthropy

Ashlee Young, M.P.H., and Jaime Love, M.Ed., Interact for Health; Nancy Csuti, Ph.D., The Colorado Trust; and Christopher J. King, Ph.D., Consumer Health Foundation

- 103** Generative Philanthropy: Long-Term Investments in Economic Opportunity

Robert Giloth, Ph.D., Annie E. Casey Foundation

Book Review

- 121** Review of *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving* by Michael Moody and Sharna Goldseker.

Review by Elenore Garton, Ph.D.

Plus

- 123** Executive Summaries

- 126** Call for Papers

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Community Foundation-Led Giving Days: Understanding Donor Satisfaction and Philanthropic Patterns

Benjamin S. Bingle, Ph.D., DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership

Keywords: Philanthropy, giving days, online giving, donor satisfaction, crisis management

Introduction

Charitable giving in the United States reached an all-time high in 2016 at \$390.05 billion, with individuals donating \$281.86 billion of that total (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2017). Increasingly, donors opt to make these donations online. Online charitable transactions grew by 7.9 percent in 2016 when compared with the prior year, and online gifts represented 7.2 percent of all philanthropic donations in 2016 (MacLaughlin, 2017).

This shift poses challenges and creates opportunities for traditional philanthropic institutions such as community foundations. The bedrock of many community foundations is the triumvirate of endowment funds, donor-advised funds, and grantmaking. These tried and true methods help ensure long-term, sustained asset appreciation and targeted investment in communities through grant funding. Yet, as technology continues to alter the landscape of philanthropy, community foundations have had to adapt — and some are embracing new forms of philanthropic activity, such as giving days.

This article is a starting point in filling a void in research on the topic of charitable giving days. First, an overview will define giving days and offer some initial context. It is followed by a case study of Give Local DeKalb County — a giving day that experienced extraordinary challenges when the technology platform used to process online donations failed. The data from a survey conducted after the event offer unprecedented insight into donor satisfaction with the giving day in the face of a disastrous technology failure, while also providing a glimpse at giving

Key Points

- This article examines Give Local America 2016, a giving day beset by a technology failure that created challenges for donors and community foundations throughout the United States, and explores the experiences of donors as giving day participants.
- Philanthropic giving days have gained popularity as opportunities for community foundations to engage new donors, create excitement about organized philanthropy, and democratize charitable giving. This article, examining survey data collected after a giving day led by a community foundation in northern Illinois, provides unique insight into donor satisfaction levels, opinions, and giving patterns.
- Data suggest that giving days are not crowding out donations at other times of the year, but instead are viewed as a supplementary option for the public to engage philanthropically. The article concludes with practical recommendations for community foundations that are considering hosting a giving day.

behavior that suggests giving days do not crowd out donations at other times of the year. Finally, practical considerations are offered for community foundation-led giving days.

Giving Day Overview

Giving days are described in a variety of ways, such as a “virtual party for your cause” (McDonald, 2016, p. 3) or, more negatively, as an exercise in hashtag activism or slacktivism.

Stated plainly, a giving day is a 24-hour fundraising event.¹ These events are an opportunity to engage donors, volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and entire communities with the goal of raising funds in support of common causes and/or nonprofit activities. A specific giving day may be geographically focused (e.g., citywide, countywide, or statewide) or may be global in scope. Some organizations host their own giving days; other giving days invite nonprofits to take part, which provides donors the option to select the organizations they want to support from a list of participants.

Online engagement is considered vital for the success of a giving day. At the core of this engagement is the giving day website. This hub of information and resources is generally the central location for nonprofit organizations to register for participation and to create a profile that shares organizational information to build a case for donor support. The website also acts as the portal through which donations are processed and details about the giving day are shared publicly. Social media is an integral method for creating excitement and awareness about a giving day. Hashtags and frequent web-linking in social media posts help to increase engagement and direct the public to the giving day website. In addition, giving days may include matching funds or “gamification,” such as prizes and contests, which can be promoted to generate enthusiasm among nonprofits and donors.

Giving days are a recent phenomenon, with the first examples starting in 2009, but it was not until 2012 that the most widely known giving day — #GivingTuesday — was established. Occurring on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, #GivingTuesday is an opportunity for people to give back — in contrast to the consumerism that marks Black Friday and Cyber Monday (#GivingTuesday, 2016). Outside of #GivingTuesday, there are numerous examples of localized giving days, many of which are coordinated by community foundations.

Methodology

The following analysis incorporates a case study focused on the Give Local DeKalb County 2016 giving day. This giving day was coordinated by the DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership, a membership-based nonprofit capacity-building program of the DeKalb County Community Foundation. The case relies on secondary information, observation, and firsthand accounts of the 2016 giving day.

Data derived from a donor survey are also used to explore donor satisfaction and the impact of Give Local DeKalb County on giving patterns at other times of the year. The seven-question survey was emailed to every donor with an email address who gave during Give Local DeKalb County 2016 ($n = 946$). It was sent on May 12, 2016, and data were collected for eight days, resulting in 160 responses for a response rate of 16.9 percent.

The case study and survey are used to better understand two questions:

1. How satisfied are donors with the overall philanthropic experience offered by giving days?
2. Do giving days reduce charitable contributions made at other times of the year?

Give Local DeKalb County 2016 serves as a crucial case to understand the first research question (see Eckstein, 1975). Given the technology issues associated with the giving day, it stands to reason that donors may express lower levels of satisfaction or outright frustration with the giving day experience. Using this least-likely case allows for a rigorous assessment of donor satisfaction while also adequately addressing the second research question.

Case Study

For a variety of reasons, community foundations are often uniquely positioned to coordinate giving days: their connection with the nonprofit

¹ Other philanthropic initiatives, such as giving challenges or campaigns, are frequently time-bound but may not be a single day in length.

sector, their infrastructure for accepting and processing donations, and their relationships with donors, media, possible sponsors, and other community stakeholders. In addition, giving days tend to generally align with the mission of many community foundations. What follows is a case study of Give Local DeKalb County 2016, a giving day offered in DeKalb County, Illinois, on May 3, 2016.

DeKalb County, Illinois

Situated 60 miles from Chicago, DeKalb County is one of 102 counties in Illinois and is home to 104,528 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) residing in its 14 municipalities. Among the county's population, 92.2 percent are high school graduates and 30 percent have at least a bachelor's degree; both rates outpace the national average of 86.7 percent and 29.8 percent respectively. The median household income is slightly higher than the United States as a whole, at \$54,101 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The unemployment rate is generally stable and is currently at 4.5 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). DeKalb is a largely homogeneous county: 87.3 percent of its residents are white, a full 10 percentage points higher than the nation as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

DeKalb County has a rich agricultural history. Barbed wire was patented by an inventor from DeKalb in 1874 and DeKalb Genetics Corp. was founded in 1938, developing agricultural seeds with international distribution before being acquired by Monsanto Co. in 1998 (Bloomberg, 2017). While agriculture remains an important part of the county's economy, Northern Illinois University, Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital, and distribution centers for businesses such as 3M and Target Corp. are among the largest employers (DeKalb County Economic Development Corp., 2017). In addition, there are over 500 IRS-registered nonprofit organizations in DeKalb County and nearly 7,000 nonprofit employees (see Bingle, 2015).

Community Foundation and Nonprofit Partnership

The DeKalb County Community Foundation was created in 1993 with a \$3.6 million gift from

For a variety of reasons, community foundations are often uniquely positioned to coordinate giving days: their connection with the nonprofit sector, their infrastructure for accepting and processing donations, and their relationships with donors, media, possible sponsors, and other community stakeholders.

Charlie and Mary Roberts, whose family started DeKalb Genetics Corp. Today, the foundation has over \$49 million in assets and typically disburses more than \$2 million in funding annually. The organization's eight staff members and 19 board members focus on building endowment, donor services, stewardship, grantmaking, and community initiatives (DeKalb County Community Foundation, 2017).

One such community initiative is the DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership (DCNP), a membership-based, nonprofit capacity-building program of the community foundation. The DCNP's mission is to strengthen the nonprofit sector through leadership, professional development, and collaboration. Most active nonprofit organizations in DeKalb County are engaged in the DCNP, which has more than 100 members. The program has 1.25 FTE staff support and a steering committee consisting of nonprofit leaders who serve in an advisory role. The DCNP offers an annual conference, monthly trainings, an internship program, grant funding for professional development, board-member training, and networking opportunities, and serves as an information hub for members and the public.

This shared governance encouraged ownership among nonprofit leaders and spread some of the administrative burden to committee members. Still, the bulk of the Give Local DeKalb County operation fell to a single foundation employee, who handled all matters — from communications and nonprofit registration to training and website content development.

The foundation operates its giving day through the DCNP. While the public does not tend to differentiate the DCNP from the foundation, this arrangement helps distinguish the giving day from other philanthropic activities of the foundation, such as growing the endowment and encouraging charitable estate gifts. Moreover, the DCNP is a collective of nonprofit members and the giving day relies on its nonprofit participants to take an active part in promoting and organizing around the event. There are also capacity-building trainings offered in support of giving day participants, and capacity building is the core purpose of the DCNP. Finally, giving days require an intensive amount of communication and information-sharing. These are two roles that the DCNP plays year-round for the nonprofit community in DeKalb County, so it is well-positioned to assume these activities leading up to the giving day. Four giving days have been coordinated in DeKalb County for DCNP-member nonprofits. From 2014 to 2016, these giving days were part of the Give Local America campaign.

Give Local America and Give Local DeKalb County

Kimbria Inc., an online fundraising technology and services firm, created the Give Local America initiative, a 24-hour crowdfunding event that took place in communities throughout the United States.² Started in 2014, the campaign raised \$53 million for 7,000 nonprofits; those figures jumped to \$68 million for 9,000 nonprofits in 2015. Kimbria described Give Local America as “an ideal crowdfunding format for community foundations,” which frequently served as the local coordinating partner and liaison between Kimbria and individual nonprofits and donors (Podder, 2015).

The DeKalb County Community Foundation participated in Give Local America from the start. In the first year, 37 DCNP-member nonprofit organizations participated in the giving day and jointly raised \$99,443 during the 24-hour period. These funds were matched proportionally by a \$20,000 “bonus pool” supplied by the foundation, resulting in a total of \$119,443 in distributions to the participating organizations. Over the next two years, Give Local DeKalb County benefited from increased name recognition, enhanced community support, and broader participation resulting in larger matching funds, more donations, and higher fundraising totals. (See Table 1.)

Give Local DeKalb County had a planning committee, coordinated by the DCNP, that consisted of nonprofit representatives charged with four primary responsibilities:

1. oversight and decision-making,
2. fundraising for the match incentive,
3. securing in-kind media donations for publicity, and
4. raising awareness through presentations and community outreach.

² Give Local America events now occur throughout the year. There were 20 giving days between February and June 2017, of which 12 were coordinated on May 2, 2017 (Kimbria Inc., 2017).

TABLE 1 Give Local DeKalb County Results 2014–2016

	2014	2015	2016
Number of participating nonprofits	37	44	68
Number of donations	873	1,265	2,036
Number of first-time donors (online only)	193	216	338
Number of states represented among donors	22	25	30
Number of countries represented among donors	1	3	5
Donations	\$99,443	\$166,525	\$324,547
Bonus pool/match	\$20,000	\$23,000	\$103,750
Total funds raised	\$119,443	\$189,525	\$428,297

This shared governance encouraged ownership among nonprofit leaders and spread some of the administrative burden to committee members. Still, the bulk of the Give Local DeKalb County operation fell to a single foundation employee, who handled all matters — from communications and nonprofit registration to training and website content development. While the 2014 campaign was solely an online giving day, organizers decided to allow walk-in donations in 2015 and 2016. This provided donors with a low-tech option to give, bypassed credit card and platform fees associated with giving online, and was an opportunity to invite the general public to visit the foundation.

Heading into Give Local America 2016, Kimbia’s goal was to raise \$100 million for participating nonprofits (Podder, 2015). In DeKalb County, efforts were at an all-time high, with more staff involvement, a larger committee, an enhanced focus on media outreach, and bolstered fundraising efforts to build the matching funds. Nonprofit participation increased to 68 organizations and over \$50,000 in matching funds was raised leading up to the giving day, on May 3. Multiple trainings were coordinated by the

DCNP to help position nonprofits for success, and staff were regularly communicating with Kimbia representatives in the final days before the event. This extensively planned approach, however, did not address all the challenges that emerged during Give Local DeKalb County 2016.

Technology Failure and Crisis Management

At approximately 9 a.m. on May 3, the Kimbia online fundraising platform being used for Give Local America events nationwide began experiencing delays. In DeKalb County, initial reports of slow load times and donation processing issues were recorded at 9:30 a.m. The first general communication from Kimbia acknowledged intermittent performance issues and was sent to its coordinating partners at 9:58 a.m.³ Community foundation representatives from around the United States began communicating via an email listserv immediately after the technology issues emerged. Since the root cause of the issue was unidentified and its severity was unknown, there was a “wait and see” attitude among most of these community foundations — including in DeKalb County.

³To inform the content of this section, 319 emails were reviewed. Details have been withheld to protect the confidentiality of those communications.

While managing the technology crisis, Give Local DeKalb County continued to accept in-person donations at the foundation. Those walk-in donations allowed the event to forge ahead no matter the status of online-giving capabilities. Moreover, those face-to-face interactions allowed organizers to hear donor concerns and gain anecdotal feedback — and to remind frustrated donors that Give Local was not a monolithic online event; rather, real people from the local community were working to make the event as successful as possible despite the circumstances.

DeKalb County Community Foundation staff fielded questions and coordinated with Kimbia throughout the morning, but did not address nonprofit partners until 12:15 p.m. This delay was due primarily to a lack of concrete information to share with partners. While managing the technology crisis, Give Local DeKalb County continued to accept in-person donations at the foundation. Those walk-in donations allowed the event to forge ahead no matter the status of online-giving capabilities. Moreover, those face-to-face interactions allowed organizers to hear donor concerns and gain anecdotal feedback

— and to remind frustrated donors that Give Local was not a monolithic online event; rather, real people from the local community were working to make the event as successful as possible despite the circumstances.

Coincidentally, a major donor representing the Douglas C. and Lynn M. Roberts Family Foundation took special interest in the crisis and visited the foundation throughout the day. By 3 p.m. it became clear that local action was necessary to salvage the giving day. Three community foundation staff members met with the donor and his family foundation's community liaison. During a 30-minute brainstorming session, a path forward was identified:

1. The donor pledged an additional \$50,000 to the matching funds, raising the total to over \$103,000.
2. Hours were extended into the following day, May 4, with online donations accepted until 5 p.m. and in-person donations accepted at the foundation from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
3. Mailed donations would be accepted if post-marked by May 4.

These action steps and an update were emailed to all participating Give Local DeKalb County nonprofits at 3:44 p.m. on May 3. Media partners were also contacted and social media mobilization was prioritized. Fortunately, these actions reinvigorated the giving day and resulted in a record-breaking year for Give Local DeKalb County.

Despite the loss of online donation access, Give Local DeKalb County processed 60.9 percent more donations in 2016 than 2015, donations were received from 30 states and five countries, and \$238,772 more was raised compared to the previous year. (See Table 1.) The public rallied around the foundation, there was renewed support of Give Local DeKalb County, and press coverage was overwhelmingly positive.

Shepherding the giving day to a successful conclusion involved an extraordinary administrative

burden. A significant number of duplicate donations were recorded online from donors who repeatedly donated when the system lagged, not realizing their donation had already been made. The technical failures affected online receipting, and droves of donors did not receive proof of their contribution for tax purposes. Nonprofit partners had difficulty accessing donor information and the reliability of accessible data was questioned. Stakeholder management was intensive; major donors and contributors to the matching funds sought information and updates. There were also multiple interviews, radio appearances, and news articles that demanded careful messaging. Beyond all of that, standard procedures had to be carried out: reconciling balances, calculating proportional matching funds, transferring funds, data entry, and administering checks. In the end, 840 combined staff hours were allocated to Give Local DeKalb County 2016.

Survey Results

After the giving day, a survey was sent to all donors who supplied an email address; the survey was planned ahead of time and was not in response to the technology glitch. Given the tech failure, however, gathering donor feedback through the survey took on heightened significance. Important questions were identified by the Give Local DeKalb County planning committee and the foundation staff and board members: How satisfied are donors with Give Local DeKalb County? Is the giving day dampening donations at other times of the year?

The following survey results offer insights related to both of these questions.

Donor Satisfaction

While there is no systematic research specifically about donor satisfaction with charitable giving days, studies about donor experiences with online giving are available. Consensus among researchers is that the online-giving process matters and so does the time of year, with a third of all online giving taking place in December (Network for Good, 2015). In addition, donors tend to notice fees associated with online giving, and high fees can lead to less giving (Meer, 2014).

TABLE 2 Overall Donor Satisfaction (n = 160)

Response	Percentage
Very unsatisfied	14.4%
Unsatisfied	2.6%
Neutral	7.8%
Satisfied	35.9%
Very satisfied	39.3%

NOTE: Valid percentages reported with responses of “don’t know/unsure” coded as missing values and not included in calculations.

Donors’ socio-demographic characteristics may influence their likelihood to give online (Shier & Handy, 2012), and those who give through social networking applications are not motivated by such traditional economic considerations as efficiency ratios, as is the case with many offline donors; rather, they direct their typically small gifts to organizations with robust web capacity (Saxton & Wang, 2014). All told, donor satisfaction with online giving depends heavily on the donation process, availability of high-quality information, and the overall online experience; in fact, the giving experience online has a significant impact on donor loyalty (Network for Good, 2015).

Give Local DeKalb County 2016 represents a stringent test of donor satisfaction because of the technology failure that occurred with the giving day website and underlying donation platform. To better understand satisfaction levels, donors were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Give Local DeKalb County’s donor experience. All 160 survey respondents answered the survey question, but seven responded “don’t know/unsure.”

Despite the technology issues, only 17 percent of respondents indicated they were either “very unsatisfied” (14.4 percent) or “unsatisfied” (2.6

Give Local DeKalb County donors were also asked to share their charitable behavior beyond the giving day to address a key issue: Is the giving day crowding out donations made at other times of the year? This question is important to nonprofits since the giving day is often not their only fundraiser, and they want to understand how a giving day impacts their other fundraising efforts.

percent). Conversely, 75.2 percent reported some level of satisfaction with the overall Give Local DeKalb County donor experience. Of these, 39.3 percent were “very satisfied” and 35.9 percent were “satisfied.” (See Table 2.) While some donated before the technology problems surfaced, the majority of survey respondents’ giving experiences were impacted by the glitch.

On the whole, Give Local DeKalb County did not offer a streamlined, easy, engaging donation process or an online-giving experience that inspired confidence; yet, donors overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with the experience. Why? The following donor remarks shed light on this question:

- “I appreciate the clear communication and adjustments made by the community foundation and admire the Roberts Family Foundation for stepping in to help the situation. That certainly mitigated the confusion with the website.”
- “Although you had a computer glitch, I think you did a tremendous job of informing donors about the mishap. And, the extended time was very helpful, too. Keep up the great work!”
- “DCNP and the community foundation staff did an excellent job managing all the components of Give Local.”
- “The technical issues did not stop my donations, since I was able to donate the next day on May 4. Thank you for the extra time. I will use this opportunity to donate in the future.”
- “We appreciate you extending the giving period to enable us to give after the technical problems were resolved.”
- “Initially, the difficulty with the website was disappointing when going to give. However, the ability to give in person and steps made to correct the issues made up for any aggravations.”
- “Dropping off the donation in person was easy and quick. Thanks. Very satisfied with the local end.”
- “Communication was very good, especially with the glitches. Once I found out there was to be a second day, I just waited for everything to get straightened out. It was no big deal to me. When things happen beyond our control, you just have to roll with it ... and you all did that very well in DeKalb!”
- “It was frustrating that the website was not working the first two times I tried to donate. I was happy to see that donation time was extended and that the site was eventually fixed so that my online donation was accepted. The flexibility (lengthening donation time, etc.) in response to the difficulties and the acknowledgment and explanation posted was appreciated. I thought the problem was handled well and made me believe the people in charge of Give Local

TABLE 3 Donation History and Future Plans (n = 160)

Prior 2016 Donation		Plan to Make Another 2016 Donation	
Response	Percentage	Response	Percentage
Yes	79.2%	Yes	89.8%
No	20.8%	No	10.2%

NOTE: Valid percentages reported with responses of “don’t know/unsure” coded as missing values and not included in calculations.

DeKalb County were ... flexible, competent, and able to think on their feet — all reassuring qualities when giving money.”

These comments suggest the contingency plan — including the \$50,000 donation by a key community stakeholder, and the implicit endorsement of the giving day that the donation carried with it — and the proactive communication efforts were important factors in donor satisfaction. The competent and flexible response to the technical problems helped ease concerns and contributed to a satisfying donor experience.

Giving Patterns

Give Local DeKalb County donors were also asked to share their charitable behavior beyond the giving day to address a key issue: Is the giving day crowding out donations made at other times of the year? This question is important to nonprofits since the giving day is often not their only fundraiser, and they want to understand how a giving day impacts their other fundraising efforts. The question is also relevant to funders who continuously monitor their regional philanthropic landscape.

Most of the applicable literature on this topic focuses on whether private donations are “crowded out” by government sources of nonprofit revenue (e.g., Warr, 1982), or if government funding is an indicator of solid

performance leading to increased private giving, or “crowding in” (e.g., Schiff, 1990).⁴ Understanding how charitable donations made during a giving day may crowd out other charitable donations at another time of year is uniquely different and deserves further exploration.

All Give Local DeKalb County survey respondents were asked two questions about their giving patterns:

1. Have you made any other donations in 2016 (other than during Give Local DeKalb County 2016) to nonprofit organizations in DeKalb County?
2. Do you plan to make any additional donations in 2016 to nonprofit organizations in DeKalb County?

Each of the 160 respondents answered both questions. Six donors could not recall whether a prior donation had been made in 2016, responding with “don’t know/unsure”; 79.2 percent of respondents indicated they had given to a nonprofit in DeKalb County earlier in the year. When asked if they planned to make another gift in 2016 specifically to a nonprofit in DeKalb County, 89.8 percent responded affirmatively and 10.2 percent said they had no plans to do so. (See Table 3.) Based on these results, Give Local DeKalb County 2016 did not substantially dampen giving at other times of the year. While

⁴The research on how government funding may or may not crowd out charitable giving is substantial. For more, see Brooks (1999, 2002) and others (e.g., Abrams & Schitz, 1978; Andreoni & Payne, 2011; Heutel, 2014; Schatteman & Bingle, 2015; Simmons & Emanuele, 2004).

not all of those who said they would give later in the year (89.8 percent) may have actually followed through with another gift, nearly 80 percent had already made a donation in 2016 and still gave during the giving day.

Discussion and Lessons Learned

One drawback of this study is that it is specific to DeKalb County, Illinois. Case studies often lack generalizability and, to a certain extent, that is true here. Community dynamics, staff capacity, stakeholder involvement, and the size of the giving day are just a few considerations that community foundations had to consider when crafting their responses to the technology failure. For example, the response from very large giving days shared some similarities with DeKalb County, but there are unique differences. The Seattle Foundation's GiveBIG day raised the most of any community (\$12.8 million) during Give Local America 2015, followed by the Pittsburgh Foundation's Day of Giving (\$5.7 million) (Hrywna, 2016). In Seattle, the giving day was extended another 24 hours, a response similar to DeKalb County's. In Pittsburgh, however, the giving day was suspended and rescheduled, with an additional \$100,000 added to the incentive pool (Hrywna, 2016). While Pittsburgh and DeKalb County were able to add sizable amounts to the available incentives, it is important to note that among the communities that could not do so, many were still able to salvage their giving days. Regardless of geographic and community-specific differences, taking direct action to address a giving day's malfunction is paramount, especially in the absence of a major gift.

For additional perspective across multiple communities, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation funded the Giving Day Initiative — a nationwide report on 18 giving day organizers that, together, ran 49 giving days. The report focused on the “long-term value of giving days for community foundations” (Third Plateau, 2016, p. 1) and identified four ways in which giving days created value for community foundations: advancing mission through growing and “democratizing” philanthropy, enhancing visibility and credibility for the foundation among the community, bolstering the capacity of

community foundations to fundraise online and engage wide-ranging donors, and positioning community foundations as information centers through centralizing nonprofit and donor data. The report also identified three strategies that community foundations have used to reduce costs associated with giving days while also aligning the giving events with their missions: charging a participation fee, partnering to share the workload, and linking the giving day to other foundation efforts (e.g., encouraging donors to create donor-advised funds or approaching nonprofit participants to establish endowment funds) (Third Plateau, 2016).

Community foundation leaders considering the possibility of hosting a giving day would be well-served to review the insights from the Giving Day Initiative. Interestingly, the case study of Give Local DeKalb County aligns closely with many of the takeaways outlined in the Knight Foundation report. The following elaborates on some of those points, and serves to highlight a few considerations for community foundation-led giving days:

- *Planning.* Planning matters. In the case of Give Local DeKalb County, there had been some surface-level planning for website issues but the actual action steps were not developed until the tech failure was in its sixth hour. Thinking through all conceivable scenarios — far beyond possible technology failures — ahead of time encourages organizers to prepare for the possibility of problems: What happens if a volunteer is sick? What if the phones go down? What happens in the event of a natural disaster? All of these questions, and many more, need to be answered ahead of a giving day.
- *Engage key stakeholders.* The endorsement of a giving day by key stakeholders contributes to its legitimacy. This can be done in a variety of ways: gathering sponsorships from reputable and recognizable local businesses, taking photos or video of community leaders holding giving day signage, or inviting elected officials to visit the foundation for a photo opportunity on the

giving day. In the DeKalb County case, the \$50,000 donation from the Roberts Family Foundation did much more than boost the matching funds — it also served as an endorsement from a prominent community leader at a critical moment.

- *Encourage ownership.* Give Local DeKalb County relies on a planning committee consisting of executive directors from nonprofits that participate in the giving day. This approach reduces some of the staff workload, but, more importantly, it engages participants in community leadership. Decentralizing decision-making to a representative committee of nonprofit participants spreads ownership of the event and democratizes the process.
- *Consider a match.* Give Local DeKalb County had a bonus pool of proportional matching funds. Such matching funds do not have to be large; evidence suggests that the presence of a match increases the size of donations and overall participation by donors, but larger match ratios have no additional impact compared to smaller match ratios (Karlan & List, 2007). Offering a giving day match incentive can encourage donors to participate and differentiates the event from another “normal” donation. A match can also create excitement and is a key attribute to include in promotional materials. In DeKalb County, 86.5 percent of donors said the matching funds were either somewhat or extremely influential in their decision to donate. Over time, however, the presence of a match may shift more donors to direct all of their donations for the year to the giving day. More longitudinal research is needed to determine how the availability of matching funds during a giving day impact giving at other times of the year.
- *Capacity building.* There are many opportunities to build the capacity of nonprofits that participate in giving days. Community foundations may assume that role or contract for training on topics such as online fundraising best practices, engaging donors

Thinking through all conceivable scenarios — far beyond possible technology failures — ahead of time encourages organizers to prepare for the possibility of problems: What happens if a volunteer is sick? What if the phones go down? What happens in the event of a natural disaster? All of these questions, and many more, need to be answered ahead of a giving day.

online, peer-to-peer fundraising, and online communication strategies. Many giving day platform providers offer trainings, webinars, and resources as value-added capacity-building services, so the burden of implementing these activities does not have to fall solely on the community foundation organizers.

- *Communications.* Timely and effective communications are important when managing wide-reaching projects like a giving day. Multiple donors to Give Local DeKalb County noted that they appreciated the effective communication in the wake of the tech failure. Giving day organizers can prepare by scheduling social media posts, developing templates for various emergency scenarios, and identifying what communication channels will be used. Moreover, soliciting media sponsorships before the event can lead to wider promotion of the giving day at low or no cost.

- *Allow offline donations.* When tech issues halted online giving during Give Local DeKalb County 2016, offline donations continued to roll in. Offering this option is a built-in contingency plan in the event of technology problems. It also allows community foundations to invite donors to visit, encourage the press or elected officials to stop by, host a reception, and build in-person excitement throughout the day. Offline donations demand volunteers, physical space, organization, and a separate set of processes, but the benefits can be extraordinary.

Conclusion

Community foundation leaders should carefully consider the resource commitment necessary before deciding to put on a giving day. Some additional considerations include whether to have a program of the foundation coordinate the endeavor or to charge a participation fee. Fortunately, valuable resources are available to help guide those who want to organize giving days (e.g., Third Plateau, 2016; Third Plateau & KDS Strategies, 2016).

The potential benefits of giving days for the community foundations that lead them are well-documented (Third Plateau, 2016). When relying on technology, however, there is always a potential for risk. This article explored Give Local DeKalb County 2016, a giving day that was disrupted because of a technology issue that emerged in every community participating in the Give Local America 2016 campaign. The findings from a donor survey revealed high levels of satisfaction with the donor experience despite the tech failure. Donor comments indicated that the actions taken by foundation staff to salvage the giving day and the proactive communication efforts were key in making the event a success. Additionally, Give Local DeKalb County did not crowd out other charitable giving in 2016, but that may change if more organizations focus on the giving day as their primary or sole fundraiser for the year.

Just how long giving days will prevail as viable fundraising events for nonprofits and donors

is uncertain, and the return on investment for community foundations is likely to continue to evolve. While giving days may offer new opportunities for community foundations, more research is needed to further understand their impact on the broader philanthropic landscape.

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Transforming Coalition Leadership: An Evaluation of a Collaborative Leadership Training Program

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Keywords: Collaborative leadership, coalition leadership, evaluation, systems leadership, coalition coach, leadership development

Introduction

Community residents, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and government and philanthropic entities often form and support coalitions as a way to address complex challenges that require collaboration within and across sectors, organizations, and demographic and geographic boundaries. National, regional, and community foundations have invested in coalitions for their potential to create long-term social change, build legitimacy and political clout for local and state policy change, elevate the community voice, and pool and maximize community assets and external resources (Community Catalyst, 2003; KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2017). Coalitions require systems thinking beyond a single organization, collaboration among partners representing different interests, and trust that enables communities to develop and sustain capacity to address complex, multisector issues (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

Local community leadership associations across the country operate programs to develop informed citizen leaders who can collaborate with other individuals and organizations and to help link participants to networks of like-minded individuals (Bono, Shen, & Snyder, 2010). Their emphasis has been on individual and organizational leadership. Organizations tend to be hierarchical and have defined lines of authority and established processes for achieving change (Thompson, Scheffler, & Shankman, 2015). Coalitions, on the other hand, rely on group process to bring together individuals with varying

Key Points

- Effective coalitions need leaders who are able to reach beyond individual, group, and sectoral boundaries to advance a shared vision for healthy and thriving communities. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership to create a one-year pilot, the Community Coalition Leadership Program, to test a new approach to providing training in collaborative leadership.
- This article discusses the program, whether and how it improved participants' individual and coalition leadership skills, and the implications for foundations and other entities seeking to increase interdependent leadership capacity within community coalitions. This article does not, however, intend to describe progress toward coalition goals or changes in community outcomes, given the short time frame of the evaluation.
- A post-program survey found that most coalitions improved on some measures along four dimensions: membership, structure, functioning, and collaboration. Even coalitions that struggled showed improvement along some dimensions, which suggests that the program was a valuable part of a longer-range strategy to build leadership capacity in under-resourced communities.

levels of influence within their organizations and represent organizations across systems, each with its own processes, language, and power structure within a community. Coalitions with

effective leadership are likely to have solid bonds among members and to encourage collaborative behavior within the coalition (Alexander, Christianson, Hearld, Hurley, & Scanlon, 2010; Gadja, 2004).

