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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.

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Editorial

Dear readers,

As I write this, we are beginning the fourth week of working from home as COVID-19 continues to ravage the world and glimmers of hope are appearing. We're seeing infection and mortality rates slow down as physical distancing measures are having the intended results. (Keeping our distance from other people is now the best way we can show our love of humanity.)

The philanthropic sector has stepped up to meeting the needs of individuals and communities as the twin health and economic crises continue. We're seeing flexibility on the part of grantmakers in meeting the immediate needs of individuals, families, and organizations. Reporting requirements, funding restrictions, and streamlined proposal processes are being put in place. We're seeing nonprofit organizations adapt and innovate quickly to meet the need for their services, finding no-contact ways to deliver meals and working to get technology in the hands of people who need to learn or get health care remotely.

Over the next year, as we move from crisis to recovery, we'll need to continue to innovate. While the articles in this issue were written well before COVID-19 was part of our vocabulary, these authors share tools and frameworks that have great potential for supporting the work of foundations in this next phase.

Wojcik, Ford, Hanson, Boyd, and Ashley focus on decision-making processes in participatory grantmaking efforts. Participatory grantmaking is a framework for engaging community members in determining what should be funded. As we recover, engaging communities in determining what they need will only become more important. The authors compare two methods for getting input, and found that neither

approach overcame the bias toward larger organizations. They conclude that more consideration needs to be given to the criteria being used for selection, regardless of the method.

Randell and MacDavey report on another tool for engaging community members. As part of ongoing efforts to engage grant partner voices in their work with young people who have intellectual disabilities, program staff at the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation used human-centered design. This approach proved an effective team-building initiative with the potential to make grantmaking more participatory and to generate grantmaking opportunities that better incorporate beneficiary voice.

Especially during times of crisis, collaboration across parts of the sector is critical. **Ely, Edwards, Hogg Graham, and Varda** used a social network analysis of community partners focused on addressing needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortages to illustrate how the results can constructively inform foundations on how they are viewed by community partners along dimensions of trust, value, resource contribution, activities, and contribution to outcomes. While this work was not done during the current crisis, social network analysis has potential to be useful as foundations assess their role with respect to other organizations in recovery efforts.

The disparate impact of the crises on communities of color has again highlighted the need for systems change to create more equitable communities. **Takada, Nolan, and Mani** describe the use of the Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool as a guide for focusing philanthropic efforts and creating greater understanding of their advancement.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for thinking about how private and public action work toward creating equitable communities. **Candela, Demarie, and Mulassano** explore using the SDGs as a tool for communication; advocacy; linkages to common, worldwide efforts; and evaluating a foundation's own choices (explicit or tacit). Compagnia di San Paolo, an Italian grantmaking foundation, assessed how successfully its work aligned with the SDGs. They found the foundation had made significant contributions to the goals in a number of areas funded by Compagnia. The analysis is particularly noteworthy in its identification of an unintentional pattern of convergence between the foundation's activities and the SDGs.

Responses to the current crisis have been informed by what we know from previous disasters. Foundation archives can be an important resource for understanding how and why foundations take the actions they do. **Eaton and Kowalewski** describe how two different foundation approached preserving their records to support future research and analysis on limited-life foundations. Once they close their

doors, much institutional knowledge is lost. The authors examine two specific cases — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which began planning for its archives early in its work, and the Atlantic Philanthropies, which began the process later. This article also offers recommendations for foundations seeking to plan and structure archives, with specific suggestions for organizing and preserving records at various stages of an organization's lifespan.

Nonprofits often point out that while funders encourage them to collaborate, especially in challenging times, large foundations often fail to even collaborate across internal units. **Kabel, Cruz, Rosga, Esparrago Lieu, and Blackmur** explore the challenges of internal, cross-team work. They conclude that as philanthropy seeks to support collaboration among grantees and launches new multifunder collaboratives to affect systems change, structures within foundations may need to change to actualize this ideal.

Challenging times require smart, adaptive philanthropy, and the articles in this issue — while not written to address the current situation — offer some timely suggestions for foundations seeking to respond effectively.



Wishing health and hope for everyone,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Teresa R. Behrens'.

Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D.

Editor in Chief, *The Foundation Review*

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

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The Foundation Review is published quarterly by the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Participatory Grantmaking: A Test of Rubric Scoring Versus Popular Voting Selection in a Blinded Grantmaking Process

Oktawia Wojcik, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and LesLeigh Ford, Ph.D., Keely Hanson, M.P.A., Claire Boyd, B.A., and Shena Ashley, Ph.D., Urban Institute

Keywords: *Participatory grantmaking, equitable grantmaking, review processes, implicit bias*

Introduction

Under traditional funding mechanisms, small nonprofits struggle to increase their visibility and establish the level of legitimacy needed to compete for funding (McGinnis & Ashley, 2011). Although the results of empirical studies are mixed, most scholars find that size is a consistent predictor of whether an organization receives a grant from foundation and government funders (Ashley & Van Slyke, 2012; Church & Parsons, 2008; Gordon, Knock, & Neely, 2009).

Why size? It is likely that size serves as a proxy for reputational capital and capacity, with larger organizations that have more name recognition inspiring more confidence in their ability to deliver results. And the majority of nonprofits are considered to be “small” — often classified as public charities with budgets under \$5 million. In fact, the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics shows that three in 10 nonprofits have expenses under \$100,000, and over two-thirds have less than \$500,000 in expenses, composing less than 2% of public charity expenditures overall (McKeever, 2018).

Because small, community-based organizations play a critical role in delivering services and expressing diverse community values, it is important to find ways to minimize disparities in their access to philanthropic resources. Frequently mentioned by scholars and critics of philanthropy as one proximate cause of this disparity is the risk perception among foundation boards and program officers. Traditional

Key Points

- Because small, community-based organizations play a critical role in delivering services and expressing diverse community values, it is important to find ways to minimize disparities in their access to philanthropic resources. Participatory grantmaking is widely viewed as a practice with good potential to mitigate this tendency.
- This article addresses the design of this approach to grantmaking and, specifically, whether changing the decision-making process in addition to changing the decision-makers has an effect on how grants are allocated. It examines the design of two grant review processes — one based on popular voting, the other a more traditional rubric approach — and compares their outcomes to learn whether a more open and discursive process based on popular voting for grantee selection helps to overcome bias against small organizations.
- The article concludes with research implications for participatory grantmaking and grantmaking practice. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to the growing body of empirical knowledge around the design of participatory grantmaking processes.

grantmaking is often criticized as a reflection of the preferences or perspectives of an insular group of foundation staff or board members. Ostrower and Stone (2006) observed that the

This study is focused on the design of participatory grantmaking and addresses the question of whether changing the decision-making process, in addition to changing the people making decisions, has an effect on how grants are allocated.

particularism of philanthropic staff can lead to decisions that do not entirely align with those of the public.

For this reason, considerable effort has been devoted to understanding how small nonprofits can be better equipped to compete for grants, and how to structure grant competitions without placing small organizations at a disadvantage. One proposal to mitigate the tendency for foundations to favor grantees that are larger, older, and urban-based is participatory grantmaking, an approach whose logic is rooted in notions of democratizing access to capital. At its core, participatory grantmaking is about opening up the process of grantmaking decisions to people outside of the foundation as part of an effort to shift the locus of power, control, and voice (Gibson, 2017).

This shift can happen in many forms, with examples that range from the longstanding practice of volunteer committees at local United Ways to technology-enabled public-voting processes that the Case Foundation brought to its Make It Your Own Awards (Gibson, Levine, & Dietz, 2010). The expectation is that greater public and stakeholder involvement in a grantmaking decision is likely to lead to a more diverse grantee mix — with more small nonprofits among them — than often results from a traditional, more insular approach. This assumption derives in part from evidence from public administration, where greater public participation has contributed to

broader redistribution of public resources in some cases (Hong & Cho, 2018).

There are, however, two reasons to challenge the logic behind participatory grantmaking. First, it presumes that the decisions of ordinary people would not be shaped by the same organizational characteristics of potential grantees that influence the decisions of foundation staff and boards. Research on grantmaking clearly shows that donors, both individual and institutional, rely on a number of easily observable organizational characteristics, such as age or size, as proxies for the quality and performance of nonprofits (Weisbrod & Dominguez, 1986). This tendency stems from the fact that donors often operate in environments with a high degree of information asymmetry that limits their ability to monitor a nonprofit's performance. An empirical study by Johnson (2013) looked at grant-decision data from community boards making recommendations for foundation grants and found grantee selection among those boards to be largely consistent with that of traditional boards. Except for one statistically significant difference — community boards more often than traditional ones favored slightly smaller organizations — decision-makers who were more representative of the community tended to select grantees using the same heuristics as members of traditional boards, favoring older and more financially efficient organizations.

Second, there is much more attention in participatory grantmaking to the who, rather than the how; it presumes that changing the people making decisions — without changing the decision-making process or criteria for a successful proposal — is enough to shift the outcome toward more grant opportunities for small nonprofits. As Irvin and Stansbury (2004) point out, proponents of participation have to look beyond the simple assumption that involving the public will impact decisions. In public administration, scholars are more clear that the relationship between community involvement and organizational decisions is mediated by the design of or how the community members are engaged in public participation programs (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006). Thomas (2012) highlights

the value of deliberation in the decision-making process, specifically describing how allowing citizens to participate and discuss their choices in small groups allows for learning that can shape their decisions.

This study is focused on the design of participatory grantmaking and addresses the question of whether changing the decision-making process, in addition to changing the people making decisions, has an effect on how grants are allocated. In particular, we are interested in whether a more open and discursive process based on popular voting for grantee selection helps to overcome the tendency toward bias against small organizations. The sections that follow describe the grantmaking process used in this study to test whether and when small nonprofits had a greater chance of being selected under different types of review conditions, and present the results of an empirical analysis of the data from that grantmaking process. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research for participatory grantmaking and grantmaking practice.

The 500 Cities Data Challenge

In collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the CDC Foundation launched the 500 Cities project in 2015. Using a small area estimation approach, the project's data set provided city-level information on health outcomes, risky behaviors, and use of prevention services for the 500 largest American cities.

The 500 Cities Data Challenge, initiated by the RWJF and administered and managed by the Urban Institute in 2017, invited researchers and practitioners from around the United States to use the 500 Cities data set¹ in combination with other nonhealth-related data to either conduct analyses to answer a cross-sector question or build practical tools to target a cross-sector intervention. The competition was open to private, public,

To encourage a wide range of submissions from a diverse pool of applicants, the Urban Institute and RWJF team developed a two-stage application process, leveraged their networks, and conducted targeted and social media outreach. The first stage involved a brief letter of intent from prospective grantees; a group from that phase was selected to advance to the full application stage.

nonprofit, and grassroots organizations seeking to advance understanding of health outcomes relative to other social factors associated with those outcomes, including housing, education, transportation, violence, and civic participation. Through the challenge, 10 projects were funded and the total awards approached \$1 million.

The Urban Institute and the RWJF incorporated elements of equitable and participatory grantmaking practices to conduct research while managing this grant opportunity. One design element was to test different review processes to assess whether their design had an impact on scoring outcomes that would determine which organizations would advance from the idea-submission phase to the full proposal stage.

The Idea/Letter of Intent Phase

To encourage a wide range of submissions from a diverse pool of applicants, the Urban Institute

¹ This data set and corresponding website sheds light on the geographic distribution of health-related outcomes, providing a unique opportunity for community leaders to bridge the gap between health outcomes and housing, education, transportation, and other key social determinants of health.

and RWJF team developed a two-stage application process, leveraged their networks, and conducted targeted and social media outreach. The first stage involved a brief letter of intent (LOI) from prospective grantees; a group from that phase was selected to advance to the full application stage. Applicants were asked to describe how they would utilize the 500 Cities data with other data to design innovative solutions or conduct analysis that would build a foundation for more comprehensive cross-sector collaboration in their communities. The LOI was designed to present a very low barrier of entry for prospective applicants and involved the submission of either a one-page narrative or a three-minute video.² The Challenge team also conducted targeted outreach to identify a broadly diverse set of applicants. The strategy leveraged the RWJF's grantee, partner, and collaborator networks to promote the upcoming grant opportunity and also included direct outreach to networks and organizations that would not traditionally pursue these types of data-focused grant opportunities, but whose missions aligned with the challenge. The team also designed and implemented a comprehensive social media outreach plan that utilized both the RWJF and Urban Institute platforms to increase visibility of the challenge beyond limited listservs.

This strategy yielded a diverse applicant pool of nonprofits, government agencies, universities, private companies, and emerging collaborations from 51 cities in 29 states. In all, the challenge received 75 expressions of interest: 64 were written LOIs and 11 were in video format. In early December 2018, the Urban Institute conducted reviews of the LOIs in two review conditions — a traditional, rubric-based review and a popular-voting review — to determine which applicants would be invited to submit a full proposal.

The LOI Review Process

From the original 75 LOI submissions, 13 were excluded because they either did not utilize

the 500 Cities data or failed to present an idea that combined the 500 Cities data with other data. The remaining 62 LOIs — 54 letters and eight videos — were eligible for review. Prior to review, the Urban Institute team blacked out identifying information in the written LOI statements to guard against name-recognition bias (Paarlberg, McGinnis Johnson, & Hannibal, 2019); video submissions could not be de-identified in the same manner. Further, financial or organization-capacity information was not requested during the LOI phase.

Rubric-Based Review

Two researchers from the Urban Institute with expertise in nonprofit and philanthropy read or watched each submission and scored it using a basic rubric that included the following criteria:

- Cross-sector — seeks to answer a well-defined question that advances understanding at the intersection of health and other outcomes; offers a cross-sector intervention to improve health outcomes, prevention, and/or behaviors.
- Data-driven — incorporates 500 Cities data as a major component of the project.
- Advances use of 500 Cities data — serves as an example of how to use the data set through a replicable and open approach.
- Targeted communities — from an organization working in rural and/or underrepresented communities and proposing a project or idea that focuses on improving outcomes for those communities.
- Innovative — uses an unconventional approach or tests a novel application of the data set.
- Feasible — proposes a project or idea that can be completed within the one-year grant period using the proposed funding.

²The written submissions were to be no longer than one 8.5-by-11-inch page and single spaced, using an 11-point font and one-inch margins. The video entries were limited to three minutes and an Audio Video Interleave (AVI) format; professional video quality was not required and cellphone recordings were sufficient.

TABLE 1 Comparison of Review Processes

Characteristic	Rubric Review	Popular Voting
Discussion between reviewers	After scores assigned	During scoring process
Number of reviewers	2	Range from 1 to 6
Reviewers' expertise	Researchers with philanthropy subject matter expertise	Researchers and research support staff without philanthropy subject matter expertise
Scoring mechanism	Points	Star stickers

- Overall quality of application and fit with challenge.

Reviewers were instructed to score each criterion on the following scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor. The reviewers' scores for each application were then averaged to create total scores, which the project team used to evaluate the strength of each LOI.

Popular-Voting Review

The popular-voting mechanism, which is gaining popularity through crowdfunding platforms and philanthropy prize competitions as an alternative to traditional expert- or criteria-based participatory review processes, was used as a test case in comparison to the rubric-based review of the challenge applications.

In our popular-voting format, researchers and research support staff from across the Urban Institute — including researchers without expertise in nonprofit and philanthropy — were invited to review the letters,³ which were placed in random order along the walls in the style of a gallery walk, and asked to attach star stickers to the LOIs they would recommend for advancement to the next stage. Each of the 17 reviewers was assigned to one of six gallery walks and had access to an unlimited number of stickers. They were given up to 60 minutes to indicate applications as most promising, based on general guidance and a brief project overview, but they were not provided a rubric. They were allowed

to converse with other reviewers about the applications while making their recommendations, and all votes were viewable by all reviewers throughout the review process. In total, 120 stickers were allocated across the 54 letters; on average, each reviewer issued eight stickers and spent 26.8 minutes on the review. (See Table 1.)

