

6-2018

## Front Matter

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### Recommended Citation

(2018) "Front Matter," *The Foundation Review*: Vol. 10: Iss. 2, Article 3.

<https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1421>

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## In this issue:

### Results

Partner-Centered Evaluation Capacity Building.....	<b>7</b>
A Small Foundation's Impact Assessment.....	<b>26</b>

### Tools

Simple Financial Metrics.....	<b>41</b>
-------------------------------	-----------

### Sector

The Role of Data in Philanthropy...	<b>52</b>
Philanthropy-Private Sector Partnership.....	<b>67</b>

### Reflective Practice

Developmental Evaluation of a Collective Impact Initiative .....	<b>80</b>
Resilient Funders.....	<b>93</b>

Executive Summaries.....	<b>106</b>
--------------------------	------------

Call for Papers .....	<b>109</b>
-----------------------	------------

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# THE FoundationReview®

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

VOL. 10 ISSUE 2 | JUNE 2018

*The Foundation Review* is the first peer-reviewed journal of philanthropy, written by and for foundation staff and boards and those who work with them implementing programs. Each quarterly issue of *The Foundation Review* provides peer-reviewed reports about the field of philanthropy, including reports by foundations on their own work.

**Our mission:** To share evaluation results, tools, and knowledge about the philanthropic sector in order to improve the practice of grantmaking, yielding greater impact and innovation.

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



**Front cover photo:**  
Fountain on the campus of Grand Valley State University.

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Valerie Wojciechowski



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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

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Dear readers,

As usual with our unthemed issues, this issue includes articles on a broad range of foundation practices, with several focusing on evaluation. We start the issue with **Frantzen, Solomon, and Hollod's** article on building grantees' evaluation capacity using a highly participatory process. While there has been a great deal of emphasis on nonprofit capacity building in recent years, the process used here is somewhat unusual in focus on individual grantee needs and the particular barriers to evaluation that each of them faced.

Two articles share a “less-is-more” approach to foundation work. **Pond, Shah, and Sak** provide a case study of how a small foundation, with limited resources for assessment and impact evaluation, approached the challenge of evaluating their overall impact. The foundation funds youth-led social change, using a cohort model. They found improvements in five of six key outcome areas in the two cohorts they examined. They used the results of their assessment to revise some of their reporting approaches as they expanded their grantmaking to a new city.

**Polanco and Snow** share the Financial Health Analysis Tool that can be used to foster conversation with potential and ongoing grantees about their financial position. The tool presents four years of key financial indicators in graphs and charts that create a kind of dashboard of a nonprofit's financial health over time. This small set of metrics highlights patterns and trends that can help grantmakers and nonprofits see how the financial management of an organization is advancing its mission and strategy.

While most of the emphasis on data in philanthropy has been in the context of evaluation, **Bixler, Zappone, Li, and Atshan** identify the many ways in which data are used by foundations, including needs identification, evaluation and learning, and measuring community impact. They have six recommendations for effective practices in integrating a data perspective into philanthropic work. These include: view evaluation as a tool for learning, create a safe space to share data, clarify what is “good data” and “good evaluation”, fund evaluation efforts of partners, support evaluation capacity, and advocate for community data infrastructure.

While there has been a fairly extensive body of work on partnerships between foundations and government, less has been written about partnerships between foundations and private sector organizations. **Scott, Lamont, Wandersman, Snapper, Shah, and Eaker** draw upon an evaluation of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Humana partnership to highlight key insights for forming and implementing a formal partnership between a philanthropy organization and an investor-owned business. They note that many of the basic principles of good partnerships are the same, with some nuances due to the differences in organizational priorities.



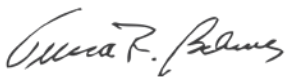
*Teri Behrens*

**Landers, Minyard, and Price** share reflections on the Colorado Health Foundation's efforts to create a collective impact initiative to help tackle the state's complex, systems-level health issues. They describe the role of developmental evaluation and a realist framework in aiding both the initiative's steering committee and the Colorado Health Foundation's decision making. Ultimately, the collective impact frame as implemented did not prove to be appropriate and sustainable in this context.

There has been a global shift in political leadership over the past decade that has resulted in increasing pressure on civil society. **Allan and DuPree** reflect on how funders can adapt to changing political environment. They identify three characteristics that are especially critical: flexibility; diversity and redundancy; and resourcefulness and ability to learn. Drawing on lessons from the experience of those working in countries of concern, this article proposes a conceptual framework for weathering threats from changing conditions, with the aim of providing a simple yet powerful way of assessing and improving current practices.

From analyzing the financial data of individual organizations to positioning philanthropy in the context of global political challenges, this issue represents the breadth and depth of the field. The range of knowledge, skills and perspectives needed to be effective in the field continues to change and expand.

We're pleased to be on this journey with you.



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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*This publication is printed with soy ink. Printed in USA*

## Results

7

Partner-Centered Evaluation  
Capacity Building: Findings from a  
Corporate Social-Impact Initiative

*Lisa Frantzen, M.B.A., TCC Group;  
Julie Solomon, Ph.D., J. Solomon Consulting,  
LLC; and Laura Hollod, M.P.H., Johnson &  
Johnson Global Community Impact*

26

Cricket Island Foundation: A Case  
Study of a Small Foundation's  
Impact Assessment

*Anna Pond, M.P.A., Anna Pond Consulting;  
Seema Shah, Ph.D., COMMIVEDA  
Consulting; and Elizabeth Sak, M.B.A.,  
Cricket Island Foundation*

## Tools

41

Less Is More: How Grantmakers  
Are Using Simple Financial Metrics

*Hilda H. Polanco, C.P.A., FMA and  
Luther K. Snow, M.B.A., Independent Consultant*

## Sector

52

Unpacking the Role of Data in  
Philanthropy: Prospects for an  
Integrated Framework

*R. Patrick Bixler, Ph.D., University of Texas at  
Austin; Marisa Zappone, LMSW, Mission Capital;  
Lin Rui Li, University of Texas at Austin; and  
Samer Atshan, University of Texas at Austin*

67

Learning from the Opportunities  
and Challenges of a Philanthropy-  
Private Sector Partnership

*Victoria C. Scott, Ph.D., M.B.A., University of  
North Carolina at Charlotte; Andrea Lamont,  
Ph.D., MAS, and Abraham Wandersman, Ph.D.,  
University of South Carolina; Leslie Snapper,  
B.S., University of North Carolina at Charlotte;  
Mona Shah, Ph.D., M.P.H., Robert Wood  
Johnson Foundation; and Erik Eaker, M.H.A.,  
Humana, Inc.*

## Reflective Practice

80

Developmental Evaluation of  
a Collective Impact Initiative:  
Insights for Foundations

*Glenn Landers, Sc.D., Georgia State University;  
Kelci Price, Ph.D., Colorado Health Foundation;  
and Karen Minyard, Ph.D., Georgia State  
University*

93

Resilient Funders: How Funders  
Are Adapting to the Closing Space  
for Civil Society

*Chris Allan, M.A., Ajabu Advisors, and  
Scott DuPree, Ph.D., Civil Society Initiatives*

## Plus

106

Executive Summaries

109

Call for Papers



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