Collaborative leadership — also referred to as collective, shared, distributed, relational, integrative, systems, or interdependent leadership (Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2012) — is “leadership that fosters collective action by multiple stakeholders from various sectors of society who work together for the common good” (Bono et al., 2010, p. 325). In particular, coalitions for social change require leadership across organizations and systems, described by Denis et al. (2012) as distributed leadership enabling complex cross-boundary change, which we propose is a different set of skills and tools from that of organizational leadership and has a different emphasis from shared leadership within a single organization or system. For example, a critical task of many coalition leaders is identifying and building consensus for a shared vision. Although this type of task is not exclusive to coalitions, managing the priorities and trade-offs between inclusiveness and efficiency among multiple organizations from different sectors within a coalition becomes increasingly complex. Many coalition members have little training in collective leadership across systems (Thompson et al., 2015), and more research is needed to determine what works, when, and why (Denis et al., 2012).

Recent studies of collective leadership recognize the heterogeneity of expertise and skill among potential team members, the importance of effective information exchange, and co-existence of collective leadership with formal or vertical leadership (Friedrich et al., 2011). To date, studies of collective leadership showing improved team performance are limited to teams with fairly defined responsibilities (for example, manufacturing, road maintenance, or research and development) or top management teams within a single organization or system (Friedrich et al., 2011; Hauschildt & Kirchmann, 2001; Hiller, Day, & Vance, 2006; Howell & Boies, 2004). A recent meta-analysis of shared leadership and team effectiveness (Wang, Waldman, & Zhang, 2014)

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found that the relationship between shared leadership and team effectiveness varies across different types of effectiveness criteria, and that the complexity of the work performed by teams was a moderator of the relationship between shared leadership and outcomes, suggesting shared leadership might be most beneficial when the work is knowledge-based and interdependent.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership to create the Community Coalition Leadership Program (CCLP) to improve the interdependent leadership capabilities within community coalitions. The program hypothesizes that developing the leadership capacity of a team of coalition members representing different organizations and sectors of the community — through intensive in-person training on boundary-spanning leadership and its related tools, team coaching through a coalition coach, and support through a professional mentor coach and monthly webinars — can improve coalition direction, alignment, and commitment; a culture of collaboration; and the ability to effect community change. Boundary-spanning leadership involves six practices: (1) buffering to create safety among members, (2) reflecting to foster intergroup respect, (3) connecting to build

FIGURE 1 CCLP Logic Model

SOURCE: Center for Creative Leadership and Mathematica Policy Research

trust, (4) mobilizing to create shared identity, (5) weaving to advance intergroup interdependence, and (6) transforming to enable intergroup reinvention (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2011).

This article contributes to the literature by describing the CCLP, a pilot program focused on developing collaborative leadership across systems; the evaluation, which aimed to understand whether and how the CCLP improved participants' individual and coalition leadership skills; and the implications for foundations and other entities seeking to increase interdependent leadership capacity within community coalitions. Given the short time frame of the evaluation, however, this article does not intend to describe progress toward coalition goals or changes in community outcomes.

The Community Coalition Leadership Program

The CCLP aimed to develop the collaborative leadership capacity of multiorganization coalitions and help coalition leaders engage in, develop, and transfer boundary-spanning leadership skills — defined as “the ability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across group boundaries in service of a higher vision or goal” (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2011, p. 2). (See Figure 1.)

The CCLP was a one-year pilot initiative building on Ladder to Leadership, a program created by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Creative Leadership to prepare emerging nonprofit community health leaders for senior leadership roles in their organizations.

Ladder to Leadership equipped participants with boundary-spanning leadership practices to collaborate with other leaders from diverse sectors to address shared community challenges. To accomplish this, Ladder to Leadership required participants to form project teams that worked for 18 months to effect change in their community on an area of shared interest (e.g., reducing childhood obesity, improving behavioral health services). A team coach from the Center for Creative Leadership supported the project teams in applying program concepts and tools to improve team dynamics, and a community sponsor helped the team navigate potential obstacles in the community. The foundation was investing in many coalition-based efforts across the country that could also benefit from boundary-spanning leadership practices.

Program Components

There were three primary components to the CCLP's team-based leadership development model: the coalition coach, in-person training, and intersession support.

Ladder to Leadership participants suggested that the teams might have been even more effective if the team coach and the community sponsor had been the same person. Given that feedback, the foundation and the Center for Creative Leadership piloted that idea with the CCLP by designing the coalition coach role to be filled by a community leader with some experience with team facilitation or coaching, rather than a professional coach from the center. The CCLP curriculum specified three functions of the coalition coach: facilitator, coach, and subject-matter expert. Coalition coaches received training in team coaching skills and worked alongside their coalition team leaders to learn and apply the boundary-spanning leadership practices.

The CCLP kicked off with an orientation webinar and then intensive in-person training at a Center for Creative Leadership campus. Coalition coaches began training on a Monday, and the full team — the coalition coach and four coalition members — started their four-day team training the next day. The curriculum included a combination of didactic sessions, experiential exercises,

and modeling of the six boundary-spanning leadership principles and tools. Specifically, the goals of the training were to help participants develop self-awareness in order to collaborate more effectively with others; awareness and appreciation for different perspectives and leadership styles of their teammates; and skills to better identify, analyze, and influence multiple stakeholders. A year later, the program concluded with Sharing the Impact, a two-day event for teams to share coalition experiences and leadership lessons and that served as a training refresher.

Over the course of the year, center staff mentored the coalition coaches and supported the leadership teams through monthly webinars and an online toolkit. The center knew that one day of coach training, followed by four days of training with their leadership teams, would not be enough for the coaches to completely master the new skills. For that reason, the center designed the intersession support, with emphasis on access to a mentor coach, to support coalition coaches with problem solving and on-site observations. After the initial training, each coalition coach could use 16 hours of mentor coaching, with flexibility to use those hours in any way — by telephone, email, or in person (within a travel budget).

Pilot Cohorts in the Evaluation

In 2013-2014, teams of four leaders and a coach from 14 coalitions participated in the pilot program that Mathematica evaluated. Approximately 100 coalitions were invited to apply to the CCLP, and applicants were encouraged to reflect diversity across multiple dimensions, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Of those, 17 coalitions submitted applications. Although all of the coalitions that applied might not have reflected all of the desired qualities (e.g., having an already-formed multisector coalition or network committed to collaborating on a shared health-related community issue), the foundation and the center had interest in learning from as many coalitions as they had capacity to include; thus, they selected 14 coalitions to participate and assigned coalitions to cohort 2 or 3 based on their availability to attend the initial training. (The first cohort

began October 2012 and served as an early pilot.) (See Table 1.)

Both cohorts reflected a wide range of characteristics:

- **Membership size:** The majority of coalitions had 20 to 40 members (range: 4 to 120).
- **Tenure of the coalition:** Most coalitions formed within five years of starting the CCLP, with three forming the same year. One coalition existed more than five years — and two coalitions more than 10 years — before the CCLP.
- **Location:** One partnership was on the West Coast, five were in the Midwest, three were in the Northeast, and five were in the South.

The Evaluation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation commissioned Mathematica in spring 2013 to evaluate the CCLP to help the foundation and the center learn whether and how it improved participants' individual and coalition leadership skills. We sought to answer three research questions:

1. What leadership practices did CCLP participants use to foster cross-sector collaboration within their coalitions?
2. Did the CCLP achieve its short-term goal of improving participants' skills in leading at three levels: individual, with others, and within the system and community?
3. What factors of the CCLP and its implementation can help inform the foundation's leadership development strategy?

To address these questions, we assessed changes in coalition membership, structure, functioning, and collaboration as measures of leadership development by conducting three types of activities:

- **Document review:** We reviewed the coalitions' CCLP applications, the 2013 request for proposals, and the Center for Creative

Leadership's digital toolkit, received by participants.

- **Structured interviews:** We gathered qualitative information through two rounds of telephone interviews. At the start of the evaluation, we interviewed all 14 coalition lead contacts briefly to obtain information on coalitions' background and organization, membership, and selection of CCLP participants. We also interviewed the coalition lead contacts, participants, and coaches after the initial training, and again two to three months after the CCLP ended, about their coalitions, cross-sector partners, coalition goals and activities, and CCLP experiences and expectations. Finally, we interviewed staff from various foundations and organizations that were either involved directly in the CCLP or oversaw grantees that were participating in the program, to learn about their experiences and perceived benefits and challenges for participants. At baseline, we interviewed 67 of the 72 coalition lead contacts, participants, and coaches; at follow-up, we interviewed 65 of the 70 participants and coaches (achieving a 93 percent response rate in each round). In analyzing the data, we identified key themes within each interview and across interviews. We used a combination of an inductive approach to identify preliminary themes and a deductive approach to categorize and organize the themes within the framework of the evaluation questions.
- **Coalition survey:** We conducted baseline and follow-up surveys of coalition members from 13 coalitions in cohorts 2 and 3 and analyzed results for 12 coalitions. We did not administer the survey to one coalition, which was still forming and had only four members at baseline. We did not analyze results from one coalition, which had a low response rate (20 percent at baseline and 31 percent at follow-up) and high member turnover during the year (only three members completed both surveys).

TABLE 1 Overview of CCLP Cohort 2 and 3 Coalitions

Coalition	Mission / Key Coalition Characteristics	Year Coalition Began	Number of Members ^a
Cohort 2			
A	Improve financial security and health of state residents through passage of a statewide earned income tax credit. / Work team is part of a larger advocacy coalition.	2010	12 21
B	Improve health outcomes across the county. / Formed in response to the 2010 County Health Rankings.	2010	24 22
C	Increase access to health care for residents. / Work groups target childhood obesity and perinatal substance abuse.	1996	90 55
D	Improve healthy food policies. / Team is a subgroup of a large county initiative.	2013	12 16
E	Improve academic achievement of children in the public school system. / Organization-based membership. ^b	2009	38 43
F	Improve community health via cross-sector planning among the public health department, hospitals, and health plans. / Loosely based on a former collaborative.	2012	41 46
G	Prevent heart disease. / One of seven community coalitions addressing health issues.	2011	90 42
Cohort 3			
H	Guide a collective impact approach to improve physical activity and healthy eating, women's preconception health, children's health and early development, and access to care. / Integrated within the county's department of health and human services.	2013	20 22
I	Improve access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities. / Formed by the county health department as part of a state grant.	2000	28 22
J	Give residents a tool to regain control over their community and public spaces to eliminate existing drug activity and persuade young offenders to make different life choices. / Community-driven coalition emerged from previous project.	2012	22 19
K	Increase the financial stability of the county's low-income families.	2011	30 31
L	Improve financial stability of low-income individuals and families.	2007	21 17
M	Improve access to, coordination of, and collaboration with educational, social, physical, and behavioral health services, from cradle to career. / Convened by a former mayor	2010	120 205
N	Reduce obesity and improve access to healthy foods.	2013	4 8

SOURCE: Coalition CCLP applications, rosters, and baseline interviews.

^a Top number (in boldface) represents the number of members on the roster of active coalition members we received at baseline; bottom number represents the number at follow-up.^b Membership is based on organizations, such that three individuals represent each organizational member.

We administered the baseline survey after each initial CCLP training session (June 2013 for cohort 2 and July 2013 for cohort 3) and the follow-up survey directly after each cohort's Sharing the Impact event (June 2014 for cohort 2 and July 2014 for cohort 3). Before each survey administration, we asked the lead contact of the coalition to provide us with a roster of all active members. We drew our sample from a frame of all active members. Members received an email with a unique link to the survey to complete online; they had the option to receive an electronic version, which they could return by email or fax.

The 15-minute survey consisted of 40 questions across four components:

1. Respondent organization information: We asked each respondent about his or her involvement in the coalition and other collaborative groups and about characteristics of the organization he or she represented.¹
2. Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory: We included 22 items from the 40-item Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, which measures dimensions of coalition functioning, relevant for the CCLP evaluation (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).
3. Coalition leadership characteristic measures: We adopted measures from the Center for Creative Leadership's evaluation of the first cohort to learn how coalition members viewed seven leadership characteristics that the CCLP sought to improve, such as recognizing the strength of partners and leveraging opportunities, and being able to move to solutions and take action.
4. Collaboration: We included one social network question — frequency of collaboration — to identify the level of collaboration among the organizations within each coalition. We used this information to identify,

for each organization, the proportion of other organizations that cited it for frequent collaboration, and we averaged those scores for all organizations to create an overall level of collaboration within the coalition.

Across 12 coalitions, the median coalition response rate was 71 percent at baseline (range: 33 percent to 85 percent) and 70 percent at follow-up (range: 40 percent to 88 percent). Coalitions with a larger number of members — those reporting 90 or more — tended to have lower response rates than those with fewer members. To assess coalition changes over time and differences across coalitions, we used a descriptive analytical approach, such as comparing counts, frequencies, and means of the responses for each coalition and survey. (See Appendix.)

The evaluation offered rich, multifaceted insights about the participants and their coalitions during the program year, but also had limitations. First, the program included a small number of coalitions with baseline differences for which our analysis could not control, and we did not observe the degree to which each team implemented the CCLP model and tools. As a result, we had limited ability to know what drove change — CCLP participation, the dosage of training and uptake, other before-and-after factors, or a combination. Second, the observation period of 12 to 15 months was too short to observe change in coalition effectiveness, and we do not know if the observed changes persisted after the program ended. In addition, many coalitions aimed to make changes to improve social and economic determinants of health, which involve multiple systems across numerous years. The time frame for the evaluation was too short to assess coalitions' progress toward their community improvement goals. Future research on collective leadership training initiatives should assess coalition collaboration and progress toward coalition goals and intermediate milestones. Finally, the evaluation did not consider

¹ The survey assessed coalition-level issues, and it was presented to respondents as a survey about the coalition and the respondents' involvement with their organization and the coalition. We therefore did not ask respondents about any personal characteristics, such as age, sex, or race/ethnicity. We acknowledge that these characteristics could play a role in the collaborative group involvement and perceptions, and that the decision not to collect this information presents a potential limitation of the evaluation's results.

individual participant characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and past leadership experience, which could have influenced CCLP participant involvement as well as overall perceptions and relationships within each coalition. We note that there are numerous factors within a complex and dynamic system of interactions that are at play, which points to the challenge that it is “nearly impossible to isolate a causal link between leader traits and behaviors and outcomes” (Friedrich et al., 2011, p. 5).

Results

Participants across the 14 leadership teams reported that the CCLP was a major influence on both their individual- and coalition-level leadership development. Next, we highlight results related to individual-level leadership changes (addressing research question 2), coalition-level changes (addressing research question 2), implementation of the CCLP skills (addressing research question 1), and participant feedback on the CCLP (addressing research question 3).

Individual-Level Changes

Participants said that the CCLP’s standardized tools and process for self-reflection helped them function more effectively as individual leaders. The CCLP sought to increase participants’ self-awareness to improve their ability to work collaboratively with others and to increase their respect for and ability to leverage interpersonal differences. Participants and coaches — those new to leadership and professional coaches alike — all reported that the CCLP provided skills, knowledge, and tools to help them grow as individuals and lead more effectively and, for some, more confidently. One participant commented, “Personally, I think it’s made me more comfortable in front of groups because it’s a standardized set of facilitation tools. I’m not a natural facilitator. It’s a learned skill for me.”

Participants reported that the CCLP helped them identify and leverage their leadership styles and provided a set of standardized facilitation and planning tools that helped them engage and lead groups. Coalition coaches were able to layer the CCLP tools on top of their existing and often

[T]he evaluation did not consider individual participant characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and past leadership experience, which could have influenced CCLP participant involvement as well as overall perceptions and relationships within each coalition. We note that there are numerous factors within a complex and dynamic system of interactions that are at play, which points to the challenge that it is “nearly impossible to isolate a causal link between leader traits and behaviors and outcomes.”

extensive community leadership experience. They were more likely than other participants to facilitate group processes as part of their regular responsibilities and thus were more likely to report that they use the CCLP skills and principles very frequently or on a daily basis.

Coalition-Level Changes

This section describes coalition-level changes along the dimensions of membership (such as number of members and sector representation), leadership team and committee structure, coalition functioning (such as participation, goals, and purpose), and collaboration. Among the 12 coalitions with survey results, most coalitions improved in some measures. On the whole, however, four coalitions improved on most coalition

functioning and collaboration measures; two maintained high scores in membership, functioning, and collaboration. Three experienced challenges that were difficult to resolve during the program year and had lower follow-up scores than at baseline; three others worked to identify a shared vision and had no substantial change in scores over the year.

In the tables that follow, we categorize results for two groups of coalitions: those that completed the CCLP program with higher scores and those that completed the program with lower scores. The section concludes with a summary for each coalition by these different categorizations.

Coalitions used CCLP tools to assess their membership and leverage existing relationships to reach unrepresented sectors. The CCLP encouraged participants to use a systematic approach to identify and address gaps in key partners, which could have resulted in coalitions expanding their membership, depending on coalition goals and existing organizational involvement. After identifying membership needs through this process, five of the 12 surveyed coalitions increased their membership; four of these were coalitions with lower scores. (See Table 2.) The need to increase membership could signal that a coalition had not assessed its membership before (or recently), potentially because it had recently formed or its members were not accustomed to working together toward common goals.

Most coalitions had broad sector representation in their membership at baseline and increased sector diversity during the program year. (See Table 2.) The CCLP was predicated on the idea that coalitions addressing complex community issues should involve many sectors, including business, community development, education, government, health care, philanthropy, and public health. The appropriateness of such expansion or inclusion, however, depends on each coalition's goals and the local environment. Survey respondents within each of nine coalitions represented at least eight sectors as of the initial survey, and sector representation increased for most coalitions during the program year.

Despite this breadth, most coalitions wanted still greater sector diversity. Survey respondents indicated at both time points that their coalitions needed representation from other sectors, but typically did not agree on which sectors they needed. As sector diversity increased, sector dominance decreased during the program. At baseline, one sector dominated eight coalitions' membership; that is, half or more of respondents represented a single sector. Sector dominance decreased during the CCLP for five of these coalitions and remained stable for three coalitions (A, E, and F), which had specific missions that necessitated representation from the advocacy, education, or health care/public health sectors.

As coalitions became more involved in the CCLP, they could have changed how they were structured in response to new information learned, both about how coalitions work and about member needs.

Participants from 10 of the 11 coalitions that existed before the CCLP indicated that they created a leadership team or changed the number or structure of the coalition's committees or work groups in response to the CCLP. (See Table 2.) For example, in seven coalitions, the team that participated in the CCLP became the coalition's leadership team. For many of these coalitions, leadership rested with a single organization before the CCLP. Three other coalitions restructured or established new committees or work groups to assess membership or engage new members. According to participants, establishing a core leadership team helped them with strategy and meeting planning, and the structural changes helped improve the coalition's direction and alignment, as well as renew member commitment.

Coalition functioning improved or remained stable for most coalitions over time. (See Table 3.)

The number of items on the Wilder inventory identified as strengths increased for eight coalitions, suggesting improved coalition functioning during the program. Respondent assessment across seven leadership characteristics showed increased scores from baseline to follow-up for seven coalitions. The number of areas that respondents identified as working well in the coalition also increased for all but three

TABLE 2 Characteristics of Coalition Membership and Structure

Coalition Characteristic	Coalition					
<i>Coalitions with higher scores</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>J</i>
Membership						
Membership changes from baseline to follow-up	Increase	No change	Decrease	No change	Decrease	Decrease
Number of sectors represented (baseline/follow-up)	5/9	12/9	12/11	10/11	11/12	8/7
Sector dominance baseline/follow-up)	Yes/Yes	Yes/No	No/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Structure						
Changes in leadership team (LT) or committees (C) from baseline to follow-up ^a	LT	LT	C	None	LT	C
<i>Coalitions with lower scores</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>M</i>
Membership						
Membership changes from baseline to follow-up	Increase	Increase	No change	Increase	Decrease	Increase
Number of sectors represented (baseline/follow-up)	6/6	11/ 10	11/11	5/6	8/7	12/12
Sector dominance (baseline/follow-up)	No/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/No	Yes/Yes	No/No	No/No
Structure						
Changes in leadership team (LT) or committees (C) from baseline to follow-up ^a	None	LT	LT	LT	LT	C

SOURCE: CCLP baseline survey (July–August 2013) and follow-up survey (July–September 2014); CCLP coalition rosters at baseline and follow-up; baseline and follow-up interviews.

NOTE: The appendix includes descriptions of the measures used. Additional statistical tables are available upon request.

^aStructural changes are identified as (1) changes related to the leadership team (a change in the structure or composition of the team leading the coalition); (2) changes related to the committees of the coalition (including changes to the number, type, structure, or purpose of coalition committees, work groups, advisory groups, etc.); or (3) none (no changes in the coalition leadership team, committees, or their structures).

coalitions. Respondents most frequently identified the following areas as working well: having adequate expertise among members to accomplish coalition activities/goals, communication among members, leadership, and shared vision and direction on goals.

Collaboration levels. The number of organizations with which respondents indicated collaborating most frequently increased sizably

for three (B, H, and I) of the six coalitions for which we had sufficient data. (See Table 4.). Our assumption was that these levels would increase as a result of coalitions' CCLP involvement. In addition, the organizations represented by CCLP participants typically were more central to collaboration at the end of the program than at the beginning, as measured by increased collaboration for two to four of the participant organizations within each coalition.

TABLE 3 Coalition Functioning

Coalition Characteristic	Coalition					
Coalitions with higher scores	A	B	C	H	I	J
Number of areas of strength (of 22 items total on the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory)						
Baseline	6	10	4	8	13	14
Follow-up	8	16	12	15	15	17
Leadership characteristic measures (average of 7 items on a 9-point scale)						
Baseline	5.86	6.29	6.37	6.27	7.33	6.82
Follow-up	6.30	6.93	6.89	7.22	7.09	7.41
Number of items working well (of 18 items total)						
Baseline	6	5	1	6	11	12
Follow-up	12	6	7	12	13	14
Coalitions with lower scores	D	E	K	F	L	M
Number of areas of strength (of 22 items total on the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory)						
Baseline	12	17	8	5	4	2
Follow-up	8	5	1	7	6	2
Leadership characteristic measures (average of 7 items on a 9-point scale)						
Baseline	6.93	6.87	6.31	5.63	5.50	5.99
Follow-up	6.14	5.82	5.46	6.11	5.67	5.78
Number of items working well (of 18 items total)						
Baseline	7	11	6	3	4	2
Follow-up	10	6	3	5	8	2

SOURCE: CCLP baseline survey (July–August 2013) and follow-up survey (July–September 2014); CCLP coalition rosters at baseline and follow-up; baseline and follow-up interviews.

NOTE: The appendix includes descriptions of the measures used. Additional statistical tables are available upon request.

Summary results for coalitions with higher and lower scores. Six coalitions completed the program with higher scores. Of those, four coalitions (A, B, C, and H) began with mixed or lower scores at baseline and improved at follow-up:

- Coalition A, a small coalition at the start of the CCLP, assessed its membership using CCLP tools; both membership size and sectors represented nearly doubled during the CCLP, which reflected its focus on recruiting nontraditional allies. It established a

core team to make strategic planning decisions, which allowed CCLP participants to take more ownership of the group work.

- Similarly, CCLP participants from coalition B formed a leadership team to provide more structure and integrate CCLP leadership practices and tools within the broader coalition. It was among the coalitions with the largest number of areas identified as strengths in the Wilder inventory at follow-up. Participants reported at follow-up

TABLE 4 Coalition Collaboration Levels

Average Coalition Level (from 0 to 1)	Coalition					
Coalitions with higher scores	A	B	C	H	I	J
Baseline	0.25	0.14	No data	0.12	0.10	0.22
Follow-up	No data	0.20	0.08	0.22	0.21	0.25
Coalitions with lower scores	D	E	K	F	L	M
Baseline	0.18	0.21	0.13	No data	0.17	No data
Follow-up	No data	0.24	0.15	No data	No data	No data

SOURCE: CCLP baseline survey (July–August 2013) and follow-up survey (July–September 2014); CCLP coalition rosters at baseline and follow-up; baseline and follow-up interviews.

NOTE: The appendix includes descriptions of the measures used. Additional statistical tables are available upon request.

- that the coalition supported formation of the leadership team.
- Coalition C showed improvement on multiple measures, although it had high membership turnover during the program year. Despite having a large membership at baseline, participants reported that only about half of its members attended meetings. During the CCLP, the coalition reviewed its membership and implemented work groups to promote member engagement.
 - Coalition H had among the highest-ranking scores across all measures at follow-up. The coalition credited the CCLP with introducing tools it otherwise would not have tried to strengthen its coalition. Program participants served as an executive committee for the coalition; one of the participants, a dedicated staff member in a backbone organization, functioned as a central coordinator for the coalition. In addition, during the program year, this coalition applied for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Culture of Health Prize, which helped focus the coalition and attract community representatives.
- Two coalitions — I and J — had smaller increases in scores, maintaining relatively high scores in membership, functioning, and collaboration. These coalitions were established with decision-making processes already in place and used CCLP to become more effective in member recruitment and reengaging current members.

 - Leaders from coalition I, a longstanding coalition, indicated that after the CCLP it became more intentional about recruiting new members and engaging current members in collaborative activities toward a shared vision. This approach differed from the way it operated before, when it met regularly only to share information and accomplishments of individual organizations.
 - Coalition J grew from community residents voicing a need for community safety, opportunities for physical activity, and restorative justice interventions for their young adults. After the initial CCLP training, coalition leaders assessed their membership and reached out to additional stakeholders, but noted that many of the key stakeholders were already engaged in the coalition.

Participants noted that they used the tools with which they were most familiar or comfortable, those they had the opportunity to practice, and those that were simple to use and explain.

Of the six coalitions that completed the program with lower scores, three (D, E, and K) started with high or mixed scores at baseline, and three (F, L, and M) started with low scores. Program participants from the three coalitions starting with high or mixed baseline scores encountered challenges that were difficult to resolve or overcome during the program year, but they reported that the program had positive influences on coalition processes and structure and provided tools to assess and adapt their approaches.

- Coalition D, a newly formed work group of a larger informal partnership, redirected its focus from school policies to food-related issues. Potential barriers to progress included time constraints on key coalition members during their CCLP involvement and the role the work group defined for itself. Work group members, although convening regularly, primarily coordinated efforts of their own organizations or other collaboratives rather than building collective action.
- Coalition E had high baseline scores in membership, functioning, and collaboration, but realized through the CCLP coaching process that it had little influence or leverage with public school system governance and an acrimonious political environment. As a result, the coalition shifted its focus to increase public awareness about the school system and disparities in academic achievement in the district.
- For coalition K, the CCLP provided an opportunity to create leadership and an identity separate from a large community organization that had formed and led the coalition for two years up until the CCLP. Program participants reported they had to overcome perceptions of “us versus them” among some coalition members who did not participate in the CCLP. The coalition’s lower scores at follow-up suggest that the coalition was still in transition.

Coalitions F, L, and M showed little movement in scores, relative to their baseline scores. Two of the three were still in a planning or earlier developmental phase than other participating coalitions.

- Based on interviews with participants, coalition F appeared to be in the planning phase of developing a shared approach to community health needs assessments (required of public health departments, hospitals, and health plans under the Affordable Care Act), leveraging data among partners to avoid duplication, and coordinating strategies based on the assessment findings.
- Participants from coalition L noted they were in an earlier developmental stage than others in their cohort. During the CCLP, they encountered difficulties in determining the direction of the coalition and in recruiting potential stakeholders.
- Coalition M was a large, established coalition with a complex organizational and leadership structure with multiple work groups that made it difficult to identify shared goals. This coalition nearly doubled in size during the year. Its lower scores were consistent across both administrations of the survey, which could reflect its size, the range in sectors represented among its membership, and the complexity of the issues it was trying to address within child development and education.

Implementation of CCLP Skills

Participants from nearly all the coalitions reported that they shared their CCLP experience and used the tools with the rest of the coalition. Participants from several coalitions described using the CCLP tools to help the coalition identify its areas of strength and weakness or to map out the coalition's vision and goals. Participants noted that they used the tools with which they were most familiar or comfortable, those they had the opportunity to practice, and those that were simple to use and explain. When asked which tools were most useful, participants most frequently cited seven of the 24 CCLP tools as ones they could translate easily to the full coalition; three of these related to the practice of mobilizing.

Participants used the CCLP tools to identify and understand their stakeholders and build cross-sector collaboration. Many coalitions had cross-sector representation within their memberships before the CCLP. However, the CCLP gave participants tools to assess member recruitment, sector engagement, and retention in purposeful ways. Participants reported that CCLP training and tools, particularly stakeholder mapping, helped them think about potential partners they would not have considered before.

- Coalition A members successfully reached out to larger financial institutions and chambers of commerce to support or be a part of their coalition's campaign, partners they did not expect would be willing to collaborate.
- Coalition C used its subcommittee structure to recruit topic experts. Members identified that law enforcement was a missing sector and invited a representative to present to the coalition. After the coalition engaged this law enforcement representative as a speaker, he continued to attend meetings.
- Coalition E's strategic-planning committee assessed its coalition membership and identified the need for organizations that represent parents and teachers. The coalition engaged these organizations by inviting

Participants overwhelmingly reported positive experiences, with many commenting the program was transformative to them individually or for their coalition work.

them to participate in community forums on education. During the program year, the coalition increased its membership by 13 percent (from 38 to 43 members).

Some CCLP teams encountered common challenges translating the program's tools to the broader coalition. First, some participants described needing more assistance explaining the boundary-spanning leadership concepts and tools to the rest of the coalition. In addition, many noted that using the tools within the time constraints of a coalition meeting was challenging. Furthermore, because most coalitions met monthly, the frequency of coalition meetings and inconsistent meeting attendance made it challenging to keep members engaged in the process. Finally, in a few coalitions, members wanted to move to action and resisted spending time to reflect and go through the capacity-building steps participants learned in the CCLP.

Participant Feedback on CCLP

Participants overwhelmingly reported positive experiences, with many commenting the program was transformative to them individually or for their coalition work. Participants also had very positive feedback about the Center for Creative Leadership staff; as one participant said, "They were spot-on ..., practicing even in the moment when they were trying to teach us." When asked to provide feedback on the program, participants made suggestions related to the initial weeklong training, intersession support, and role of the coalition coach:

- Initial weeklong training. To improve the transfer and application of CCLP skills, participants had suggestions related to preparation for the initial training, additional time for discussion about roles and strategic planning, and peer learning. Participants commented that they did not have a clear understanding of what to expect from the initial training, that it was difficult to absorb all the concepts and information during one intense week, and that more discussion during the orientation webinar about the pre-training required reading might better prepare participants. Participants from coalitions would have liked time at the end of the training for teams to debrief and start strategic planning. Finally, some participants indicated that more connectivity and peer-learning opportunities outside the in-person sessions might have been available had coalitions had more in common.
- Intersession support. Coalition coaches and participants valued having a mentor coach, but had mixed opinions about the webinars. Nearly all the coalition coaches indicated that when they reached out to their mentor coach for input, the feedback was valuable. Mentor coaches helped coalition coaches with problem solving, on-site observations, and additional perspectives. Several coaches mentioned they did not use all the time allocated to them for mentor coaching and indicated they might have met with their mentor coaches more if the interactions were more structured and did not depend on their initiating the contact. Webinars focused on using the tools or management practices were most helpful; however, participants thought a more effective way of communicating information about pre-event planning or logistics would have been via email and not during webinars. Although participants enjoyed hearing from the other coalitions during the in-person sessions, providing similar updates did not translate well in a webinar format.
- Characteristics of the coalition coach. Participants across coalitions identified

several qualities that were critical to the role of the coach, including willingness to learn, understanding the community, being comfortable helping others lead (and not being in the spotlight themselves), and active listening. Participants from most coalitions also indicated that having respect from the community, a strong network, and knowledge of what coalition building entails were important qualities. Having previous knowledge of the coalition's history facilitated the coach's ability to build trust and credibility with the leadership team and broader coalition.

Discussion

This evaluation demonstrated that the CCLP has the potential to benefit other community coalitions. In particular, the evaluation offers insights about the aspects of the program model, as well as characteristics of the leadership teams and their broader coalitions, that facilitated learning transfer.