Hypotheses

This study sought to measure the comparative success of small organizations in advancing from LOIs to the full application stage under the rubric-based review and the popular-voting review. Each context represents a different design for a participatory-grantmaking approach under conditions where any markers of organization size or capacity have been excluded or de-identified. Thus, any observed difference in outcomes are likely to be the result of the review conditions: rubric versus popular voting.

We hypothesized that there would be no size-related difference in the selection of organizations in the rubric review process, since the LOIs were de-identified, and we expected the quality of the LOIs would be largely consistent. Under the popular-voting condition we expected that smaller organizations would have a better chance of advancing in the application process, since scoring was guided by the innovativeness of the proposal.

These hypotheses were made with several considerations. On the one hand, we might expect

³ Videos were not included in the popular-voting review because video screens could not be incorporated into the gallery walk.

that there would be no difference in the selection of small organizations in the two review conditions because of the de-identified nature of the review. On the other hand, because there could be a correlation between the size of the organization and the quality of the writing of the LOI or its proposal, we might expect that smaller organizations would be less likely selected under the rubric review process because it encourages a focus on specific evaluation of quality through assessment of the proposal's innovativeness and feasibility. In the popular-voting process, these factors could have guided some reviewers but not others, so we expected that any of these unseen factors that are correlated to nonprofit size may not be as strongly predictive as in the rubric review process.

Data and Methods

The data used for the analysis were collected from the scoring through the two review processes and were combined with organizational data collected from nonprofits' Form 990 and organization websites for government and private organizations.

- *LOI score/advanced to full application.* In the rubric review, the LOI scores ranged from lowest (27) to highest (81). The average score was 52.85. For this analysis, any organization that scored higher than the average met the threshold to advance to the full application stage. In the popular-voting review, scores ranged from 0 to 6. Any application that received three or more stickers met the threshold to advance to the full application stage.
- *Budget size.* We classified organizations as small, with a budget of less than \$5 million; medium, with \$5 million to \$50 million; or large, with a budget greater than \$50 million. To avoid overfitting the analysis, we condensed the six budget ranges used to classify nonprofit size in previous studies (Frailey & Kardos, 2017) into three categories. We derived budget data from the Form 990 data for nonprofits and universities and government budget data from government sources, but were not able to identify budget data for the for-profit organizations in the sample.
- *Organization type.* The sample consists of organizations that submitted LOIs for the 500 Cities Data Challenge, including universities, for-profit companies, nonprofits other than universities, and government agencies. We categorized these organizations using information retrieved from their websites. We controlled for organization type in this study because universities, government agencies, and for-profit organizations may have a higher capacity to respond to a data competition.
- *Geography.* The sample includes organizations from 23 states, which were classified into regions determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. We used the Northeast as the comparison group, because historic patterns of nonprofit funding show the largest distribution of funds targeted to nonprofits located in that region (McKeever, 2018).

Statistical Model

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + r$$

Y is a measure of the score the applicant received. In the rubric review, the scores from each of the two reviewers were averaged to determine the final score. In the popular-voting review, the score is based on the number of stickers received. One specification of the model uses the score as the variable, and in the other the score has been converted to a dummy variable to indicate whether the applicant's score was above the threshold to advance from the LOI stage to the full application stage.

X_1 is a dummy variable for whether the organization had a budget less than \$5 million.

X_2 is a dummy variable for whether the organization was a nonuniversity nonprofit or either a university, for-profit organization, or government entity.

X_3 is a dummy variable for whether the organization was located in the Northeast.

TABLE 2 Comparison of Selected Applicants

Characteristic	Rubric Review	Popular Voting
<i>Number of Applications</i>		
Reviewed	62	54
Written submission	87.1%	100%
Video submission	12.9%	0%
<i>Number of Applicants</i>		
Advanced	32 (50%)	29 (47%)
Budget Size		
Small (n = 14)	21%	43%
Medium (n = 13)	61%	61%
Large (n = 29)	55%	41%
Organization Type		
Nonprofit (nonuniversity) (n = 26)	50%	46%
University (n = 15)	60%	40%
Government (n = 13)	30%	54%
For-profit (n = 6)	66%	50%
Region		
Northeast (n = 19)	58%	47%
Outside Northeast (n = 43)	46%	46%

Note: 16 of the same organizations were advanced in both review conditions.

Descriptive Statistics

In a comparison of groups selected for the full application stage, results indicate slight differences. (See Table 2.) A smaller proportion (21%) of the 14 organizations that were considered to be small were selected under the rubric review than with the popular-voting review (43%). We measured the statistical significance of this difference using linear and logistic regression. (See Table 3–Table 6.)

Multivariate Analysis

In both the linear regression (using assigned scores) and the logistic regression (whether or not an organization met the threshold to advance to the full application stage), small organizations had either a lower score or were less likely to be advanced than were medium-size or large organizations in the rubric review, but size was not a statistically significant factor in the popular-voting review results.

Limitations

The results of this analysis are limited by the small sample size, which may lead to biased results. Another limitation of this study is how the popular-voting process may have introduced bias into our findings. Many of the reviewers in the popular-voting condition have some research expertise; as a result, this composition of reviewers may on average be more likely to select LOIs that have a more robust research background or rigorous research design. This has the potential to favor organizations that detail more sophisticated data collection or analysis strategies or evaluation.

Still, as an exploratory study, our findings indicate that it is worth further research into the differing patterns of selection under different review conditions in participatory grantmaking. That research may explore the potential moderation effects of deliberation — whether and how open discussion in the popular-voting review

TABLE 3 Linear Regression: Rubric Review Results

Applicant Characteristic	Coefficient	P-value
Small	-9.13513	0.014***
Nonprofit	2.568994	0.430
Northeast	-0.2891117	0.931
Constant	53.34203	0.000

Note: ***Significant at 0.05 level; n = 56 (no budget data for for-profit organizations)

TABLE 4 Linear Regression: Popular Voting Results

Applicant Characteristic	Coefficient	P-value
Small	-0.4212513	0.443
Nonprofit	0.2206041	0.655
Northeast	0.1804207	0.722
Constant	2.112055	0.000

Note: n = 49 (no video submissions reviewed in popular voting; no budget data for for-profit organizations)

TABLE 5 Logistic Regression: Rubric Review Results

Applicant Characteristic	Coefficient	P-value
Small	-1.971072	0.015***
Nonprofit	0.6614155	0.317
Northeast	0.4829123	0.477
Constant	-0.0570408	0.885

Note: ***Significant at 0.05 level; n = 56 (no budget data for for-profit organizations)

TABLE 6 Logistic Regression: Popular Voting Results

Applicant Characteristic	Coefficient	P-value
Small	-0.2161387	0.747
Nonprofit	0.0902846	0.881
Northeast	-0.1610368	0.796
Constant	-0.0855059	0.825

Note: n = 49 (no video submissions reviewed in popular voting; no budget data for for-profit organizations)

process impacted the results, and reviewer expertise — whether reviewer expertise in nonprofits and philanthropy shapes reviewer perspectives in the rubric review condition.

Discussion

We believe the findings of this research are valuable to both philanthropy practitioners and scholars. Given that grant funders tend to favor large nonprofits and the consistent evidence that small nonprofits have a difficult time securing needed resources, these findings are sobering. Even in participatory contexts (both review conditions in this study were participatory in the most basic sense, in that the decisions were made by people outside the foundation), small organizations can still face funding challenges based on the type of review condition being used.

This emerges as an even more compelling finding given that this outcome can occur even when the application being reviewed is a simple, one-page statement of an idea and no data revealing the size of the organization is included in the review. Overall, the results suggest that grantmakers may need to think seriously not only about how we broaden participation with a more inclusive review process, but also about our use of rubrics and criteria in the selection process.

Even in participatory contexts (both review conditions in this study were participatory in the most basic sense, in that the decisions were made by people outside the foundation), small organizations can still face funding challenges based on the type of review condition being used.

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Human-Centered Design and Foundation Staff: A Case Study in Engaging Grant Beneficiaries

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Keywords: Human-centered design, design thinking, inclusion, foundation staff, grant beneficiaries, proximity, participatory grantmaking, culture, emergent strategy

Introduction

A regional grantmaking focus affords the staff at the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation the opportunity to get to know the communities where they fund. When you work in just six counties — two in western New York and four in eastern Massachusetts — and focus primarily on at-risk youth, you can spend time interacting with your grant partners and, if you choose, with the young people your grants are intended to benefit. But meaningful interactions, particularly the latter, don't just happen. There is a real temptation to let the relationships you build with grant partners — in our case, the community-based service providers that work with young people — be a proxy for getting to know the young people themselves.

Staff engagement with grant beneficiaries has happened at the Tower Foundation, albeit sporadically and not very strategically. Over the last five to six years, engagement strategies included focus groups with young people and family members, immersive site visits, and art shows in our offices. Sometimes these strategies informed grantmaking, but usually they did not. Beginning in 2018, the foundation's seven-person staff took on a human-centered design project that shows more promise of authentic engagement than most past efforts. With human-centered design methods as a framework, the team worked to unpack assumptions about social and recreational programming for young people with intellectual disabilities. Staff interviewed youth directly in developing a project

Key Points

- As part of ongoing efforts to engage grant partner voices in their work with young people who have intellectual disabilities, program staff at the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation have explored the notion of being physically proximate to these young people as a way to more authentically listen to them and their families — those for whose benefit the foundation's grant dollars are ultimately intended.
- The staff's most recent engagement strategy looked at a way of solving problems and designing solutions for people that puts those people at the focal point of the process: human-centered design. For the Tower Foundation, this approach proved an effective team-building initiative with the potential to make grantmaking more participatory and to generate grantmaking opportunities that better incorporate beneficiary voice.
- This article describes human-centered design and its applications in a foundation setting. It briefly discusses philanthropy's history with the approach, recounts the foundation's past efforts to engage grant beneficiaries and shares the journey with one project that sought to understand barriers to a particular grantmaking objective, reflects on some learning for the field, and concludes with thoughts about where human-centered design can take us next.

To expand on its commitment to four funding areas — intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health, and substance-use disorders — the foundation’s board of trustees looked at the change it envisioned for each.

to create an advisory group to review and give feedback on grant proposals, beginning with the foundation’s grant cycle in the fall of 2019.

The foundation is excited about the potential of this work to advance a number of objectives:

- Achieve genuine staff engagement with young people with intellectual disabilities, one of the key populations our grantmaking serves;
- Provide a socially engaging opportunity for young people with disabilities to share their lived experiences in service of community change;
- Make our grantmaking more inclusive and participatory, incorporating grant beneficiary feedback in funding decisions; and
- Create an opportunity for shared learning with existing and potential grant partners, other funders, and the general community.

This article will recount the foundation’s past efforts to engage grant beneficiaries, discuss its initial foray into human-centered design, look briefly at philanthropy’s history with the approach, share our journey with one particular project, reflect on some learning for the field, and conclude with some thoughts about where human-centered design can take us next.

Prior Engagement Strategies

The Tower Foundation’s first concerted effort to actively engage youth and their families stemmed from the drafting of funding priorities at a board retreat in early 2011. To expand on its commitment to four funding areas — intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health, and substance-use disorders — the foundation’s board of trustees looked at the change it envisioned for each. It came up with four to six results statements per funding area, crafted as statements of well-being (e.g., “Young people make healthy and informed choices about alcohol and drugs”).

Over the course of the year, these statements were tested and validated at over 30 community focus groups. Focus group participants included professionals from each respective field; educators; government representatives; law enforcement personnel; parents, guardians, and other family members; and, where possible, the young people at the center of the work. For example, one focus group, conducted in the library of a school for young people with dyslexia, asked 10 15- to 18-year-olds to critique the priorities and language around the foundation’s learning-disabilities results statements. Many results statements were revised based on focus group feedback.

This process quickly sold foundation leadership and program staff on the value of engaging youth voice. Over the next few years, program officers worked to make site visits more immersive and participatory. Staff members have spent a day as campers at summer programs for people with disabilities, joined in therapeutic yoga classes, shadowed street outreach workers, sat in on vocational skills classes, and joined peace circles. Twice, the foundation offices functioned as gallery space, showcasing client artwork from several grant partners working with disabled youth. An artists’ reception with cabaret-style performances closed out both exhibits.

While staff found value in these activities, it was hard to qualify that value. Client voice was not really being captured in any formal — or actionable — way. And staff acknowledged this

in conversations about inclusion. Foundation leadership has consistently provided the time and space to look beyond purely transactional grantmaking to relational grant-partner interactions that are less formal, promote conversation, and build on personal connections. Foundation staff carved out time to reflect on barriers to active engagement and empathy. The entire team completed several of Harvard University's Implicit Association Tests¹ and reflected on individual and collective room for growth in overcoming implicit biases. Finally, the foundation landed on human-centered design as a way for staff to further and more genuinely engage and react to the voice of grant partners and the youth they serve.

Initial Exposure to Human-Centered Design

The Tower Foundation was first exposed to the human-centered design model in the spring of 2016 by a health conversion foundation that was interested in exploring the model for applications to its own grantmaking. The Health Foundation for Western & Central New York hoped to make its programming for older adults more responsive to real community need. With that population front of mind, several members of its staff began an online human-centered design course. The hope was to explore a problem-solving approach that expressly leverages the knowledge, experience, and input of the end user — the person benefiting from a product or service — in order to design potential solutions to social problems. The Health Foundation invited several other individuals from the nonprofit community, including a Tower Foundation program officer, to learn alongside its staff.

A five-person team came to the table with varying degrees of familiarity with the human-centered design approach. Taking an online class together provided the team with a shared orientation to the framework and language of human-centered design.² The course led students through the three phases

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of human-centered design: inspiration, ideation, and implementation. The team members selected a pre-scoped design challenge, food insecurity in aging adults, which allowed them to jump right into practicing with some human-centered design tools. Over six months, team members immersed themselves in settings where aging adults gathered for meals, designed interview questions that spoke to the issue of food access, and interviewed experts on aging and nutrition as well as aging adults themselves. They practiced strategies to make sense of what they had heard through these interviews and designed some potential solutions to food insecurity. Team members brought back to their respective organizations enthusiasm for a tool with the potential to more actively engage their target populations.

Tower Foundation staff saw human-centered design as a chance to improve upon efforts to capture the voice of grant beneficiaries. For a few months, it remained a standing agenda item for program staff meetings. But the ongoing attempts to get physically and empathetically closer to our grant partners and the young people they work with, whether through site visits or the art shows in our office, felt just not quite

¹ See <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>

² The course, "The Course for Human-Centered Design," was offered through Acumen, an online leadership platform. The curriculum was co-developed in partnership with IDEO, a global design company.

Predictive models that grantmakers have long favored are not the best at accommodating iterative processes and repeating feedback loops. But with the advent of emergent strategy in the last few years, the grantmaker toolbox is expanding.

sufficient. So the program staff signed on for an online course of their own. The intent was to test the human-centered design model, whether it led to a project or not.

Human-Centered Design and Philanthropy

In trying on human-centered design for size, foundation staff were by no means pioneers. The notion that the end-user experience should be integrated in the development and testing of new products and services has informed commercial and industrial design since the 1950s. Design thinking, the practice of designing through a process of multiple iterations of user feedback with real empathy for the end user, has brought us the computer mouse and the Airbnb user experience. But only in the last decade have the principles of human-centered design been adopted for use in addressing social issues. And it should not be particularly surprising that philanthropy would be a little late to the party. Predictive models that grantmakers have long favored are not the best at accommodating iterative processes and repeating feedback loops. But with the advent of emergent strategy in the last few years, the grantmaker toolbox is expanding.

A few years ago, Kania, Kramer and Russell described the shift from strategic philanthropy to emergent philanthropy:

Emergent strategy does not attempt to oversimplify complex problems, nor does it lead to a “magic bullet” solution that can be scaled up. Instead, it gives rise to constantly evolving solutions that are uniquely suited to the time, place, and participants involved. It helps funders to be more relevant and effective by adapting their activities to ever-changing circumstances and engaging others as partners without the illusion of control. (2014, p. 3)

And, as their essay goes on to suggest, human-centered design is one of several tools better aligned with approaches that recognize the complexity of many societal issues:

Today’s strategy-setting activities often fail to incorporate the dynamic nature of complex systems, miss the interdependence of players affecting an issue, and under-appreciate the human dynamics that accelerate or impede change. No one decision-making framework can capture all the dynamics of a complex system. Nevertheless, greater use of systems maps, stakeholder analysis, cultural frames, and story-telling frames such as scenario planning — combined with an orientation to hypothesis testing and prototyping (via methodologies such as human centered design) — can provide more useful frameworks for strategic decision-making that addresses complex problems. (Kania et al., 2014, p. 13)

IDEO, the international consulting firm that was behind the Apple mouse, supported the emergence of design thinking and human-centered design as tools for improving lives and conditions in vulnerable communities. In 2009, IDEO developed the HCD Toolkit for applying human-centered design concepts to social-sector projects and, in 2015, followed that up with a field guide. Philanthropy took notice.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is probably the best-known champion of human-centered design. It has partnered with the U.S. Agency for International Development to “encourage more global health practitioners to build their programs around the wants and needs of the people they aim to serve” (Cheney, 2018, p. 1). Projects supported by the Gates Foundation have included work to increase use of contraceptives by young women in Africa and initiatives in Africa and Southeast Asia to improve access

to mobile banking services for communities in poverty. At the core of these efforts is a better understanding of the lived experiences of the people most affected.

While foundations can support grant partners on the ground that employ human-centered design approaches, foundation staff can use these approaches, too. The Raikes Foundation, in Seattle, Washington, used human-centered design principles to explore why high-wealth donors tended not to be strategic in their gift-giving habits. One of the central notions of human-centered design is the idea that we are all designers. In this case, the design team included several Raikes trustees, the executive director, a program director, and a consulting advisor. After an intensive series of interviews with donors, the team constructed profiles of hypothetical donor types that provided insights about donor motivation. The Raikes team found value in the experimental and iterative process of engaging stakeholders, but also cautioned that it was time-consuming and resource-draining work (Roumani, Brest, & Vagelos, 2015).

Engaging Human-Centered Design at the Tower Foundation

In spring 2018, the Tower Foundation team forged ahead with its own experiment in human-centered design. The primary goals of this effort were for the team to learn the human-centered design model and assess its fit with the foundation, and in addition, this internal project would prove to offer a ready-made team-building exercise. It also provided a chance to be more proximate to the young people served by the foundation's grantmaking — particularly young people with intellectual disabilities. Barnes and Burton (2017) articulated the significance of getting proximate for grantmakers:

In this proximate stance, we can understand that we are not dealing with people in need of saving, or with people who are inherently challenged or responsible for their own poverty. Instead, we must acknowledge advantages, privileges, and power dynamics, and approach our work alongside individuals to fix or replace broken systems. In

While foundations can support grant partners on the ground that employ human-centered design approaches, foundation staff can use these approaches, too.

this proximate stance, grantmakers can engage in meaningful dialogue and develop public kinship. (p. 3)

Fast forward a little more than one year, and the process led to creation of an advisory team of young people with intellectual disabilities. (See Figure 1.) This team's task was to review and offer feedback on grant submissions received through the fall 2019 and winter 2020 grant cycles.

The foundation team of program officers, administrative staff, and the executive director took the same online course that the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York had taken about a year and half earlier. After getting familiar with the methodology, the team worked to choose a design challenge. Four of the foundation's results statements, drafted by trustees at that 2011 board session, pertain to young people with intellectual disabilities. Given the gaps in the quality, breadth, and even the existence of community-level data for the field of intellectual disabilities, the foundation team decided to look at a portion of a result statement that speaks to engagement and socialization: "Young people with intellectual disabilities have access to meaningful social pursuits." By selecting this as the focus, the team hoped to get a handle on what "meaningful social pursuits" could look like, and how young people with intellectual disabilities would articulate those opportunities when given the chance.

Phase I: Inspiration

For grantmakers that deploy the human-centered design model, the inspiration phase challenges

FIGURE 1 2019 Tower Foundation Advisory Team

The members of the 2019 Tower Foundation advisory team are Anthony Frail, seated front left; Bradley Wunderlich, Anthony Salvo, and Niko DelValle, seated, from left; and Marshaun Walton, Sydney Leszczak, and Kalina Rumph, standing, from left.

them to get as close as possible to the lived experiences of the people they are “designing” for. The Tower Foundation team made a point of seeking more immersive experiences than were generally afforded by a typical site visit to an intellectual-disabilities service provider. Program officers spent a day at an inclusive camp, talked with campers and counselors, and helped set up for the evening’s semiformal dance. Other activities included group yoga classes and a playground painting project. In working or playing side by side with young people, one’s perspective can shift from an orientation toward specific programs and how they are implemented to one focused on individuals and what engages and motivates them. There was a significant benefit to having real conversations. Unlike most site visits with grant partners, these were about personal interactions and not about outcome reporting and budget modifications that tend to reinforce power imbalances. With these experiences still fresh, the foundation’s human-centered design team came together to share observations about activities that resonated

with young people, as well as their interactions with peers, friends, and program staff.

To further capture the perspectives of young people with intellectual disabilities, the foundation team conducted 15 separate interviews with young people between the ages of 15 and 30. Two grant partners were able to help facilitate these interviews, whose questions were designed to focus on how and with whom the young people preferred to socialize: What do you do for fun? Whom do consider a friend, and why? What do you wish you could do more of? Responses were revealing and poignant:

- One young man described his future career ambitions and the strong social network that supports him. He has been able to find many opportunities to meet new people and maintain friendships while also working a part-time job.
- A young woman shared the tension between wanting to have independence and

to be able to see her boyfriend when she wants to while at the same time being reliant on her parents for transportation.

- A young man shared his desire to make friends and his anxiety about doing so; his experience in school as a youngster was very lonely. He is considering changing his college major so that he can be around more like-minded people.
- Another young man recently started participating in a vocational program where he is paid for his work; but, more important to him, he is surrounded by people who have become his close friends. Since graduating high school, he had been extremely lonely, neither employed nor involved in any clubs or organizations.

While every interviewee was unique, some key themes emerged: As important as it is to make friends, programming with structured (but not forced) opportunities to socialize naturally are infrequent. Barriers include transportation, basic time constraints, and family expectations.

Human-centered design encourages interviews with field experts, too. The Tower Foundation team identified eight experts representing a range of perspectives, from on-the-ground service providers to funders, academics, and state officials. In one interview, a family support specialist shared this observation:

What we want for ourselves and our own children is exactly what young people with intellectual disabilities want. It's no more and no less. ... They want to have typical life experiences: They go to school, they make friends, they get to be a teenager, they want to have more independence, they want to date, they want to get married, they want to have kids, they want to have a job, they want a career, they want money in the bank. It's the exact same thing. It's just adapting the situation to fit their individual needs.

Broad themes that emerged from conversations with experts included the following:

- The best programs that promote socialization for young people with intellectual disabilities are those that are integrated with typical peers, where natural consequences and authentic interactions can occur. While all programs should promote acceptance, friendship and collegiality should not be forced. Programs should make room for people to make friends, but not devalue experiences if this doesn't happen.
- There is a need to normalize inclusion. The best way to promote socialization for young people is not necessarily through programs at all, but through everyday life in the community.
- There are extensive gaps in recreational opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities due to funding cuts. These gaps are particularly pronounced for individuals who have aged out of the education system.

What did we really learn from these conversations? We learned about the ableism that exists within systems, standing in the way of people with disabilities realizing their goals, underestimating their abilities, and devaluing their contributions. We were not surprised to learn that young people with intellectual disabilities crave the variety of social and recreational opportunities that we all do. But it really came home to us that these experiences — a beer with friends, a play they wrote and performed — are the cornerstone of well-being for these youths. The conversations we were having felt like the right conversations.

Phase II: Ideation

In the ideation phase of human-centered design, grantmakers can reflect on what they learned in the inspiration phase, identify potential design solutions, and begin to test them. This is creatively demanding work, as the team works to distill takeaways from the interviews and immersive experiences into something that can generate insights on the way to possible solutions. Recounting all the twists and turns of the process is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice

The individuality of each person we interviewed notwithstanding, the foundation team was able to identify four overarching themes to serve as guardrails throughout the ideation phase[.]

to say the team brainstormed its way through a lot of sticky notes and colored markers.

The individuality of each person we interviewed notwithstanding, the foundation team was able to identify four overarching themes to serve as guardrails throughout the ideation phase: Young people with disabilities are ambitious. They want to be independent. Like everyone else, they have individualized interests. And just like young people without disabilities, they benefit from inclusion — which should be rooted in equal opportunity and access, not one-off events or highly orchestrated interactions.

The team then generated what in the parlance of in human-centered design are called insight statements, or observations that spoke to the challenges facing young people with intellectual disabilities without preference for any specific solution. For example: Young people with intellectual disabilities often have greater potential than many systems and individuals assume or allow for. Parents struggle with the trade-off between independence and safety/support for their children. Based on these insights, practitioners of human-centered design are taught to create “how might we” questions that turn the challenges captured by insight statements into opportunities for solutions. A sampling of questions the foundation developed include:

- How might we promote leadership of young people with intellectual disabilities through our grantmaking?

- How might we show parents and caregivers that greater independence for these young people doesn't necessarily threaten safety or supports?
- How might we promote or build authentically inclusive programs in the community?

From “how might we” questions, the team transitioned to brainstorming possible solutions — actual project ideas to test and refine. It was a not entirely comfortable shift. With few exceptions, the foundation doesn't create or run programs on its own, but relies on grant partners to build programming to meet the needs of the populations they serve. Were we coming up with program ideas that we would pass down to grant partners to actually implement? This felt a bit presumptuous.

With this in mind, the team went forward. Some of the most promising ideas emerging from this process included:

- Design a tool box of inclusive methods for organizations to use when planning new programs.
- Create learning opportunities for grant partners to support and promote inclusion, building a roster of consultants with appropriate expertise.
- Create an advisory team of young people with intellectual disabilities to review a round of grant proposals.
- Support an entrepreneurial business competition for young people with intellectual disabilities.

Inclusion was a common theme; we had heard a lot about its importance and how rarely it is supported in an authentic way.

After designing storyboards based on several of the more promising ideas, the foundation team decided to develop an advisory team made up of young people with intellectual disabilities that would review grant requests and give direct

feedback to program officers. This project would not impose new programming demands on any of our grant partners, though we would engage their support and expertise.³ But before going too far down this path, the foundation shared a high-level summary of this concept with a number of grant partners for a gut check: Is this a good idea? Where are the gaps in this concept? Buoyed by some initial positive feedback, the team identified two key components to be tested: 1) a way to translate the content of a grant proposal for young people with intellectual disabilities in an accessible and comprehensible way; and 2) integration of the steps and activities to assemble an advisory team and capture its input within the timeline of a grant application and review cycle.

For the first challenge, the foundation team converted preliminary grant applications chosen from a previous application cycle to short scripts, kept as direct and conversational as possible. These were, in turn, converted to videos of program officers explaining the concept and key details of each proposal, interspersed with a few photos and graphics. Two grant partners helped us prototype this approach, showing the videos to some of the young people with whom they work. Feedback helped us strike the right balance of detail — they wanted to know more about outcomes and the viability of strategies than we expected — and visuals to enliven and further illustrate the proposals.

For the second issue — fitting all of this within a grantmaking calendar — the team tested a number of scenarios and, in the end, advisory-team activities were accommodated by extending the grant-review period by just a few days. For the first convening of the advisory team, these activities included three events: an orientation get-together, the actual grant reviews, and a celebration in the community. The advisory team helped plan the celebration: Escape room? Rock-climbing gym? Arcade? Stipends were paid to advisors for their participation in the first two events. A second convening of the advisory team

After designing storyboards based on several of the more promising ideas, the foundation team decided to develop an advisory team made up of young people with intellectual disabilities that would review grant requests and give direct feedback to program officers.

for the winter 2020 grant cycle was pared down slightly, keeping the review session and celebration but dropping the orientation session since everyone was familiar with the process.


The vision for the advisory team evolved considerably over a four-month prototyping phase, with the input of service providers and the young people themselves. An important recommendation that emerged from this phase included building a role for a liaison into the grant review process whereby each advisor would work with a supportive person in their life as they reviewed the videos, recorded their reaction on a form (see Figure 2), and prepared to share their assessments of the proposals. The liaison would facilitate prescreening of the videos, assist with comprehension, help allay social anxiety, and encourage advisory team members to make their opinions known. In practice, this role really was critical.

Phase III: Implementation

The implementation phase of human-centered design offers the chance to take solutions out in the field, where they are tested and adapted. In fall 2019, as our project began to take shape, the

³ Given the power imbalance that makes it hard for nonprofits to say “no” to a funder, we did try to be sensitive to the commitment that would be required of our grant partners. Honorariums and staff stipends compensated for time and effort as appropriate. The leadership teams from the grant partners that worked with us on this initiative have been enthusiastic supporters of the advisory team, and have promoted the work in their own internal and external communications.

FIGURE 2 Advisory Team Feedback Form








ADVISORY TEAM FEEDBACK FORM

Name: _____

Grant Name: _____

1. How did you like the project?










Hated it Didn't like it It was okay Liked it Loved it

a. What did you like? _____

b. What would you change? _____

2. How important is this project to...

	Not important	A little important	Important	Very important
 you?	★	★★	★★★	★★★★
 your family?	★	★★	★★★	★★★★
 your community?	★	★★	★★★	★★★★

3. What do you want to know more about? _____

PETER & ELIZABETH TOWER FOUNDATION

prototyping and implementation stages began to bleed into one another. When the foundation decided to “go live” with an advisory team to help with the fall 2019 grant-review process, preparations took on the familiar look of project planning: developing a timeline, articulating a value proposition for a couple of different stakeholder groups, creating a communications plan, taking on some basic event planning, and designing evaluation protocols. Design considerations included how to create events that combined socializing with peers with a more civic-minded activity. Pizza and ice-breaking games would be a part of the mix. But we had also learned from

the prototyping work that our young advisors were prepared to take their roles as third-party grant reviewers seriously.

The first advisory team event is in the books. Over three weeks beginning in late September, we conducted a lively orientation session, got together a second time to discuss the actual proposals, and finally celebrated with dinner and arcade games. Our first steps toward participatory grantmaking are partial steps that do not cede decision-making power to the advisory team. But, we wanted input from the team to have a direct bearing on actual grantmaking.