Boundary-spanning leadership practices focus on building direction, alignment, and commitment across group boundaries in pursuit of a shared vision or goal (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2011). The CCLP provided a common vocabulary and tools for understanding and diagnosing challenges to collaboration, critical skills for those leading stakeholders with varying interests and priorities to achieve common goals.

Several aspects of the CCLP model facilitated learning transfer. The model included layers of support to facilitate learning transfer through collaborative learning and mentors. The program built in collaborative learning within teams — four participants from each coalition, and peer learning across teams; seven teams participated together in one room. The coalition coach, who had a central role in helping coalition leaders “deepen their thinking, unearth tensions or underlying conflicts, or get ‘un-stuck’ during a discussion or group process,” received ongoing support through a mentor coach (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013, pp. 4). Participants embraced the idea that their coalition coach had a mentor — that is, that no one had be the

smartest person in the room. Finally, reflective learning was an integral part of the CCLP model. In particular, the Sharing the Impact event enabled participants to use the CCLP tools to reflect on their progress and share insights with other participants and program leaders.

Among the coalitions that completed the program with improved or consistently high survey scores, we noted characteristics common to these teams and their coalitions, in contrast to the coalitions with low scores. First, high-scoring coalitions had a clear mission. Second, coalitions tended to have a staff person dedicated to managing the coalition. Third, coalition coaches with more coaching or community leadership experience tended to better understand the ins and outs of coalition building and had a well-established network in the community to draw upon as needed. In addition, coaches who had some experience with the coalition could move more quickly into the roles of facilitator, expert, and coach, without first having to build relationships and trust with the leadership team and broader coalition. Finally, many of the coalitions that scored highly at the follow-up survey operated in a local environment supportive of their work.

Coalitions completing the CCLP with high scores tended to have most of these characteristics, but did not share all of the same characteristics, nor were any of these characteristics exclusive to coalitions with high scores. In complex and dynamic systems such as community coalitions, multiple factors are important for improving coalition operations, and different combinations of factors are possible in different communities. Yet, coalitions completing the program with higher scores were those with many of these characteristics — most likely because they had capacity to build upon, rather than having to start at the beginning and define goals that reflect community priorities, for example. Foundations can look for these characteristics as some of the key indicators of capacity to identify coalitions likely to make short-term progress on similar dimensions of coalition operations. However, building leadership capacity within community coalitions, in which membership and leadership turnover is common and often

[B]uilding leadership capacity within community coalitions, in which membership and leadership turnover is common and often presents barriers to progress, is a long-term investment. Thus, even modest improvements within coalitions that struggled can be viewed as important gains.

presents barriers to progress, is a long-term investment. Thus, even modest improvements within coalitions that struggled can be viewed as important gains. In addition, staff working closely with the coalitions observed that readiness for change was an essential characteristic for coalitions to benefit from the program.

Conclusion

Foundations and nonprofits have a long history of supporting leadership development, such as fellowship, individual skill-building, social entrepreneurial, and grassroots leadership programs (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2002). Leadership of cross-sector coalitions requires systems thinking and skills different from leading others within an organization setting or within a single system. Our evaluation suggests that the CCLP, a program teaching interdependent boundary-spanning leadership, can build leadership capacity within cross-sector coalitions by improving their ability to strengthen direction, alignment, and commitment. The CCLP is a resource-intensive model and thus might not fit every community.

The evaluation of the CCLP suggests three areas for consideration with regard to coalition capacity building. Benefits from coalition involvement in the program accrued to both more established and newer coalitions. In selecting coalitions for participation in foundation-sponsored programs,

a coalition's focus on goals and commitment to its purpose might be more relevant than other coalition characteristics, such as its age, size, or duration of member involvement. However, coalitions with clearly defined goals and committed members are likely to have a certain level of development or maturity. In addition, future funders would benefit from adopting a developmental perspective with regard to their expectations for the rate or pace of growth or change among coalitions with different experiences, relationships, and resources; expecting all coalitions to reach the same threshold in the same time frame is not realistic. Finally, funders should articulate their expected program outcomes to help inform the appropriate evaluation design. Funders that wish to better understand the potential effect of a leadership development program on coalition or community goals should prioritize a systematic assessment of dosage and uptake over an adequate period of time to capture changes over time. Other funders might prioritize building leadership capacity in historically under-resourced communities, which could require a longer-range strategy of investments.

Readiness for change on the part of individual participants and the coalition coach, as well as the broader coalition, is likely an important factor in the successful adoption and application of leadership skills and practices. Assessing applicants' understanding of the expected change process, potentially through brief screening interviews, could provide useful information during the selection of appropriate coalitions for a foundation's investment in leadership development. Second, although the foundation and the Center for Creative Leadership did not intend for cross-team learning to be the primary goal, particularly given that the CCLP was a pilot, they still thought teams might learn from one another and establish networks with their peers. However, we found that participants perceived a lack of a purposeful approach to peer learning and networking and did not make connections outside of their teams. Thus, if a limited pool of coalitions is available (as in the case of the CCLP pilot), the program might benefit from focusing on within-team learning; if a more deliberate

approach to team selection is feasible, efforts to facilitate peer learning might be worthwhile.

Reflecting on feedback from the final in-person event and the evaluation, the center and the foundation made several changes to what became the next iteration of the program, the Boundary Spanning Leadership Institute for the New Jersey Health Initiatives. In response to participant feedback about information overload during the initial training and challenges applying the tools with the broader coalition, the program now delivers the initial in-person training in two separate two-day sessions separated by six weeks. In addition, the center sharpened the content during the in-person sessions to focus on aspects of training that participants rated as most useful. Together, these two changes allow teams more time to practice their new skills and focus on applying the tools. The Center for Creative Leadership and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also developed a more strategic approach to selecting coalitions that demonstrate a readiness and interest in learning and applying the boundary-spanning leadership tools.

Acknowledgments

We thank Lynn Fick-Cooper at the Center for Creative Leadership, Leslie Foster and Jennifer Brown at Mathematica Policy Research, and our anonymous journal reviewers for their valuable input on this article, and gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of the program participants and coaches. We also thank Nancy Fishman and Sallie George of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for their guidance and leadership on the evaluation and Jasmine Little, Connie Qian, Scott Richman, Mindy Hu, and Kaylyn Swankoski for their contributions to the evaluation. This evaluation was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the foundation or Mathematica Policy Research.

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APPENDIX Description of CCLP Evaluation Measures

Variable	Source	Description
Membership: Number of coalition members	Coalition roster	Coalition lead submitted a roster of all individual members participating in the coalition before each survey administration. We assessed changes from baseline to follow-up as an increase, decrease, or no change in number of members.
Number of sectors represented	Survey	Self-identification in response to the question: What sector(s) do you and your organization represent? Select all that apply: advocacy, business, community development, education: higher education, education: primary and secondary, government, health care provider, health care system, law enforcement, public/community health, social services, other.
Sector dominance	Survey	Whether half or more respondents reported representing a single sector (see previous item).
Leadership team or committee structure	Interviews	We identified structural changes from baseline to follow-up as (1) leadership team changes (a change in the structure or composition of the team leading the coalition); (2) changes related to the committees of the coalition (these could include changes to the number, type, structure, or purpose of coalition committees, work groups, advisory groups, etc.); or (3) none (no changes in the coalition leadership team, committees, or their structures).
Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory	Survey	<p>22-item scale to assess coalitions along six collaboration factors: environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources. The responses for each item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Coalition means above 4.0 represented a strength for the coalition; coalition means from 3.0 to 3.9 might need attention; and coalition means below 3.0 might indicate an area of concern (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).</p> <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agencies in our community have a history of working together. b. Others (in this community) who are not a part of this collaboration would generally agree that the organizations involved in this collaborative project are the “right” organizations to make this work. c. The political and social climate seems to be “right” for starting a collaborative project like this one. <p>Membership characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. People involved in our collaboration always trust one another. e. The people involved in our collaboration represent a cross-section of those who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish. f. People involved in our collaboration are willing to compromise on important aspects of our project. <p>Process and structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. The organizations that belong to our collaborative group invest the right amount of time in our collaborative efforts. h. The level of commitment among the collaboration participants is high. i. People in this collaborative group are open to different approaches to how we can do our work. They are willing to consider different ways of working.

APPENDIX Description of CCLP Evaluation Measures (continued)

Variable	Source	Description
Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory	Survey	<p>Process and structure (continued)</p> <p>j. People in this collaborative group have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>k. There is a clear process for making decisions among the partners in this collaboration.</p> <p>l. This collaborative group has tried to take on the right amount of work at the right pace.</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>m. People in this collaboration communicate openly with one another.</p> <p>n. I am informed as often as I should be about what goes on in the collaboration.</p> <p>o. The people who lead this collaborative group communicate well with the members.</p> <p>p. Communication among the people in this collaborative group happens both at formal meetings and in informal ways.</p> <p>q. I personally have informal conversations about the project with others who are involved in this collaborative group.</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>r. People in our collaborative group know and understand our goals.</p> <p>s. People in our collaborative group have established reasonable goals.</p> <p>t. My ideas about what we want to accomplish with this collaboration seem to be the same as the ideas of others.</p> <p>u. What we are trying to accomplish with our collaborative project would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish by itself.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>v. The people in leadership positions for this collaboration have good skills for working with other people and organizations.</p>
Leadership characteristic measures	Survey	<p>7 leadership characteristics that the CCLP sought to improve</p> <p>Please indicate your agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 (to no extent) to 9 (to a very great extent):</p> <p>a. The collaborative group recognizes the strength of partners and leverages opportunities.</p> <p>b. The collaborative group is innovative in collectively creating solutions to address the goals of the collaborative group.</p> <p>c. The collaborative group influences stakeholders as necessary to meet the goals of the collaborative group.</p> <p>d. The collaborative group has been successful in achieving its goals to date.</p> <p>e. The collaborative group is able to move to solutions and take action.</p> <p>f. Diverse perspectives are sought and incorporated to create innovative solutions.</p> <p>g. Collaborative members are able to work effectively across the different organizations they represent.</p>

APPENDIX Description of CCLP Evaluation Measures (continued)

Variable	Source	Description
Number of items working well	Survey	18 items related to membership, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources What is working well in your collaborative group? Select all that apply. Membership characteristics Adequate expertise among members to accomplish our activities/goals Appropriate community and stakeholder connections Inclusion of appropriate members/sectors Process and structure Ability to address member conflicts and disagreements Agreement on roles and responsibilities Community support Decision-making ability Member involvement/engagement with collaborative group Member meeting attendance Visibility in the community Communication Communication among members Communication between leadership and members Purpose Developing and implementing activities that will achieve our goals Shared vision and direction on goals Resources Adequate time for members to commit to activities/goals Adequate funding to accomplish our activities/goals Leadership Other
Number of items needing improvement	Survey	18 items related to membership, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources What needs improvement in your collaborative group? Select all that apply. Items are the same as those in previous measure.
Collaboration level		The average proportion of organizations that cited one another for frequent collaboration, based on the question: With which individuals or organizations do you collaborate most frequently regarding collaborative group issues? (Please list as many as apply.)

Considerations for Measuring the Impact of Policy-Relevant Research

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Keywords: Impact, assessment, evaluation, measurement, framework, grantmaking, health insurance coverage, policy

Introduction

Philanthropy, and the research and analysis it supports, has an important role to play in informing policy and making government more effective. Indeed, the gold standard for many researchers and the funders who support them is the ability to produce research findings that inform policymaking or contribute to policy change. Yet all too often, foundations and other research funders struggle to understand whether and how their investments have affected policy, a challenge that is compounded by time lags between research output and recognized impact, a lack of clear standards for impact measurement, and the simple fact that many factors beyond research influence policy decisions.

Even the most esteemed foundations are not immune to this challenge. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the largest philanthropy in the United States dedicated solely to health. In 2014, it announced a new vision to build a national “culture of health” — a culture in which everyone in America has the opportunity to lead a healthier life (RWJF, 2017). One critical component to this vision is the belief that good health is promoted through access to high-quality health care and affordable health insurance coverage. Over several decades, the RWJF has invested in numerous programs and projects to identify gaps in health insurance coverage and support enrollment in health insurance across the country.

In 2015, the RWJF asked AcademyHealth, a leading national organization for health services and policy research, to conduct a pilot project focused on a subset of the foundation’s research

Key Points

- Philanthropy, and the research and analysis it supports, has an important role to play in informing policy and making government more effective. Yet all too often, foundations and other research funders struggle to understand whether and how their investments have affected policy.
- This article highlights the findings of an 18-month pilot project conducted by AcademyHealth to help the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation better understand the impact of a subset of the foundation’s research grants, across investment types, on health insurance coverage and health reform, and to help inform how the foundation may more systematically track and measure the impact of the research it funds.
- This pilot was unique in that it sought to formulate practical recommendations for how foundation staff might collect, organize, and interpret key measures of policy impact on an ongoing basis, particularly when working with limited time and resources. This article focuses on insights that may be of interest to other foundations seeking to measure the policy impact of their research investments.

investments on health insurance coverage and health reform. Specifically, the purpose of the pilot was twofold: (1) to help the RWJF better understand the impact of a subset of grants across investment types, and 2) to help inform how the foundation may more systematically track and measure the impact of the research it

funds. Like many other foundations, the RWJF conducts regular program evaluations, but this pilot was unique in that it sought to formulate practical recommendations for how foundation staff might collect, organize, and interpret key measures of policy impact on an ongoing basis, particularly when working with limited time and resources.

In this article we highlight findings from the 18-month pilot project, with particular attention to insights that may be of interest to other foundations. While the focus of the AcademyHealth pilot and this article is on the impact of health-focused research investments, we think many of the observations will be relevant to policy-oriented research investments across sectors. We begin with a brief discussion of research-impact assessment, a growing area of work that seeks to use rigorous methodological approaches to understand the impact of research findings within academia and on society. We then turn to the AcademyHealth pilot, its context, and the types of research projects included. Next, we reflect on our findings and observations from the pilot project — specifically, the effectiveness of various impact-tracking tools and grant-monitoring processes to support impact-assessment activities. Finally, drawing on lessons from the pilot project, we present considerations for an impact-measurement strategy that may be adopted by other foundations seeking to understand the policy impact of their research investments.

Assessing Research Impact

Philanthropy, whether it supports research and analysis or programs and services, is mission-driven. To ensure investments are aligned with their mission and vision, foundations have increasingly employed strategic or outcome-oriented philanthropy, which involves clearly defined goals, evidenced-based approaches, and formal assessments of success and effectiveness (Brest, 2012). Multiple formal evaluation approaches exist to measure the effectiveness of a foundation's investments, including formative evaluation to assess program development or delivery; summative evaluation to assess program effectiveness; process evaluation to

determine if the program was implemented as intended; outcome evaluation to assess short- or long-term changes in outcomes, behaviors, and practices as a result of the program; and impact evaluation to capture long-term changes, such as policy changes, resulting from the program (University of Minnesota, 2017).

Yet, standalone evaluations are of little benefit to foundations unless the results of the evaluations are used to inform future foundation investments or program decisions. Carol H. Weiss (1998) describes the broader applications for evaluation use, including instrumental use to inform decision-making about investments and programs; use for conceptual purposes, which can provide program staff with a better understanding of the program's strengths and weaknesses; use for mobilization, which can affirm the need for specific changes to a program; and use for influence or enlightenment, where evaluation findings contribute to a larger body of evidence or knowledge base.

Research-impact assessment, the focus of this article and the AcademyHealth pilot project, falls within the impact subset of evaluation. Foundations and other research funders may be motivated to evaluate the impact of their research investments for a number of reasons. Molly Morgan Jones and Jonathan Grant (2013) presented a framework for these motivations, which they termed the four "A's": advocacy, accountability, analysis, and allocation. As governments and other research funders grapple with challenging fiscal environments and competing priorities, research-impact assessment can serve to advocate, or "make the case," for research funding and help to establish research as a priority. Related to advocacy, limited research funding requires researchers and funders to demonstrate accountability for investments, particularly for public dollars but increasingly for private dollars as well. Foundations may conduct an analysis to better understand what investments worked and under what circumstances. This type of assessment can showcase the policy impact from research and can help to demonstrate the pathways from research investment to impact. This analysis can

ultimately inform how a foundation or government allocates research dollars and contribute to research-strategy development and management decisions.

The approach a funder takes to assessing research impact is closely tied to the purpose or goals of the particular research investment under consideration, whether that is advancing scientific knowledge on a topic, informing public policy, or improving health outcomes. There are several traditional techniques for assessing research impact, including bibliometric or citation analysis, document reviews, interviews, and surveys, each with its own strengths and weaknesses (Jones & Grant, 2013).

Regardless of the technique used, numerous challenges can make research-impact assessment difficult. These challenges are not new and are well documented. A notable challenge is the time lag between research investment and research impact. Evidence suggests that it may take 17 years, on average, to translate research findings into policy and practice (Slote Morris, 2011). Even research productivity measures, like citations or product output, can take multiple years to materialize. It often takes several years from the receipt of a research grant to publication of findings, and multiple years may elapse following publication before meaningful citations are accrued. Further, a grantee's reporting period often coincides with its grant period, and, as such, important impacts that may result many years following the conclusion of a study are not routinely captured.

Another important challenge is measuring the attribution and contribution of research to a particular outcome. The ability to directly attribute an outcome to a specific research investment is the gold standard of research-impact assessment, but is incredibly difficult to achieve. Establishing that a research investment has contributed to a particular outcome is only slightly less challenging. Attribution and contribution pose a particular challenge for measuring the impact of research investments on policy and decision-making, the focus of the AcademyHealth pilot project, since policymaking is a complex

As governments and other research funders grapple with challenging fiscal environments and competing priorities, research-impact assessment can serve to advocate, or “make the case,” for research funding and help to establish research as a priority. Related to advocacy, limited research funding requires researchers and funders to demonstrate accountability for investments, particularly for public dollars but increasingly for private dollars as well.

process often informed by a body of evidence — rather than a single study — and many other streams of information (Penfield, Baker, Scoble, & Wykes, 2014).

Despite the limitations of research-productivity measures, these are some of the measures researchers rely on for promotion and tenure at their institutions and for reporting impact back to their funders. Given the limitations of these measures, many funders, largely outside of the U.S., have adopted frameworks and methodological approaches that require researchers to report not only research outputs but also the broader impact of their funded work. One prominent example is the United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF), which asks higher education institutions to submit both traditional measures of research output and case studies demonstrating the impact of their research

[T]he AcademyHealth pilot sought to introduce both foundation staff and researchers to practical methods and tools for more systematically capturing data on research impact, with a particular focus on measures that indicate impact of research on policy and policy decision-making. [T]he goal was to develop a process for how foundation staff might collect, organize, and interpret key measures of policy impact on an ongoing basis.

beyond academia (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2016).

Building on the REF among other frameworks, the AcademyHealth pilot sought to introduce both foundation staff and researchers to practical methods and tools for more systematically capturing data on research impact, with a particular focus on measures that indicate impact of research on policy and policy decision-making. The pilot project was not intended to be a formal impact evaluation nor to take the place of comprehensive program evaluations. Rather, the goal was to develop a process for how foundation staff might collect, organize, and interpret key measures of policy impact on an ongoing basis. These measures are intended to complement qualitative data collection and other evaluation activities underway.

RWJF's Investments in Health Insurance Coverage and the Pilot Project

For the RWJF and other health-focused foundations, the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010 created both a tremendous opportunity and an important challenge: the need to generate evidence with the rigor required to be credible and the timeliness needed to inform policy discussions and keep pace with the rapidly evolving policy landscape. In response to this challenge, the foundation supported a range of research projects intended to help policymakers and other decision-makers understand and respond to issues around ACA implementation. These research investments included:

- investigator-initiated research studies and policy analyses to evaluate provisions of the law, identify potential refinements, and inform implementation;
- survey research to help policymakers and stakeholders understand consumers' attitudes toward and experiences with insurance under the ACA; and
- data set creation, analysis, and dissemination to bring new data to bear on emerging policy issues.

While these diverse investment types converge upon a shared goal — to inform policies that improve access to affordable health insurance coverage — the methods, products, audiences, and reach of these grantees and their activities vary greatly.

The grants examined as part of the pilot included six projects completed prior to the start of the pilot. For these grants, AcademyHealth developed case studies that drew on several sources of data: semistructured telephone interviews with each of the principal investigators/project leads; review of relevant grant products, reports, and available web and/or media analytics; and interviews with policymakers and other end users of the grantees' work. Each finished case study summarized the results of these data collection

efforts to describe how, when, and why grants were or were not impactful.

While the research investment types included in the AcademyHealth pilot had different aims, methods, and intended audiences, each investment type made an important contribution to health policy. In different ways, findings from included grants helped inform policymaking within state and federal government and within health care delivery systems. They also provided evidence that was used by intermediary organizations to inform policy discussions, including advocacy organizations, stakeholder groups, and the media. Taken together, the research produced by this portfolio of grantees was cited in at least 24 policy documents, including a Supreme Court decision, numerous amicus briefs, and several reports to Congress; mentioned or used by at least 13 policymakers or end users; mentioned in more than 500 media stories; and viewed or downloaded over 30,000 times.

For five active grants included in the pilot project, AcademyHealth tested a set of tracking tools to help inform a practical approach for gathering impact metrics while a grant is underway. These tools were intended to capture indicators of impact, including grantee mentions in traditional and social media; citations in policy documents, grantee publications, and alternative article-level metrics (e.g., blog posts mentioning published work); and peer-reviewed citations of published work. Eight specific tools were implemented in the pilot project:

1. Researchfish, an online platform for grantee reporting that records and attributes research outputs, outcomes, and impact to a specific grant;
2. Cision, an online media-monitoring software that enables manual and automated searches;
3. Google News/Alerts, an online search engine that allows for manual and automated searches of media and other online mentions;

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4. CQ (Congressional Quarterly) Press Library, a database of policy documents (e.g., legislation, testimony, congressional reports) that allows for manual and automated searches of grantee citations in public and private policy documents;
5. PubMed, a biomedical literature database that allows for manual and automated searches for grantee publications;
6. Altmetric Bookmarklet, a free, online plug-in that provides alternative article-level metrics for select publications;
7. Google Scholar, an online, scholarly literature database that shows citation counts for publications via a manual search; and

TABLE 1 Pilot Project Impact-Monitoring Tools

Tool	Purpose	Process	Example	Availability	When to Use
Researchfish	Research outputs and outcomes reporting	Grantees are notified quarterly to update their profiles with outputs and outcomes associated with their grant.	A grantee reported briefing policymakers on study findings.	Subscription fee	Implement at the beginning of a research study and maintain through the grant period and a designated post-grant monitoring period.*
Cision	Media monitoring	Automatic alerts are set up for the full names of each principal investigator; staff manually reviews results for relevant impacts.	A grantee was quoted in an article in <i>The New York Times</i> .	Subscription fee	Implement at the beginning of a research study and maintain through the grant period and a designated post-grant monitoring period.*
Google Alerts	Media/online monitoring	Automatic alerts are set up for the full names of each principal investigator; staff manually reviews results for relevant impacts.	A grantee was quoted in an article in <i>The New York Times</i> .	Free	Implement at the beginning of a research study and maintain through the grant period and a designated post-grant monitoring period.*
CQ (Congressional Quarterly) Press Library	Mentions in policy documents	Automatic alerts are set up for the full names of each principal investigator; staff manually reviews results for relevant impacts.	A grantee was cited in a report from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.	Subscription fee	Implement at the beginning of a research study and maintain through the grant period and a designated post-grant monitoring period.*
PubMed	Publications	Automatic alerts are set up for the full names of each principal investigator; staff manually reviews results for relevant impacts.	A grantee published a paper in <i>Health Affairs</i> .	Free	Implement at the beginning of a research study and maintain through the grant period and a designated post-grant monitoring period.*
Altmetric Bookmarklet	Alternative, article-level metrics	Automatic alerts are set up for a grantee's publication; staff records relevant results.	A grantee publication was mentioned by six news outlets, three blogs, 106 tweets, and two Facebook pages.	Free	Implement for grantee publications as they are produced.
Google Scholar	Scholarly literature database, citations	Staff manually searches using the title of a grantee publication and records the "cited by" number provided; automatic alerts can also be set up.	A grantee publication had eight citing articles.	Free	Implement for publications as they are produced; search at regular intervals for a designated post-grant monitoring period.
Science-Metrix	Bibliometrics and citation analysis	Staff contracts with a survey research firm to conduct citation analysis of identified publications.	A grantee publication was cited by 50 peer-reviewed publications in journals, with a relative impact factor of 1.65.	Contract-based	Implement at the conclusion of a research study; best if performed at least two years after the conclusion of a portfolio/release of associated publications.

*Implementing online tracking tools at the beginning of a research study ensures that no relevant mentions of the grantee and/or study are missed; however, the search results are likely to be most relevant and indicative of impact toward the end of the grant period, when the researcher has findings or has published.

FIGURE 1 A Pyramid Approach to Measuring Policy Impact

8. Science-Metrix, an international research evaluation firm that performs citation analysis and other services.

Most of these tools enable real-time tracking of grantees and their research products, with the exception of the citation analysis performed by Science-Metrix and the citation count derived from Google Scholar, which are retrospective in nature. (See Table 1.) We have named the specific tools included in the pilot project to give foundation staff an idea of the types of tools available to support grant monitoring and impact tracking, but this list is not exhaustive and the inclusion of these particular tools in the pilot project is not intended to be an endorsement of any one tool.

This component of the pilot sought to determine the accuracy and feasibility of a range of tracking tools for concurrent grant monitoring, complemented by direct and regular outreach to active grantees to solicit any recent examples of impact. To the extent possible, AcademyHealth also applied the tracking tools to the six grants included in the retrospective analysis to better understand the tools’ effectiveness in capturing impact metrics from years past.

Organizing and Interpreting Impact Measures: The Metrics Menu

The specific charge of the AcademyHealth pilot project was to develop a tool and process for more systematically capturing the impact of the RWJF’s research investments. Drawing from both the case study development and the testing of online tracking tools, AcademyHealth developed a grant monitoring tool — the Metrics Menu — to organize different types of impact data according to three different strata we identified as important indicators of research impact (See Figure 1.)

In the case of the AcademyHealth pilot project, the RWJF was particularly interested in the impact of its research investments on health policy and health policy decision-making. As many foundation staff are likely aware, process and productivity measures such as page views or product output are often the easiest to assess, but do not capture the full impact of a research investment. To address this limitation, we attempted to identify indicators of policy impact and classify them into three broad strata: awareness measures, influence measures, and impact measures. Taken

TABLE 2 Policy Impact Metrics and Sources for Data Collection

Strata	Metric	Source
Awareness	Website page views and downloads	Grantee-reported web analytics
	Grantee product output	Count of grantee deliverables
Influence	Media mentions	Media-monitoring software (e.g., Cision); Google Alerts
	Citations in peer-reviewed literature	Google Scholar; citation analysis (e.g., Science-Metrix)
Impact	Citations in policy documents	CQ Press Library alerts/searches; manual review of citations in relevant policy documents (e.g., legislation, testimony); grantee-reported testimony
	Policymaker request for information	Grantee-reported exchange

together, they cover a range of indicators of research's impact on policy, providing research funders and their grantees with examples of the types of metrics they might collect to inform their research-impact assessment activities.

We defined awareness measures as those that capture the visibility of a product or suite of products from a grant. Although not policy impact per se, metrics like website page views or publication downloads help to highlight grant products or projects that garner above-average attention and awareness, which may signal potential policy impact. These measures are often readily accessible to foundation staff or easily obtained from the grantee.

The influence measures move a step beyond awareness to capture important interactions between grantees and potential end users of their work that could result in policy impact. For example, grantees in the AcademyHealth pilot reported spending significant time talking with reporters, either specifically about study findings or about a broader policy issue relevant to their grant. These conversations sometimes led to mentions in media stories, but not always. In cases where a grantee was not subsequently cited in a story, these conversations brokered

important relationships between researchers and members of the media and helped to establish RWJF-funded researchers as go-to resources for future stories.

Finally, impact measures indicate use of funded research in policy and policy decision-making. Possible indicators of impact range from citation of a research article or other grant product in a policy document (e.g., legislation, regulations, court decisions, testimony) to a policymaker contacting an expert researcher to inform ongoing decision-making. In the course of the pilot project, we observed numerous occasions in which in-person interaction with a policymaker was an effective means of informing policy decisions. When a policymaker directly reaches out to a researcher, this signifies he or she views the researcher as a trusted expert in the topic area. These direct and personal interactions are considered "productive interactions" and are examples of social impact (Spaapen & van Drooge, 2011).

Findings

AcademyHealth's experience documenting the impact of a subset of RWJF grantees offers valuable insights for other foundations seeking a practical approach for routinely collecting indicators of the policy impact of their research

investments. The AcademyHealth process is neither a large-scale program evaluation nor a full research-impact assessment, and, as such, it necessarily lacks some of the rigor and comprehensiveness associated with these types of efforts. What it does offer, however, is a way for foundation staff to more systematically identify, collect, and organize different types of data that, together, can more closely approximate a research investment's actual policy impact. In this section, we reflect on the effectiveness of our impact measurement strategies, including the pros and cons of the methods we tested.

Understanding the Benefits and Limitations of Tracking Tools

Impact-measurement tools, including those implemented in the AcademyHealth pilot, aim to capture a broad range of research outputs and outcomes, from publications and citations to mentions in the press and other policy-relevant sources. They also vary in terms of their ease of use, cost, and the “signal to noise” ratio of the search results. As such, each tool has distinct advantages and disadvantages. Implementing standard search strategies (e.g., using the principal investigator's full name) across a range of tools increases the consistency of the grant monitoring and is more comprehensive than individual, one-off, or irregular attempts to identify examples of research use and impact. However, the time and energy required to process search results depends on several factors. For example, the uniqueness of the principal investigator's name can significantly affect the “signal to noise” ratio and require greater staff time to parse irrelevant results. Although automatic alerts address this issue to some extent, more staff time may be required to monitor prolific grantees who work on multiple grants, produce many products, and generate evidence within a defined content area, which can complicate attributing search results to specific foundation-funded grants.

AcademyHealth tested most of the tracking tools both retrospectively as well as in concurrent grant monitoring. On the whole, we found that using these tools to identify the impact of completed grants was more labor-intensive and potentially less accurate than using the tools to help

[R]egardless of the tool used, impact tracking and measurement is imperfect. Media stories and policy documents sometimes refer to bodies of work in general, and/or do not reference the author or study title by name, making it difficult for a tool or manual search to identify. Even detailed searches do not capture everything, and relevant items can be missed.

inform concurrent monitoring, in which search results can be assessed and recorded in near real time. Also, the pilot tested tools that require a subscription fee as well as those that are publicly available. There is a tradeoff between paid versus free tools, but based on our experience, in many cases the tradeoff is minimal. Most of the impact tracking that was the focus of our pilot could be accomplished using the publicly available tools, although the paid tools can provide more nuanced or detailed results in some instances.

Finally, regardless of the tool used, impact tracking and measurement is imperfect. Media stories and policy documents sometimes refer to bodies of work in general, and/or do not reference the author or study title by name, making it difficult for a tool or manual search to identify. Even detailed searches do not capture everything, and relevant items can be missed. Further, quantitative measures alone fail to capture the full impact of a grant, as they cannot assess who is downloading and reading a brief or the quality of the news outlet citing a study's findings. This underscores the importance of gathering qualitative information from grantees and from research

[M]any salient examples of policy impact may be informal or unplanned, including a telephone call or hallway conversation between a researcher and a policymaker or journalist. These important examples of impact cannot be captured by web-based tracking tools and stand to be lost in the absence of regular communication with the grantee.

end users, through direct outreach or interviews, to provide context for the impact of a research study and supplement the quantitative measures.