In the preliminary grant-review process, which roughly corresponded with the three weeks of advisory-team engagement, we shared feedback with applicants and gave them a chance to respond and, if warranted, modify their program proposals. When discussing a proposal that would promote social-skill development for youth with autism through science-based programming, advisory team members told us they favored activities in more inclusive settings, including a mix of youth with and without disabilities. When advised of this, the applicant increased the number of near-age peer counselors in the program. Another application looked at improved housing-navigation supports for young people with disabilities aging out of the foster care system. Two of our advisory team members had experienced this very transition, and the applicant plans to connect with them as it goes forward with the project. Applicants welcomed advisor feedback warmly, and this sweetened the success of our early efforts. Ultimately, our trustees approved the proposals that the advisory team reviewed, proposals strengthened by their input.

Learning and Next Steps

The Tower Foundation found a lot to like in taking on a human-centered design project at the staff level. There was a team-building dimension to the project; administrative staff joined program officers in the effort. As designers, team members flexed creative muscles that could use some toning. Interviewing young people — and eventually working with them directly to discuss the merits of grant applications — felt like a natural extension of efforts to get closer to the ultimate beneficiaries of our grantmaking. Execution of the project is not expensive; the team budgeted \$4,000 for activities that supported the initial round of grant reviews. But person hours for the whole process could certainly be measured in the hundreds. For the foundation team, bringing new voices to our grantmaking process felt like it elevated our work and more than justified the investment.

In addition to a significant commitment of staff time, there are other potential challenges to consider. The funder power dynamic doesn't go

For the foundation team, bringing new voices to our grantmaking process felt like it elevated our work and more than justified the investment.

away. You will very likely ask grant partners for help; recognize that they may not feel they are in a position to turn you down. The foundation team took pains to not pursue a project that would heap more programming demands on service providers. If a provider and potential grant partner has been a full participant in the process and feels like it jointly owns the solution, then new programming demands may be justified. If this has not happened, grantmaking strategy shaped by human-centered design methods can be almost as top-down and patriarchal as other approaches.

Additionally, human-centered design methods recommend that you start small and pilot your solutions. Pilot tests leave people out. The foundation's initial implementation focused on just one of several of its funding geographies. Scaling of good ideas can happen, but it is not inevitable. Finally, whether you scale or not, human-centered design methods will not take a community or target population over some imagined finish line. The foundation took steps toward more inclusive practice and created an engagement opportunity for young people. Good progress, certainly. But as components of an emergent strategy, human-centered design initiatives are small wins in an evolving campaign.

Participatory Grantmaking

In planning for our inaugural advisory team at the Tower Foundation, we were fortunate to lean on the expertise of two funders that have embraced inclusion at all levels of their work: the WITH Foundation and the Disability Rights Fund.

Some candidates for project focus include ways to support families that need to navigate mental health support systems; how communities can be supportive of young people in recovery; and what young people with learning disabilities need to become more confident learners. These feel like complex challenges best taken on with the kind of on-the-ground, person-to-person collaboration that human-centered design methods support.

The WITH Foundation, a private foundation with grantmaking focused on comprehensive and accessible health care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, has a robust advisory-committee model. This committee engages people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to advise the foundation board (which is also inclusive of individuals of people with disabilities) on its grantmaking and programmatic initiatives.

The Disability Rights Fund, an international, intermediary grantmaker that helps to support people with disabilities in the developing world, has similarly inclusive governance and leadership team. The fund has also been a leader in providing technical assistance to other funders interested in participatory grantmaking. A partnership with GrantCraft produced the guide *Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking* (Gibson, 2018).

What's Next?

In the short term, we were excited to get the advisory team together again. For a January 2020 grant cycle, we reconvened the same group for input on a new set of proposals. In the spirit of human-centered design, we made some tweaks based on what we had learned thus far. We didn't ask any one advisory team member to review more than two proposals, breaking out into teams to accommodate all the submissions. In the first iteration, we had asked them for feedback on three proposals and were rushed for time in the group discussion component. Later this spring we will assemble a new advisory team — again focusing on young people with intellectual disabilities — in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, one of our other funding geographies. We do expect some modifications, in part due to travel considerations. There is a local disabilities coalition well-positioned to support us in the work. We have other constituencies to bring to the table as we further explore participatory grantmaking. We have not yet established a firm timetable, but will look to similarly engage youth with mental illness, facing substance-use challenges, and with learning disabilities. Whether these are issue-specific advisory teams or more integrated groups remains to be determined.

For human-centered work more broadly, in 2020 we look forward to beginning a project that will explore some of the issues touched upon by results statements that serve our other funding areas. Now that we have some familiarity with the methodology, we hope to invite external stakeholders to join us in the work: another regional funder, perhaps, or a local provider or collaborative. Some candidates for project focus include ways to support families that need to navigate mental health support systems; how communities can be supportive of young people in recovery; and what young people with learning disabilities need to become more confident learners. These feel like complex challenges best taken on with the kind of on-the-ground, person-to-person collaboration that human-centered design methods support.

At the Tower Foundation, we explored those methods as a strategy to “get proximate” with

one group of people, in one community, that we hope to positively impact through our grantmaking. We are not ready to “check the box” on proximity. Our human-centered design project, when we focused on variables we could control as grantmakers, has just started us on a path toward participatory grantmaking. We have other communities to engage and additional stakeholders that care about our focus areas to get to know better. We hope that this experiment continues to move us along a continuum toward broader inclusion that will inform and enrich the work of the foundation long beyond the scope of this project.

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This article, and our human-centered design project, would not have been possible without the contribution of time and talent by many people and organizations. We would like to acknowledge the members of our inaugural advisory team, who helped us enrich the way funding decisions are made at the Tower Foundation: Niko DelValle, Anthony Frail, Sydney Leszczak, Kalina Rumph, Anthony Salvo, Maurshaun Walton, and Bradley Wunderlich. We would also like to acknowledge the teams that supported this project at Empower, under the leadership of Kim Kiely, and at People Inc., under the leadership of Alison Smith; their feedback and contributions made this project the success it was. We are also grateful for a number of funders that helped guide our exploration of human-centered design and participatory grantmaking: the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York, the WITH Foundation, and the Disability Rights Fund. Finally, thanks to the Tower family and the trustees of the Tower Foundation for joining us on this path.

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Using Social Network Analysis to Understand the Perceived Role and Influence of Foundations

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Keywords: Foundations, network analysis, collaboration, evaluation

Introduction

Foundations play a prominent role in philanthropy, representing nearly \$67 billion, or 16%, of giving in the United States during 2017 (Indiana University Lilly School of Philanthropy, 2018). Arguably, more important than the level of giving is the collective impact of foundations working in concert with grantees to address an array of social purposes. The critical relationship between foundation and grantee is complicated due to an imbalance in power and accountability when one party in a relationship is dependent on resources from another. Whereas funders rightfully demand accountability from grantees through evaluations and reporting, grantees have more limited and challenging means of holding funders accountable. These include turning down grant support — an unlikely response for most organizations — or, “they may exercise voice through complaints and efforts to reform their funders” (Ebrahim, 2003, p. 201). More generally, “the power and wealth of private foundations often prevents them from getting good criticism” (Wisely, 2002, p. 163).

This article introduces an emerging tool that complements the information gathered in traditional grantee surveys. Social network analysis (SNA) is used to assess collaboration among organizations in a community and its outcomes. A unique, yet often underemphasized, benefit of this approach is the focus on dyadic relationships between organizations. This presents an opportunity for foundations to better understand their role in collaborative efforts and how they are perceived by the organizations working alongside

Key Points

- Collaboration between foundations and other organizations is critical to the success of foundation-supported initiatives, but the power dynamics among foundations, grantees, and their broader communities can be challenging. Social network analysis is a tool to assess collaboration among organizations and its outcomes. A unique yet often underemphasized benefit of this method of analysis is its focus on dyadic relationships between organizations, which presents an opportunity for foundations to evaluate their role in a network and how they are perceived by the very organizations whose missions they support.
- This article leverages a social network analysis of community partners focused on addressing needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortages to illustrate how the results can constructively inform foundations on how they are viewed by community partners along dimensions of trust, value, resource contribution, activities, and contribution to outcomes. The analysis is conducted using an online network survey, analysis, and reporting tool called PARTNER — Program to Analyze, Record and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships.
- The analysis of survey responses captures over 600 unique dyadic partnerships across more than 40 community organizations, including their relationships with participating foundations. The PARTNER tool satisfies the need to evaluate both the impact of collaborative initiatives supported by foundations and foundations’ roles in these efforts.

them in support of their mission, including those they support financially.¹

To demonstrate the use of SNA, we leverage an analysis of a community focused on addressing needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortage to illustrate how SNA can constructively inform foundations on their positions within a collaborative. The network analysis is conducted using the PARTNER (Program to Analyze, Record, and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships) platform (Visible Network Labs, n.d.a). Survey responses capture over 600 unique dyadic partnerships across more than 40 organizations, including each organization's relationship with engaged foundations. The tool satisfies the dual needs to evaluate the impact of collaborative initiatives supported by foundations while simultaneously learning where foundations can refine their practices to strengthen roles in the community, enhance trust, and provide even greater value.

Evaluating Foundations

Foundations are increasingly focusing on the impact of their activities, and the traditional tool to determine outcomes is evaluation. The focus of evaluation is generally the effectiveness of grant-funded programs conducted by external grantees. Nearly 20 years ago, Wisely asked, “[Why] has progress in evaluation in private foundations been so slow and intermittent?” (2002, p. 159). In response, she highlighted the need for a foundation to embrace the feedback of a range of stakeholders about its work and to focus the organization on learning, rather than just demonstrating programmatic successes.

Unlike most organizations, funders experience dual needs for evaluation. First, the expectation to evaluate programs and activities receiving foundation support is strong for accountability and strategic purposes. Second, periodically evaluating the foundation's own performance is necessary but potentially less urgent in the

Social network analysis is used to assess collaboration among organizations in a community and its outcomes. A unique, yet often underemphasized, benefit of this approach is the focus on dyadic relationships between organizations.

day-to-day operations of a funder. These two levels of evaluation are linked by the grantees, who serve as programmatic partners in achieving foundation goals.

The field recognizes this duality of foundation evaluation activity (Easterling & Csuti, 1999; Kramer & Bickel, 2004; Behrens & Kelly, 2008). Easterling and Csuti classify evaluations as either grantee-focused or foundation-focused, and observe that “evaluation will never achieve its true potential within philanthropy so long as the lens is trained only outwardly” (1999, p. 1). We think of these distinctions as outward- and inward-looking evaluations, respectively. At the heart of the foundation-focused evaluation is the relationship with grantees and community partners.

For funders, mechanisms that provide a candid, inward look at the organization's position and role in society are hard to come by. A notable exception is the Center for Effective Philanthropy's Grantee Perception Report, a survey-based approach to generating information on the funder-grantee relationship used for learning and improvement. Grantee Perception Reports are used by many foundations, and some publicly release their reports to bolster transparency and accountability. A notable benefit of these reports

¹ We recognize the diversity of foundations, including nonoperating private foundations, community foundations, and operating foundations (Guy & Ely, 2018). The tool presented here is applicable to any type of foundation engaged in a collaborative setting. By a collaborative, we mean an intentional effort by a group of organizations to work together to achieve a common goal, solve a problem, disseminate knowledge and innovation, or develop a coordinated system (among other foci).

Social network analysis is the study of the structural relationships among interacting network members and examines how those relationships connect to outcomes.

is the ability to compare a foundation's performance with peer foundations. Other foundations have leveraged the Grantee Perception Report as a piece of a broader foundation evaluation strategy. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is a prominent example: It developed a scorecard that included grantmaking activity and survey-based feedback from a wide range of stakeholders (Colby, Fishman, & Pickell, 2011).

Evaluating foundations by looking inward is an exercise to support continuous improvement, but how do foundations respond to such evidence-based critiques? Anecdotal evidence suggests that some foundations incorporate grantee feedback from surveys into their operations. Buchanan, Bolduc, and Huang (2005), for example, detail how some users of the Grantee Perception Report responded to the results by redesigning grantmaking processes, making administrative burdens proportional for different-sized grants, maintaining valued research staff, and dropping specific programs. Colby et al. (2011, p. 75) describe the "jolting wake-up call" for the RWJF following the initial comparison of its grantee survey results to peers and the resulting establishment of targets for subsequent results.

Behrens and Kelly (2008) highlight SNA as an emerging approach to evaluation. The following section details the potential for SNA to contribute to foundation-focused, or inward, evaluation.

Social Network Analysis

Foundations operate within formal and informal networks. Here, we use the term network to represent more formal partnerships among three or

more organizations established to achieve mutually desired objectives. Networks are a prominent strategy for addressing complex societal challenges, particularly efforts that cross sectors, but are less suitable for activities that can be achieved within a single organization (Popp, MacKean, Casebeer, Milward, & Lindstrom, 2014).

Although we conceptualize networks as a group of organizations with a shared or at least overlapping mission, it is important to acknowledge that network partners often have different perspectives on the network (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005). This is especially true for organizations like foundations and nonprofit service providers, which may have very different day-to-day priorities and objectives (Chapman & Varda, 2017; Hogg & Varda 2016). While specific goals may differ by organization, the literature suggests that an effective network attains outcomes unachievable by a network member acting alone (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Social network analysis is the study of the structural relationships among interacting network members and examines how those relationships connect to outcomes (Scott, 2017). As an evaluation tool, advocates suggest, SNA can serve as a guide for improving network management (Popp et al., 2014). Examining networks using SNA is performed at multiple levels. Frequently, the focus of SNA is on the entire network and its outcomes, but SNA also provides beneficial information for individual organizations within the network (Provan et al., 2005).

Some existing research focused on foundations takes a network perspective in highlighting approaches to strengthen network capacity for systems change (Easterling, 2012) and to evaluate networks (Taylor, Whatley, & Coffman, 2015). Others expressed a desire to expand networks of interest beyond just grantees and funders (Nolan, Souza, Monopoli, & Hughes, 2017), which reflects a key strength of SNA — namely, its capacity to capture a broader group of relationships with foundations compared to traditional grantee surveys.

Social Network Analysis Using the PARTNER Platform

This article describes one tool for conducting SNA and the potential benefits for foundation members of networks. The PARTNER platform, originally funded by the RWJF, launched in 2008 as an online application to help build the capacity of the public health sector to measure and monitor collaboration among organizations (Varda, Chandra, Stern, & Lurie, 2008). PARTNER is used extensively by cross-sector networks to analyze how their members are connected, how resources are exchanged, the levels of trust and perceived value among network members, and to link outcomes to the process of collaboration.

PARTNER includes both a customizable, validated 19-question survey and an analysis tool that allows users of the survey data to create network maps, analyze network scores and other results, and generate reports. The platform was selected for this project for its SNA functionality, relatively low resource demands, and robust reporting capabilities. Although PARTNER developed around public health networks, the functionality is broadly applicable to other collaborative settings, demonstrated by its use in over 4,500 community networks in all 50 states. PARTNER is used primarily to assess the structure and performance of collaborations, but the evaluation and feedback for participating foundations is a secondary benefit on which we focus.

Foundations operate with many partners in distinct networks depending on the breadth of the organization's mission and activities. Prior to administering the PARTNER survey, the first task is to "bound" the network to identify which organizations compose the network of interest, and as a way to allow members to self-define "community." While deceptively simple, this step is crucial to having useful results. The practice of determining who is "in" or "out" of a network is a difficult part of the method, and it is recommended that a collaborative approach be used that includes the network's stakeholders (Visible Network Labs, n.d.b).

This article describes one tool for conducting SNA and the potential benefits for foundation members of networks. The PARTNER platform, originally funded by the RWJF, launched in 2008 as an online application to help build the capacity of the public health sector to measure and monitor collaboration among organizations.

Once the participants in the network are identified, the PARTNER platform is used to distribute an online survey to contacts at each of the network's organizations. The survey recipients respond to questions from the perspective of their organization, as well as relational questions about each of the other organizations in their network. The responses allow for network mapping at multiple levels, including the whole network, dyadic relationships (member-to-member), and specific organizations.

The survey questions in PARTNER capture the perceived success of the network in reaching its specific goals (which are identified prior to the survey dissemination by network members), the outcomes of the collaborative, and the factors contributing to the outcomes. The relational questions are answered separately for each network member with whom the organization has a relationship. For example, if the identified network contains 20 organizations and a member of the network has a relationship with half those organizations, they would answer the relational questions independently for each of the 10 organizations. The relational questions consider the frequency of interactions with partners, quality of activity in the relationship, value of the

We use a recent PARTNER project to demonstrate the potential value of using SNA for understanding foundations' positions and roles in a network. The case study also highlights the sensitive nature of evaluation that looks inward at network members and foundations, in particular.

relationship (based on power/influence, level of involvement, and resource contribution), and the extent of trust (based on reliability, support of the mission, and openness to discussion).

The PARTNER survey also generates traditional SNA network measures that fall into the categories of breadth, density, and centrality.² The measures capture the composition of a network's structure — breadth represents the array of partners, density indicates the connectedness of the partners, and centrality identifies the influence of centrally positioned members.

Usefulness of the Tool to Foundations: An Application to a Social Services Network

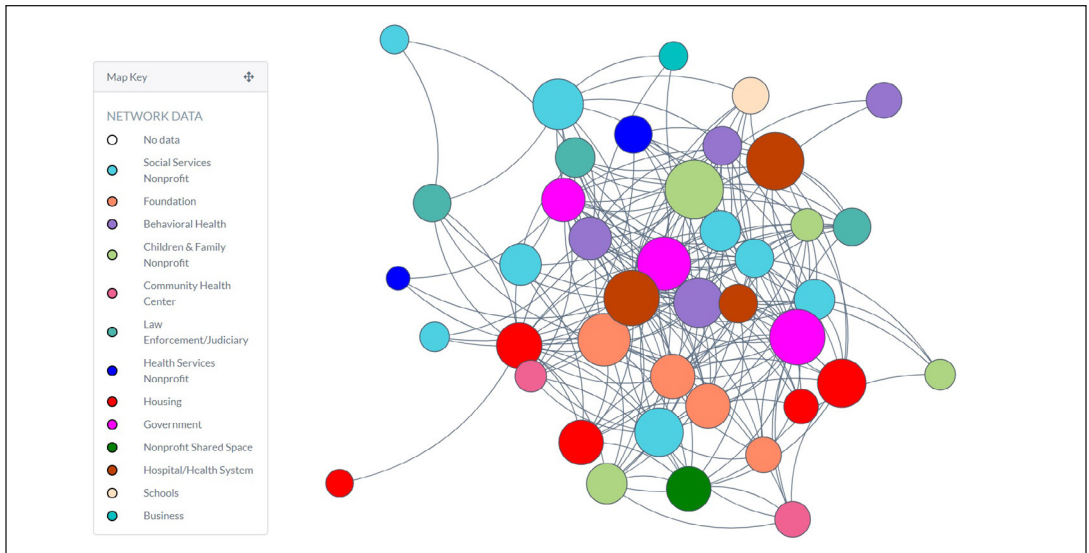
We use a recent PARTNER project to demonstrate the potential value of using SNA for understanding foundations' positions and roles in a network. The case study also highlights the sensitive nature of evaluation that looks inward at network members and foundations, in particular. For this reason, the case is presented at a level of detail intended to preserve the confidentiality of participating organizations. In general, organizations interested in conducting SNA for networks in which they are active need to

establish guidelines for the use and distribution of the resulting data. Foremost, such exercises at times require network members, including foundations, to have a thick skin given the presence of relational questions. Closely related is the genuine need for a guarantee that the results are used for improvement at the network and organization levels, rather than for punitive purposes.

Before reviewing the results of the PARTNER survey, we also acknowledge that foundations intentionally play various roles in collaborative efforts. For this reason, the information gained from network analysis must be interpreted through the lens of an individual foundation's goals and objectives. For example, if a foundation entered collaborative work with a goal of being a central/backbone player in the effort, then centrality measures can help gauge whether the position is realized. Alternately, for various reasons a foundation may decide to contribute resources to a collaborative effort but remain disconnected from the day-to-day activities. In this case, low levels of interaction and centrality alongside a high value score may indicate success for the foundation's planned role. In other words, insights from network analysis are context-dependent due to the complex goals of foundations across different settings. The relationships and interactions among direct service providers may be markedly different than with foundations operating in the same collaborative work.

In this project, partnering with a well-connected community-based organization helped us begin the process to bound the network. Additional feedback from key informants in the community finalized the list and defined the boundaries of the community network of more than 40 organizations engaged in collaboratively addressing needs of people experiencing the effects of homelessness and housing shortages. Approximately three-quarters of the organizations completed the PARTNER survey, representing more than 600 distinct dyadic partnerships within the network. Assessing the network's influence on achieving the network's

²For greater detail on the signatures and the evidence supporting their use in network science, see Retrum, Chapman, and Varda (2013).

FIGURE 1 Social Service Network Map for Medium-Sized City

goals is the primary focus of the SNA, but the results also shed light on the place and perceived roles of individual organizations in the collaboration. The following section reviews the network structure, with a focus on the network's foundation members, before examining the perceived trust and value, types of activities, and outcomes of network partners. After examining the network broadly, we focus on a single foundation to demonstrate the utility of SNA as a tool for decision-making.

In general, significant differences between the network's foundations and other members are more common among the value and trust measures than the network structure measures. Many of the activities engaged in by network partners differ when engaging with a foundation, which speaks to the different roles typically played by foundations versus other types of community-based or government organizations. Network members believe their partnerships with foundations are significantly more likely to support priority outcomes than partnerships with nonfoundation network partners.

Network Structure

The social service network we surveyed represented 13 different organization types, including four foundations. The size of the icon in the network map reflects the relative number of connections, or relationships, with other organizations. (See Figure 1.)

Visually, the map allows foundations to understand their collectively determined place in the network. Standard network measures are described below and presented for the foundations as a group and compared to all other partner organizations. (See Table 1.) Two-sample *t* tests demonstrate whether the differences in mean scores between the foundations and other network members are statistically significant.³ We note that the small number of foundations in the network limits the power of the test to detect meaningful differences.⁴

Network Measures

Degree centrality represents the number of connections a member has to other members

³ Standard tests determine that the assumption of equal standard deviations (variances) between the groups cannot be rejected. The *t* tests, therefore, assume equal variances.

⁴ This is particularly true for the network structure and measures comparison. We urge readers to focus on the information that can be conveyed to an individual foundation with these measures.

TABLE 1 Network Structure and Measures for Foundations and Other Partners: Comparison

	Foundations (average, n = 4)	Other Network Partners (average, n = 37)
Degree centrality	24.25	20.57
Closeness centrality	0.73	0.69
Nonredundant ties	14.12	11.52
Relative connectivity	65.3%	52.7%

Note: There are no statistically significant differences in means between foundations and other network partners among these network measures based on a difference-of-means *t* test.

TABLE 2 Value and Trust Measures for Foundations and Other Partners: Comparison

	Foundations (average, n = 4)	Other Network Partners (average, n = 37)
Value Dimensions		
Power/influence	3.37**	2.82
Resource contribution	3.15*	2.77
Involvement	2.55*	3.00
Trust Dimensions		
Reliable	3.66*	3.41
Support the mission	2.99	3.02
Open to discussion	3.42	3.37

Note: Comparison of group means conducted using two-sample *t* tests. ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$

of the network. A higher value is sometimes interpreted as a member holding a more central position by being highly embedded in the network. Degree centrality is bound by the size of the network, so the maximum value in this case is 40. The average network member has a relationship with just over half the other network members, with a degree centrality score of 21, while the average foundation has a relationship with 24 members. Regardless of whether a participating foundation views itself as a leader or peripheral player in the community's effort, the degree centrality score provides information to understand its place in the network based on the number of connections it has to other members of the network.

Closeness centrality is another measure representing how central a member is in the

operations of the network. Technically, the measure indicates how far each member is from other members of the network based on the number of links (other members) between each member dyad. A score closer to 1 reflects members in a central network position with the shortest distance from all other members and relationships that make it easy to connect with other members. For an individual foundation, this measure of centrality shows how directly (through a long or short path) it is connected to its partners in this initiative. This often helps to illustrate whether a network member can quickly connect with another member, or whether it needs to access others through their common connections.

The analysis also provides visibility into nonredundant ties, which represent the number of

connections between members that are not connected to any other overlapping member. Essentially, nonredundant ties reflect network members that bridge different clusters or groups within the network. Such ties are considered beneficial to aid in the transmission of information throughout the network. The average network member has close to 12 nonredundant ties; foundations average more than 14. An individual foundation can look to this measure as an indicator of whether it serves as a bridge between organizations in the network or reinforces existing relationships.

Relative connectivity is based on measures of value, trust, and the number of connections to other members based on the survey responses. A member gets a high connectivity score when it has many connections with valuable partners who have trust in it. The score is relative to the network's member with the highest number of trusted connections to valuable partners. The average foundation in the network has higher relative connectivity (65%) than the average network member (54%), but the difference is statistically insignificant. Relative connectivity captures an important dimension of the work done by foundations, namely, maintaining trusted relationships with a large number of valuable partners engaged in supporting the network's mission-based activities.

Perceived Value and Trust Among Network Members

We now shift to consider the perceived value and trust of network partners based on the relational survey responses of each of their partners. Using the PARTNER tool, network members are asked to rate their partners, on a scale of 1 to 4, on their perceptions of those partners' value and trust. A response of 1 means "not at all," a 2 means "a small amount," a 3 means "a fair amount," and a 4 means "a great deal." (See Table 2.)

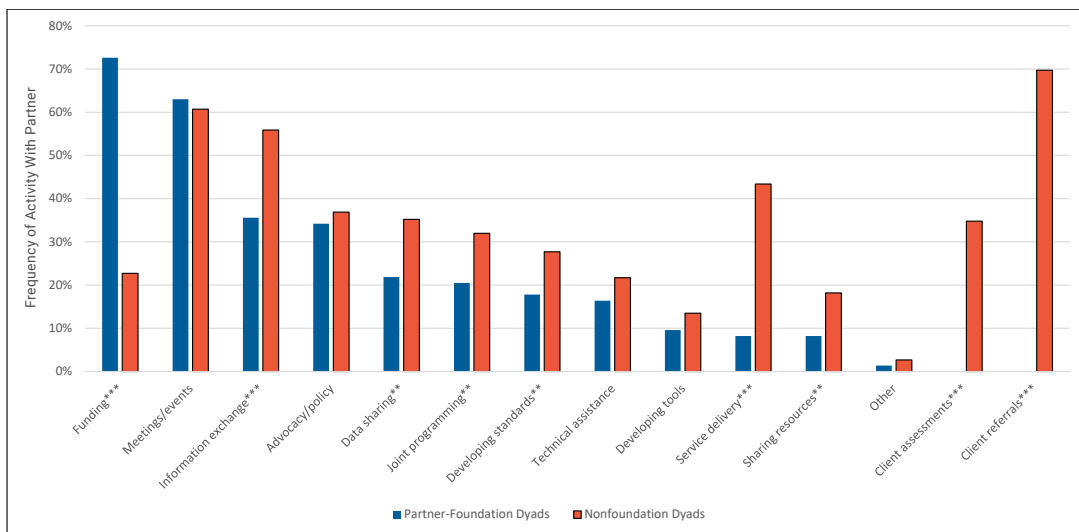
The individual dimensions of value include perceived power/influence in the network, resource contribution to support the network's goals, and level of involvement in pursuit of the network's goals. The foundations are perceived to hold power and influence within the network. The

average foundation's power/influence score of 3.37 exceeds the network average and the difference between the two groups is statistically significant (two-sample $t(39) = 2.6, p = 0.007$). All of the foundations in the network have power/influence scores greater than the network's average. This is unsurprising given the resources held by foundations, but important to see that foundations exert greater than average influence on the network. The power/influence scores may also suggest foundations play leadership roles in the network, rather than acting as passive funders.

The second element of the value scores is the member's resource contribution to support the network's goals. As expected, the average foundation contributes more resources than the average nonfoundation partner. The magnitude of the perceived difference in resource contribution is statistically significant (two-sample $t(39) = 1.9, p = 0.034$). The variation in perceived resource contribution among the foundations is notable, ranging from 2.58 to 3.73. A lower score for resource contribution is not necessarily a bad thing if the network activity being considered is not a foundation's programmatic priority. Yet being aware of the perceived level of support can inform future decision-making or confirm that resources currently align with foundation priorities.

The final value element represents the member's level of involvement in the network. In this network setting, the foundations are perceived as being significantly less involved than the average network member (two-sample $t(39) = 2.1, p = 0.022$). None of the foundation scores meaningfully exceed the network average. While those in the field may find these results unsurprising and less involvement by foundations may be preferred by some partners, there is utility for a foundation to know how its involvement in collaborative efforts is perceived by partners.

Trust is a key characteristic of partnerships. Recall that this network is organized around meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortage and includes organizations ranging from a police department to a school district to health systems and

FIGURE 2 Frequency of Activities Reported by Network Partnerships

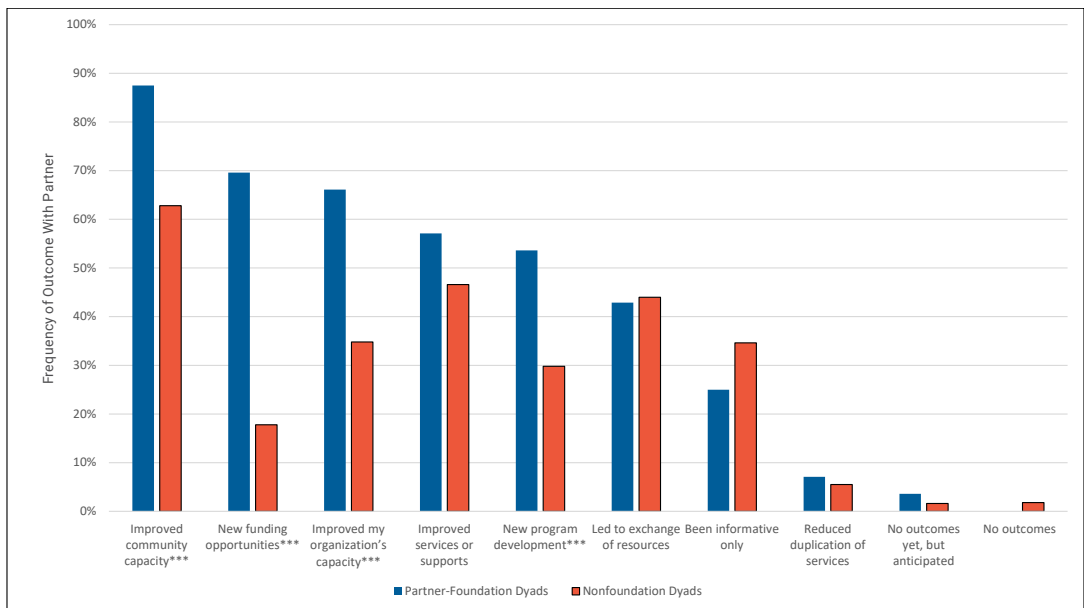
Note: Statistical significance of the difference in reported activities of partnerships is determined using a Pearson's chi-squared test statistic ($n = 561$ dyads, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$).

community-based service providers. The individual dimensions of trust captured by the survey responses include whether each organization is considered reliable, in support of the mission, and open to discussion. The foundations, as a group, are perceived to be more reliable on average than other network members, and the difference is statistically significant (two-sample $t(39) = 1.8$, $p = 0.041$). All four of the foundations have higher-than-average reliability scores, suggesting they are viewed as dependable partners.