Eliciting Information From Grantees

In the pilot project, we tested two strategies for gathering qualitative information from RWJF grantees: regular and direct outreach to active grantees and semistructured interviews with grantees whose projects had concluded. Both strategies are effective for eliciting detailed, narrative information from grantees to enhance the quantitative measures described above. Direct grantee outreach in real time has the primary advantage of prompting grantees to provide examples of research impact as those examples occur. For example, in our experience, many salient examples of policy impact may be informal or unplanned, including a telephone call or hallway conversation between a researcher and a policymaker or journalist. These important examples of impact cannot be captured by web-based tracking tools and stand to be lost in the absence of regular communication with the grantee. It is important to note, however, that given the time lag between the conduct of a research study and the study's impact, active

grantees may not have significant information to share during their study period.

Conversely, retrospective qualitative analysis, such as the interviews we conducted with past grantees and the users of their work, yields significantly more detailed results, but at a significant cost to staff time. For example, our interviews revealed that several grantees gave presentations at conferences that helped them connect with eventual end users of their work, information we would not have gained had we asked grantees to simply report the number of presentations given. However, the process of eliciting this information from grantees and confirming it with the research users they identified required time and other resources from project staff that may not be available to foundations and other funders.

Making Sense of Impact Metrics

The Metrics Menu developed through the AcademyHealth pilot is intended to be a tool used by researchers and foundation staff to organize impact metrics captured from web-based tracking tools and/or qualitative data collection. It organizes these metrics into awareness, influence, and impact measures to help researchers and their funders track the myriad ways research findings may reach a policymaker, some of which are more direct than others. (See Table 2.) While we view the Metrics Menu as a useful tool for helping researchers and their funders organize and interpret impact data, we recognize that simply listing counts across different metrics types does not provide a full picture of whether, why, and how a research grant had impact. Rather, the Metrics Menu is most valuable when paired with a narrative account that provides additional qualitative information and helps corroborate and contextualize the data captured in the menu. More broadly, we recognize that even this detailed, two-step approach cannot conclusively determine whether or not a researcher or research study has had an impact on policy. However, we believe this process still has value as a practical approach for uncovering and explaining examples of impact that research funders may not capture otherwise.

Discussion

Drawing from our reflections on the effectiveness of the pilot project, this section lays out several key considerations for foundations in developing and implementing an impact measurement strategy. In particular, we recommend foundations consider the following key questions as they develop or refine their own measurement strategies.

What: Defining Outcomes of Interest

Foundations and other research funders may be interested in many different types of research impact, such as advancing knowledge, informing policy, or making a broader contribution to society. For any funder interested in assessing research impact, an important first step is identifying the type of impact of greatest interest and the types of metrics that can approximate that impact.

Our primary outcome of interest in the pilot project was the impact of research investments on policymaking, and, as such, we developed three strata of measures that may indicate policy impact. Other foundations may also want to consider stratifying the information they collect from grantees and other sources to provide a more accurate picture of the contribution of a particular study. For example, we found that grants with a documented impact on policy (e.g., grant products cited in policy documents like court decisions, legislation, regulations, or testimony) often achieved considerable visibility (as measured by page views and downloads). Foundations seeking to determine which products or projects generated the greatest awareness could consider asking grantees to submit grant-related products and associated web analytics on a regular basis. A regular review of these web analytics might suggest particular products or projects to monitor more closely for policy impact.

When: Timing for Impact Monitoring

The pilot project also suggested important considerations for the timing of impact monitoring. Many of the RWJF grantees noted there is often a lag between the conclusion of a research study

For any funder interested in assessing research impact, an important first step is identifying the type of impact of greatest interest and the types of metrics that can approximate that impact.

and the public release of study findings. Further, the conclusion of a study and/or release of study findings may not coincide with a “policy window” — a time when findings are relevant to current policy discussions (Kingdon, 1993). Certain types of projects may have a longer lag time than others: For example, researchers who rely on traditional dissemination vehicles, like peer-reviewed publications, often experience longer timelines, as it may take many months or even years to have a paper reviewed, accepted, and published. The time lag between release of study findings and their application to policy decisions suggests foundations may want to follow up with a grantee for a period of multiple years after the grant concludes. Real-time monitoring of an active grantee is important to ensure the grantee adheres to the project schedule, but foundations interested in gaining a more comprehensive view of the policy impact of their investments should consider monitoring projects beyond the conclusion of the formal grant period.

How: Choosing an Impact-Monitoring Approach

A broad range of tools exist to support grant monitoring and impact tracking, but as has been stated, these tools should be paired with qualitative data. Foundation staff could consider a range of options to couple quantitative metrics with narrative information. In monitoring active grants, the AcademyHealth pilot coupled use of the tracking tools with regular and direct outreach to grantees. For concluded projects, AcademyHealth staff conducted semistructured telephone interviews with grantees and end users

[O]nline tracking tools present an opportunity to more systematically capture examples of research impact, and they can sometimes provide important evidence of the visibility, influence, and impact of funded research. That said, these measures must be paired with qualitative data to better understand not only the impact of research investments, but the impact pathway as well.

of their work. The purpose of the telephone interviews and the direct grantee outreach was to capture examples of policy impact that the tools would miss, such as conversations with policymakers or journalists. Regardless of the specific tools or processes implemented, foundations should incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data collection into their impact-measurement strategy.

Who: Engaging Dedicated Grant Monitors to Systematically Track Grantees

Given the complexity of research-impact tracking, the resources required, and the level of effort involved, RWJF grantees in the AcademyHealth pilot project indicated they would need resources and support to perform this level of tracking and reporting. Given this feedback, we recommend identifying a designated grant monitor to conduct impact tracking. Depending on the size of the portfolio, this could be the grant's project officer or manager within the foundation. Alternatively, if a foundation wishes to assess a larger portfolio or multiple portfolios,

a foundation could engage an external organization to monitor the projects during the grant period and for a period following the conclusion of a research study.

Identifying a designated grant monitor or monitoring organization that is responsible for research-impact tracking has several advantages. First, it enables consistent measurement across a portfolio of projects. The monitor can ensure that the same alerts and strategies are applied to each grantee so that the data are collected systematically and reported consistently. Second, a designated monitor reduces the burden and reporting requirements for grantees. That said, grantees will still need to work closely with the monitor to report examples of grant impact that cannot otherwise be captured by tracking tools or systematic searching.

Conclusion

Systematically measuring the impact of research on policy is a long-standing challenge for many organizations, and this pilot confirms there is no silver bullet. However, the AcademyHealth pilot project for the RWJF proved useful in several respects. Chiefly, the pilot succeeded in its goal of helping the foundation better understand the impact of different types of research investments, particularly for less traditional research investments whose findings did not end up in the peer-reviewed literature. The project also provided useful insights into the RWJF's target audiences. Like many organizations, the foundation has a range of audiences for its work, some big and some small, with varying levels of influence that may not correspond to size — for example, certain policy audiences may be small in number but highly influential. In the case of the RWJF pilot, conversations with research users about how and why a project was impactful also turned up important insights about where key audiences go for information and why they view that information as trustworthy or useful.

Importantly, the AcademyHealth pilot project also provides useful information for other foundations as they consider practical ways to collect, organize, and interpret key measures of policy impact on an ongoing basis, keeping in mind

that this process does not take the place of large-scale program evaluations. Among our lessons learned, online tracking tools present an opportunity to more systematically capture examples of research impact, and they can sometimes provide important evidence of the visibility, influence, and impact of funded research. That said, these measures must be paired with qualitative data to better understand not only the impact of research investments, but the impact pathway as well. Another key takeaway is that the grantee is often the best source of information about the impact of his or her work. By enlisting the assistance of a designated grant monitor, or perhaps an external monitoring organization, foundations can partner with grantees to collect key indicators of impact both while a grant is underway and after the project concludes. It is our hope that the lessons learned in this pilot project prove useful for other foundations seeking to support impactful research and systematically assess their success in this regard.

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Inside the Black Box: Investigating Philanthropic Foundation Strategies in a Dynamic Environment

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Keywords: Philanthropic foundation, strategy

Introduction

Broadly understood, the term “strategy” refers to an intentional plan of action intended to achieve a defined objective. In a foundation context, strategies are reflected in how foundations apply their resources as well as the ends to which these resources are directed. Philanthropic foundation operations have been referred to as a “black box,” implying that what happens inside a foundation to transform resources into a charitable purpose is hidden from view. If a foundation has a public formalized strategy, however, its operations are ostensibly more transparent, and applicant nonprofits can anticipate the foundation’s priorities and even successfully appeal to the foundation for its resources.

Whereas not all foundations operate from an intentional and formalized plan, all foundations fall along a strategic spectrum. For example, charitable check-writing encompasses a loose approach of responding to requests made to the foundation, whereas “strategic philanthropy” is known by its formalized and coordinated giving areas and metric-driven evaluations (Katz, 2005; Kramer, 2001; Sandfort, 2008). Practitioners and researchers alike have been curious to make sense of this spectrum and, in doing so, explain the factors and processes that influence how foundations use their resources.¹ This line of inquiry answers Ostrower’s call to “categorize foundations” according to their approaches and “underlying philosophies that inform their philanthropy” (2006, p. 510).

Key Points

- Foundations have been described as black boxes — implying that we know very little about what happens between inputs and outputs. We do know that they operate in dynamic environments and must adopt strategies to be effective in the face of change. This article, which examines the strategies of 29 foundations operating in one southeastern state, provides fresh insights into how foundations fulfill their missions.
- The article is based on a research study that used semistructured interviews to explore how foundations approached grantmaking. Interviewees discussed the multiple and simultaneous roles played by grantmakers in addition to their traditional check-writing function.
- While much of how a foundation applies its resources to its mission is still hidden from public view, strategic approaches make this application more transparent and predictable. Further, understanding the motivations and adaptations of these strategies helps explain the collective work of the sector.

This article was inspired by an observation from the director of a statewide grantmakers’ association. Scanning her membership’s landscape, she remarked that foundations appeared to be “turbocharging” as they sought to maximize their impact and receive a greater return on their investments, given the shock of 2008 financial crisis. Her comments reflected that in as much

¹ For examples of these factors and processes, see Bolduc, Buteau, Laughlin, Ragin, & Ross, 2007; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Ostrower, 2006; and Sandfort, 2008.

as foundations affect their environment in terms of funding and community leadership, they are also affected by their environment and operate within porous organizational boundaries. Her comments also implied that foundations may adapt, “modify[ing] and refin[ing] the mechanisms by which they achieve their purposes” (Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, 1978, p. 547).

In response to these remarks, this research study investigated how foundations navigate their mission amid external pressures. Results of the 29 semistructured interviews with foundations operating in a southeastern U.S. state are presented and discussed in the context of foundation behaviors. Although limited by the small sample and exploratory approach, they update the findings of prior research and provide evidence that foundations are engaging a broad portfolio of strategic tools to achieve charitable impact. Strategic philanthropy, once documented as sporadic or intermittent, was found to have a wider foothold, spurred on by isomorphic pressures as well as a foundation-level desire to maximize impact. Helping explain the approaches and motivations of foundations, these findings allow a peek inside the “black box” and have implications for how we understand the work of individual foundations as well as adaptations shaping the sector.

The Study of Foundation Behaviors

How foundations work, commonly referred to as their behaviors, has been examined at two levels. One perspective examines grantmaking as the repeated cyclical process evidenced according to the decisions foundations make — i.e., their grant awards. Another perspective applies a strategic lens to make a “causal connection” of resources applied toward a predetermined end (Bolduc et al., 2007, p. 2). Both perspectives posit foundation behavior as reflecting complex considerations shaped by internal and external factors, but as Ashley (2007) argued, we have yet to generate a conclusive theory of foundation behavior (Bernholz, 1999; Diaz, 1996).

Foundation strategies are devised by internal forces — namely, staff and board members whose knowledge and position exert influence over the foundation’s direction, and informed externally by foundation and other nonprofit peers

This latter approach is interested in intentional foundation behaviors, and although foundation strategies may not always be formalized strategic plans, they have been widely touted by foundation leaders and others as both an indicator and means of foundation effectiveness (Bolduc et al., 2007; Buchanan & Carothers, 2004; Sandfort, 2008). Foundation strategies reflect a theory of change, but are also diverse, “eclectic, and not easily summarized” (Grønbjerg, Martell, & Paarlberg, 2000, p. 28), and even “elusive” (Kramer, 2001, p. 40). Across the nonprofit sector, a strategic orientation helps navigate missions amid a nonprofit’s resource environment, and although unevenly applied among philanthropic foundations, evidence of strategic approaches is common (Stone, Bigelow, & Crittenden, 1999). Foundation strategies are devised by internal forces — namely, staff and board members whose knowledge and position exert influence over the foundation’s direction, and informed externally by foundation and other nonprofit peers (Bernholz, 1999; Brown & Garg, 1997; Sandfort, 2008).

Research into foundation strategies has examined singular tactics, such as public partnerships (for an example, see Abramson, Soskis, & Toepler, 2012), or looked holistically at a foundation’s portfolio of tools to identify patterns and even typologies of approaches.² Prager (1999)

² For examples, see Bolduc et al., 2007; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; and Scherer, 2017.

[O]rganizations adapt and innovate when they have excess resources available to equip experimentation; in the case of philanthropic foundations, the luxury of resources enables such experimentation.

identified elements of foundation strategies that were assessed to be effective, and the conclusions affirm that effective foundations are both active in serving their mission and defined by diverse roles beyond traditional check writing. Ostrower (2006) expanded these findings to include an advocacy role for foundations as well as to emphasize the role of staff in a foundation's effectiveness. Scherer (2017) applied a lens of organizational identity and posited that research into foundation strategies must also consider the larger operational backdrop of the foundation. Collectively, this research highlights considerations and drivers of organizational strategy, but does not appreciate strategy as reflecting a process of adaptation and innovation.

Foundation Behaviors as Adaptive and Innovative

Foundations face a perfect storm of increased demand for their resources amid finite resources, and must evolve their approaches to play new roles and fill new needs emerging in the contexts they support (Bernholz, 1999). Organizational adaptations have been described as a factor of organizational choices and/or environmental factors, implying that foundations adapt on their own accord and/or due to an external push and pull (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1985). Internal influence may come through staff or board leadership changes that bring in different perspectives and priorities, or even information collected from patterns of grantmaking and grantee reports. External factors may include evolving community contexts, such as increased need or changing priorities;

strains on resources due to economic factors, such as a recession (Lenkowsky, 2012); or, as Benjamin (2010) described them, isomorphic pressures from philanthropic peers or infrastructure organizations that educate and inform about emerging approaches or trends among foundations. Damanpour (1991) wrote that organizations adapt and innovate when they have excess resources available to equip experimentation; in the case of philanthropic foundations, the luxury of resources enables such experimentation.

Evidence of foundation adaptations and innovations have been noted by practitioners and researchers alike. As more foundations require grantee reporting and gain other means of collecting information about how their resources are used, foundations have taken an evaluative or outcome orientation (Buteau & Buchanan, 2011; Easterling, 2008; Patrizi & McMullan, 1998). In turn, foundations have applied resources to nonprofit capacity building, operating under the logic that improved capacity will contribute to greater outcomes on behalf of their resources (Backer, Bleeg, & Groves, 2006). Foundations have also involved themselves directly in charitable work and public-policy initiatives, perhaps due in part to a desire to be proactive or that staff expenses can be counted as part of their payout calculation (Abramson et al., 2012; McGinnis, n.d.; Lenkowsky, 2012). As foundations move from supporting the work to doing the work, they are ostensibly shifting from a traditional donor-oriented, check-writing role to those that focus more on issues and outcomes (Mendel & Brudney, 2014; Ostrander & Schervish, 1990); Benjamin (2010) expanded the functions of the foundation to include partner, investor, and collaborator. But as Brown and Garg (1997) pointed out, these diverse roles are demanding, requiring "foundation staff who are seasoned in and able to move between the worlds of foundations and communities and who are able to understand the nuances of the organizational dynamics, politics, and cultures of both worlds" (p. 12).

Taken together, this research on foundation behaviors and adaptations is instructive in describing the strategies and tools foundations employ. But with one exception, by Graddy and

TABLE 1 Select Characteristics of the Sample

Type of Foundation 14 (48%) family or independent foundations 7 (24%) community foundations 3 (10%) affiliated with hospital/health system 3 (10%) affiliated with another nonprofit or trade organization 1 (3%) corporate foundation 1 (3%) special-purpose foundation	Affiliations 29 (100%) state foundation association 9 (31%) state nonprofit association 5 (17%) Council on Foundations 8 (28%) other national foundation associations 9 (28%) Southeastern Council of Foundations 12 (41%) affinity groups
Foundation Assets Average: \$139.9 million Median: \$53.4 million Range: \$727,000 to \$957 million	Interviewees 14 (48%) executive directors 4 (14%) C-suite executives 7 (24%) program officers 4 (14%) other staff Average time at foundation: 8.4 years
Board of Directors Average size: 11 members 8 (28%) with grants-review committee 16 (55%) accept unsolicited grant proposals	Staffing Average paid staff: 6 Staff with grant-reviewing role, per foundation: 3 Foundations with no paid staff: 3 (10%)

Morgan (2006) set among a sample of community foundations, little evidence has been accumulated for how foundations arrive at these approaches in terms of their motivations and rationales. Bernholz (1999) argued, “We need considerably more work on ‘communities of foundations,’ how they work, what they’ve done, and what they might mean for the future of foundation decision making” (p. 368). This study viewed strategy as evolving rather than static, and sorted among those internal and external factors that may have led to adaptations. Further, the timing and sampling approach was set against the backdrop of the most recent financial crisis, and examines individual and patterns of foundation adaptations.

Method

This research study investigated strategies of foundations operating or making grants in one southeastern U.S. state. The foundations were identified from the membership listing of a state association of grantmakers (n = 105) and randomly ordered to prioritize requests for phone interviews. Sixty of these foundations were contacted via phone and email; ultimately, 29

participated in a phone interview. The interview was semistructured, took between 30 minutes and one hour to complete, and followed an interview protocol that asked about the structure, process, and strategies of the foundation’s work. The interviews took place between August and November 2016. As the interviewee spoke, the interviewer typed notes, which were loaded into Nvivo to enable analysis.

The foundations in the sample represent a diversity of philanthropic institutions according to type, asset size, board leadership, staffing, and affiliations. (See Table 1.) The predominant types are family and independent foundations. Assets were \$139.9 million on average; the median was \$53.4 million. On average, foundations were led by 11 board members, and nearly a third operated with a board subcommittee dedicated to reviewing grant applications. Foundations employed an average of six staff members, but three foundations had no paid staff. Beyond their membership in the state grantmakers’ association, foundations reported a diversity of state and national memberships as well as those related to subject matter (i.e., health or education). The

With only a few exceptions, interviewees explicitly or implicitly described their approach as strategic, implying that it was intentionally targeted.

most common interviewee was the executive director, followed by a staff member in the executive suite, such as a chief operating officer. On average, the staff interviewed had been on board 8.4 years, with tenures ranging from two months to 24 years.

Findings

The interview findings, organized here into four themes, provide evidence that strategic philanthropy is more widespread than previously reported and can often be traced to a catalyst. Further, the findings describe the roles foundations are increasingly playing beyond that of funder and that, rather than deterring a foundation's mission, external economic factors are mission-centering events.

Strategic Philanthropy Has Gained Traction

To understand if the foundations in the sample operated with an overarching strategy in mind, they were asked first what they were trying to achieve and how they applied their resources — financial and nonfinancial — toward these ends. They were next asked if, taken together, these means and ends constituted a foundation strategy. With only a few exceptions, interviewees explicitly or implicitly described their approach as strategic, implying that it was intentionally targeted. One of these exceptions candidly replied, “If you give me a truth serum, it’s not as scientific as I really [would] like.” Yet the interviewees’ remarks more commonly reflected an intentional, focused approach to their mission: “We have a screen we put ideas through — ideas of why we would or wouldn’t do something, [since] we get asked to do a lot of things,” one

interviewee said. Others who engaged a more strategic approach described drawing upon the foundation’s assets — financial resources, staffing capacity, insights drawn from data and research, or even its leadership position. As one interviewee commented, “We have a little bit of money we can give away, but we are in this fabulous position of leadership.” Said another: “We are trying to leverage 100 percent of the foundation’s resources — the corpus, grantmaking, staff-member time, relationships of staff and family; leverage all of those assets to amplify our positive impact worldwide.” As expected, professionalized, staffed foundations were more likely than unstaffed or family foundations to employ strategic philanthropic approaches.

A defining feature of foundation strategies was a relationship orientation. Foundations reported an interest in fostering what one respondent termed “collaborative, partnering-type relationships” that often run counter to the top-down grantor-grantee relationship. One even asserted that relationships, while requiring careful judgment in order to protect a foundation’s reputation, are “more important than the money.” Foundations sought input from stakeholders in defining their strategies, an approach referred to by one interviewee as a “validation process” that affirmed to the board that the foundation was on the right track. Another interviewee reported that a relationship-centered strategy helped draw in the “right people in the room — not just the wealth in the room, but the talent” critical to informing the foundation’s focus.

Relationships have also been an imperative, motivated by the limits of a foundation’s resources in the face of its mission’s great need. One staffer reported tallying the costs for programming the foundation wanted to invest in, revealing that foundation resources fell far short of need and pointing to the wisdom of a collective-impact approach. Another foundation simply recognized the convergence among application requests, which prompted it to encourage collaborative approaches among grantees.

Evidence of these strategic orientations was also apparent in grantmaking. While several

foundations are still taking a traditional grant-application approach, others are more proactive in identifying nonprofits that fit their strategic priorities while maintaining flexibility to respond to nonprofit and community needs. As one interviewee said, “The largest number of our dollars are through competitive grants process, but that has been starting to shift to community conversations, to things that keep bubbling up in our community.” Interviewees also remarked on a shift toward fully funding fewer applications and away from partial funding of a larger number of grantees: “We are trying to do less small things and a few more ambitious big things,” one interviewee said. But another remarked that pulling resources from some causes in order to focus on others can be difficult: “You know how much your resources are needed, but in order to have an impact you have to focus a bit more.”

For some family foundations, strategic focus-ing meant limiting the discretionary resources available to board members for supporting their “passions.” “We have to have lots of conversations about our risk tolerance — picking projects that are innovative and have a systemic change,” an interviewee said. “It frankly makes it harder work, as it’s easier to find what we call ‘nice programs’; but we are looking for projects that change outcomes for thousands and thousands.” Thus, even in this traditional role of grantmaking, significant application of other resources, namely staff time and expertise, is required for foundations to fulfill their strategic objectives.

Strategic Approaches Have a Catalyst

While strategies were described as evolving, they often could be traced back to a specific catalyst. For some, the approach was readily traceable to a donor’s intent — a rudder even in the face of new interpretations by staff and board members. Others explicitly point to the influence of board or staff leadership — for example, when a shift to a new generation of board leadership brings a new interpretation of the donor’s intent. Boards hold the ‘power of suggestion’ that can focus a strategic orientation and are also motivated to focus a foundation’s strategy so that the foundation’s impact can be more easily assessed. As one interviewee candidly remarked, “Boards can’t

Evidence of these strategic orientations was also apparent in grantmaking. While several foundations are still taking a traditional grant-application approach, others are more proactive in identifying nonprofits that fit their strategic priorities while maintaining flexibility to respond to nonprofit and community needs.

tell if they are making a difference. ... We have to define something or we are going to lose our mind.” Other interviewees reported that board members made suggestions based on a news report or conference presentation that “inspired and compelled” a board chair.

Interviewees pointed to staff who brought their own frames of reference from prior work both within and outside the foundation sector, and said such fresh approaches helped spur new ways of doing things. Staff supporting family-led boards appeared to be particularly instrumental in helping guide family attention and cultivating opportunities to educate family members about community issues and needs. Consultants were also cited as helpful in listening to board and staff intentions and eliciting ideas that ultimately helped formulate strategies.

Other catalysts were external, and included peer foundations, stakeholders, and data derived from research. One interviewee remarked,

The external environment spurred on our strategic plan — any nonprofit, if you are trying to remain relevant, has to ask big questions, so that was the driver. There are internal matters that [also] spur

Foundations were aware of the power they held in relation to the nonprofits that looked to them for funding, but also recognized that this power leveraged new opportunities.

us on to revisit our grantmaking: what is our current approach, what is the added value, how does that fit with how we know the state is changing.

Interviewees described looking to the examples of other foundations, particularly those whose approach “has been developed and formed over time” and even those that “have tried and failed and tried new things.” Stakeholders proved influential when they were intentionally engaged as part of a listening effort by foundations; one foundation learned that stakeholders wanted it “to step up more” — to go beyond writing checks and into a leadership role. Data — from both primary sources collected by the foundation and from secondary sources, such as a community health assessment — proved informative to the foundation’s approach. One foundation has identified a research partner at a local university; another has leveraged internal staff capacity to manipulate data for decision making. Yet, as one interviewee cautioned, data should be used judiciously so as to avoid “paralysis by analysis.” Finally, while some foundations could point to a single catalyst that led to the embrace of a strategic approach, at least one described a convergence of intentions: a reluctance to duplicate existing initiatives, a desire to leverage the impact orientation of the entrepreneurial family, and an opportunity to engage local leadership in informing the foundation’s approach.

Foundations appeared to gain confidence from prior strategic successes, which sometimes prompted them to accelerate their efforts. Interviewees described boards as strategically oriented, making decisions based on impact, even “emboldened” by past investments to take

on future ones. As one interviewee recalled of an initial impact-oriented strategic approach: “We dipped our toe into it. ... It’s just evolved from there.” Interviewees also spoke of the value of the strategic-planning process as “the process itself,” which prompted a spirit of “openness.” A few foundations that reported only working toward a strategic plan related benefits from the tension of “questioning and understanding before we can get to narrowing” strategic objectives. Interviewees also said the format of their strategic plan mattered — from something as simple as four objectives with four related activities listed on a single sheet of paper to a detailed report complete with logic models. A strategic plan equipped the staff and board to be more “deliberate and intentional” in using it as an everyday point of reference.

Staff Capacity and Open Boundaries Spur on Strategic Roles

Interviewees were asked about the roles their foundation plays in the community it serves. Foundation representatives described a broad range of roles beyond grantmaking: “advocate,” “broker,” “catalyst,” “colleague,” “convener,” “idea generator,” “intermediary,” “navigator,” “resource,” “thought leader,” “trusted partner.” A characteristic of foundations engaged in these diverse roles was the presence of paid staff. One interviewee said she chooses her role and how to allocate her time based on how she can be the “best representative” for her foundation. Interviewees also described how professional staff can act as gatekeepers, providing preliminary screening of grant applications and recommending a slate of finalists to the board, and can help focus and frame strategic conversations. Staff taking on these diverse roles were empowered by organizational leadership to allocate their time and share their expertise with broad audiences and in a range of venues. Often these roles were derived from the way in which the foundation related to its stakeholders and community partners — crossing sector boundaries and including nonprofit, public, and for-profit entities.

Foundations were aware of the power they held in relation to the nonprofits that looked to them for funding, but also recognized that this power

leveraged new opportunities. As one foundation executive remarked,

When a foundation calls, people tend to behave better. ... You have to use that power carefully ... [because] when you focus on an issue, when you try to be a leader on that issue, people tend to pay attention. ...[W]hile the staff have expertise in the area we are working in, we don't have all the answers; we don't want to be the type of organization that comes down from high.

Another executive said, "If a foundation or a funder calls a meeting, people will come. They think there may be some money in it for them. We have this ability to create a captive audience because we have money."

Strategic roles were often undertaken as a means of delivering impact for the foundation, since relationships had opened it up to new opportunities. Community foundations, under the leadership of paid staff, appeared to be stepping up to a convener role as well as seeking unrestricted funds to strategically and flexibly meet needs beyond what their donor-directed and restricted funds allow. One interviewee blended the roles of convener and disseminator in sharing what the foundation and its partners learn from their work, as a way to multiply the foundation's investment and influence. Foundations also sought relationships among their peers at the local and national levels in order to learn and work collaboratively. Another interviewee marveled that a partnership with the public school system had afforded the foundation a new "access point"; another said complex, cross-sector issues required the foundation to act as a convener, creating "coherence in a fragmented space." Other foundations took on advocacy roles to give voice to underrepresented issues and causes.

Strategies Are Amended, not Deterred by Economic Factors

One premise of this research study is that foundation strategies may be affected by economic downturns — the financial crisis that began in 2008 being a case in point. When asked about the influence of the Great Recession on their work, foundation interviewees reported

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that they maintained or even expanded their grantmaking. Interviewees described undertaking new efforts to meet urgent and emerging community needs as investment continued in long-standing priorities. Several described relief at not having multiyear grant commitments so they could be more readily responsive to emerging needs; at least one foundation that did have such commitments issued funding in advance to free up future resources. Several foundations described special funding initiatives intended to help stabilize nonprofits, allowing them to meet growing community needs. Payout requirements guided foundation spending policies; since payout is calculated on prior earnings, grantmaking resources were not affected until the year following the initial downturn. Conscious of public image, interviewees from a few foundations reported trimming of staff and other internal costs — even refraining from hosting a public event — which helped free up resources for other purposes.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings from these interviews confirm and extend what we know about philanthropic foundation strategies. Interviewees confirmed the selective nature of strategic grantmaking (Katz, 2004) and the influence of boards in defining foundation strategies (Buchanan & Carothers, 2004). As Ostrander and Schervish (1990) observed, foundations appear cognizant of the power dynamic they represent as donors among resource-constrained, nonprofit stakeholders. Foundation interviewees echoed Benjamin (2010) on the influence of their affiliations on their operations and strategic directions, and reaffirmed Moody's (2008) assessment that new forms of philanthropy require champions. The interviews offered insights into how the capacity and expertise of paid staff influence the strategic approaches and roles taken by foundations; and, given that staff expenses can be counted as part of a foundation's payout requirement, these resource allocations do appear to be mission-serving (Stewart & Faulk, 2014). Interviewees reported pro-cyclical responses to economic downturns such as the recent recession, guided by their payout requirements and the needs of their communities — which supports other findings (Dietz, McKeever, Steele, & Steurele, 2015; Lawrence, 2009; Lenkowsky, 2012; Urriolagoitia & Vernis, 2012).

Whereas Grønbjerg et al. (2000) found funding objectives “vaguely articulated” and that foundations had a “reluctance to evaluate grant performances” (p. 36), the foundations in this sample commonly reported employing defined strategies with metrics. Although the sample size does not allow for strong conclusions about strategic patterns according to a foundation's profiles, it is interesting to note that formalized strategies were employed by both large and small foundations, implying that such an orientation is not limited by staffing or asset size.

While Easterling (2008) described foundations as reliant upon their nonprofit partners for metrics and performance information, the strategic orientation of the foundations in this study was often accompanied by a capacity to generate their own metrics and sources of information.

Thus the traditional principal-agent relationship described by Benjamin (2010) and Fairfield and Wing (2008) may be rewritten to some degree, as information asymmetries are minimized in light of foundation capacity. And in an update of what Grønbjerg et al. (2000) found in the mid-1990s among a sample of Chicago-based foundations, interviewees in this study were quite cognizant of their peers' operations, even using them as reference points for their own work. This finding implies that isomorphic pressures exist among foundation cohorts, perhaps as a consequence of membership in or affiliation with state, regional, and/or national associations. The interviewees' descriptions of their diverse roles indicate that how we conceive of the foundation's mission may need to be broadened to incorporate community contributions and investments beyond the basic role of funder (e.g., see Kramer, 2001).

Some of what this means for practice are implicit in the findings of this research, but there are some explicit implications as well. Strategic philanthropy, guided by objectives and outcomes, is becoming the *modus operandi* for the foundation sector. And the sector has resources aplenty — affiliate organizations, consultants, the example of peers — to inform foundations seeking a more strategic approach to their work, as well as catalysts — affiliations, professional staff, even the fresh perspective of new or younger board members.