The remaining trust measures, support of the mission and openness to discussion, are not statistically different between the average foundation and the average network member. The range among foundations' scores "in support of mission" is wide and illustrates the varied perceptions of foundations and alignment with the network's specific mission. Stereotypes might suggest that foundations are less open to discussion than other community organizations, but the survey results counter such a view. At the foundation level, knowing whether the organization is perceived as open to discussion might influence a foundation's engagement strategy or hiring practices.

Quality and Range of Network Partnership Activities

Quality of activities is measured in PARTNER using a four-point scale that captures the types of activities the organizations engage in with each other member of the network. The lowest level of interaction is simply attending meetings together. The second level of quality is cooperative activities, which includes the exchange of information and offering resources to partners. The two highest levels of interaction quality are coordinated and integrated activities. The coordinated level includes cooperative activities with the addition of more intentional efforts to build capacity for partners. Integrated activities include all previous categories as well as the creation of unified centers of knowledge and developing programming that supports common goals. Of those organizations that reported having relationships with foundations, 42% had integrated interactions with foundations, meaning they had the highest-quality collaboration possible. This number is higher than the rest of the network's reported activities, where only 35% of partners reported integrated interactions, although the difference is not statistically significant based on a chi-square test of independence.

FIGURE 3 Frequency of Outcomes Reported by Network Partnerships

Note: Statistical significance of the difference in reported outcomes of partnerships is determined using a Pearson's chi-squared test statistic ($n = 429$ dyads, *** = $p < 0.01$).

Besides identifying the quality of activities among network partners, the survey also captures the specific activities of this engagement. Foundation activities with network partners are more concentrated than the activities of nonfoundation network partners. (See Figure 2.) Based on a chi-square test of independence, partnerships with a foundation engaged in significantly different activities than purely nonfoundation partnerships. Among statistically significant differences, nearly three-quarters of partnership dyads with foundations have a relationship that entails funding, compared to only 23% of nonfoundation partnerships. This is the only activity where foundations are statistically more likely to engage in an activity with a network partner than nonfoundations.

Network partnerships including a foundation are significantly, and unsurprisingly, less likely to engage in a wide range of direct service activities, including client assessments and referrals, service delivery, and joint programming. The foundations are also significantly less likely to engage in data sharing, developing standards/

procedures, developing tools/technologies, information exchange, and sharing nonfinancial resources like office space and staff.

Outcomes of Network Partnerships

The dyadic reporting on relationships using SNA provides evidence on the perceived effectiveness of the network's partnerships. Each responding organization identified outcomes resulting from its partnership with each other organization in the network. (See Figure 3.) The percentages reflect the share of network dyads reporting the given outcome of the partnership between the two organizations. We divide these reported outcomes based on whether the outcomes are being reported by a nonfoundation organization with a foundation partner or by a nonfoundation organization in a dyad with another nonfoundation (comprised only of other nonprofit, for-profit, or government organizations).

The relationship between the presence of a foundation in the network's dyadic partnerships and partnership outcomes are examined using a chi-square test of independence. Partner dyads

TABLE 3 Example Foundation's Ranked Network Measures and Scores

	Rank (n = 41)
Relative Connectivity	4
Degree Centrality	6
Nonredundant Ties	6
Closeness Centrality	6
Value	
Power/influence	3
Involvement	20
Resource contribution	1
Trust	
Reliable	4
Support the mission	1
Open to discussion	5

including a foundation were significantly more likely to improve the capacity of the community to address needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortages, lead to new funding opportunities, improve the partner organization's capacity, and lead to new program development.

Nearly 90% of organizations report that their relationship with a foundation in the network has improved the capacity of the community to address unmet social needs, a primary outcome of interest for this network. The most dramatic, yet unsurprising, difference in outcomes for partnerships with a foundation is that the relationship led to new funding opportunities. While 35% of nonfoundation partnerships in the network improved the reporting organization's capacity, this share jumps to two-thirds of partnerships when a foundation is involved. More than half of the partnerships with a foundation resulted in new program development.⁵

Network Lessons for an Individual Foundation: Translating the Data to Practice

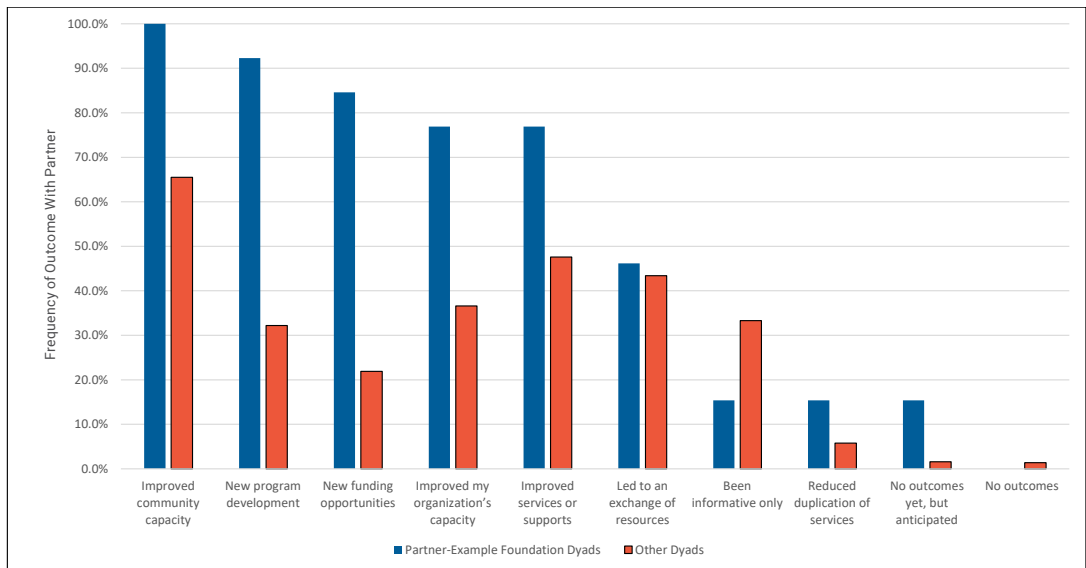
We focus the previous discussion of the SNA results on a comparison between foundations

and other organizations in the network. The exercise sheds light on the position and role of the network's foundation partners. Although the SNA results for foundations demonstrate the value of applying SNA as a tool, the real value for foundations is to inform future activities that are typically organization-level decisions. We demonstrate how we translate SNA to practice by briefly reviewing the SNA results for one of the four foundations from the social services network, and discuss the implications of the information. The selected foundation is an active and central network partner. A network member profile, based on the survey and available in PARTNER, can be tailored to an individual foundation and cover its position, value and trust, activities, and outcomes in the network.

Based on relative rankings of the organization compared to network partners, the foundation can better understand the role it plays in the collaborative effort. Beginning with the network characteristics, the selected foundation is in the top 15% of network organizations for relative connectivity, degree centrality, nonredundant ties, and closeness centrality. (See Table 3.) This foundation has a relatively 1) large number of connections to other network members, meaning it is highly embedded, 2) central position in the network's operations based on distance to all members, 3) high number of connections between members who are not connected to any other overlapping member, and 4) extensive connections with valuable partners who trust the foundation.

The selected foundation has similarly high relative scores of value and trust within the network, meaning the organization is considered valuable and trusted. The foundation has the highest reported score among network organizations for resource contribution and supporting the mission, but the involvement score ranks at the median level. Partners overwhelmingly characterize relationships with the selected foundation as consisting of either integrated activities (62.5% of relationships) or coordinated activities (31.3%).

⁵ Survey responses about foundations' roles and outcomes may be influenced by social desirability bias, but the variation in actual responses reflect a willingness of partner organizations to provide less socially desirable responses.

FIGURE 4 Example Foundation's Relative Partnership Outcomes

Note: No tests of statistical significance were conducted for the single foundation comparison.

The most common activities engaged in with partners are funding (68.8%), advocacy/policy (62.5%), and meetings/events/trainings (62.5%).

If a goal of a network is to achieve outcomes unattainable by any single organization, then the perceived outcomes of relationships with a foundation are critical measures of impact. All of the partners of the selected foundation reported that the relationship improved the capacity of the community to address unmet social needs. Engaging with the foundation resulted in new program development, led to new funding opportunities, improved the partner organization's capacity, and improved services or supports in more than three-quarters of the relationships representing rates much higher than the average for other network organizations. (See Figure 4.)

How would the foundation's managers benefit from this SNA information? In this case, the data affirm the foundation's influential role in the network, especially the positive outcomes reported by partners around the improved capacity of the community and its organizations. The showcased foundation is a valued and trusted organization within the network, according to

its partners, and the foundation's prominent network position is apparent. The foundation's engagement in the network consists of mainly integrated activities, the most collaborative type.

Despite the positive results, managers might still change behavior based on the information. For example: From a network structure perspective, does the foundation play too central a role in connecting network partners? Does that positioning encourage collective buy-in, accountability, and shared facilitation by the network members, which are characteristics of a distributive leadership approach, or, as Varda (2017) examines, encourage dependence that can inhibit sustainability? What will happen to the collaborative effort if the foundation decides to reduce its activity or involvement?

The foundation ranked 20th among the 41 organizations in members' perception of its level of involvement in addressing the needs of the community. The foundation might interpret this as a function of not being a direct service provider, or it might decide to increase involvement in specific ways. Members might view this differently: as a deficiency in involvement of an otherwise

SNA using a tool like PARTNER can serve as a hybrid evaluation solution that blends the benefits of traditional grantee-focused evaluations of an initiative with those of foundation-focused evaluations to detail relationships with community partners.

highly influential member. A “more is better” approach is often not effective in networks, but depending on the foundation’s goals and priorities, managers may direct more resources to activities they engage in less frequently with partners like joint programming, data sharing, and technical assistance/training. Similar assessments conducted around other networks with the foundation’s involvement may tell different stories about the foundation’s role and engagement and inform foundation-level decision making.

Implications for Foundations

SNA using a tool like PARTNER can serve as a hybrid evaluation solution that blends the benefits of traditional grantee-focused evaluations of an initiative with those of foundation-focused evaluations to detail relationships with community partners. Nested within the evaluation of a collaborative effort is information that can inform foundation decisions about enterprise-level behavior, particularly around engaging community partners, as well as traditional funding practices. Social network analysis provides a unique type of feedback on the foundation from the perspective of network partners rather than solely grantees or potential grantees, and allows benchmarking of those perceptions against other members of the network. The specifics of the illustrative case presented here are not intended to be generalizable to other networks involving foundations. Rather, the case

demonstrates assessment through SNA can be genuine and reflective of a foundation’s performance in the field.

At the same time, a SNA focused on a portfolio of actors working on a specific or broad issue area within a foundation’s area of influence can provide an important road map for deepening impact through strategic investments. Because of the position in the community that they serve, foundations have the ability to convene and connect groups, magnifying impact even with relatively small direct outlays of resources. Repeating a network survey over time establishes a valuable record of changes in collaborative efforts and relationships (Provan et al., 2005).

Foundations are regularly criticized for a lack of public accountability (Reich, 2018). Thoughtful, reflective evaluation is one approach to strengthen accountability to the public and develop a more productive feedback mechanism for improving resource stewardship. Social network analysis, such as that conducted here using PARTNER, complements existing tools for foundation-focused evaluation and offers a unique view of how foundations are situated among and perceived by the partners working to support their missions.

As foundations evolve their thinking around the role they play in collaborative, networked approaches that they both fund and engage in, it is critical that they have data and analysis to inform their decisions. By utilizing a novel tool like SNA, they can expand their own perspectives on the appropriate role at the launch, implementation, and conclusion of their investments in these efforts. This type of tool can prompt important discussions and provide the data needed to make informed decisions.

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Assessing Change and Deepening Impact in Early Learning Systems: The Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool

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Keywords: *Evaluation, systems change, community systems change, participatory evaluation, systems-change tool, developmental evaluation, self-assessment*

Introduction

What constitutes meaningful progress for systems change is not always clear. This is particularly the case for public agencies, such as a school district, where administrators and staff are spread thin and progress must be measured on so many levels; or in an area like early childhood education, with a system that is very nascent compared to K–12 or higher education.

Additionally, many early childhood programs (e.g., preschools, child care, developmental health screening) that serve the same beneficiaries are often disconnected or “siloe,” with multiple funding streams and data limitations that make it more difficult to understand the connections between and gaps in services within such a system (Melnick, Tinubu Ali, Gardner, Maier, & Wechsler, 2017). This makes it difficult for foundations that fund systems-change initiatives to know whether progress is being made to improve and strengthen systems, and for evaluators to monitor and measure progress in a way that captures not only impact, but also interim outcomes and learnings to advance ongoing development for foundations and grantees.

Despite these complexities, it is clear that for our youngest children to be healthy and ready for school, a strong systems approach to support all families, their young children, and early educators with coordinated resources and high-quality programming is necessary.

Key Points

- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is investing in a 10-year strategy, Starting Smart and Strong, that partners with three California communities to develop and test solutions to support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be ready for school. Central to this strategy are community efforts to create comprehensive early learning systems that model quality teaching practices, secure and ensure adequate distribution of resources, and have capacity to improve, innovate, and scale.
- One of the challenges in systems evaluation is identifying meaningful indicators of interim progress toward longer-term change. From the start, the evaluation has been learning through interviews and observations how each community is approaching systems development. The evaluation team used those learnings and a literature review to inform the development of the Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool. To date, there has not been a quantitative tool that assesses community progress in this arena that also allows users to reflect on their work and develop data-informed strategies for deepening impact.
- This article explores how and why the three California communities and the Foundation have found the Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool to be a useful guide for focusing their efforts and creating greater understanding of their advancement. It also shares the tool's development process to provide a helpful example for others working on long-term systems change who are grappling with how to identify meaningful interim progress.

Launched in 2014, Starting Smart and Strong was designed as a shared, community-driven commitment that brings together public and private supporters to develop and test solutions that support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be healthy and ready for school.

Long-term, Multicommunity Investment

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Early Learning grantmaking strategy¹ is guided by the principle that all children should have access to opportunities that help them be healthy, ready for school, and on track to reach their full potential. To do this, the foundation's Children, Families, and Communities program supports a range of efforts, including improving training and professional development for early childhood educators and caregivers and providing parents, extended family members, and informal caregivers with the information, coaching, and support needed to create environments where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

One of the Foundation's most significant investments is Starting Smart and Strong,² a 10-year, place-based strategy³ that supports children and families in three California communities: Fresno, East San Jose, and Oakland. Launched in 2014, Starting Smart and Strong was designed as a shared, community-driven commitment

that brings together public and private supporters to develop and test solutions that support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be healthy and ready for school. For the past five years, each Starting Smart and Strong grantee partner community has been working closely with local partners to lead and implement new approaches to meet the needs of their unique communities. Starting Smart and Strong strategies rest on four pillars: Professional Development and Training; Support for Family, Friends, and Neighbors; Healthy Development; and Scaling What Works.