Foundations also should be mindful about how to balance new and strategic roles, such as leadership and convening, with the traditional role of grantmaking given the resource needs of nonprofits. Strategic philanthropy has equipped foundations with the capacity to be both informed and selective, and nonprofits must be more proactive in fostering relationships with their foundation partners and aligning themselves with their partners' strategic directions. At the same time, foundations reported wanting to be capable partners with the nonprofits in their communities; accordingly, nonprofits should not neglect foundations when collaborating with local stakeholders.

The study is limited by its sampling approach: Foundations were selected based on their membership in a single state association and not from the broader population of philanthropic foundations. In addition, the foundations participating in these interviews were smaller than the average association member, and corporate foundations were underrepresented in the interview sample.³ Future research should elaborate on the findings of this study by engaging a larger sample to identify patterns of strategy emerging from across the sector.

This study investigated the strategic approaches of philanthropic foundations — it peeked into the black box of their operations. While much of how a foundation applies its resources to its mission is still hidden from public view, strategic approaches make this application more transparent and predictable. Further, understanding the motivations and adaptations of these strategies helps explain the collective work of the foundation sector as well as inform nonprofits about how they might most effectively appeal for foundation resources.

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³ The interview sample had \$139.9 million in assets on average, compared with \$689.7 million on average for the association membership. If an outlier in the state association was excluded, the difference is \$139.9 million for the interviewees compared with \$179.3 million for the state association. The median assets of the interviewed foundations were \$53.4 million, compared with \$32.5 million for the state association membership.

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Philanthropy: Evidence in Favor of a Profession

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Keywords: Philanthropy, grantmaking, foundations, profession, professional development, Council on Foundations, competencies

Introduction

In *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America*, Burton Bledstein (1976, as cited by Stauber, 2010) suggests that a profession is defined by seven standards:

1. a full-time occupation that is one's principal source of income;
2. difficult and extensive training;
3. theoretical training that precedes practice or apprenticeship;
4. mastery of "esoteric but useful systematic knowledge";
5. receipt of a license or degree from a certified institution;
6. provision of "technical competence, superior skill, and a high quality of performance"; and
7. "an ethic of service which taught that dedication to a client's interest took precedence over personal profit." (pp. 86–87)

Scholars and professionals have worked hard to establish nonprofit management as a profession over the last 30-plus years, and evidence has long suggested that nonprofit employment can be viewed as a profession (Hwang & Powell, 2009).

There were over 10.7 million nonprofit workers in the U.S. in 2010 (Salamon, Sokolowski, & Geller, 2012); more than 340 colleges and universities offer degrees and courses focusing on

Key Points

- Philanthropic employees have been cautious in implying that they are pursuing a career in philanthropy. Karl Stauber (2010) presented an argument in support of such caution: that philanthropy failed to meet all seven standards posited by Burton J. Bledstein, that when met, define a profession.
- This article presents a literature review and findings from a survey of 500 members of the Council on Foundations that offer evidence for the counterargument that philanthropic work requires specialized education and training to master a set of core competencies.
- While this article does not argue for or against the question, determining whether philanthropy as a field can rightly be considered a profession has important consequences. Codes of conduct and professional training standards can lead to greater diversity among practitioners. Legitimization lends support for additional work to govern the profession. And the status and prestige stemming from professionalization establish the credibility necessary for grantmakers to influence decision-makers and the public, and to be entrusted with the sound management of charitable funds.

nonprofit management (Mirabella, 2017), and 50 of these programs are members of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, an organization that established nonprofit curricular guidelines.

There are also technical competency requirements for nonprofit organizations, defined by such accrediting bodies as the Standards for

Although nonprofits and foundations operate under the same 501(c)(3) tax status, full-time foundation employees often view themselves as different from other nonprofit workers. Grantmakers have been cautious in implying that they are pursuing a career in philanthropy.

Excellence for the Nonprofit Sector, the Better Business Bureau, and Charity Navigator. Many standards of ethics exist within subfields as well, such as those created by the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the Association for Volunteer Administration.

Although nonprofits and foundations operate under the same 501(c)(3) tax status, full-time foundation employees often view themselves as different from other nonprofit workers. Grantmakers have been cautious in implying that they are pursuing a career in philanthropy (Orosz, 2000, Stauber, 2010). Gardner and Horn (2006) describe philanthropy as very different from other fields because most philanthropy professionals do not plan a career in grantmaking; many end up at foundations while pursuing other work or because they enter the field to accomplish a personal mission.

In 2010, Karl Stauber argued that philanthropy was not a profession because it met only three of Bledstein's seven standards of a profession: it can be a full-time occupation, it involves at least limited mastery of "esoteric but useful systematic knowledge," and it entails an ethic that places the interest of a client over personal gain. This article provides data and evidence gathered from a 2014 survey of professional-development needs, completed by members of

the Council on Foundations (COF), to demonstrate that grantmaking can be considered a profession under Bledstein's criteria:

1. Many full-time grantmakers are employed in the sector.
2. Extensive training is available and utilized by grantmakers through organizations such as The Grantmaking School.
3. Grantmakers pursue theoretical training via master's degrees in philanthropy that are available from multiple universities.
4. Many philanthropic workers have systematic knowledge and mastery of the grantmaking competency.
5. Many grantmakers possess a master's degree with a concentration in nonprofit and/or philanthropic studies.
6. Grantmakers have "technical competence, superior skill, and a high quality of performance."
7. Philanthropic employees have an ethic of service through the mission-driven work of their foundations.

While this article does not attempt to argue that grantmaking should or should not be considered a profession, this additional evidence could serve to further legitimize the field of philanthropy.

Review of Literature

It is difficult to describe the size and scope of the field of philanthropy because the term has many definitions. In this article, "philanthropy" refers to grantmaking by established, incorporated organizations and philanthropic workers — or grantmakers — who are full-time employees of established foundations. This article does not attempt to discuss smaller, volunteer-run foundations or other forms of philanthropic giving.

There are approximately 1.2 million 501(c)(3) organizations operating in the U.S. (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2017).

Foundations can be incorporated as either private foundations or public charities, which include community foundations. The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) reports that 105,000 private foundations completed IRS Form 990-PF in 2016 (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2017). The Foundation Center (2017) documents 86,726 foundations that currently provide grants: 79,729 independent foundations, 3,687 operating foundations, 2,521 corporate foundations, and 789 community foundations.

Orosz (2000) categorizes foundations according to four approaches to grantmaking:

1. passive foundations, which largely fund a select number of unsolicited requests;
2. proactive foundations, which accept unsolicited requests but also actively search for grantees;
3. prescriptive foundations, which have clearly defined interests and fund grantees through formal requests for proposals; and
4. peremptory foundations, which have clear agendas and select grantees directly, with no competition.

There are no data documenting the total number of staff at grantmaking foundations. Similar to nonprofit workers, however, the majority of grantmaking professionals are employed by the largest organizations (COF, 2011). The COF's 2016 salary and benefits survey sought employment data from all grantmaking foundations listed in the Foundation Center database; the 1,010 responding foundations reported 9,945 paid full-time staff (COF, 2017).

Training Needs of Foundation Professionals

The COF, members of United Philanthropy Forum (formerly the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers), and Exponent Philanthropy (formerly the Association of Small Foundations) offer some training programs for foundation trustees, CEOs, and program officers. Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and Grand Valley State University's

In the past, experience and training in philanthropy was not needed to become a grantmaker; foundations tended to hire people with backgrounds in specific fields rather than individuals with technical grantmaking skills that can be acquired on the job.

Johnson Center for Philanthropy offer longer-term training options for foundation staff.

In the past, experience and training in philanthropy was not needed to become a grantmaker; foundations tended to hire people with backgrounds in specific fields rather than individuals with technical grantmaking skills that can be acquired on the job (Orosz, 2007). In addition, foundations tended to hire people with whom they had an established professional relationship.

Moreover, post-employment training was not popular among foundation staff. Training held a negative connotation for foundations that believed program officers needed to be rotated periodically to bring in a fresh perspective and avoid burnout (Orosz, 2007). And for many grantmakers, philanthropy was merely one chapter of their professional lives. All of these factors often resulted in new foundation staff receiving little guidance on how to do their jobs effectively.

In the past 10 years, however, grantmakers have taken advantage of new opportunities for professional training and education. Notably, Indiana University's Center for Philanthropy became a School of Philanthropy; Grand Valley State's Johnson Center now provides regular training in grantmaking and supports foundations that prioritize training. Moreover, more management-support organizations — including the COF, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations,

The work on grantmaker competencies points to the wide range of knowledge and abilities — from familiarity with philanthropic models to approaches to community organizing — that foundation professionals must possess to be effective.

Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP), and GrantCraft — provide professional-development opportunities.

Grantmaker Competencies

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other assets needed to perform a job. In the past, foundations lacked shared professional standards that defined the purpose and practice of grantmaking (Gardner & Horn, 2006). But the past 10 years have seen an influx of defined grantmaker competencies from such organizations as the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (2007); the COF (2013), and EPIP (2013), as well as *Designing Program Officer Competencies for Strategic Grantmaking* (Sturgis, 2008). In addition, the Johnson Center's launch of LearnPhilanthropy in 2015 established frameworks for the field to compile and summarize common grantmaking competencies.

The work on grantmaker competencies points to the wide range of knowledge and abilities — from familiarity with philanthropic models to approaches to community organizing — that foundation professionals must possess to be effective. The nine competencies that appear consistently in the literature are *collaboration, communication, decision-making, grantmaking, grants management, influencing and fundraising skills, organizational development, personal/professional development, and strategic/analytical skills*.

A solid understanding of nonprofits is also essential, including their life cycle, organizational development, and generally accepted accounting principles. Grantmakers also must have a working knowledge of the management of and evaluation process for funded projects (Orosz, 2007). As Castillo, McDonald, and Wilson (2014) observe, grantmaking is more than just giving away money — to be successful, grantmakers must balance analytical, emotional, ethical, and intra/interpersonal competencies.

Nonprofit management competencies are also relevant to grantmakers, given that foundations fund nonprofits. Separate research has defined the responsibilities and necessary skills of fundraising professionals, nonprofit financial managers, and executive directors, and Carpenter (2014) conducted a clustered social network analysis of 15 studies that included nonprofit management competencies, training needs, and capacity-building measures. The analysis revealed 12 core competencies connected across the literature: leadership, planning, public relations, volunteer management, financial management, communication, marketing, governance, data utilization, human resources, fundraising, and information technology. These core competencies and those identified by the COF — collaboration and community building, donor engagement, investment practices — were used as a basis for surveying COF members.

Methodology: Evidence for Philanthropy as a Profession

A February 2014 electronic survey sent to 2,000 COF members contained 33 questions about their job competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other assets), professional-development needs, and training sources; 500 (25 percent) were completed. Twenty-nine of the respondents indicated they were volunteers at a nonprofit or foundation, 95 reported they were employees of a nonprofit, and 376 said they were employed by a foundation. Since little data are available on the total number of employees at grantmaking foundations, the respondents' demographic information was compared to the demographics of nonprofit employees in general; many similarities were found in gender, age, and position level.

TABLE 1 Competencies Performed on a Monthly Basis, Reported by COF Respondents

Competency Performed	% Reported
Leadership	67.8
Grantmaking	62.0
Collaboration and community building	54.2
Program, organizational, and strategic planning and management	54.1
Donor engagement	51.7
Communications, marketing, and public relations	50.7
Nonprofit, philanthropy, history, and ethics	49.3
Financial management	40.3
Governance	38.0
Information management	35.0
Fundraising	34.0
Direct service	33.7
Legal and regulatory issues	32.9
Evaluation	31.2
Human resource management	30.0
Investment practices	29.8
Volunteerism	20.7
Social entrepreneurship	14.3
Advocacy, public policy, and social change	11.7

This article reports findings from the 376 survey respondents employed by a foundation. The survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results and the literature review provide evidence that grantmaking meets all seven standards of a profession. To craft the argument, these findings are presented in reverse order:

- No. 7 - An ethic of service:** Stauber (2010) argued that an ethic of service was a standard met in philanthropy; it continues to be met through the mission-driven work of foundations and the entire nonprofit sector. The general public holds foundations to a high ethical standard. Foundation trustees and staff members are expected to operate for the public good and not for private benefit. This public benefit is codified in the IRS rule requiring all nonprofits to establish conflict-of-interest policies and to review those policies and document potential conflicts annually. The National Center
- No. 6 - Competence and skill:** In his 2010 article, Stauber argued that there was no agreed-upon set of skills for philanthropic workers. Since that time, technical competencies have been established for grantmakers (e.g., COF, 2006; EPIP, 2013; Sturgis, 2008); LearnPhilanthropy is based on an agreed-upon taxonomy (Major, 2012). Further evidence of technical competency in grantmaking comes from COF survey respondents, who identified the important competencies they perform monthly. (See Table 1.) The competencies of leadership;

for Responsive Philanthropy's *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best* (2009), a set of principles that is presented at grantmaking conferences across the country, states: "A grantmaker practicing Philanthropy at Its Best serves the public good by demonstrating accountability and transparency to the public, its grantees, and constituents" (p. 8).

TABLE 2 NIH Proficiency Levels, Descriptions, and Definitions

Proficiency Level (and Description)	Definition
1 (Fundamental awareness)	You have a common knowledge or an understanding of basic techniques and concepts.
2 (Novice)	You have the level of experience gained in a classroom and/or experimental scenarios or as a trainee on the job. You are expected to need help when performing this skill.
3 (Intermediate)	You are able to successfully complete tasks in this competency as requested. Help from an expert may be required from time to time, but you can usually perform the skill independently.
4 (Advanced)	You can perform the actions associated with this skill without assistance. You are certainly recognized within your immediate organization as “a person to ask” when difficult questions arise regarding this skill.
5 (Expert)	You are known as an expert in this area. You can provide guidance, troubleshoot and answer questions related to this area of expertise and the field where the skill is used.

Source: National Institutes of Health (2009) Competencies Proficiency Scale: National Institutes of Health

TABLE 3 Average Proficiency of Frequently Performed Competencies Reported by COF Respondents

Competency Performed	Average Proficiency Level
<i>Grantmaking</i>	4.15
Governance	4.02
Fundraising	3.99
Volunteerism	3.95
Donor engagement	3.94
Social entrepreneurship	3.61
Communications, marketing, and public relations	3.50
Advocacy, public policy, and social change	3.47
<i>Collaboration and community building</i>	3.46
<i>Leadership</i>	3.44
<i>Program, organizational, and strategic planning and management</i>	3.39
Investment practices	3.34
Information management	3.24
Evaluation	3.22
Legal and regulatory	3.15
Direct service	3.11
Financial management	2.85

NOTE: Most frequently performed competencies in italics.

grantmaking; collaboration; and program, organizational, and strategic planning and management — identified in the literature as essential to the grantmaking profession — are performed monthly by a majority of respondents.

- **No. 5 - License or degree:** The majority (56.6 percent) of the survey respondents earned a master's degree or higher. In addition, grantmakers can receive a degree from certified institutions: more than 200 schools offer a focus on nonprofit or philanthropic studies (Mirabella, 2017). Most of the respondents (72.1 percent) indicated an interest in pursuing doctoral-level education and, based on their career aspirations, a preference for a professional doctorate degree in philanthropy. Such a degree provides students with advanced, expert-level knowledge and practice-based experience to further develop their philanthropic career (Carpenter, 2016).
- **No. 4 - Mastery of esoteric but useful systematic knowledge:** Mastery of such knowledge can be exhibited through performing competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other assets) at a high level of proficiency. (See Table 2.) Survey respondents were asked to identify the proficiency level at which they perform their competencies. (See Table 3.) An average at the intermediate level (3) or above indicates the respondent believes she or he has mastered the competency. Respondents rated their proficiency at or above the intermediate level — an ability to perform the skill independently — in all competencies except one. Significantly, respondents ranked themselves at an advanced level (4) of proficiency in grantmaking — evidence that respondents have mastered the esoteric knowledge of philanthropy. Respondents also indicated a high likelihood that they would pursue professional development in the competency areas they perform frequently. (See Table 4.) The highest likelihood of seeking professional development was indicated in the frequently

performed competency areas of leadership and of program, organizational, and strategic planning and management, as well as evaluation. Fewer expressed a desire for professional development in grantmaking, presumably since many respondents indicated mastery in that area.

- **No. 3 - Theoretical training:** At this time, 211 universities offer master's degrees in nonprofit or philanthropic studies (Mirabella, 2017); also available to students in the U.S. are six master's degree programs that include philanthropy in their name and offer one or more graduate-level courses in grantmaking. Syllabi for these master's degree programs show that 10 percent of courses offer theoretical training in "philanthropy and the third sector" (Mirabella & McDonald, 2013, p. 250).
- **No. 2 - Difficult and extensive training:** The majority of respondents — 56.6 percent — reported having earned a master's degree, a percentage much higher than the general public (9 percent) (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Respondents also reported attending a variety of philanthropy-related conferences (e.g., COF, Grant Managers Network, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, the Fall Conference on Community Foundations) and pursuing professional development. (See Table 5.) What types of training are considered "difficult" or "extensive" is open to interpretation, but most of the respondents reported using a variety of professional-development sources. In addition, 196 foundation-staff respondents indicated they were members of a professional association in addition to the COF, and the majority of these respondents indicated they were members of three to five professional associations. The most commonly listed were the COF, Association of Fundraising Professionals, Grant Managers Network, American Institute of CPAs, Estate Planning Council, Association of Small Foundations, and regional or state-based grantmaking associations.

TABLE 4 Competency and Likelihood of Pursuing Professional Development

Competency Performed	Likely pursuit of professional development
<i>Leadership</i>	91.1%
<i>Program, organizational, and strategic planning and management</i>	91%
Evaluation	90%
Donor engagement	88.8%
Investment practices	84.7%
Legal and regulatory	82.5%
Information management	81.9%
Fundraising	81.5%
Human resource management	81.4%
Financial management	80.8%
<i>Grantmaking</i>	80.7%
Social entrepreneurship	80.5%
<i>Collaboration and community building</i>	80.2%
Communications, marketing, and public relations	78.6%
Governance	78.3%
Advocacy, public policy, and social change	68.7%
Nonprofit, philanthropy, history, and ethics	67.4%
Direct service	60.2%
Volunteerism	56.6%

NOTE: Most frequently performed competencies in italics.

TABLE 5 Sources of Professional Development and Percentage of Use

Source	Use
Books	99.7%
Try something new	99.6%
Contact a colleague	97.8%
Conference	96.6%
Association	91.5%
Online	88.5%
Organization	84.1%
On the job	75.2%
Club	57.7%
Volunteer	53.9%

- **No. 1 - A full-time occupation:** Twenty-five percent of survey respondents were president/CEO of a foundation, 25 percent were program staff members, and the remaining 50 percent held a variety of other foundation jobs. In terms of experience, respondents also indicated the level of the position they held: 2.7 percent were entry-level employees, 43.6 percent were mid-level, 35.1 percent were experienced, and 18.5 percent were at the executive level. A search of the job compilation site Indeed.com found more than 100 full-time grantmaking jobs and almost 4,000 full-time philanthropy-related positions.

Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

In the seven years since Stauber (2010) argued that philanthropy cannot be considered a profession, additional evidence has emerged to provide a counterargument. In either case, determining whether a field can rightly be considered a profession matters — for a variety of reasons.

Professions are governed by a code of conduct and provide standardized training and education, both of which provide for greater diversity and equity within a field. Professionalization legitimizes a field and creates support for additional work to govern the profession. Moreover, as Stauber emphasized, “Being a professional was a way for those born outside of privilege to gain power and prestige” (2010, p. 89). Since grantmaking professionals are typically in the position of recommending funding that utilizes other people’s money, professional influence and prestige are important factors in inspiring trust in their grantmaking and other foundation decisions. The standards of a profession lend the credibility necessary for grantmakers to influence decision-makers and the general public.

Nevertheless, the definitions and data used in this article are narrow and its defined scope — a focus on grantmaking within formal, established organizations — has its limitations. Many smaller volunteer-run foundations, giving circles, and nonestablished foundations are left out

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of the discussion; as is true with nonprofit organizations in general, data on established foundations are more readily available.

Traditional data analysis also has its limitations, as does generalizing data to an entire field. In reviewing the demographic data from 376 survey respondents and comparing those data to the available demographic information on the philanthropic sector, it was clear that generalizations could be made about the profession of philanthropy since the COF survey respondents were representative of the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors in such characteristics as gender, age, and level of position.

Future studies can further explore the philosophical side of Stauber’s 2010 article. And in pursuit of further evidence in favor of grantmaking as a profession, empirical studies should determine the true size and scope of employment within the philanthropic sector and gather more specific information about the formal education and training that grantmakers receive.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the School of Public, Nonprofit and Health Administration, the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy, and the statistical consulting center at Grand Valley State University; the Council on Foundations; Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy; Gayane Selimyan, M.P.A.; Tonia Bain; Ericka Plater-Turner; Tera Qualls, M.P.A.; Michael Moody, Ph.D.; and Teri Behrens, Ph.D. for their feedback during the research process. The author received no funding to conduct this study.

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Funder Collaborations — Flourish or Flounder?

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Keywords: Education philanthropy, education reform, system change, collaboration, collaborative funder partnerships, pooled funding

Background: What We Know About Collaboration

From years of research and practitioner experience on collaboration, our sector has several helpful frameworks and tools to guide the development of funder partnerships. These tools identify common considerations:

- A clear mission: Collaboration is most powerful when it's directed toward a particular end that each foundation cannot reach on its own. For example, GrantCraft advises funders to “stipulate goals and purpose very early on in the process” to avoid “drifting away from what they were originally formed to achieve” (Gibson & Mackinnon, 2009, p. 12). This means that funders need to understand their desired outcomes and be able to articulate how the collaboration — as opposed to independent actions — can help them make progress toward those goals.
- Honest relationships: When the Bridgespan Group set out to find lessons learned from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's many collaborations, it concluded, “Nearly everyone we spoke to emphasized the importance of developing strong working relationships with partners” (Huang & Seldon, 2014, p. 11). Trust, mutual respect, honesty, and sensitivity to each other's institutional culture are necessary. These conditions are especially relevant when funders are working together for the first time.
- Different forms for different functions: We usually talk about funder collaboration as pooled funding. But collaborations come

Key Points

- Funders regularly collaborate to leverage their influence, channel their funding, and mobilize grantees in the same direction. Our sector's default assumption is that more collaboration is better — even as too many collaborations end with a whimper instead of a bang. Why do some funder collaborations flourish, and others flounder?
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Education First participated in a half-dozen joint funding efforts to support the success of the Common Core State Standards in the nation's K–12 public education system. Looking critically at these efforts, we learned lessons about why some collaborations are more effective.
- Funder collaborations work best when participants recognize key milestones in a partnership and make decisions at each of these stages to set up success: defining the problem and agreeing on clear goals and strategies that leverage the unique value of collaboration; taking action aligned to shared objectives through nimble decision-making, defined lines of authority, and strong support and expertise; and setting criteria for success that allow participants to know what they are accomplishing, honestly assess their progress along the way, and determine the right next steps.

in many shapes, each presenting “looser” or “tighter” ways to work together toward a common goal. Collaborations can vary in intensity, including “learning together” and coordinating or aligning grantmaking in

addition to pooling funding. Looser, but still valuable, collaborations can include developing a common vision or set of practices to guide grants in an area or meeting regularly to assess progress of common grantees.

- **Strong backbone management:** Funders must establish an efficient structure with appropriate norms for implementing their day-to-day collaboration. There needs to be an approach and a process for convening and making decisions, exploring opportunities for action, and revisiting priorities as the policy landscape evolves. A Grantmakers for Education case study of the Donors' Education Collaborative of New York City reports that funders recognized early on that they needed someone to facilitate strategy discussions, manage grantee work plans, and keep the work moving forward — and this consultant became, according to one participant, the “incredible and necessary glue that held everything together” (Mackinnon, 2006, p. 11).
- **Flexibility and humility:** Some practices in our sector, including inflexible grantmaking structures and processes, can discourage collaboration. Paul Brest (2006), former president of the Hewlett Foundation, noted that funder egos and a “turf” mentality can get in the way of a strong partnership. Being honest about these challenges can help funders increase their likelihood of finding common ground. Brest also observed that collaboration has inevitable upfront costs in the time and effort spent in communicating and making decisions with one's partners. “At the end of the day,” he counseled, “the extra effort is justified only if it has greater impact in improving people's lives” (p. ix).

Life Cycles of Collaborations in an Era of New Education Standards

When the Common Core State Standards were finalized in 2010, many of us working to improve schools saw them as a potentially powerful catalyst for change, especially in making sure that underserved students have access to high-quality

Together, we responded in a variety of ways to address different challenges to the standards' success, from a lack of high-quality textbooks, tests, and teaching materials to concerned parents and political opposition. Our joint efforts included pooled grantmaking funds, knowledge networks, technical-assistance efforts, and even new organizations to fill emerging leadership and capacity gaps.

teaching and learning environments. The standards describe the problem-solving, thinking, and writing skills all students must have in the 21st century. With over 40 states adopting them, they represented a broad agreement on what all students need to learn to succeed, no matter where they live or their plans after high school. This consensus has created a nationwide platform for helping educators across states teach more effectively, rather than continuing to re-create unique supports for different states and districts. Along with many other education funders, we hoped that coordinating and collaborating wherever possible to help the nascent standards succeed could help us all make a greater difference.

Together, we responded in a variety of ways to address different challenges to the standards' success, from a lack of high-quality textbooks, tests, and teaching materials to concerned parents and political opposition. (See Figure 1, which places the collaborations in this article in context of major developments

FIGURE 1 Common Core: Major Milestones and Select Funder Partnerships

Starting in 2012, funders worked together in multiple ways to help tackle a variety of emerging challenges related to implementation of Common Core.

in implementation of the standards.) Our joint efforts included pooled grantmaking funds, knowledge networks, technical-assistance efforts, and even new organizations to fill emerging leadership and capacity gaps. (See Table 1.) Our partners included diverse funders such as the Bill & Melinda Gates, Helios Education, Lumina, and Schusterman foundations; the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust; and many local foundations focused on supporting school districts in their home cities. These experiences with working to advance the same issue in different ways and with many of the same funders led us to reflect on why some of the collaborations flourished and some floundered.¹ In initiating these partnerships we worked to follow the good advice described above, but our collaborations still got stuck in places.

We found that thinking about the life cycle of a collaboration, much as we often do about the nonprofits we support, helped. The work of a collaboration shifts over time, raising different problems at each stage. We identified which decisions successfully moved the work along at these key milestones — and which decisions (or lack of decisions) got in the way of progress. And, while our observations draw from work in the education sector, our advice can apply to other fields as well. Broadly, funder collaborations typically pass through at least three stages of development: startup and ideation, implementation, and maturation and maintenance. Below, we've elaborated on these decisions and how they can impact (or impede) success and progress at each stage, drawing on examples from our recent experiences.

¹ For Education First's analysis of our different partnerships and recommendations, see <http://education-first.com/library/publication/how-funder-collaborations-flourish-lessons-from-the-common-core-standards>.

TABLE 1 Education Funder Collaboration Details

Funder-Led Efforts to Support Educators and Policymakers in the Transition to Common Core State Standards

Name	Start Date	Goal/Strategy	Beginning Governance	Type of Collaboration	Intended Time Frame
Common Core Funders Working Group	Fall 2012	Provide information about gaps, lessons learned, and emerging practices to help individual funders strengthen their grantmaking strategies as they support changes needed to implement Common Core standards in states and districts	4 national funders, 2 local funders, 3 grantmaking networks	Learning network	Fall 2012 to Fall 2015 (3 years)
EdReports.org	Early 2013	Conduct evidence-based reviews of instructional materials to increase the capacity of educators to seek, identify, and demand the highest-quality materials	3 national funders, transitioning to new board of directors with no funders	New nonprofit	Ongoing/permanent
High-Quality Assessment Project	Fall 2013	Make grants, provide technical assistance, and strengthen the capacity of advocacy organizations and policymakers to communicate the benefits of more sophisticated, performance-based tests	5 national funders	Pooled grantmaking fund	Fall 2013 to Fall 2015 (2 years), subsequently extended an additional year
California Common Core Funders Collaborative	Fall 2014	Focus philanthropic efforts on the greatest needs with implementation of the new standards, facilitate collaboration, and provide information to help individual funders strengthen their own grantmaking	3 national funders; 3 California state and local funders	Aligned grantmaking originally, then transitioned to learning network	Fall 2014 to Winter 2016 (potentially 2 years with intention to revisit after 1 year; extended an additional year)
Not discussed in article					
Core to College	Mid-2012	Facilitate greater coordination between K–12 and postsecondary systems in implementing Common Core standards and aligned assessments (with grants to 12 states)	4 national funders	Pooled grantmaking fund	Mid-2012 to mid-2015 (3 years)
Collaborative for Student Success	Early 2013	Ensure fact-based discussions about new standards and assessments in national media, support local advocates to educate stakeholders	7 national funders, 1 state-based funder	Pooled grantmaking fund that transitioned to new nonprofit	Not specified at beginning, but now ongoing/permanent

The Working Group sparked well-informed conversations, and the exchange of ideas informed participants' grantmaking choices. But by fashioning itself strictly as a knowledge network, the Working Group lacked mechanisms to help funders — on their own, in partnership, or with the field — move toward concrete actions to address the most pressing problems we uncovered.

Stage No. 1 — Getting Off on the Right Foot: Startup and Ideation

The Common Core Funders Working Group, one of the first funder partnerships created in response to the new standards, emerged from informal conversations among education grantmakers in 2011. All of us asked: What help could philanthropy offer to maximize this moment of tremendous change? We designed the Working Group as a knowledge-sharing network. With the help of Education Funder Strategy Group, Grantmakers for Education, and the Growth Philanthropy Network, dozens of funders committed to convene regularly to learn from researchers and practitioners about key challenges and needs as schools were beginning to roll out the Common Core. We set a three-year timeline for our work, from 2012 to 2015, to coincide with when we expected schools to face the toughest obstacles. During our first year, the Working Group enlisted systems-change expert Peter Senge to help craft a “systems map” to flag specific areas in the education field that needed attention.

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How Will We Know Our Collaboration Is Making Progress?

Collaborating funders must grapple early on with the twin questions of what exactly they are doing together and how they will know it's successful. We don't believe funders always need a defined solution at the front end; many social problems are complex and require adaptive approaches. But even in the absence of a clear strategy, collaborations need clear goals, clarity about the problem the collaboration is attempting to tackle, and some way of knowing whether progress is being made.

One practical way to compel this sort of clarity is to set a notional end date for the collaboration at the beginning, which funders can, of course, extend. This forces participants to define what they hope to accomplish within a certain window and enables a graceful exit if the group does meet those goals. In hindsight, the three-year time frame we set for the Working Group was too long; indeed, it continued to pursue its learning agenda even as some funders moved on. Instead, one year probably would have been enough to equip funders with the know-how to make wise grantmaking choices in the Common Core era, and then we should have ceded to, and help set up, more action-oriented efforts focused on specific, thorny problems.

As a knowledge network committed to hazy goals of informing the field, the Working Group didn't provide a venue to set desired goals and strategies with specificity or a method to know if we were succeeding. (By the way, we didn't refer to the Working Group as a knowledge network at the time; naming it as such — and recognizing at the beginning both the potential and limitations of a group of funders interested only

in learning together — might have helped us set crisper and more realistic goals for our work.) Also, in seeking to be a big tent for all funders to learn, we may have erred in not encouraging participants to more rigorously elevate and resolve individually divergent theories of action for which solutions would solve which problems. Creating an effective partnership requires finding ways to surface tensions and disagreements in creative and constructive ways.

How Are We Creating Shared Ownership and Commitment to the Partnership?

Although the Working Group's budget was underwritten by four national funders who split the costs equally, we worked hard to engage non-contributing funders as members of our steering committee. Still, their participation — and, really, their buy-in — was uneven. Investing time isn't the same as having skin in the game. And without a complementary financial contribution, we saw that it's very hard for anyone to prioritize and sustain a commitment to a collaboration, despite the best intentions.

In early 2013, the Working Group's same founding funders (the Gates, Hewlett, and Lumina foundations and the Helmsley Trust) identified a more action-oriented, pressing problem to work on together. While not an exciting issue, we knew that the tests states were using to measure standards and hold schools accountable had to evolve to match the critical-thinking and writing skills the Common Core emphasized. What gets measured matters, and continued use of decades-old multiple-choice tests would discourage educators from taking the new expectations seriously. Our response was to organize the High-Quality Assessment Project (HQAP), which pooled resources to make grants, provide technical assistance, and strengthen the capacity of advocacy organizations in a dozen states working to communicate the benefits of more sophisticated, performance-based tests. In addition to the original four foundations that had been discussing this problem, we recruited another donor, the Schusterman family, that had political and advocacy expertise and support. These five funders were all involved in getting the HQAP

While the HQAP explored the possibility of recruiting other funders to help, there never seemed a good opportunity to successfully bring others into the collaboration and get their buy-in for the goals, decisions, and strategies that we worked hard in the beginning to jointly develop. Unlike a learning network, pooling resources and sharing grantmaking decisions with others requires a more significant commitment, a stronger value proposition, and real clarity about how well the fund will be advancing each funder's individual strategies.

off the ground and steering its work throughout its intended short-term life.

Recruiting your partners is easier at the beginning, when everyone can play a role in creating what the shared work will be, than trying to enlist them down the road. While some funders want to see some initial evidence of progress before signing on, we found the early conversations about goals and purpose represent the best opportunity to attract the attention and engagement of other funders. Just as important, having all collaborating funders present at the beginning — when ground rules are set, ideas are advanced or discarded, and compromises are made — helps a collaboration operate efficiently over its entire life cycle. While the HQAP explored the possibility of recruiting other funders to help,

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With the HQAP, we had the benefit of a small group of funders, all present at the beginning, who took six months to sort out and clarify the specific problem we would be working on and the specific goal we were going to accomplish. Once those key issues were resolved, each funder could then decide how much — or even whether — to give, depending on how closely aligned the final approach was to their own priorities. In the end, all five funders contributed, although in different amounts; regardless of contribution, we decided the HQAP should be governed by consensus and not by contribution amount.

All these early steps in the startup process also matter because the group's definition of the problem to be solved should guide the partnership's structure, strategies, and activities. While it can be useful to start with a slower-going "big tent" approach to get a collaboration off the ground, funders should be wary of getting stuck there. Agreeing on a timeline for actions and expected

results can ensure participants don't get bogged down debating every nuance.

While some of these conclusions may be obvious in hindsight, they are still worth stating. Few funders operate with the same theory of change or the same grantmaking outlook, and combining funding may be the best way to truly and successfully force the question of how to reconcile and how to meet (or not) the various interests of different funders.

Stage No. 2 — Moving to Action: Implementation

Once funders have identified both a clear problem and a clear strategy for their work together, collaborations move to action. Here too, key decisions along the way can affect whether the work goes smoothly or off track. Many funder collaborations choose to focus on policy advocacy and communications, and many of our Common Core partnerships worked to sustain, extend, or defend important policymaker decisions to endorse and support the new standards and their implementation. Collaboration is attractive because pooling resources can be an effective vehicle for organizing and mobilizing advocates and achieving larger-scale impact in a potentially chaotic arena.

What Decisions Will We Make and Which Will We Delegate?

All the reasons that funding advocacy can be challenging for a single funder are amplified when a group of funders are involved. Collaborators must be clear about individual and group processes for making grant decisions, balancing inclusiveness with being nimble. They need to decide when and which decisions they'll make themselves, and when and which decisions will be trusted to an intermediary, consultant, staff, or smaller group of designated leaders. Lack of clarity about governance leads to delay or, worse, distrust. Collaborators also need a process for reacting to unanticipated policy openings or setbacks.

We knew informed advocacy would be a critical ingredient to getting state leaders to adopt and

keep new tests that align to the Common Core. As noted above, traditional multiple-choice tests could not measure the critical-thinking and writing skills now expected of students. Initially, as states adopted the new standards, most policymakers understood this need for better measures and committed to overhauling state tests. One key way many states tackled this challenge was by participating in one of two consortia working to create a common test for member states to use. But by 2014, contentious debates about testing erupted around the country. Vocal critics questioned the use of new tests that took more time, asked harder questions, and relied more on technology; some even called for abolishing testing altogether. And state policymakers, caught in the middle, started wavering on their earlier commitment.

In its early days, the HQAP regularly got stuck in the process of deciding how to spend its funds given so many unique state needs. We also argued about whether the HQAP was focused on national communications and media, or state-specific advocacy. In some cases, after much deliberation about the right course of action in a state, political circumstances had moved on and our chosen approach was no longer relevant. As the manager of the HQAP, Education First often invested excessive resources in serving up time-sensitive decisions and options on which the funders were slow to act, taking away energy from managing and leading the actual work of making grants and supporting grantees.

The conventional wisdom is that collaborations can solve this problem if one lead foundation has the capacity to serve in a “backbone” role and assign staff to manage the work, or if funders retain a third-party organization to execute these responsibilities, as we did by engaging Education First. However, as our experience with the HQAP shows, simply hiring a manager isn’t enough. The HQAP only hit its stride once we augmented our shared goal with clear measures of success and an adaptable strategy: We identified the states we would support, defined what counted as a policy “win,” and then gave Education First significant flexibility to tailor the HQAP’s approach based on the policy context in each state, including the

[S]imply hiring a manager isn’t enough. The HQAP only hit its stride once we augmented our shared goal with clear measures of success and an adaptable strategy.

ability to make opportunistic grants on behalf of the HQAP based on our priorities.

A focus on policy advocacy requires collaborating funders to be highly flexible. As Paul Brest (2012) wrote in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, supporting policy advocacy is “risky business” for philanthropy because there is no certainty of success: political fortunes of policymakers may change, alliances may form or strain under pressure, and what counts as a “win” can change from one week to the next. As it matured, the HQAP was most successful once it had clear, shared objectives and nimbler decision-making processes to act on those objectives.

Policy advocacy is not the only opportunity for collective action. By design, a sweeping policy change, such as the adoption of more rigorous standards to guide teaching and learning in thousands of schools, has major systemwide implications. While getting the policy right and in place is important, just as important is quality implementation and building the capacity of the field to act differently in response to new policy directions.

What Support and Insights Do We Need to Complement Funder Perspectives?

In 2013, the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands gathered educators, mathematicians, scientists, and business and foundation leaders to tackle the challenge of improving mathematics achievement in the U.S. The group zeroed in on a big obstacle: the mismatch between the high expectations for math in the Common Core and other K–12 standards aiming to prepare students

Foundations often have difficulty organizing themselves in a collaboration for extended periods of time. Whether focused on advocacy or on implementation/capacity-building efforts, we found a collaboration is stronger when it thinks about itself as a campaign: What is the specific need, what is the time frame to influence change, and how will we know if we've won?

for college and careers, and the overall low quality of math textbooks that teachers could readily access. The experts at Sunnyslands asked: How can state agencies and school districts know which textbooks were of the highest quality and would best support educators? They proposed the creation of an independent *Consumer Reports*-like reviewer to assess the quality and Common Core alignment of teaching materials in the marketplace. Three foundations — Hewlett, Gates, and Helmsley — stepped up to help make this recommendation a reality. Relying on strategy design and initial staff support from Education First, we funded a new nonprofit organization, EdReports.org, to disseminate free and publicly available reviews of math textbooks.

By early 2014, many funders had been working side by side in various ways and with various commitments to support the new standards, and had a good sense of each other's priorities, interests, and style of engaging. Given EdReports.org's stated goal of disrupting the marketplace with independent textbook reviews, having the support of three funders (and not just one) from

the beginning was important. Also important: our early decision that the organization had to be truly independent in order to establish a credible, impartial brand separate from the funders — which meant that we co-founders would be very hands-off. The foundations deliberately asked educators, board members, and Education First to shape the early decisions about governance, structure, staffing, and priorities. We saw our grants as general operating support, unlike other collaborations where funders were much more “in the weeds” of the work itself.

To put a collaborative strategy into motion successfully, funders must determine early what content expertise they need to develop internally or seek externally to inform their strategies and activities. In creating EdReports.org, we recognized that others had the knowledge and credibility required to conduct rigorous evaluations of textbooks. In fact, EdReports.org recruits and trains experienced educators to carry out an evaluation methodology developed in consultation with subject-matter experts.

Foundations often have difficulty organizing themselves in a collaboration for extended periods of time. Whether focused on advocacy or on implementation/capacity-building efforts, we found a collaboration is stronger when it thinks about itself as a campaign: What is the specific need, what is the time frame to influence change, and how will we know if we've won? And poor execution, poor decision-making, and poor support can threaten the success of a collaboration even if it has a well-defined problem in its sights. Again, we recognize that not all collaborations (or problems in the field) have readily identified solutions; a collaboration can be about testing, identifying, and showcasing new approaches — although, as the EdReports.org collaboration underscores, having a clear solution at the beginning definitely helps. But in all cases, our collaborations floundered when there wasn't a process for ensuring the partnership was moving forward and funders instead kept rehashing and revisiting the same problems.

Stage No. 3 — Staying on the Right Path: Maturation and Maintenance

Are we still better together than alone? Posing this simple question early and often helps funders understand whether their collaboration is an effort worth continuing. But getting to an answer requires well-defined criteria for the collaboration's success, along with a strong process to monitor outcomes. Growing into the maturation phase of a partnership means being able to see evidence pointing to meaningful and measurable change. If this change is not happening (and there could be many different reasons for this, as we describe below), funders should weigh the benefits of their collaboration and perhaps significantly change the focus or even decide to spend their time and resources elsewhere.

Why Aren't Funders Showing Up Any More?

In some of our collaborations, we noticed signs that something had gone awry:

- Low or declining commitment: Funders invest fewer resources, as measured by smaller grant commitments or aligned investments, and/or they attend fewer meetings, participate less in discussions, and decline to volunteer in shared activities.
- New developments or transitions: Foundation staff turnover leads to new individuals being assigned to the collaboration who are not as personally invested in the work or who question the foundational decisions made by the group, and/or an individual funder's grantmaking strategies shift direction, resulting in misalignment with the collaboration's purpose and objectives.
- Internal dysfunction: Repeated failures to make group decisions translate into lost opportunities for action, and/or disagreements over aspects of the collaboration's work—from the core mission and goals to the chosen strategies and timelines—remain unresolved or papered over.

Reflecting on our different Common Core-focused collaborations, it's important for funders

With our sector's focus on collegiality, we sometimes find it easier to drift away or quietly quit than proactively raise difficult questions about strategy and impact. Building deliberate opportunities for these candid discussions, rather than hoping they'll emerge organically, is one solution we found.

to have an honest conversation about these indicators and decide on ground rules for resolving the underlying issues causing these problems. Instituting regular check-in meetings to gauge internal dynamics and discuss the progress made toward goals is one effective practice for maintaining a healthy collaboration. With our sector's focus on collegiality, we sometimes find it easier to drift away or quietly quit than proactively raise difficult questions about strategy and impact. Building deliberate opportunities for these candid discussions, rather than hoping they'll emerge organically, is one solution we found. The HQAP went through this stock-taking with its funders annually, with some using the opportunity to move on if they weren't satisfied or if their strategies had shifted, and others using it to "re-up" their commitment.

How Do We Know It's Time to Change or Wrap Up Our Collaboration?

At these check-in meetings, funders should take stock of the interim results of their work, including milestones achieved by the group and their shared grantees, and fairly evaluate three options for the collaboration's future: continuation, reset, or exit. If there are promising short-term results and evidence of a persistent unmet need in the field, funders may continue the collaboration

in its current form, making ongoing strategy adjustments as appropriate.

Funders can reset their partnership if they determine that their collaborative structure is no longer suitable to solve the problem. A reset is not about starting over from scratch; rather, it could mean revisiting previously agreed-upon structures and measures of success to ensure strong alignment between form and function. Funders in a knowledge network, for example, might more intentionally transition some of their work together into a pooled fund to tackle a particularly vexing or immediate problem of shared interest. Jointly creating a nonprofit organization to continue to lead on a particular issue is also an option, especially if the problem is long-standing and knotty and others in the field don't have the capacity to tackle the issue well.

Finally, there's exit — disbanding the collaboration itself. Some funder partnerships start with an end date, which we strongly recommend. Although the date may change upon further deliberation and experience, discussing the exit decision upfront preempts any confusion down the line. It also forces a “go/no go” decision based on the merits and progress, rather than allowing the collaboration to continue based solely on its own momentum or the polite inability of participants to call it quits.

Sometimes these difficult decisions become even more challenging if the collaboration has created an infrastructure, including dedicated staff or consultants, which would be disbanded if the collaboration were to cease. On the other hand, not having infrastructure can readily lead to analysis paralysis; how best to balance these twin risks of committing too much too soon versus not committing enough too early is another early decision to tackle explicitly. Disappointing outcomes can happen even to the most strategic funder collaboration, due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. Still, in the absence of positive results, funders should be more willing to pull the plug and move on to other pursuits.

The HQAP was created and charged with working for two years (2013-2015). The funders agreed — after a formal meeting to assess progress and examine options for next steps, including shutting down as originally conceived — to recommit for a third year of grantmaking, as arguments about whether to use new tests were still strong in many states. But, regardless of a two- or three-year effort, the HQAP was always clear with its grantees that the effort would be a short-term one. This approach also allowed Education First to prioritize grants and activities that were more about building knowledge, capacity, and expertise among a variety of organizations to continue working successfully on implementation challenges for the standards after the HQAP's burst of grantmaking was over.

Our partnership in one state, with the California Common Core Funders Collaborative, is instructive in a different way. The effort included a diverse mix of California-focused funders such as the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. and Silver Giving foundations, as well as the Gates and Hewlett foundations, national funders with a deep interest in the state. Conceived in late 2014 as no more than a two-year partnership to organize co-funding opportunities, commitments started waning after year one. While Education First and participating funders served up a variety of ideas that matched the group's stated priorities, participants rarely pursued collective funding opportunities. By early 2016, participating funders needed to wrestle with whether it was time to exit or whether this venue still provided enough value for remaining members. We looked carefully at why some funders had dropped out — it turns out most left because of internal staffing or strategy shifts — and we revisited the problems the founding funders said they wanted to work on originally, such as spreading effective teaching practices across a huge state with varying capacity and significant diversity. It was clear all funders still had an interest in the issue, but each had grantmaking priorities they were pursuing on their own.

In the end, we decided that working to find common funding opportunities wasn't the highest value or best use of resources; instead, it was

“resetting” the collaborative opportunity to meet regularly around a learning agenda and coordinate intelligence on state progress. The funders also committed to recruit others to participate in this new structure. Interestingly, because the group stuck together and continued to develop its working relationships and to better understand each other’s priorities, many members of the group are now poised for and confident about jointly investing in a new, potentially significant opportunity to take a fresh look at governance and funding of California’s K–12 school system. The latest evolution illustrates the value of funder collaborations engaging in intentional, candid conversations to explore continuation, reset, or exit; these examinations also create space to step back, reflect, and even surface better opportunities to work together.

Parting Thoughts

Many of us in philanthropy believe that collaboration is a productive avenue for influencing and changing large systems. But creating effective collaborations that lead to action and impact is hard to do and hard to sustain. Some collaborations are not worth pursuing at all — and funders should do more, and save the field a lot of time and effort, to more honestly and more carefully reflect on the costs and benefits of each possible partnership at the front end. But, once committed, we found that looking at the life cycle of these partnerships, with distinguishing stages and distinguishing problems that need to be addressed, helps identify the unique challenges and decisions that need to be tackled along the way, and helps head off predictable areas where the work can get stuck.

Collaborations flounder when funders aren’t clear about goals, metrics, and problems to be solved in the beginning; aren’t clear when grantmaking starts about how decisions will be made and how the collaboration can balance inclusiveness with action; and aren’t clear about when the collaboration has outlived its usefulness. We think that recognizing these sticking points and tackling them explicitly can help more collaborations grow and mature into more powerful forces for social change.

Acknowledgments

In developing this article, we appreciated the insights and candid feedback received from many colleagues, especially Rachel Leifer, formerly of the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Trust; Terri Shuck, of the National Education Public Support Fund; Bill Tucker, of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Fay Twersky, of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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Looking in the Mirror: Equity in Practice for Philanthropy

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Keywords: Equity, philanthropy, internal change, equity lens, system change

Introduction

Philanthropy is a system that operates from a position of power and privilege. Foundations have the ability to set an agenda for their grantmaking and decide who receives their money. From the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, after the killing of Michael Brown to the uprising in Baltimore in the wake of the death of Freddie Gray, there has been a call to action for systems change from communities and funders alike. Events like these shed light on the structural racism that still exists throughout the country, and sparked a national dialogue about the state of historically marginalized communities of color and the organizations that now, more than ever, should be supporting those communities.

As suggested by Barnes and Burton (2017), philanthropy should “seek to break down longstanding, intentional, institutional policies that have shaped social divides in the United States and that continue to promote inequality today” (para. 2). Philanthropy is well positioned to address these issues, but to do this work authentically, foundations must look in the mirror and reflect on how their own organizations’ internal policies and practices continue to perpetuate inequality.

Ten years ago, GrantCraft and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity produced *Grantmaking With a Racial Equity Lens*, a report that looked at how several dozen foundations started to think and talk about power and privilege in order to address racial and ethnic inequities entrenched within the complex issues those funders were addressing. The report recommended ways to model diversity and inclusiveness within foundations, such as hiring people of color and working to retain them; acting to

Key Points

- Philanthropy still needs to be reminded that there is no such thing as a post-racial America, and that systemic racism continues to underlie the problems foundation funding attempts to address. While many foundations have found it challenging to address equity in their grantmaking, they have found that process far more comfortable than addressing equity within their own organizations.
- This article will describe the efforts of three foundations in various stages of seeing themselves through an equity lens: the Consumer Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, and Interact for Health. This article will discuss why these foundations are on this journey, what they expect to achieve, what hurdles they have encountered, and how those hurdles were — or were not — overcome.
- It is impossible for a foundation to effectively fund with an equity lens unless it commits to doing the necessary internal work around the same issue, and embarks on its own journey toward equity.

ensure that the makeup of the staff and the board reflected the community; seeking a more diverse vendor base; and, perhaps most importantly, striving for a welcoming environment that “allows staff to bring to bear skills, abilities, and insights directly related to their cultural, racial, linguistic, economic, gendered, or other experiences” (GrantCraft, 2007, p. 15).

This report is one stark reminder of how little philanthropy has progressed in the past 10 years and how far it has to go. Another can be found

The philanthropic field has paid increasing attention to equity, with more and more funders announcing equity initiatives, specifically adding equity to formal foundation values, and requesting equity statements in grant proposals. What is less evident, however, is what these funders have done to use an equity lens to examine their own internal policies, programs, and practices.

FIGURE 1 Questions for Reflection

1. Does your staff and board reflect the community you serve?
2. Where are you or your organization on the equity journey?
3. Who or what is your biggest barrier?
4. What role do you play in contributing to inequities in your work?
5. Who is consulted during the decision-making process?
6. How are resources (e.g., money, time) allocated?
7. Who experiences benefits? Who experiences burdens?
8. Who leads?
9. Who decides?

in *The Exit Interview: Perceptions on Why Black Professionals Leave Grantmaking Institutions*, a 2014 report from the Association of Black Foundation Executives. The report identified challenges to the retention of African-American foundation professionals, including a sense of isolation due to politics, lack of a diverse staff, and/or a glass ceiling at the mid-management level (44 percent); an overly bureaucratic organizational culture and limited professional-track training, pipeline networks, and support systems (45 percent); and, especially among program officers, a feeling that their expertise was not valued or trusted by colleagues (*Philanthropy News Digest*, 2014.)

A literature search on equity grantmaking brings up the decade-old GrantCraft report first, followed by several hundred thousand references to foundation websites that mention equity initiatives and equity grantmaking. Numerous funder affinity groups focus their efforts on addressing equity issues in their communities. But what has really changed — particularly in areas where many funders are working? Research over the past decade on public health, for example, has with increasing clarity identified systemic racism as a social determinant of health (Garcia & Sharif, 2015).

The philanthropic field has paid increasing attention to equity, with more and more funders announcing equity initiatives, specifically adding equity to formal foundation values, and requesting equity statements in grant proposals. What is less evident, however, is what these funders have done to use an equity lens to examine their own internal policies, programs, and practices. Has staff and board diversity increased over the years? If so, does such diversity make a difference in who and how they fund? What foundation structures have been put in place — or torn down — to make it easier for communities of color to get funding? What types of reflective work are done within the foundation, among staff, to address equity issues? (See Figure 1.) This type of information is rarely available.

This article highlights the experiences of three foundations that have made a commitment to

internal equity work. The Consumer Health Foundation has focused on equity for more than a decade; The Colorado Trust has been on this journey for over three years and Interact for Health, for just two years. Each of these foundations began this work for different reasons and their paths vary: There is no one way to initiate internal equity work, just as there is no single approach to grantmaking to address our social problems. This article explores the paths they are taking, what motivated them to start, and what lessons they can share with others embarking on this effort.

Consumer Health Foundation

Based in Washington, the Consumer Health Foundation (CHF) is a private foundation that envisions a nation in which everyone — regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, education, or income — lives a healthy and dignified life (CHF, 2016). The foundation advocates for racial equity and racial justice through programs and investments that advance the health and well-being of communities of color that have faced historically rooted structural barriers to health care. A regional grantmaker, the CHF supports advocacy organizations with aligned missions in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and northern Virginia.

Rather than an isolated function of the CHF's work, racial equity is an internalized process that is woven into the fabric of the foundation's operations. The CHF applies a racial-equity lens to all program areas: grantmaking, strategic communications, partnerships, and mission-consistent investing. Established in 1997, it has evolved toward racial equity within a foundation culture that has normalized continuous learning and risk taking. For example, its initial grantmaking strategy focused on programs and services to promote behavior change and increase access to care. But the release in the early 2000s of several landmark studies and publications that focused on social determinants of health prompted the CHF to rethink its approach and pursue a deeper understanding of the issues affecting health. The foundation

A heightened awareness of the impact of structural racism on health motivated the board and leadership of the CHF to ask a strategic question: Did the foundation want to continue to operate as a safety net and an advocate for behavioral change, or did it want to change course and address structural racism as a social determinant of health? The board of trustees, which reflects the diversity of the communities served by the CHF, chose to be explicit about racial equity as a means of improving health.

sponsored a series of “community speakouts” in 2004 and 2005, where residents were encouraged to share their lived experiences. What emerged was a recognition that contemporary manifestations of structural racism were the underlying factors impeding residents’ ability to achieve optimal health and well-being.

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FIGURE 2 Definitions

- **Racial equity:** An outcome in which “race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes. ... As a process, we apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity” can fully participate in the development of “institutional policies and practices that impact their lives” (Center for Social Inclusion, n.d., para. 9).
- **Equity:** “Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Unlocking the promise of the nation by unleashing the promise in us all” (PolicyLink, 2015, p. 3).
- **Equity lens:** The lens through which you view conditions and circumstances to assess who experiences benefits and who experiences burdens as the result of a program, policy, or practice (CommonHealth Action, n.d.).
- **Systemic racism:** Racism that consists of policies and practices, entrenched in established institutions, that result in the exclusion or advancement of specific groups of people. It manifests itself in two ways: (1) institutional racism: racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society; and (2) structural racism: inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that excludes substantial numbers of members of particular groups from significant participation in major social institutions. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 352)

Since racial equity is rare in the field of philanthropy, the foundation engaged external experts to assess internal capacity, readiness, and potential impact. In 2007, the CHF participated in a yearlong internal assessment that was jointly conducted by the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity and the Applied Research Center (now Race Forward). Many lessons were learned; one of the most salient was the importance of agreeing upon definitions and shared language. (See, e.g., Figure 2.) Before the assessment, for example, the CHF used words such as “vulnerable” and “underserved” to describe its target populations. Such terms have come to be understood as “coded” references to low-income people of color; CHF communications were reframed to explicitly state a focus on “low-income communities and communities of color.”

As a private foundation, the CHF was also prompted by the internal assessment to identify its strengths and the role it could play beyond grantmaking. Convening disparate sectors,

testing new ideas, spearheading regional initiatives, and advancing the field of philanthropy to apply a racial-equity lens were highlighted. Today those concepts are the bedrock of how the foundation operates at the local level and shares lessons learned with peer foundations and stakeholders across the nation.

The lesson learned? The foundation’s commitment to racial equity as a process could not be fully realized without engaging external expertise, which was instrumental in informing the foundation’s identity — including its vision, mission, values, theory of change, and operational norms.

Governance

The achievement of racial equity hinges upon resolving historical injustices in various systems and institutions, including philanthropy. Therefore, the CHF is intentional about examining its own vulnerabilities and addressing them with best practices that strengthen its capacity

to stay true and authentic to its commitment. One example of this involves trustee diversity and continuous learning. Nine of the board's 15 members — 60 percent of the trustees — are people of color. The racial and ethnic composition of the board yields productive dialogue, which is essential for understanding the complex dynamics that contribute to poor health outcomes in various racial and ethnic groups.

In order to gauge insight around individual and board capacity to govern with a racial-equity lens, an annual self-evaluation is administered with such statements as “I am comfortable articulating the intersection between health equity, racial equity, and economic justice” and “Collectively, the board has the right mix of skills and expertise to govern with a racial-equity lens.” Results inform recruitment priorities as well as a prospective board-development agenda.

Annual “learning journeys” — where the board convenes in communities that are disproportionately impacted by structural inequity — are another method of continuous learning. By focusing on topical issues such as unjust housing and employment practices, the journeys give trustees the opportunity hear the narratives of residents and engage in conversation, and they yield a deeper knowledge of social, political, economic, and environmental barriers. Consequently, the intimate level of exposure to lived experiences informs board discussions, empowering trustees to think more critically about the external landscape and the potential role of the foundation. Since the first journey, many lessons have been learned. But most importantly, the experiences have reinforced the board's commitment to advancing a racial-equity agenda through a field-building approach.

Field Building and Grantee Evaluation

The CHF defines “advocacy” as efforts to create local, state, and regional policy change and systems reforms that benefit low-income communities and communities of color (CHF, 2016). Since health inequities are created and reproduced by

[T]he intimate level of exposure to lived experiences informs board discussions, empowering trustees to think more critically about the external landscape and the potential role of the foundation.

policies and systems, applying a racial-equity lens in advocacy work is essential. The foundation's grantmaking strategy supports work that includes community organizing, developing policy recommendations, implementing and monitoring relevant trends, building coalitions and networks, and collective problem solving among diverse groups.

Cultivating a shared vision around diversity, inclusion, and racial equity in the larger community is a prerequisite for changing policies and systems to eliminate racial inequality. Consequently, the CHF takes a different approach to grantee evaluation methods. Instead of focusing on “impact” and counting the number of people touched, field building is a marker of success: How does the foundation's philanthropic investments advance the field of advocates? Are grantee partners working toward building a robust network of organizations that have the ability to analyze legal issues and develop policy recommendations with a racial-equity lens? Are grantees generating and sharing resources? Are they able to rapidly respond during times of peril?

In an effort to learn more about the state of the field, the CHF's most recent request for proposals includes two new components: An organizational assessment tool¹ requires applicants to assess their capacity to address racial equity, both internally and externally; a racial-equity

¹ Organizational Assessment tool and Racial Equity Impact Assessment available online at <http://www.consumerhealthfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CHF-RFP-2017.pdf>

impact assessment tool allows applicants to systematically assess how their advocacy advances progress toward the elimination of long-standing racial inequities. Collectively, these tools motivate potential grantees to reflect on their capacity at a macro level. The CHF's review of aggregate results offers insight into strengths and gaps in the field. Lessons learned inform how the foundation prioritizes and deploys resources and programmatic investments.

Partnerships and Strategic Communication

Partnerships with other funders is an important part of the CHF's work. Pooling resources and intellectual exchanges with organizations that are passionate about racial equity, but may not identify as health funders, bolsters the capacity to address social factors that drive health (i.e., housing, education, transportation, employment). One of the CHF's most recent endeavors is a partnership with the Meyer Foundation and the Urban Institute to produce an interactive equity report for the District of Columbia. Titled "A Vision of a More Equitable DC," the unconventional digital platform showcases what it will take to achieve a more racially equitable city: How many more black or Hispanic residents need to attain a high school diploma or GED? How many more will need to earn a livable wage? How many more will need to be homeowners? Using gross domestic product as a proxy, the site discloses the financial impact with and without racial equity in the nation's capital. This different way of presenting information helps other foundations, policymakers, and regional stakeholders understand the gravity of racial inequity and how it restricts progress toward healthy lives and a thriving local economy.

The CHF recognizes that open and honest communication about racism and its causes is key to racial healing and the achievement of equity. Trusted spaces for heightening awareness and stimulating productive dialogue are essential. By enlisting the expertise of a communications firm, the foundation uses its voice for "narrative change" — a long-term process relying on storytelling as a method of disrupting dominant belief structures that undergird social and racial hierarchy and expanding the availability of a wide

range of stories about people of color (American Values Institute, 2013). Whether in the form of a blog or testimony from someone with a lived experience, narrative change is a powerful mechanism. It humanizes the data and helps those who lead systems of power connect the dots.

Mission-Consistent Investing

Although private foundations are required to spend a minimum of 5 percent of their assets annually on charitable activities, the CHF continuously explores how the other 95 percent of its endowment can advance its mission. In pursuit of a goal to improve the structural conditions of low-income communities of color, the CHF made the decision in 2014 to transfer 100 percent of its portfolio to mission-consistent vehicles. In addition, the foundation carved out a portion of its endowment in 2016 to engage in impact investing. To date, this carve-out has been used to invest in affordable housing and loans to entrepreneurs who are women and people of color. Moreover, investment advisors are advised to apply a racial-equity lens as part of the vetting process for all subsequent investments. As part of routine financial discussions, trustees and leadership explore how the endowment can positively affect communities of color through investments in companies that value racial diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as those that demonstrate strong labor practices.

Operations and Accountability

The CHF recognizes that success would not be possible without steadfast demonstration of the core values that govern its work: consumer voice and engagement; equity and social justice; health care for all; partnership; innovation and risk taking; shared learning; and accountability. Internal diversity and equity indicators ensure the foundation normalizes operational practices that advance its mission, and by perceiving the achievement of racial equity as a process, equity indicators are monitored routinely and factored into annual performance reviews. For example,

- Human resources policies: Is a commitment to racial equity an integral part of recruitment, selection, and retention processes?

- Vendor recruitment and selection: Do marketing materials prominently encourage women and people of color to apply? Are vendors and business partners philosophically aligned, and is there a solid history of evidence?
- External communication: Is a commitment to racial equity explicitly conveyed in communication materials, and is it framed within the context of health?
- Grantmaking: Do current and prospective grantees have people of color represented in leadership and governance?

The Consumer Health Foundation started on its equity journey over 10 years ago, and we have seen how it was able to move from theory to practice and sustain those changes. The Colorado Trust and Interact for Health are early on their journeys, and we can take a look at how they focused on changes within their organizations. Their journeys reflect how messy this work can be: There is not always a clear, linear path from early development to full implementation of an equity lens, but the interest-to-action continuum among leadership and staff is evident at both foundations, as are the multiple ways to achieve sustainable change within an organization to promote equity.

The Colorado Trust

The Colorado Trust is a health equity foundation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the people of Colorado, and invests in advocacy, data and information, and program-related investments to support health equity. In the past few years, the trust has been implementing a strategy aimed at empowering resident-led change to advance equity at the community level.