Starting Smart and Strong communities are creating comprehensive early learning systems that model quality teaching practices and training, secure and ensure adequate distribution of resources, and have the capacity to improve, innovate, and scale. While the heart of this initiative is about scaling effective practices that result in improved child outcomes, the foundation team hypothesizes that scaling is not possible without the existence of a strong and coordinated early learning support system in each community — that is, creating the conditions for success. For the purposes of this work, we are defining “early learning support system” as the system of leadership, capacity, and infrastructure that supports early learning. This narrower definition focuses on actors, resources, and policies that support service providers, and not on the services themselves.

Further, over the course of Starting Smart and Strong, the Foundation is implementing a developmental evaluation (Patton, 2010) that is well-suited for work that is highly innovative and takes place within the context of complex environments. Therefore, the evaluation is focused on understanding the extent to which grantee partner communities⁴ have or are developing strong early learning support systems by

¹ See <https://www.packard.org/what-we-fund/children-families-and-communities/what-were-doing/early-learning/>

² See <https://www.packard.org/what-we-fund/children-families-and-communities/starting-smart-and-strong/>

³ Recognizing that each community has different structures, challenges, and opportunities, and that no two communities' approaches to early childhood development are the same, the Packard Foundation decided to take a place-based approach with which it offers direct grantmaking and technical support to Oakland, Fresno, and East San Jose.

⁴ Each community grantee included a school district and its local collaborative partners (e.g., community-based organizations, other public agencies, advocacy groups).

learning from implementation and capitalizing on early and frequent opportunities to support community or Starting Smart and Strong successes. As the Foundation and the evaluation team learn from the work happening in Fresno, East San Jose, and Oakland, they can begin to work with communities to offer insights about what it takes to build early childhood systems so that any community can adopt best practices and scale what works. Through this testing and learning approach to grantmaking, Starting Smart and Strong strives to identify universal best practices, share these learnings across California to scale impact, and create a stronger system of support for young children — ultimately benefiting every child, parent, caregiver, and educator in the state by 2025.

Needless to say, this is a complex, long-term initiative in need of an evaluation tool that is able to adapt and respond to changes in circumstances or strategies at multiple levels (family, school, community, state, foundation). While the end goal might be clear (i.e., parents, caregivers, and educators are supported as they prepare children to be healthy and ready for school), the challenge in systems evaluation is identifying meaningful indicators of interim progress toward longer-term change. With a multiyear, place-based grant strategy for early learning, we felt it was important for the Foundation and community grantee partners to have meaningful data points along the way about systems change. One way to do that was to develop a tool that is participatory, can provide rapid feedback, and can engage grantees and their stakeholders in a process that is both reflective and strategic.

Systems-Change Tool: The Development Process

When we began the development of this systems-change tool, one nonnegotiable was to stay true to the developmental evaluation approach and prioritize continuous feedback and learning as its function. The primary intent of this tool was to be able to lift up lessons that can be fed back into Starting Smart and Strong for ongoing growth and adaptation through the end of the 10-year strategy. This tool was developed

Starting Smart and Strong: The Four Pillars

- **Professional Development and Training:** Starting Smart and Strong communities are testing professional development and training models for early childhood educators in formal settings, focusing on equipping the professionals who work with children every day with best practices for adult-child interactions.
- **Support for Family Friends and Neighbors:** Communities are testing new approaches to support and provide resources for informal caregivers, and to ensure authentic parent engagement.
- **Healthy Development:** Starting Smart and Strong strategies are working to ensure the healthy development of young children through access to universal developmental screenings and appropriate responses.
- **Scalable Solutions:** Starting Smart and Strong aims to scale what works by creating strong systems, committing resources, and engaging committed leaders who are willing to take action.

two years into Starting Smart and Strong, which allowed us to develop domains and indicators that were relevant and meaningful to the Foundation and its grantee partner communities. From the start, the evaluation team has been learning through interviews and observations how each community is approaching systems development. The tool items were informed by the Foundation's Theory of Change for Starting Smart and Strong (David and Lucile Packard Foundation, n.d.), interviews with key leaders and stakeholders in each community, numerous observations at strategic planning meetings and early learning trainings, learning and reflection sessions with grantee communities and the foundation, and thorough assessments of capacity in each community.

Additionally, through an extensive literature review, several systems-evaluation frameworks

were considered, among them *A Practical Guide to Evaluating Systems Change in a Human Services Systems Context* (Latham, 2014) and *Evaluation Systems Change: A Planning Guide* (Hargreaves, 2010). We chose to largely base our systems-tool framework on the Build Initiative's *Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives* (Coffman, 2007), which recognizes that systems initiatives are diverse and complex, and that it is necessary to have clarity on what grantee communities are doing and aiming to accomplish. There were three other determining factors:

1. The Build framework was designed with early learning in mind; therefore it defined and recognized key dimensions of success for a strong early learning support system.
2. The framework was not limited to a public social service system. It made room for public and private players and agencies to partner and collaborate in the systems-change space, which is necessary in these grantee partner communities as well as a component of this funding strategy.
3. This framework complements the developmental evaluation approach, which focuses on learning about emerging strategies and changes across stages of work and the idea that certain focus areas may be more relevant than others as the work progresses and matures.

While the ultimate goal of the Foundation's Starting Smart and Strong theory of change is for children to be healthy and ready for kindergarten, it was important for this tool to focus on those outcomes related to systems development that are important measures of progress along the way (Coffman, 2007). For Starting Smart and Strong, those community-informed outcome indicators linked to four focus areas of the Build framework:

- *Leadership development*, which mapped to the "context" area of the Build framework

and addresses building and improving the sociopolitical environment that surrounds the system, through system-level leadership, so it produces the changes needed to sustain it;

- *Quality improvement*, which mapped to the "component" area of the Build framework and addresses establishing effective and high-performing programs and services within the system;
- *Infrastructure*, which addresses developing the resources and supports need to function effectively and with quality; and
- *Alignment*, which mapped to the "connection" area of the Build framework and addresses creating strong and effective linkages across system components.

Once the rubric of indicators, rating scale, and their definitions were developed for the four focus areas, the tool was vetted with a core of early learning and social service community partners that represented the grantee partners and the Foundation. This ensured that the tool reflected the community-level perspective of what systems change would take. After some adjustments, the Formal-System⁵ Self-Assessment Tool was ready to be piloted in the Starting Smart and Strong grantee communities.

The Tool and Community Implementation

The Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool (FSAT) is a rubric⁶ organized into a framework of four domains that are parallel to the four focus areas of the Build framework: leadership, quality improvement, infrastructure, and alignment. There are 24 indicators on which progress is rated by each grantee partner community, and each indicator has a four-point rating scale that represents continuous progress for developing early learning systems: 1 – Starting Up, 2 – Emerging, 3 – Strong Progress, and 4 – Embedded Progress.

⁵This version of the tool was designed to address the system that supports licensed, formal early learning settings, not unlicensed informal/family friend and neighbor care settings.

⁶See <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/rubrics>

TABLE 1 The Four FSAT Domains: Definitions

FSAT Domain	Domain Description
Leadership (7 items)	Leaders at different levels within and outside the district (e.g., superintendents, early learning directors, principals, teachers, etc.) are committed and demonstrate leadership to support implementation and scale of effective professional development (PD) models.
Quality improvement (6 items)	The district has a clear, focused strategy and plan for improving the quality of early learning. There exists a culture of continual improvement and structures (e.g., data and dedicated time) to support learning and data-informed practices.
Infrastructure (6 items)	The formal sector has the resources and infrastructure (e.g., funding, staffing, facilities, and policies) needed to implement and scale effective PD models. Resources and infrastructure are adequate, aligned, and coordinated across institutions, and receive adequate attention from leaders at different levels.
Alignment (5 items)	District and other formal sector entities form partnerships with the broader system of leaders and providers in early childhood learning and healthy development. This includes public health, mental health, informal care networks and resource and referral networks.

Under each rating level is a brief description for each indicator to ensure a common understanding of each indicator and level of systems-change progress. (See Table 1.)

Each grantee partner community completed a retrospective baseline assessment and current assessment of their status (as of Year 3 of Staring Smart and Strong). Each grantee partner used a local-team approach to complete their assessments, working with their partners to ensure accurate representation of activities taking place across each domain. After this round of data collection, each grantee partner community will complete the FSAT every two years through the end of the grant strategy.

Completed assessments were submitted to the evaluation team for analysis. Basic frequencies were run on all items and summary mean scores were generated for each domain for each of the three communities as well as across all communities. Additionally, the evaluation team had a sense-making analysis session where results were examined within the context of other evaluation findings and observations from each community to date, as well as within the context of the Foundation's overall early learning strategy. The purposes of this analysis session were to validate

the findings, especially since this was the pilot year; and to prepare for learning and reflection sessions with each community grantee partner and the Foundation.

Response From Grantee Partner Communities

Feedback and responses from grantee partner communities indicated that the FSAT was easy to use and the process to complete it was a positive experience. Grantee partners completed it in two weeks and the data were complete, including qualitative notes. All three communities completed them in teams, as strongly recommended. Community teams for the FSAT typically included the grantee partner lead, a project manager, and key partners (e.g., early learning director, Head Start manager, executive director of early learning or health nonprofit, family engagement specialist).

Initially, there were concerns among the evaluation team and the Foundation that the grantees might intentionally rate themselves low for the retrospective baseline to make their progress look larger, or select a rating to please the funder. This was addressed up front in four ways:

1. Under each rating, there was a description and/or examples of what progress in that

TABLE 2 Sample of Leadership Domain Rubric

DESIRED OUTCOME	INDICATOR RUBRIC			
	Level 1: Starting Up	Level 2: Emerging	Level 3: Strong Progress	Level 4: Embedded Progress
1. District superintendent is committed to early learning.	District superintendent has not expressed a commitment to/ support of early childhood education (ECE).	Superintendent outwardly supports ECE, voices ECE as a priority.	Superintendent establishes clear expectations and goals on ECE quality internally.	Superintendent establishes clear expectations and goals on ECE quality internally and externally (e.g., families, local policymakers).
2. Early learning director is empowered.	District does not have an early learning director.	District has an early learning director and staff to support this position.	Early learning director has the authority and resources to support professional development (PD) and testing & learning (T&L) efforts as needed.	Early learning director has the authority and resources to scale ECE PD districtwide.
3. A culture of participatory decision-making exists across all levels of district staff (e.g., site administrators, site directors, teachers).	Participatory decision-making does not occur within the district; there is not a practice of gathering perspectives from all levels of district staff (e.g., teachers, site directors, district administrators).	Perspectives from teachers, site directors, and administrators are gathered separately; perspectives are not aligned.	Perspectives from teachers, site directors, and administrators are considered when decisions are made, but a participatory decision-making process does not yet exist	The district has established a mechanism for participatory decision-making; representatives from all levels inform district decisions.
4. District-level leaders champion ECE PD, including T&L efforts, in their district and beyond.	District-level leaders are not bought into the importance of ECE PD or T&L.	District-level leaders understand the value of ECE PD, but are not committed to T&L.	District-level leaders value ECE PD and are committed to T&L.	District-level leaders champion ECE PD in their district and beyond, including T&L.
5. Teachers are committed to the ECE PD delivered, including T&L efforts.	Teachers are not committed to utilizing/participating in ECE PD, including T&L.	Teachers are willing to participate in ECE PD, including T&L.	Teachers implement the best practices recommended by ECE PD, including T&L, in their classrooms.	Teachers develop internal structures to support ongoing reflection and implementation of best practices.
6. District-level leadership is committed to sustaining ECE PD.	District-level leaders have not bought into the importance of ECE PD.	Buy-in for ECE PD is concentrated among a small group of district leaders.	District-level leaders have bought into the importance of ECE PD.	District-level leaders are committed to ensuring resources for ECE PD remain a priority for the district, even in the face of leadership transitions.
7. District staff at all levels are working in unison toward a common vision for ECE PD.	Commitment to developing a shared vision for ECE PD is nonexistent.	Engagement in ECE PD efforts is concentrated among midlevel staff at the district. A shared, common vision is not yet apparent.	Engagement in ECE PD efforts includes staff at all levels of the district. A shared, common vision for ECE PD is in development.	Engagement in ECE PD efforts includes staff at all levels of the district. A shared, common vision is apparent.

indicator would look like; therefore, each rating level was clearly defined and meaningful, instead of just a number. (See Table 2.)

2. We designed the tool to be completed as a community team (versus just the grantee lead), and asked each grantee partner to identify its team.
3. Community grantee partners were informed that they were not expected to be at an “embedded progress” rating across all indicators by the end of the initiative, as we understood that each community had different strengths, challenges, and needs based on unique cultural and political contexts.
4. Most importantly, we were clear from the start that FSAT was a self-assessment tool designed to help grantee partners better understand their systems-change process and make informed strategic decisions. This was not a tool designed to directly affect any grantmaking decisions.

Further, during the analysis process, we found that the results from each community made sense and were supported by most of the qualitative data we had gathered to date as part of our developmental evaluation. We also encouraged grantee partners to provide any narrative notes as examples or to explain why they selected the rating.

Rapid Feedback

What is unique about this systems-change tool is that once complete, the community grantee partners had their data and could act on it immediately. It was not necessary for an analyst to run statistical tests for grantees to understand or interpret the data; however, as evaluation partners, through community learning sessions we provided summary data and data visuals to show progress and point out bright spots and areas in possible need of more attention. We also presented this information alongside their other evaluation data, such as child outcome assessments and teaching practice data, in an effort to give communities a chance to see the bigger early learning picture. One remark in particular

represented much of the feedback: “I’ve never seen systems-change data before. The bigger picture of what we are doing makes more sense to me now.”

The simplicity of the rubric also allowed us to rapidly feed this data back to the Packard Foundation. Through a learning and reflection session with the foundation team, they were able to see systems-level progress three years into a 10-year strategy and have in-depth discussions about whether the grantees were where they expected them to be; if strategic decisions needed to be made regarding what additional resources might be needed in grantee communities; and if targets and benchmarks for the overall strategy needed to be adjusted. The Foundation also discussed strategic partnerships it had in each of the three communities and how those might be leveraged to help advance early learning systems change. Finally, it was a crucial learning opportunity for the Foundation to have seen this early progress and have data points that indicated what systems change looks like in each community and what kind of impact it was starting to have.

What Did the FSAT Data Show?

The first two data points from each community, which represented three years of early learning systems development work along a 10-year strategy, showed various levels of progress both within and across all grantee partner communities. The most salient findings were as follows:

- Community grantee partners have approached systems development in different ways, but in ways that were suited to their contexts. It was interesting to see that the FSAT was able to capture that nuance. (See Figure 1.) Fresno, for example, had a strong early learning infrastructure to start with, so it was more natural for it to build from there and to also result in a stronger infrastructure rating by Year 3.
- Despite known leadership instability at the school district level (e.g., high turnover of superintendents), all communities have demonstrated progress developing early learning leadership. (See Figure 2.)