In 2013, a new CEO brought about a shift toward purposeful community involvement in grantmaking. Although unsure what that meant, staff knew they wanted to put Colorado's residents at the center of the trust's grantmaking. To make this shift authentic, in late 2014 staff and board embarked on what

was first called diversity and inclusion (D&I) work. The Trust knew this was an endeavor that would need skilled facilitators and, after interviews with several D&I firms, Visions Inc. was chosen to help guide the foundation. The goal was to enable staff to work more effectively in Colorado communities by becoming more knowledgeable about and addressing inequities within the foundation itself.

The Trust's Equity Journey

The work began with a series of individual staff interviews with Visions that led to a plan tailored to the foundation. Throughout 2015 and 2016 the work involved quarterly, one- or two-day meetings of all staff; various exercises using tools developed by Visions; and time for personal reflection. Visions staff also met with the board annually to facilitate the trustees' own journeys.

All staff have participated since the beginning of the process. From the first meeting, it was clear to them that doing this work would differ from other all-staff development opportunities over the years. Visions focused not just on the thinking and acting aspects of diversity and inclusion, but more importantly, on the aspect of feelings. Focusing on personal feelings brought up conversations about staff members' life experiences and how they reflected power, privilege, discrimination, and racism. The work was intense and at times painful; until this point, the Trust staff as an organization had not engaged in deeply internally focused reflection of this nature.

In 2017, the work shifted toward more one-on-one coaching with Visions staff, as well as bringing in other D&I coaches. Seeking to tap into local Colorado-based resources, staff also met with other consultants in an effort to go deeper into the next level of the collective journey. While the first years of this D&I work focused on race and racism, gender identity, ableism, sexism, and other facets of inclusion are starting to be addressed.

While the shifts at the Trust have been gradual, the cumulative effect has been enormous — like a dripping faucet, unnoticed, can fill a sink. At Visions' suggestion, the foundation

Another shift has been a movement away from calling the work “diversity and inclusion” and toward use of the word “equity.” This change mirrors the changes staff want to see and better reflects the work the grantees are doing. Calling the work “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” or simply “equity work,” helps keep the goals of the foundation’s grantmaking in the forefront. It also helps prevent a falling back on old foundation habits, such as hiring people of color and thinking “diversity duty” has been completed.

created a cross-departmental diversity and inclusion team. One of its first tasks was to review all organizational policies through a D&I lens. While the process was challenging at times and took many months, the team’s recommendations for change were accepted by all staff and board. Empowering the D&I team to make those changes helped build the trust necessary between leadership and other staff to continue the work.

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simply “equity work,” helps keep the goals of the foundation’s grantmaking in the forefront. It also helps prevent a falling back on old foundation habits, such as hiring people of color and thinking “diversity duty” has been completed. Integrating equity work and embracing an equity lens helps staff understand the disparities faced by people of color and that those lived experiences not only impact their perspectives, but can also be valuable leverage points for tomorrow’s leaders.

Over the past two years, hiring practices have changed and now include questions related to the understanding of equity and a willingness join this journey. Answers to these questions are important considerations in selection of new staff. Becoming familiar with the language and concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion is an important first step for new hires — from their first day with the trust, staff are aware of the critical role this plays in the foundation.

Lessons Learned

While there are many more years of this work ahead, lessons have emerged that might help other foundations that choose this journey:

- Leadership needs to lead the journey. The Trust’s work started with the CEO, who brought board and staff along. This has been critical to keeping the work front and center, to devoting the necessary resources of time and money, and to the willingness to listen and act when changes are required to move the work forward. As Villanueva and Cordery (2017) note,

In every case where we’ve seen equity not only emerge as a philanthropic priority but also thrive and make headway, there is a CEO and board of trustees who have stepped up to the challenge as engaged and responsive leaders and willing spokespersons on equity issues. (para. 6)

This has certainly been the case for the Trust: All board meetings, for example, include a time for trustees to reflect on a personal or professional topic using an equity lens, and discussions of the equity work factor into the selection of new board members.

- Without the right staff, the work will not happen. Organizations are made up of people, and changing the culture requires the work of everyone. New hires and existing staff must value equity: grantmaking, finance, and administrative staff; vendors; consultants — everyone doing work with and for the foundation. It may be tempting at times to shift the responsibility for understanding and embracing equity onto staff who interact most often with grantees and community members. But when grants management, finance staff, or consultants ignore the importance of equity work, the consequences can, at best, slow down the culture change and, at worst, do considerable damage to the work.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is organizational culture-change work. While it might seem possible and even desirable to separate the two out, truly embracing equity means addressing issues of trust, transparency, accountability, decision-making authority, performance, and imbalances in power within an organization that lead to real or perceived inequities. It means leaning into discomfort and difficult conversations without fear. Sometimes the conversations can be deeply painful — for the speaker and the listener. Only by moving through such discomfort can change happen in an organization.
- At its core, this is a personal journey. Over the past three years, foundation staff have come to realize the changes at the Trust are ultimately changes within individuals. Staff come from diverse backgrounds and various places of power and privilege. The effects of racism and discrimination have touched each individual differently. This work provides a safe space to have these discussions and to understand one another better. Ultimately, however, the work needed to make the changes comes from within each of us. There are no glasses with equity lenses that one can put on and take off as needed. This work is about changing the way each one of us is present

It may be tempting at times to shift the responsibility for understanding and embracing equity onto staff who interact most often with grantees and community members. But when grants management, finance staff, or consultants ignore the importance of equity work, the consequences can, at best, slow down the culture change and, at worst, do considerable damage to the work.

in the world, every single day. It is about changing mindsets and mental models of how the world works, for whom, and why. It is about naming power and privilege; acknowledging what it means to other staff, grantees, and community members; and moving through discomfort to talk about it. Talking about the effects of racism, micro-aggression, and discrimination in one's personal life can be very challenging. Yet it is through such discussions that "we make the cruelties of inequality real for people who have only had a textbook exposure to it" (Villanueva & Cordery, 2017, para 14). When it is real for all of us, change can begin to happen.

Interact for Health

Interact for Health is a regional foundation serving 20 counties in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Its mission is to improve the health of people in the Cincinnati region by being a catalyst for health and wellness. Interact accomplishes its mission by promoting healthy living through grants, education, research, and policy.

In spring 2015, the staff and CEO at Interact started discussions about equity and how to be an equity-informed grantmaker. To better understand how equity can be embedded in a foundation's policies and practices, Interact asked Yanique Redwood, president and CEO of the Consumer Health Foundation (CHF), to discuss the CHF's equity journey with board and staff at an annual retreat, and the chair of CHF's board shared the perspective of a board member. The board was receptive to this session and agreed that Interact should increase its focus on equity.

Interact's Equity Journey

The first major step for Interact was to form an equity committee, which was launched in August 2015 with six staff members from across the organization. The committee's membership was intentionally created to be diverse across job levels, departments, age, race, and gender.

One of Redwood's key messages was the importance of educating both staff and board members about equity, diversity, and inclusion. The equity committee was inspired by the board presentation and adopted the term "learning journey" to describe educational opportunities for Interact's board and staff to learn from others. The equity committee reached out to other foundations to learn other approaches to equity, then began planning the learning journeys. For the first learning journey, six staff members and two board members traveled to Los Angeles to meet with the Prevention Institute and its partners, and to attend PolicyLink's National Equity Summit. Interact's representatives were part of a delegation of more than 30 leaders from Greater Cincinnati. The summit was a pivotal moment for the Interact staff members and community: the knowledge gained produced a surge of momentum for equity work at Interact and within the Greater Cincinnati community. Participants brought home insights and ideas about what equity could mean in a community or organization. The equity delegation continues to meet and includes leaders from many sectors in the community.

Equity Learning Model

The equity committee began to track and refine all the work being done with staff and board members — both large and small changes within the organization are important wins and help shape the culture of the foundation. Interact's equity committee developed a framework to guide and track the process, the Equity Learning Model (ELM). The ELM helped Interact move equity from theory to action. There are four components to the ELM and a three-phase cycle that Interact applied and continues to apply to move through the ELM components. (See Figure 3.) The cycle is what propels change to happen within the ELM components and helps to combat resistance an organization may encounter. The four components of the ELM are:

- Internal review: using an equity lens to review internal policies, programs, and practices (e.g., vendor and consultant policies);
- External implementation: how equity is reflected in external facing work (e.g., request for proposals);
- Institutionalized equity: the formal or informal creation or update of policies and practices using an equity lens (e.g., adoption of a board matrix by a board governance committee); and
- Shared learnings: informing the field through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned with philanthropy, community, and grantees (e.g., articles).

The ELM cycle consists of three parts:

- Building a common understanding: developing a common language to talk about equity (e.g., equity, diversity, and inclusion training);
- Continuous learning: engaging staff in activities that allow them to expand or develop skill sets around becoming more comfortable using an equity lens (e.g., a book club, learning journeys); and

FIGURE 3 Equity Learning Model

- **Reflection and change:** reviewing programs, policies, and practices (e.g., hiring policies) with an equity lens and making necessary changes.

Fighting the Resistance

The equity committee continues to work hard to make tangible changes within the foundation, from establishing new protocols such as the board matrix to educating staff in multiple ways. As with any change, the committee experienced some resistance from staff members, leadership, and the board. But it persisted and was able to push forward because it identified advocates for the work at all levels of the organization and continued to provide opportunities to learn. The most rewarding part of the work was seeing the benefits when change occurred, such as when an

equity lens was introduced into the hiring process (and first implemented with a new hire in November 2016) or when the board governance committee, in May 2017, formally adopted the board matrix as a recruitment and assessment tool. Support from the organization's leadership is essential to showing both the organization and the community why this work is important, and the equity committee has been able to continue down this road because of support and encouragement from Interact's leadership.

Institutionalizing Equity

Using the ELM, the committee began to review its practices and to institutionalize equity into its internal processes. Interact's board tasked the equity committee with developing an equity value statement. Using language from the

Equity is often viewed as a one-sided matter, and when the internal supporters of this work are people of color there can be additional resistance. Finding staff and board members of various races and at different levels in the organization who will advocate for equity within can help to open the mindset of different people.

PolicyLink (2015) Equity Manifesto, the following value statement was created: “Equity: We advocate for just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.” This statement was adopted by the board in December 2015 and incorporated into Interact’s core values. In addition, the equity committee created a mission statement for itself: “We advocate for a culture of equity at Interact for Health through education and accountability.”

Several foundations recommend hiring an external consultant to assist with staff and board training because it allows staff members to participate and can provide an unbiased perspective. Interact hired CommonHealth Action (CHA), of Washington, in June 2016 because of its experience with and philosophy of equity, diversity, and inclusion work and its strong background in public health. In August 2016, the CHA conducted a two-day equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training for Interact’s staff to lay the foundation for creating a common understanding, language, and personal connection to equity within the organization; this training helped deepen Interact’s equity focus. The CHA also conducted an EDI assessment survey, interviewing 10 key staff and board members to identify

ways in which inequities in Interact’s operations and culture may ultimately affect the health and well-being of the staff and the community.

In October 2016, Interact welcomed a new CEO, who asked that he and all new staff members participate in EDI training; the incoming board chair also participated in the training and joined the equity committee. In June 2017, the new chair facilitated a discussion about equity at a board retreat and, as a result, the entire board participated in an eight-hour EDI workshop in November 2017.

Interact has implemented other institutional changes and pursued other activities in the past two years as part of its effort to embed equity into its work, including open-dialogue sessions begun in 2016, allowing any staff member to put a topic up for discussion and invite all to an open space for discussion. In August 2016, the equity committee started a book club: One book is to be chosen annually that addresses various issues related to equity (e.g., race, poverty); the books can be recommended by any staff member and are purchased for entire staff, with discussion facilitated by the equity committee. And at board and staff retreats in the spring of 2017, equity was identified as a critical part of the conversation during strategic planning and time was allotted for equity-focused activities and team building.

The work of the equity committee is coming full circle to embed equity into the practices of the organization. The next step is using an equity lens in the creation of Interact’s new strategic plan, which is being developed.

Lessons Learned

- Staff and board development: EDI training is key to creating culture change and institutionalizing equity in the organization.
- Leadership buy-in: Support from an organization’s leaders is critical to moving this work forward more quickly. When leaders do not see the value of continued staff learning and internal reflection, everything gets stalled. Buy-in at the board level can be challenging, but continuing to advocate

can greatly increase board engagement in the process.

- The messenger matters: Equity is often viewed as a one-sided matter, and when the internal supporters of this work are people of color there can be additional resistance. Finding staff and board members of various races and at different levels in the organization who will advocate for equity within can help to open the mindset of different people.

Conclusion

Systemic and progressive change can be achieved when foundations step up to address the inequities in the system of philanthropy through internal reflection. Moving equity from a box to be checked to concerted action requires philanthropy to be bold, intentional, risk taking, and strategic. The disparities that exist in communities did not develop overnight — they were intentionally created through policies and practices over many decades to provide privilege to certain groups and oppress others. This cycle will not be resolved overnight, but the field of philanthropy has an opportunity and obligation to use its power and resources to create that change.

This article discusses how three foundations embarked on their own equity journeys. Although each case was unique, there were some common themes:

- Using outside consultants to assist with this work is vital to moving staff through difficult conversations and moving equity forward.
- This is a journey — personal and professional — with continuous learning and risk taking.
- Leadership buy-in is key. Senior leadership and the board of directors must be on board, if not leading the effort.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is organizational culture-change work.

Other foundations tackling these issues will most likely go about this work differently. It's impossible to take a cookie-cutter approach; each foundation is unique and must take the journey in a way that's best for that organization. One possible inclusion would be to ask for community input into new policies and procedures. Understanding how the changes within a foundation impact grantees could provide added insights.

The word “philanthropy” comes from the Greek *philanthropia*, meaning “love of mankind.” If foundations are to embrace this definition, then moving toward incorporating an equity lens into everything they do is their logical next step. Foundations must move from “doing” equity to “being and living” equity. Systems of inequity in society have been designed to withhold power from certain groups. One system that needs to change is philanthropy. One hundred years from now, how will philanthropy say it responded internally to the injustices faced by marginalized communities? Will foundations be able to say they changed their own policies and practices to create equity in the communities they serve?

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Generative Philanthropy: Long-Term Investments in Economic Opportunity

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Keywords: Generative philanthropy, long-term funding, collaborative funding

Introduction

The growth and maturation of philanthropy in recent decades has encouraged introspection and experimentation about its roles and strategies. In this context, foundation leaders have reflected upon the “theory of the foundation” — that is, what foundations do or should do and what ideas should guide their efforts. The development of foundation theory is a work in progress that has not yet yielded a clear consensus, but has produced important insights about the nature of philanthropic strategies and tactics (Patton, Foote, & Radner, 2015; Berman, 2016).

This article explores how creative collaborations among citizens, foundations, nonprofits, civic institutions, and governmental actors can promote social innovations by deploying multiple foundation tools and resources to nurture change. This long-term, collaborative practice, which I call “generative philanthropy,” represents an incremental, decentralized approach for developing and spreading social innovations.¹ Generative philanthropic investments test prototypes and identify new offshoots and opportunities that over time can focus direction and generate momentum for change. This article contrasts generative philanthropy with other approaches.

Strategy and Opportunity

All foundations — and especially large, national foundations — grapple with the challenge of balancing strategy and opportunity (Orosz, 2007). Simply, there are more effective nonprofits than grant dollars and more social problems

Key Points

- Generative philanthropy is a collaborative investment practice that tests prototypes and identifies new opportunities that, over time, can focus direction and generate momentum for change. It is an incremental, decentralized approach to investment in communities.
- This article’s purpose is to clarify the theory and practice of generative philanthropy and contrast it with other approaches. It provides an in-depth discussion of the meaning of generative philanthropy, offers five examples of the approach related to economic opportunity, and draws lessons for future practice.
- Generative philanthropy offers a framework for understanding and enriching philanthropy’s long-term role and collaboration with partners from a developmental perspective. It can hopefully inspire and guide new foundation practices that pay attention to what comes next after the first or second investment of time, money, knowledge, and leadership.

than effective solutions. How should foundations decide? How should they balance narrow, focused investments while staying open to opportunity? Business strategist Henry Mintzberg (1994) argues that organizations like businesses and foundations should embrace strategic thinking rather than strategic plans if they are to find the right balance.

¹ I hesitate offering another phrase describing innovative philanthropy; the field is already swamped with catchy phrases. But I’ve decided a new phrase — generative philanthropy — is needed because most discussions of strategic philanthropy and its variations are foundation-centric, focus on intentionality and explicit goals, and are short or midterm approaches. As I will argue in this article, generative philanthropy is quite different.

In recent years, foundation practitioners and theorists have criticized strategic philanthropy as too rigid, linear, and static. In response, several reformulations of strategic philanthropy have focused on the need for adaptive capacity to adjust philanthropic investment strategies and tactics as the world changes and in response to learning about what works or does not work. These versions of strategic philanthropy, however, still place philanthropy at the center as primary investor, stakeholder, learner, and advocate.

Philanthropy's primary focus has evolved from charitable giving and investment in building nonprofit organizations to more goal-directed philanthropy in search of specific solutions. In other words, philanthropy has evolved from buying results to building organizations and leading with foundation-centered theories of change about how to achieve specific social impacts at scale, what has come to be called strategic philanthropy (Porter & Kramer, 1999; Brest & Harvey, 2008; Stannard-Stockton, 2011; Kania, Kramer, & Russell, 2014). This approach is not new when looking back at the game-changing investments — of the Carnegie or Rockefeller foundations in the early decades of the 20th century, for example — but today, more foundations

are taking up strategic philanthropy (Zunz, 2014; Kania et al., 2014).

Strategic philanthropy requires foundations to go beyond responding to externally generated philanthropic requests to self-identifying specific results, investment strategies, and targets — what is core to their mission, whether decided by benefactors, boards, or senior executives — and what is their unique contribution (Kania et al., 2014). Foundations are the key decision-makers. Strategic philanthropy involves foundations stating more clearly their theories of change — the conceptual linkages between problem identification, levers of change, investment tactics, and results. Strategic philanthropy can focus on building nonprofit capacity in specific domains or attempt to change or reform systems affecting specific social issues, whether criminal justice, health, or job training (Walker, 2017).

In recent years, foundation practitioners and theorists have criticized strategic philanthropy as too rigid, linear, and static. Nonprofits exist in a world of dynamic complexity and messiness that defies one-dimensional theories of change. In response, several reformulations of strategic philanthropy have focused on the need for adaptive capacity to adjust philanthropic investment strategies and tactics as the world changes and in response to learning about what works or does not work (Ditkoff, 2014; Bridgespan Group, 2013). Catalytic philanthropy mobilizes foundation and nonfoundation resources to achieve specific results in campaign style (Kramer, 2009). Emergent philanthropy is the most open-ended reformulation of strategic philanthropy because it recognizes that solutions require time to take root, adapt to changing circumstances, and mature (Buchanan, 2014; Kania et al., 2014). These versions of strategic philanthropy, however, still place philanthropy at the center as primary investor, stakeholder, learner, and advocate.

Two other philanthropy approaches — system change and social movement — also emphasize key levers of change, long-term collaboration, multiple investors, and a range of philanthropic tools. But they are different than generative philanthropy in several respects. System-change

philanthropy primarily involves philanthropy moving boldly to make up for a lack of big social and economic solutions (Walker, 2017). It focuses on mobilizing foundation resources to support specific solutions that involve systemic change, beyond programs and narrow policy changes. Social movement philanthropy, in contrast, recognizes that big solutions require more than philanthropy, but that philanthropy can play a critical role in building the capacity and infrastructure for effective social movements to emerge and sustain themselves to achieve specific ends (Masters & Osborn, 2010). Both types of philanthropy typically have a “north star” for change at the outset.

This article’s purpose is to clarify the theory and practice of generative philanthropy and contrast it with these other philanthropic approaches. Its three objectives are to provide an in-depth discussion of the meaning of generative philanthropy, offer five examples of generative philanthropy related to economic opportunity, and draw lessons for the future practice of generative philanthropy.

Defining Generative Philanthropy

Generative philanthropy offers a framework that informs the grantmaking and nongrantmaking practices of foundations and how they can contribute to developing long-term solutions.² Generative philanthropy captures the collaborative and sometimes disjointed process of invention and growth seen in the evolution of many social innovations and fields of practice. It does not start with predetermined solutions or with systems ready to change. Rather, it starts with a sense of direction, multiple investors, creative competition and cooperation among key entrepreneurs and stakeholders, flexibility in tactics beyond grantmaking, and varying speeds of uptake. Generative philanthropy shares with strategic philanthropy theories of change about foundation roles and interventions, although they may be more experimental, adaptive, and

Generative philanthropy ... starts with a sense of direction, multiple investors, creative competition and cooperation among key entrepreneurs and stakeholders, flexibility in tactics beyond grantmaking, and varying speeds of uptake.

emergent. At the heart of generative philanthropy is a new perspective, metaphor, or frame of reference that redefines problems and solutions and encourages new rounds of invention and adaptation (Schön, 1983).

Rarely do foundations look back on what they have learned from past investments. Even when foundations excel in strategic thinking and ongoing learning, they tend to have short time frames — initiatives usually lasting no more than five years. Some foundation investments are longer, but operate within a framework that serves the national funders but is not responsive to reality on the ground (Joseph, 2010). Foundations pride themselves in moving to the next “big bet” or pressing civic issue and leaving behind past theories of change, partners, and results. Knowledge is relegated to grant reports and knowledge-management systems, which rarely capture the “tacit” knowledge of work on the ground.

Generative philanthropy does not focus on single grants or initiatives or single-grant periods, or even on single grantees or geographies. It doesn’t focus on abstract, long-term goals, nor is it confined to a single foundation. Generative philanthropy does not buy adoption of a new approach or point of view by saturating related fields with massive amounts of grantmaking.

² This article derives from my reflections as a foundation program officer for more than 20 years, my management and coaching of program officers, and my overall observations about program officers. The best program officers, in my experience, uniquely combine substantive knowledge, social-investor skills, community organizing sensibilities, and entrepreneurial risk-taking.

Generative philanthropy is not for all foundations or for all innovative solutions. It requires a long-term perspective, relative continuity in foundation priorities, staff retention, flexibility in foundations' roles and resources, and a willingness to reflect on the past.

Rather, generative philanthropy follows the linkages among grants and knowledge building in specific areas of work over time — in this article, the promotion of economic opportunity — and supports and learns from the dynamic interplay of grantees, foundations, civic leaders, and policymakers in the context of a rich and evolving ecosystem. In some cases, foundations follow the recommendations of their grantee partners. In retrospect, there sometimes appears to be a road map towards larger, systemic change, but in fact the road map is highly contingent, invented one step at a time, and most visible in retrospect.

Generative philanthropy adds value especially where innovative solutions are needed; where practice, system, and policy barriers prevent scaling; and when research about what works doesn't exist or has produced mixed results. Universal solutions may in fact exist on some fronts, but figuring out their targeted adaptation for specific communities and populations requires dedicated time and resources. Some policy and program spaces, like promoting economic opportunity, combine complexity in solutions and adaptations that have created fertile ground for generative philanthropy.

Generative philanthropy is not for all foundations or for all innovative solutions. It requires a long-term perspective, relative continuity in

foundation priorities, staff retention, flexibility in foundations' roles and resources, and a willingness to reflect on the past. It requires incremental nurturing of bright spots of social change so that they can influence systems, policy priorities, and broader implementation. Generative philanthropy, however, does not necessarily follow a linear path in pursuing these developmental phases; it frequently comprises a step-wise response to opportunities as they present themselves. But it is also not uncommon for generative philanthropy to stall, turn back, start over, or pursue different investment paths to achieve results or further innovation. For itself, generative philanthropy requires developmental, formative evaluations. Simply, there are almost always next steps in advancing specific solutions, but foundations often don't see them.

Simulating Generative Philanthropy

In a simplified form, generative philanthropy's approach to innovation can involve multiple foundations and other stakeholders, with different investment strategies related to a set of prototypes, exploring a specific innovative practice that progresses from the single prototypes of individual social entrepreneurs to field-based self-awareness, convening, learning, and policy advocacy infrastructure. (See Figure 1.) Nonprofit and public organizations play different roles — from evaluation to policy advocacy — in this developing innovation ecology from targeted, adaptive additions. Not surprisingly, there are some dead ends, redesigns, and restarts. There may or may not be an overall plan, strategy, or system-change vision at the outset, but it is likely — as fields of practice develop — that more shared and strategic goals are formulated and acted upon.

How might generative philanthropy unfold and develop? There is no one approach; but several possible starting points hopefully attract other investors and stakeholders and seed the startup of promising social innovations:

- A multiyear initiative spins off assets that other investors or implementers take up and grow.

FIGURE 1 Generative Philanthropy's Approach to Innovation

Learning as you go is a professional norm and requirement for activating generative philanthropy.

- A foundation seeds multiple functions, like policy and peer learning, in a common field of practice.
- Brainstorming with neighborhood residents, youth, or parents produces new insights, opportunities, and agendas for change.
- Entrepreneurial leaders change organizational roles and take up new innovations and campaigns.
- Evaluation resources for innovative pilot projects support replication and policy advocacy.
- An anchor organization opens new lines of business or partnerships that bring in fresh perspectives and investors.
- Strategic, multifoundation conversations lead to ongoing collaboration, common pilot projects, and/or complementary investments that divide up the work.
- Foundations provide capital for nonprofit intermediaries to scale innovations through government partnerships.

No matter the pathway, generative philanthropy requires foundations to support a more open, iterative, and experimental approach. This type of professional practice is more in line with thinking about “reflective practitioners” or “enterprising practitioners” in professions that confront inherently messy or thorny social problems for which there are no set answers or directions (Schön, 1983; Giloith, 2007). Learning as you

go is a professional norm and requirement for activating generative philanthropy.³

Generative Philanthropy in Action

Generative philanthropy depends upon the willingness of foundations to look back over many years, even decades, at the life cycle and trajectory of specific activities in support of social innovations. Similar long-term, generational research from the related fields of community development finance, neighborhood planning, and workforce development informs our understanding of generative philanthropy (Ratliff & Moy, 2004; Giloith, 1996; Giloith, 2004; Giloith, 2010; Hebert, 2010; Holt & Moy, 2011). The evolution of long-term evaluation strategies also illustrates the adaptive development of measures and knowledge building (Fiester, 2010). Moreover, the notion of “creeping and leaping” from social movement theory emphasizes that the pace of innovation is not uniform and that different grantmaking strategies may be required to support different types of change, and that sometimes innovations are dormant (Duberman, 2000).

The balance of this article reviews five economic-opportunity innovations that illustrate the practice of generative philanthropy. (See Table 1). The economic-opportunity field is particularly open to generative philanthropy as it is marked by multiple strategies, fragmented systems, funding silos, and the need for improvements in practice and policy. Change strategies often focus on system building, adaptation for excluded populations, evidence gathering, and creating new types of partnerships. These examples draw from the work of program officers at the Annie E. Casey Foundation from the 1990s to the present. Casey has played an important role in these five examples, but many nonprofits, public agencies, foundations, and civic leaders have played and continue to play critical roles. As will be seen, generative philanthropy requires a long attention span, not necessarily a huge amount of money, other foundation resources, and the ongoing leadership of

³ I am unabashedly a fan of the foundation program officer role as engaged, collaborative social investor and learner. I include in my notion of program officers those staff involved in research, policy advocacy, and social investing.

TABLE 1 Generative Philanthropy Examples

Time	1990s	2000s	2010s
Sector Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported leading sector partnerships Casey Jobs Initiative - 6–8 sector pilots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National convenings to build the sector field Published sector case studies & research Supported local funder collaboratives for sector partnerships Launched National Fund for Workforce Solutions Construction sector studies & networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matched Social Investment Fund (SIF) Federal policy advocacy Apprenticeship policy advocacy Started sector initiative focused on youth & young adults Supported rigorous evaluations Focus on equity
SNAP E&T	SNAP outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketed approach at community meetings Provided technical assistance to states Seattle pilot data/ evaluation of pilot Statewide adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy advocacy USDA demonstration Seattle Jobs Initiative named Center of Excellence
CWFs	Evaluations showed links among jobs, work supports, & asset building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated service (Center for Working Families - CWF) prototyping Partnership with LISC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SparkPoint Centers of United Way/Bay Area SIF Grant LISC LISC/SparkPoint
EITC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National advocacy & outreach Child Tax Credit advocacy Documentation of Chicago EITC Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported city pilot partnerships Brookings IRS data analysis Technical assistance, conferences & quality audits Advocacy against predatory tax prep practices/products State EITC advocacy Tax-time savings products IRS investment in EITC partnership infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitioned national network to new home Affordable Care Act technical assistance Refund to Savings demonstration Single-parent EITC demonstration National policy advocacy/Child Tax Credits
Financial Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community, peer coaching for jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWF prototyping Central New Mexico Community College coach training CWF-LISC adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research on models & standards Asset funders research Evaluation studies Stand By Me - financial coaching model

entrepreneurial organizations.⁴ In these examples, Casey financial investments ranged from several hundred thousand dollars to \$1 million or more per year, but grantmaking was only a part of the picture. Casey and other foundations invested in data collection and evaluation, peer learning and capacity building, policy advocacy, leadership, and communications.

All five examples of economic-opportunity innovations, described over the course of three decades, began with a diversity of prototypes or pilots with different sponsors, moved to knowledge and field building, and eventually developed policy advocacy agendas and campaigns. They display several patterns:

- Several innovations required evidence building about core results and policy advocacy for broader adoption.
- Several innovations increased the usage of existing, underutilized public resources for new or underrepresented populations.
- Several examples added new program components along the way.
- Several innovations contributed to building systems and/or durable partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders.
- One innovation took an approach from one field of practice and adapted it for engaging low-income families.

Sector/Workforce Partnerships

Sector or workforce partnerships engage groups of similar businesses in planning and implementing job training and career pathways that benefit both business and workers. Sector partnerships develop approaches to overcome barriers to accessing “middle skill” jobs — barriers that may include a lack of skills, hard-to-access locations, and discrimination in sectors like construction and manufacturing (Waldron, 2008). In the past, sector partnerships were not a priority of the

public workforce system; rather, they were created by entrepreneurial nonprofits and their business and union partners. The sector movement has emerged over the past three decades through the efforts of a loosely connected group of practitioners, foundations, technical assistance groups, and government innovators. Development did not follow a straight course and ran into many roadblocks along the way (Giloith, 2010).

Casey explored the sector approach in the 1990s, when the common wisdom was that “nothing worked.” Casey made individual grants to groups like Cooperative Home Care Associates and invested in a multiyear Jobs Initiative in six cities that ultimately created 45 diverse workforce projects, including a number of sector partnerships. The purpose of the Jobs Initiative was to support the adoption of promising practices connecting low-income communities to regional economies and helping workers achieve long-run job retention and advancement. As the initiative ended in the early 2000s, Casey decided to build on the initiative’s lessons about sector-focused strategies, rather than replicate the entire initiative, which included other workforce and system-change efforts (Waldron, 2008).

In 2003, Casey co-convened an American Assembly national conversation with other funders and practitioners to discuss how to better support sector partnerships, for which there were no dedicated funding streams (Giloith, 2004). Debates revolved around going deeper on sector as a workforce strategy, focusing on key capacities of entrepreneurial partnerships, or identifying such scaling platforms as community colleges. At the same time, Casey supported, with local and national funders, the invention of Boston SkillWorks, a funder collaborative that expanded career-development opportunities for low-income workers. Inspired by these discussions and emerging models, Casey and other funders started a small demonstration project, invested in a feasibility study for a venture fund, and networked with sector practitioners around the country. During this period, other

⁴By small amounts of money, I mean in the range of \$20,000 to \$50,000 that can pay for meetings, policy advocacy, extra interviews for an evaluation, and communications.

foundations and nonprofits invested in more rigorous evaluations of sector strategies and leadership development in the sector field.

In 2007, Casey and several other funders launched the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, which provided matched national funding with almost three dozen local funder collaboratives (Waldron, 2008). Casey also invested directly in sector partnerships and funder collaboratives in a few local communities, including its hometown of Baltimore. Scaling sector partnerships was fueled by awards from the federal Social Innovation Fund, and the inclusion of sector-oriented language in the recent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act signaled some success in institutionalizing the sector approach (Conway & Giloth, 2015). Likewise, there is significant state and federal interest in spreading the apprenticeship model — the original sector partnership — holding promise for expanding employer buy-in and financing. Today, Casey is investing in adapting the sector approach for youth employment and career development.

There was no road map for scaling sector strategies and partnerships. Multiple nonprofits, foundations, advocates, and government agencies played specific roles and took up different parts of movement building. Sometimes there was coordination; many times, healthy competition animated the field. Individual funders would support variations or add a new piece to the infrastructure puzzle. And there were failures and setbacks. Data and evaluation played an important role because the case for sector partnerships had to be made multiple times. The stakeholder that didn't come to the forefront as much as expected was the business community.

Center for Working Families

The Center for Working Families (CWF) approach bundles or integrates employment and training, work supports, and financial services to make it easier for households that need economic resources but have time and transportation challenges accessing disconnected services. The CWF effort was a big lift, because many of these services operated within policy and practice silos

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and rarely collaborated. They were seen as different fields of endeavor. Casey began prototyping CWFs in the early 2000s with a variety of nonprofits and discussions with service providers and families. Was there one best platform? What was the right balance between a real front door and virtual services? Could CWFs be franchised? Casey's then-president, Douglas Nelson, described his vision of CWFs as combining features of union hiring halls, settlement houses, and ethnic-based religious institutions. (Gewirtz & Waldron, 2013). Nonprofits and funders invented the practice of CWFs and helped scale them across the country.

A key feature of CWFs is engaging residents so they will come back multiple times for services. CWFs must be welcoming places, but a family-friendly atmosphere is not enough to generate return visits. Financial coaching became a central feature of engaging participants in working toward their own goals, which might take years and require multiple steps. Coaching also helped guide the integration of services and the collection of data for program improvement. Not all CWFs have been adept at long-term family engagement and, therefore, results have varied (Walker & Huff, 2012).

As interest grew, Casey decided not to control its CWF brand but instead to provide research and practice knowledge to strengthen and replicate the integrated-services approach. Casey's key research on how participants move faster toward their goals if they receive bundled services helped other funders and nonprofits get on board. By 2005, Casey had formed a partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC), a national community development intermediary, which scaled CWFs as Financial Opportunity Centers first in Chicago and then nationally. The LISC took a framework and made it into a replicable model, bringing in additional funders and a federal Social Innovation Fund award that required more rigorous evaluations, and it showed modest, positive employment and credit impacts (Walker & Huff, 2012; Roder, 2016).

At the same time, Casey supported the United Way of the Bay Area's CWF model, named SparkPoint Centers, which focused attention on setting income- and asset-related targets. Casey has continued its support for CWFs through research, peer learning, and establishing with other funders the Working Families Success Network. Most recently, Casey and other funders have supported a four-state, 19-college effort to adopt CWF principles and practices, an initiative led by Achieving the Dream. Integrated services using financial coaching has now become a promising practice across many populations, organizations, and funding streams.

CWFs face challenges because they are not owned by one funding source or government agency, making it difficult to maintain core resources. Another challenge is that CWFs work best for those who remain engaged, yet many participants do not show up more than once: as with many social programs, engagement and retention is key if the intervention is to be effective. Finally, evaluations and discussions with families show that moving ahead is difficult without more intensive investment in human capital for career advancement and better jobs.

CWFs represent a commonsense, integrated-service approach. It caught on among many service provider networks, leading to many centers of gravity, funders, program variations, and performance metrics, not all with Casey involvement. Casey played an important initiation role, but supported intermediaries to rebrand CWFs and explore different ways of scaling.

SNAP Employment and Training

The federal food stamp program, now known as SNAP, supports several employment and training programs, known as SNAP E&T. One of those is aimed at food stamp-eligible populations and reimburses states half of program costs.⁵ This flexible financing approach, existing since 1985, helps pay for many of the supportive services, such as case management, tutoring, and transportation, needed to promote participants' success in school and on the job. But reimbursement requires a nonfederal match from local and state funds or philanthropy, such as community colleges or United Ways. Not surprisingly, the program has been underutilized in part because federal and state policymakers don't fully understand its regulations or appreciate its opportunity, discouraging many states from taking on perceived reimbursement risk.

In the mid-2000s, as part of its Making Connections community-building initiative, Casey provided technical assistance to many of its community sites to develop SNAP E&T pilot programs. In Seattle, the lead agency was the Seattle Jobs Initiative, which worked closely with the state of Washington and local nonprofits on a demonstration project for metro Seattle. Few of the other states with pilot programs got them off the ground, but Seattle saw the scaling of effective SNAP E&T programs because of collaboration among nonprofits, community colleges, local funders, and state and federal agencies.

As the Seattle pilot program progressed, Casey provided additional financial resources to gather and analyze data about program outcomes in conjunction with the state (Kaz, 2015). The

⁵There are three types of SNAP E&T programs, two of which are formula-funded and used for food stamp recipients. The 50 percent reimbursement program is targeted to food stamp-eligible adults, is voluntary, and is funded on a reimbursement basis.

program showed positive impacts for a harder-to-employ population, while leveraging other workforce resources. It was system building. At the national level, Casey supported the National Skills Coalition, a coalition of workforce advocates, to take up advocacy for a more robust SNAP E&T program after a false start with another nonprofit advocate. Ultimately, after several years of advocacy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture created a SNAP E&T demonstration program in 10 states based in part on the experience in Seattle and Washington state. The Seattle Jobs Initiative became the technical assistance provider for this important demonstration as a federally designated Center for Excellence (Kaz, 2016).

SNAP E&T started as a pilot and technical assistance project. It grew incrementally in Washington because the state government was willing to experiment. New funding for evaluation and advocacy built the case, and then national advocates took over. At first, the thought was that scaling would occur state by state, but many states and regional offices were reluctant risk-takers. A national demonstration project emerged to galvanize adoption and led to another round of technical assistance and evaluation. While the SNAP program funding is at risk in Congress, this example of generative philanthropy has led to important advances in workforce funding and advocacy.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and related tax benefits (i.e., the Child Tax Credit and state EITCs) represent one of the largest and most effective anti-poverty programs in the United States. While most eligible families obtain these benefits, the most vulnerable sometimes do not; and private tax preparation services take advantage of many families through high-cost loans and other services. Moreover, many low-income workers fail to consistently take advantage of the tax-time moment to improve their financial standing, by, for example, saving a portion of their tax refund (Holt, 2011). Nevertheless, the EITC field has evolved into a rich set of collaborations and partnerships as a result of multiple public and private investments.

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Casey supported the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' EITC policy advocacy and outreach in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s began supporting city campaigns for volunteer, free tax preparation, first in Chicago and then in two Making Connections sites, in Camden, New Jersey, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Over time, Casey supported a range of field-building activities that

helped the EITC and asset-building field grow to hundreds of local and state campaigns; those activities included sharing data from the IRS about EITC usage, technical assistance conferences, state policy advocacy, high-quality audits and evaluations, tax-time savings/split refund pilots with Doorways to Dreams (renamed Commonwealth), joint purchasing, and advocating against predatory tax preparers and their products (Holt & Moy, 2011; Brown & Moy, 2010). In recent years, Casey has supported the transition of field building from the National Community Tax Coalition to the Corporation for Enterprise Development (recently renamed Prosperity Now). In addition to national EITC advocacy and technical assistance, Casey remains a major supporter of the robust EITC and asset-building campaign in Baltimore.

Tax credits have bipartisan support, but a narrow focus on error rates has always garnered unfair attention from some quarters. Nonetheless, important federal innovations are being considered related to expansion and simplification of the EITC, noncustodial parent tax credits, and experiments with universal income. The EITC innovation grew up around a solid and large-scale federal policy that allowed for multiple strands of local innovation for free tax preparation, consumer advocacy, linking to asset building, and new forms of outreach. These local efforts encouraged the development of a national technical assistance and advocacy infrastructure that has helped build the field and secure new financing sources for local partnerships. Data availability, federal advocacy, and cross-community learning have been essential for building this field. But, it must be emphasized, there was no overarching plan that guided funders and other stakeholders. The movement responded to threats and opportunities in innovative ways.

Financial Coaching

Achieving financial stability is a long process for low-income families, who deal with low-wage jobs, debt, and a lack of financial knowledge. Financial coaching combines aspects of life coaching and financial-skill building as an alternative to classroom-based financial education that has not shown overall success in promoting

changes in financial behavior (Collins, 2015). That is, behavioral change means families making concrete progress with financial habits related to budgets, expenditures, and savings. The key practice of coaching is to have participants develop their own goals and aspirations as opposed to relying on templates for making financial changes. Multiple funders, nonprofits, and government agencies have developed and supported financial coaching as a core feature of economic-opportunity strategies.

As discussed earlier, Casey made financial coaching the centerpiece of its Center for Working Families integrated-services approach to foster engagement, goal-setting, and accountability. Casey helped Central New Mexico Community College develop and spread financial coaching training, supported the Center for Financial Security at the University of Wisconsin to advise the financial coaching field, co-funded evaluations of financial coaching with the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau and the Baltimore CASH Campaign, and funded a variety of field-building research projects with the Asset Funders Network. Several other foundations and banks have stepped in to invest in financial coaching.

A challenge Casey and other partners have grappled with is identifying sustainable funding models to support financial coaching for low-income families, which almost always costs more than classroom-based financial education. Nevertheless, the financial-coaching field has grown dramatically — with support from a variety of additional funders — and its positive impacts relate to financial capability, family well-being, workforce development, and post-secondary attainment.

The turn to financial coaching from a primary reliance on group-based financial education opened the door for a diverse field that seeks to customize as well as scale financial capability and behavioral change. Learnings from behavioral economics and neuroscience have complemented evaluation studies of coaching used for different populations in different contexts (Babcock, 2014). Multiple funders, often using coordinated

and complementary grantmaking, have built the financial-coaching field over time. Now some of these funders are banding together to agree on common standards, performance metrics, and financing sources while they better understand the reach of financial coaching across the country.

Generative Philanthropy Themes and Lessons

Generative philanthropy occurs more frequently than understood and has potential for wider application for specific strategies, foundations, and nonprofit partners. Two philanthropy challenges, however, get in the way of greater adoption: shortsightedness and an appetite for the new. Innovation is sometimes valued more than the careful support of promising organizations and practices. New approaches are certainly needed, but careful assessment of what is already in place holds great potential for developing innovations and for scaling what works.

The five examples of generative philanthropy illustrate the time it takes to shepherd innovations to reach key next steps. This process requires foundations to use multiple tactics that go beyond regular grants — convening, policy advocacy, and human capital — as well as targeted grantmaking, initiative design, and technical assistance. More specifically, several examples demonstrate the importance of timely research and data collection to advance opportunities and thwart unwarranted criticisms. Sticking with an innovation sounds easy enough, but it often requires asking uncomfortable questions, switching horses, and navigating complicated organizational and leadership transitions. Above all, relationships matter — so that as grant periods end and time goes by, foundations remain open to new directions or unanticipated opportunities.

Were there inflection points in these examples that facilitated scaling? Solid research certainly provided a powerful platform for advocacy and increased financing in many different contexts. Ceding control allowed other organizations and funders to play important roles. And picking the right organizations or intermediaries accelerated many of these innovations. In other cases,

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the scaling opportunity was built into the policy innovation itself or an institutional partner, such as community colleges. And, to be transparent, not all inflection points were funded by Casey, such as the pathbreaking “gold standard” research on sector strategies (Maguire, Freely, Clymer, Conway, & Schwartz, 2010) or the advent of the federal Social Innovation Fund.

Understanding generative philanthropy would be enriched by mapping the many contributions of other nonprofits, foundations, civic leaders, and related stakeholders. There is a broader generative philanthropy story to be told about how fields of practice are built by the unique and complementary investments of time and money. Telling that story requires first that individual foundations get their own stories right. Casey has been an important player in such stories, but other foundations and nonprofits have led the way on evaluation, peer learning, leadership development, and state policy advocacy. (See Figure 2.) Telling the broader story, however, will require support for evaluations that look at fields of practice, networks, and long-term and diverse pathways for innovation.

Do social innovations ever run their course and conclude? Recognizing the end or final pivot of a social innovation is a function that generative philanthropy can play. The nonprofit sector is littered with projects and organizations that continue to chew up resources way beyond

FIGURE 2 Casey and Non-Casey Investments in Sector Strategies

their useful lives. Generative philanthropy should not be an excuse for extending the life of less-than-productive efforts. But the truism holds that in endings are beginnings, and that the best of social innovations may yield new opportunities after reflection and the passage of time.

Foundations wanting to embrace or deepen their practice of generative philanthropy should think carefully about changes that may be required in their institutional cultures and practices. Generative philanthropy works best to develop new solutions over the long term. When applied to existing consensus solutions, it may contribute to dilution of effort and unnecessary duplication. Eight suggestions point out fundamental capacities required for generative philanthropy:

1. Foundations should be outward facing and support field-based knowledge building.

Deep engagement with the field is essential for seeding innovations and joining with others to grow these innovations to scale. Casey accomplished this through designing its own multiyear initiative and through collaborative grantmaking to build the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and national workforce advocacy capacity.

2. Foundations should look in the rearview mirror as well as anticipate new opportunities. Receiving final grant reports should not be the end of the story, even when things seem to have gone wrong. Are there opportunities for additional investment or changing foundation tactics? Casey is still ruminating on its multiyear Jobs Initiative that ended in 2005, recently publishing a reprise of work on racial and ethnic equity (Kingslow, 2017).

3. Foundations should build on organizational and human leadership developed in specific places and in specific fields of practice. These capacities are fundamental to generating and supporting new rounds of innovation. The Seattle Jobs Initiative, for example, started as a Casey Jobs Initiative site and subsequently has played multiple roles in promoting sector partnerships and SNAP E&T. Casey's Making Connections community-building initiative served as one platform for all five of the economic opportunity examples.
4. Foundations need staff with deep content knowledge who, at the same time, are not blinded by technical knowledge. Program officers must anticipate what is possible, be open and curious about what nonprofit partners see as future opportunities, and recognize the "how to" or tacit knowledge of practitioners. Giloth and Austin's *Mistakes to Success* contains several chapters on the successes and failures of workforce innovations, including sector partnerships and EITC strategies (Giloth & Austin, 2010).
5. Foundations benefit from long-term, reciprocal relationships with nonprofit and government partners. Foundations rightly worry, however, about fairness and favoritism and the inevitability of the "ask" that comes with familiarity. In some sense, money can get in the way of the field-building that is necessary to achieve greater impact. Only partnering relationships based on learning and common goals will position foundations to learn about next steps and how they might be helpful, not through proposals alone. The LISC and United Way became key partners for developing and scaling CWFs.
6. Foundations should support program officers working with other local and national foundations. This does not require giving up strategic focus and points of view, but it can mean giving up a narrow focus on the individual foundation brand. It also means finding complementarity and synergy among colleagues so that grants and opportunities can be linked for greater impact. Sometimes program officers find their closest colleagues among program officers from other foundations. For example, Casey staff have been deeply engaged in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative, the Working Families (and Students) Success Networks, and multiple philanthropy affinity networks.
7. Foundations should learn from mistakes and successes, tolerate pauses in action, and be ready to jump on board when directions change (Giloth & Austin, 2010). Can foundations be curious and open to being led by grantees, acknowledging tacit knowledge and risk-taking without a road map that spells out exactly where they are going? The sector partnership field, for example, experienced the failure of several replications, contrary research evidence, and the misapplication of sector strategies in neighborhoods rather than regions. There are tools that can help with this emergent learning (Darling, 2014), but foundations will need to think clearly about their commitment to knowledge building.
8. Generative philanthropy is difficult to pursue without flexible pools of financial and human resources. Opportunities appear unexpectedly and tend to disappear if not embraced. Foundations need to plan for these opportunities by allocating resources for special projects or requests of different sizes and timeframes and supporting flexible grantmaking for nonprofits. But it's not just about money — foundations need to be flexible in staffing, convening, leadership, and civic advocacy. This will require candid conversations with boards about the process of long-term social innovation and the need for opportunistic resources. In many respects, for example, the SNAP E&T story grew out of incremental, discretionary resources with no big definitive plan.

Unfortunately, foundations do not always pay close enough attention to what they have helped create in the past and present, nor stand ready to support potential next steps. They can become enamored by the new, especially in the guise of strategic “big bets.”

Casey colleagues invented generative philanthropy through their great work over the years as program officers. I have received insightful comments on this article from Irene Lee, Patrice Cromwell, Don Baylor, Allison Gerber, Kirsten Moy, Charles Rutheiser, Willa Seldon, Miriam Shark, and Tom Waldron. I also want to thank the editors and reviewers of *The Foundation Review* for their helpful comments. The opinions and conclusions in this article, however, are my own and not necessarily those of my colleagues, nonprofit partners, or the Casey Foundation. Finally, thanks to Marci Weiner, Dawn Guevara, and Laura Hayes for production help.

Conclusion

Promoting social innovations, however small, requires many steps, much time, and a willingness to learn and adapt as solutions emerge. Foundations play a critical role in supporting and scaling social innovations by deploying multiple tools and resources in addition to flexible money. Unfortunately, foundations do not always pay close enough attention to what they have helped create in the past and present, nor stand ready to support potential next steps. They can become enamored by the new, especially in the guise of strategic “big bets.” At the same time, generative philanthropy is less useful when known solutions or social changes need scaling through systemic change or civic mobilization. Generative philanthropy offers a framework for understanding and enriching philanthropy’s long-term role and collaboration with partners from a more developmental perspective. It can hopefully inspire and guide new foundation practices that pay attention to what comes next after the first or second investment of time, money, knowledge, and leadership.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Doug Nelson and Ralph Smith for enabling the creation of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Family Economic Success group, and Patrick McCarthy for supporting its continuation. Casey is a national kids’ foundation that employs multiple investment tactics. Many

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Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving

Reviewed by Elenore Garton

Generation Impact begins with a bold claim: that rising major donors will be the most significant philanthropists ever. While I don't have a crystal ball, I am convinced by Sharna Goldseker and Michael Moody's examples of exciting trends and their analysis of these changes. They make a compelling argument that Generation X and millennials will change philanthropy for the better, but that getting there could get messy.

I know both authors, personally and professionally, and I was immediately intrigued when I heard they were combining forces on a project. Moody is an astute academician of philanthropy and Goldseker is an accomplished practitioner of next-generation philanthropy. The result of their collaboration is an insightful and balanced look at the state of the field as it shifts. Furthermore, their insights are punctuated by personal accounts, which makes this book accessible and readable. Moody and Goldseker share their unique access to a world that few others can explain in such a clear and comprehensive way. Everyone interested in philanthropy, nonprofits, impact investing, and social-change efforts will find a connection with their work.

The book is arranged into four sections. The first introduces the "impact revolution" that is being led by next-gen donors via new strategies and tools; the second shows the ways in which these donors are "going all in" using new and traditional resources. The third section examines the balancing act between respecting history and disrupting the status quo. Finally, the authors

explore the development of personal philanthropic identities among next-gen donors.

Moody, Michael and Goldseker, Sharna (2017) *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 978-1-119-42281-5

The first section begins with an exploration of impact as the primary goal of next-gen philanthropy. There are a variety of definitions and of strategies to achieve it, and little agreement on how to measure it. But this generation of donors prioritizes

impact above all else and wants to witness it, through site visits and other face-to-face interactions. The authors wisely remind us that social problems are complex, and that lasting change takes time and is hard to see in the making. No one wants to feel that their efforts, money, or time are wasted. If impact is the top priority for this generation, some exciting advances in metrics and measurement may be in the offing — but it will also require us to change what we measure, and to have patience.

These realities lead to the next chapters, which address strategies and tools for change. While the authors see some shift in the issues that are energizing next-gen donors, that shift is less dramatic than the rhetoric would have us believe. What this new class of philanthropist is investing in hasn't changed as much as who they invest in and how they hold them accountable. A few sectors, such as the arts and health, and combination organizations — United Ways,

for example, are going to have to find new ways to attract and retain support. The authors also do a good job of laying out the four strategic components most valued by next-gen donors: due diligence, focus, root causes, and impact. Conflicts between “old” and “new” will arise, they warn — and attention must be paid to unintended consequences, because they are inevitable. They dig into newer tools and methods that have been developed for greater impact: impact investing, funding beyond grants (e.g., low- and no-interest loans, crowdfunding, collaborative giving), and support for advocacy, policy change, and movement building. There is value to most tools, new and old, if used correctly, Moody and Goldseker remind us; the shiny new tool is not always the one most appropriate for the job. And they observe that critical reflection on strengths and capacities, by individuals and organizations, greatly improves the opportunities for influence.

The second section looks at three ways in which next-gen donors are going “all in.” There are interesting illustrations of their desire for meaningful engagement with the organizations they fund and the value they place on learning through doing, and the authors are careful to acknowledge the power dynamics inherent in donor-donee relationships. There is also an examination of what next-gen donors bring to the table beyond money: They want to be valued for skills and talents that could be useful to the organizations they support. And the importance of social networks — an emerging concept in philanthropy — is explored. In the internet age, the power of networks to communicate, organize, and affect change is profound. Harnessing that power will result in philanthropic shifts whose success will rely heavily on the soft skills of humility, listening, and building trust.

The third section of the book explores balancing one’s values and vision for the future with respect for the work of earlier generations. As Justin Rockefeller observes, “How you make your money and what you do with your money has moral consequences, both by commission (what one does with one’s money) and omission (what one doesn’t do with one’s money).” Aligning one’s values with giving and

investment maximizes potential impact on the lives of others. While values are often rooted in a family legacy and next-gen donors acknowledge prior greatness, their desire to accomplish even more is a common theme. This desire can cause conflict, which can be mitigated through clear communication across generations. Through thoughtful integration and sustained effort, bringing multigenerational teams with a range of perspectives to the table — bridging the wisdom and experience of older generations with the creativity and innovation of younger ones — can strengthen the work.

The closing chapters examine the development of a philanthropic identity: What do we care about and why? How do we spend our time, talent, treasure, and ties? Gen X and millennial donors — whether wealth creators or wealth inheritors — are on a developmental journey and, like earlier generations, want to find their own path. Generation Impact provides a window into the minds of people who will likely impact all of our lives through their philanthropy.

We need to recognize that we are talking about a heterogenic group of individuals and institutions whose power is growing as wealth is being concentrated into fewer hands. As donors, they want to change the ways we give and they want those changes now — they aren’t waiting for their third act, as many wealth creators have done in the past. Many of them are taking an integrated approach to their personal, professional, and philanthropic identities, and with a palpable urgency given the global scope of challenges and a dissatisfaction with the lack of progress using traditional strategies. By understanding these donors and their innovations, the social sector as a whole can evolve to be more effective. Leaders of nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, philanthropic advisors, and philanthropic families and institutions themselves have much to learn from this groundbreaking work.

Reviewed by Elenore Garton, Ph.D., co-founder and chief impact officer, Tablecloth Inc.

executive summaries

Results

7

Community Foundation-Led Giving Days: Understanding Donor Satisfaction and Philanthropic Patterns

Benjamin S. Bingle, Ph.D., DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership

Philanthropic giving days have gained popularity as opportunities for community foundations to engage new donors, create excitement about organized philanthropy, and democratize charitable giving. This article examines Give Local America 2016, a giving day beset by a technology failure that created challenges for donors and community foundations throughout the United States, and explores the experiences of donors as giving day participants. Data suggest that giving days are not crowding out donations at other times of the year, but instead are viewed as a supplementary option for the public to engage philanthropically. The article concludes with practical recommendations for community foundations that are considering hosting a giving day.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1384

20

Transforming Coalition Leadership: An Evaluation of a Collaborative Leadership Training Program

Jung Y. Kim, M.P.H., Todd Honeycutt, Ph.D., and Michaela Morzuch, M.P.P., Mathematica Policy Research

Effective coalitions need leaders who are able to reach beyond individual, group, and sectoral boundaries to advance a shared vision for healthy and thriving communities. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership to create a one-year pilot, the Community Coalition Leadership Program, to test a new approach to providing training in collaborative leadership. This article discusses the program, whether and how it improved participants' individual and coalition leadership skills, and the implications for foundations and other entities seeking to increase interdependent leadership capacity within community coalitions.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1385

Tools

41

Considerations for Measuring the Impact of Policy-Relevant Research

Megan Collado, M.P.H., Lauren Gerlach, M.P.P., and Caroline Ticse, B.A., AcademyHealth, and Katherine Hempstead, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Philanthropy, and the research and analysis it supports, has an important role to play in informing policy and making government more effective. Yet all too often, foundations and other research funders struggle to understand whether and how their investments have affected policy. This article highlights the findings of an 18-month pilot project conducted by AcademyHealth to help the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation better understand the impact of a subset of the foundation's research grants, across investment types, on health insurance coverage and health reform, and to help inform how the foundation may more systematically track and measure the impact of the research it funds.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1386

Sector

54

Inside the Black Box: Investigating Philanthropic Foundation Strategies in a Dynamic Environment

Amanda J. Stewart, Ph.D., North Carolina State University

Foundations have been described as black boxes – implying that we know very little about what happens between inputs and outputs. We do know that they operate in dynamic environments and must adopt strategies to be effective in the face of change. This article, which examines the strategies of 29 foundations operating in one southeastern state, provides fresh insights into how foundations fulfill their missions. The article is based on a research study that used semistructured interviews to explore how foundations approached grantmaking. Further, understanding the motivations and adaptations of these strategies helps explain the collective work of the sector.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1387

65

Philanthropy: Evidence in Favor of a Profession

Heather L. Carpenter, Ph.D., Notre Dame of Maryland University

Philanthropic employees have been cautious in implying that they are pursuing a career in philanthropy. And in this journal, Karl Stauber (2010) presented an argument in support of such caution: that philanthropy failed to meet all seven standards posited by Burton J. Bledstein, that when met, define a profession. This article presents a literature review and findings from a survey of 500 members of the Council on Foundations that offer evidence for the counterargument that philanthropic work requires specialized education and training to master a set of core competencies. While this article does not argue for or against the question, determining whether philanthropy as a field can rightly be considered a profession has important consequences.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1388

Reflective Practice

76

Funder Collaborations – Flourish or Flounder?

William Porter, B.A., Kelly James, J.D., and Robert Medina, M.A., Education First; and Barbara Chow, M.P.P., William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Funders regularly collaborate to leverage their influence, channel their funding, and mobilize grantees in the same direction. Our sector's default assumption is that more collaboration is better. Why do some funder collaborations flourish, and others flounder? The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Education First participated in a half-dozen joint funding efforts to support the success of the Common Core State Standards in the nation's K-12 public education system. Looking critically at these efforts, we learned lessons about why some collaborations are more effective. Funder collaborations work best when participants recognize key milestones in a partnership and make decisions at distinguishing stages to set up success.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1389

Looking in the Mirror: Equity in Practice for Philanthropy

Ashlee Young, M.P.H., and Jaime Love, M.Ed., *Interact for Health*; Nancy Csuti, Ph.D., *The Colorado Trust*; and Christopher J. King, Ph.D., *Consumer Health Foundation*

Philanthropy still needs to be reminded that there is no such thing as a post-racial America, and that systemic racism continues to underlie the problems foundation funding attempts to address. While many foundations have found it challenging to address equity in their grantmaking, they have found that process far more comfortable than addressing equity within their own organizations. This article describes the efforts of three foundations in various stages of seeing themselves through an equity lens: the Consumer Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, and Interact for Health. It is impossible for a foundation to effectively fund with an equity lens unless it commits to doing the necessary internal work around the same issue, and embarks on its own journey toward equity.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1390

Generative Philanthropy: Long-Term Investments in Economic Opportunity

Robert Giloth, Ph.D., *Annie E. Casey Foundation*

Generative philanthropy is a collaborative investment practice that tests prototypes and identifies new opportunities that, over time, can focus direction and generate momentum for change. It is an incremental, decentralized approach to investment in communities. This article clarifies the theory and practice of generative philanthropy and contrast it with other approaches. It provides an in-depth discussion of the meaning of generative philanthropy, offers five examples of the approach related to economic opportunity, and draws lessons for future practice. Generative philanthropy can hopefully inspire and guide new foundation practices that pay attention to what comes next after the first or second investment of time, money, knowledge, and leadership.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1391

Book Review

Review of *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors Are Revolutionizing Giving* by Michael Moody and Sharna Goldseker.

Review by Elenore Garton, Ph.D.

Generation Impact begins with a bold claim: that rising major donors will be the most significant philanthropists ever. The authors make a compelling argument that Generation X and millennials will change philanthropy for the better, but that getting there could get messy. By understanding these donors and their innovations, the social sector as a whole can evolve to be more effective. Leaders of nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, philanthropic advisors, and philanthropic families and institutions themselves have much to learn from this groundbreaking work.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1392

call for papers

FOR VOLUME 10, ISSUE 4

Themed Issue on Inclusive Community Change

Abstracts of up to 250 words are being solicited for Volume 10, Issue 4 of *The Foundation Review*. This issue, sponsored by the California Endowment and the Colorado Health Foundation, will focus on what has been learned about creating inclusive change in communities, with both the process and the outcomes reflecting the range of stakeholders in communities. Submit abstracts by February 28, 2018 to submissions@foundationreview.org. The issue will be published in December 2018.

Some of the issues that might be addressed include:

- How do equity considerations influence strategy, including leadership of the work, identifying desired outcomes, and building power in communities?
- What do we know about what it takes to create long-term sustainability, especially around resident engagement and policy change and its implementation?
- What is the dosage of a concerted community-led intervention that is required to achieve population or community-wide impact? What do we know about how long it takes to achieve change?
- What different roles can foundations play in supporting community change and what commitments, mindsets, and capacities do they need to play these different roles effectively?
- Foundations typically design their own community change initiatives and then try to leverage other funders' investments in them. What are the advantages and disadvantages of alternative scenarios, such as building on other funders' existing investments or designing investments collaboratively with other funders and community partners?
- What are the pluses and minuses of a focus on a specific community issue — education, economic development, etc. — vs. a broad community development approach?
- Are different approaches needed in rural and urban communities?
- What are models for engaging the whole range of stakeholders, including residents, community leaders and policymakers?

Abstracts are solicited in four categories:

- **Results.** Papers in this category generally report on findings from evaluations of foundation-funded work. Papers should include a description of the theory of change (logic model, program theory), a description of the grant-making strategy, the evaluation methodology, the results, and discussion. The discussion should focus on what has been learned both about the programmatic content and about grantmaking and other foundation roles (convening, etc.).
- **Tools.** Papers in this category should describe tools useful for foundation staff or boards. By “tool” we mean a systematic, replicable method intended for a specific purpose. For example, a protocol to assess community readiness and standardized facilitation methods would be considered tools. The actual tool should be included in the article where practical. The paper should describe the rationale for the tool, how it was developed, and available evidence of its usefulness.
- **Sector.** Papers in this category address issues that confront the philanthropic sector as whole, such as diversity, accountability, etc. These are typically empirically based; literature reviews are also considered.
- **Reflective Practice.** The reflective practice articles rely on the knowledge and experience of the authors, rather than on formal evaluation methods or designs. In these cases, it is because of their perspective about broader issues, rather than specific initiatives, that the article is valuable.

Book Reviews: *The Foundation Review* publishes reviews of relevant books. Please contact the editor to discuss submitting a review. Reviewers must be free of conflicts of interest.

Questions? Please contact Teri Behrens, editor of *The Foundation Review*, with questions at behrenst@foundationreview.org or call (734) 646-2874.

thanks to our reviewers!

We'd like to thank our peer reviewers for Volume 9 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!

If you are interested in peer reviewing for Volume 10, send an email to Teri Behrens, editor in chief, at behrenst@foundationreview.org.

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Published Quarterly by the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University

www.thefoundationreview.org

ISSN 1944-5660 | eISSN 1944-5679