FIGURE 1 FSAT Scores by Community, Baseline to 2017



FIGURE 2 FSAT Scores by Systems-Change Domains, Baseline to 2017

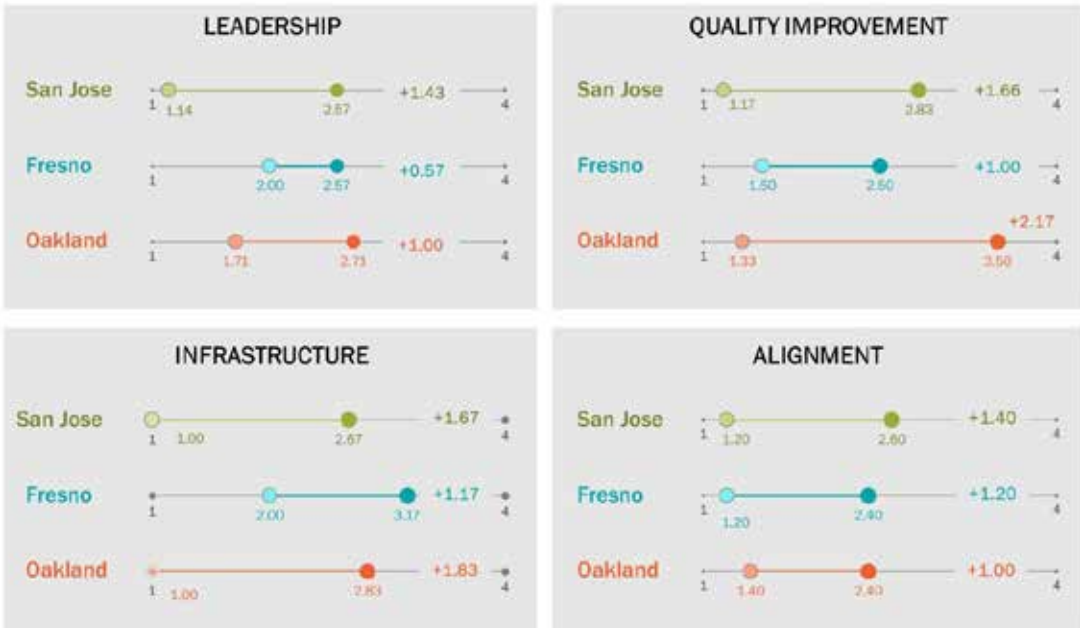
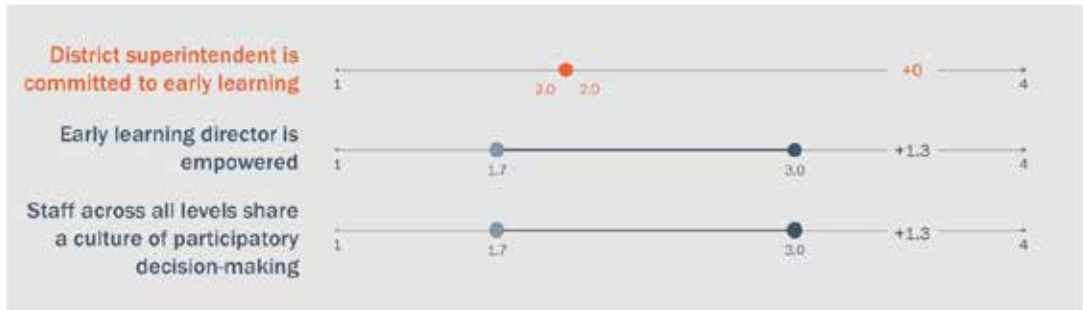


FIGURE 3

Leadership Indicators Score, Baseline to 2017: Comparing District-Level Leaders to Midlevel Leaders



- More specifically, data within the leadership domain demonstrated the importance of midlevel leadership (e.g., early learning directors, program managers). The Foundation made intentional investments in developing this leadership, and it followed that community grantees cultivated leadership and demonstrated stability in early learning departments. (See Figure 3.) This was important progress for the Foundation to see.
- The most progress was made in the quality improvement domain, specifically in changing and improving how early learning data were used to develop and/or enhance quality teaching practices and approaches.
- In the infrastructure domain, findings showed that resources (i.e., finances, time, staffing, materials) targeted to early learning professional development had increased. All three communities demonstrated strong progress.
- The least overall progress was seen in the alignment domain, and communities noted the challenges of working with traditionally siloed partners and multiple funding streams. This focus area will require more long-term strategic planning and development. This was also the domain where the indicators needed the most adjustment following the pilot.

- Overall, grantee partner communities focused on developing leadership, bringing stability to their infrastructures, and targeting their work toward quality improvement of early learning professional development. Three years into Starting Smart and Strong, there is room for further progress for all communities.

Finally, when we followed up with grantee partner communities, we learned that they used this data to set priorities for three-year strategic planning, develop systems-change benchmarks, and share systems data with school boards and community partners.

Conclusion

Ultimately, what made the FSAT work was the development process. It brought together research expertise with community wisdom, and agreements were made together about how to measure and understand meaningful progress, rather than being driven by the funder or an external framework. This process also increased participant ownership of what the tool measures and the resulting data.

Although the FSAT has shown to be promising and useful for grantee partners and the Packard Foundation for assessing and monitoring systems change, it is by no means perfect. It does not attempt to be the one tool to assess systems-change initiatives. It is still one of many data points needed to truly understand the

complexities of a multisite, multipartner, long-term systems-change strategy. The Starting Smart and Strong evaluation will continue to collect qualitative data and assess findings against other standard measures of early childhood learning and development. The Foundation plans to continue using the FSAT through the end of the 10-year Starting Smart and Strong strategy, and communities have expressed that they are eager to have another systems-change data point.

Here are some key lessons learned for funders, evaluators, and practitioners.

Lessons for Funders

- For a multiyear (e.g., 10-year) place-based initiative, funders must have interim data points to develop both clarity and a deeper understanding of what systems change looks like for community grantees (Mack, Preskill, Keddy, & Jhawar, 2014). The FSAT can do this by providing local and strategy-wide progress data.
- Data like those from the FSAT also help funders to understand how their investments might be contributing to community-level change, while informing them about what resources may be necessary in the next phase of their work.

Lessons for Evaluators

- The FSAT provides a more meaningful framework and tangible means to describe and show systems change, especially for a multiyear initiative.
- Include grantees and/or community partners in the development process of a systems-change evaluation/self-assessment tool to ensure that the measures of progress are meaningful, and to encourage participant ownership.
- The FSAT is a good learning tool to generate and facilitate meaningful discussions among foundation staff and grantees.

- As part of a developmental evaluation, the FSAT allows evaluators to have a more nuanced discussion of what could be contributing to systems change and plan for next steps of the evaluation.
- It is important for evaluators to have sense-making analysis sessions with FSAT data and to be flexible and willing to make adjustments to this type of tool. Initially, some items may not work as intended, and as initiatives and communities evolve, it may be necessary to add or replace items. This may especially be true for systems-change initiatives occurring within politically charged public systems.

Lessons for Early Learning Practitioners/Grantees

- Practitioners/grantees of public systems are juggling so much that a tool like the FSAT can help them to ground their understanding and focus on advancing systems change.
- When practitioners/grantees physically have the FSAT tool in hand to complete with key members of their team, they have created the time and space to reflect on where they have been and strategically plan their next steps.
- As follows, systems data can then be used to set priorities and benchmarks, and to share their needs and strategies with key decision-makers.

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Sustainable Development Goals: Exploring a Foundation's Contribution Through Text Analysis

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Introduction

In 2000, the United Nations defined a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by the end of 2015: to eradicate poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and foster global partnership for development. In 2015, Ban Ki-moon, then the U.N. secretary-general, called the MDG program a remarkable effort: “Yet for all the remarkable gains,” he wrote in the forward to the program’s report, “I am keenly aware that inequality persists and that progress has been uneven” (U.N., 2015a, p. 3).

In that year, a set of 17 new goals was approved by all the members of the U.N. through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (U.N., 2015b). These Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with 169 specific targets monitored by 232 indicators, followed the same methodological approach as the MDGs (Kumar, Kumar, & Vivekadhish, 2016; Sachs, 2012), albeit with different purposes and concepts (Sakiko, 2016).

Agenda 2030 takes into account five critical areas: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership (U.N., 2015b), and the dimension of SDG framework is global. The goals are intended as the work of all — governments, public institutions, the private sector, organized civil society, and ordinary citizens — and they address a wide range of issues. (See Figure 1.)

Key Points

- Compagnia di San Paolo, an Italian grantmaking foundation, conducted a text analysis using a set of keywords extracted from grantees’ project descriptions to measure how successfully its work aligned with the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and to identify interrelationships among the goals themselves.
- This article describes the foundation’s research methods and shares the results of its analysis, which found significant contributions to the goals in a number of areas funded by Compagnia and less alignment in others. The analysis is particularly noteworthy in its identification of an unintentional pattern of convergence between the foundation’s activities and the Sustainable Development Goals, which were never explicitly adopted by the foundation as terms of reference in any aspect of the planning and development of its work.
- To understand how a foundation’s work aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals framework is useful to many philanthropic functions: communication; advocacy; offering a role in a common, worldwide effort; and evaluating the organization’s own choices (explicit or tacit) against the background set by the project. This article illustrates how other foundations can adapt Compagnia’s approach to evaluate their own contributions.

Each of the SDGs is further defined by several specific subtargets, yet those do not always make evident whether or to what degree key areas

FIGURE 1 The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Note: United Nations. (2018). <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

of philanthropic work are specifically aligned, especially for entities that promote and support projects at a local level: universities, nonprofits, foundations, and municipalities. This poses an important policymaking question.

Compagnia di San Paolo

One of the largest philanthropic institutions in Italy, Compagnia di San Paolo is an independent foundation with roots in the Renaissance that emerged in its modern form from the privatization of a class of state-run banks (Monge, 2016). It had assets of about 6.3 billion Euros in 2018, and was listed No. 7¹ among "Europe's top 20 private charity donors" in a 2018 ranking by the World Charity Donor Index (Giving, 2018). The foundation operates primarily in Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, and Liguria in northwest Italy, funding work by nonprofit organizations and administering its own projects, but its geographical scope is not exclusively regional.

From 2015 to the beginning of 2019, the foundation funded more than 4,000 projects for a total investment of almost 700 million Euros. Considering this significant role in the promotion of projects aimed at enhancing the

well-being of individuals, communities, and Italian society, Compagnia's contribution to the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals program was a question that was inevitably raised within the foundation itself, beginning with the foundation's board.

Compagnia operates through five institutional departments: Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage; Philanthropy and Territory; Cultural Innovation; Social Policies; and Research and Health. But these represent little more than broad organizational labels, because each department concerns itself with a wide range of issues. (See Figure 2.) It is not immediately clear how these areas of work contribute to each of the SDGs, and there is also the issue of the interrelationships among the SDGs themselves, which several studies have addressed (Allen, Metternicht, & Wiedmann 2018; Pradhan, Costa, Rybski, Lucht, & Kropp, 2017; Waage et al., 2019). If the SDGs represent both a complex and multifaceted framework and individual, real-life projects — and, especially at the local level, rarely is it explicit whether those projects address one or more SDGs — the congruence of the two scopes can be difficult to gauge.

¹ The ranking credited Compagnia di San Paolo with making grants in 2017 that totaled about 185,000 million Euros (\$200 million in U.S. dollars).

FIGURE 2 Compagnia di San Paolo: A Thematic Organization of Programmatic Departments, 2018–2019

Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage	Philanthropy and Territory	Cultural Innovation	Social Policies	Research and Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural attractors• Places of culture• Performing arts• Anthropized landscape• Early access to culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social innovation• Circular society• Community philanthropy• Research on the territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural enterprise• Science and society• Culture and civic innovation• Contemporary languages• Access and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welfare• Active inclusion• Proximity networks• Well-being and education• Empowerment and integration• International cooperation• Employment policies• Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University system• International affairs• Health• Scientific research and technological innovation• Economic and social research

Why Measure Alignment With SDGs?

Is this relevant for philanthropic organizations? While adoption of the SDGs is not mandatory, we suggest that comprehending how an organization contributes to the SDG framework is useful for many philanthropic functions: communication; advocacy; taking part in a common, worldwide effort; and evaluating one’s own choices (explicit or tacit) against the background set by the SDG scheme.

The need for metrics to evaluate the relationship between the SDGs and the policies and work of organizations at the national and local level has been recognized, and numerous studies have mapped the contributions of specific institutions to SDGs. Various organizations and professions have been analyzed, among them UNESCO (Bergman, Bergman, Fernandes, Grossrieder, & Schneider, 2018), libraries (Pinto & Ochoa, 2017), nursing (Benton & Shaffer, 2016), information and communications technology services (Ono, Lida, & Yamazaki, 2017), commercial companies (Vodafone, 2019), finance (International Finance Corporation, 2018), health (World Health Organization, 2018), and research (Körffgen et al., 2018). These studies have adopted various analytical methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to explore this relationship.

An interesting approach can be found among universities and research agencies that are evaluating their activities through a methodology based on keywords suggested by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a network of science and technology experts whose mission is to devise strategies for the implementation of SDGs. Institutions all over the world are involved in this kind of philanthropy exercise, but, to our knowledge, only at a speculative or theoretical level. There is some recent literature on the response of philanthropy and nonprofits to SDGs: Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (2019) published a guide to practical tools for aligning philanthropic work to the goals, and the Council on Foundations (COF) has activated an SDG Funders platform² that allows stakeholders to monitor how foundations, most based in in the U.S., are supporting the program. COF also published *From Global Goals to Local Impact* (Edwards & Ross, 2016), a report examining “how U.S. funders can view their work in the global development framework and contribute to the success of the goals in the United States” (2016, para. 1). However, our literature overview found no studies attempting to verify such contributions empirically.

The consequences of this work are crucial for philanthropic organizations. Such in-depth

² See <https://sdgfunders.org/home/lang/en/>

FIGURE 3 SDG Keywords Developed by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network: Examples

SDG No. 1 No Poverty	SDG No. 2 Zero Hunger	SDG No. 3 Good Health and Well-Being	SDG No. 4 Quality Education	SDG No. 5 Gender Equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa • Class • Disadvantage • Equality • Income • Microfinance • Poor • Poverty • Quality of life • Resources • Social protection system • Sustainable • Third World • Vulnerable • Wealth distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Consume • Environment • Food • Food gap • Food production • Hunger • Legumes • Maize • Malnutrition • Nutrition • Nutritional need • Productivity • Resilient agriculture • Rural infrastructure • Wasting • World's hungry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution • Antiretroviral • Biomedical • Child deaths • Death rate • Dental • Disability and inclusion • Disease • Health • Increasing life expectancy • Malaria • Mental health • Mortality • Premature mortality • Sexual health • Soil pollution • Tobacco control • Vaccines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to education • Basic literacy • Cultural diversity • Disability and education • Education • Equal access • Gender sensitive • Global citizenship • Inclusive • International cooperation • Learning opportunities • Lifelong learning • Literacy • Numeracy • Qualified teachers • School • Universal education • Vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic living standards • Dignity • Disadvantaged • Discrimination • Employment • Empowerment of women • Equal opportunities • Feminism • Forced marriage • Gender discrimination • Governance and gender • Human rights • Parity • Sexual violence • Violence against women • Women's rights • Workplace equality

research can inform internal reflection about their own missions, a deeper comprehension of the contribution of their current efforts to SDGs, and possible transitions to new activities that are more closely aligned to the goals. This is what we have attempted to do in the case of Compagnia di San Paolo, and we discuss that attempt in this article.

Methods

To take a measure of the contribution of Compagnia di San Paolo's projects to SDGs, we adopted an approach suggested by the Australia/Pacific Network branch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) that has been used by several universities to map research and teaching activity related to the SDGs. The SDSN and ACTS developed a set of keywords for each of the 17 goals, identifying a total of 847 words to facilitate comparison with other textual resources. The keywords are linked to the main topic of each SDG (i.e., "Africa" for goal No. 1, No Poverty; "improved nutrition" for goal No. 2, Zero Hunger; "illegal fishing" for goal No. 14, Life Below Water). (See Figure

3.) For our research, we first had to translate to Italian the entire keyword corpus; because the original list is composed of simple and nontechnical words, we did not encounter any particular problems. The keywords were reduced to word roots in order to detect word variations; words with too general a meaning were not considered for the final set. The final list of SDG keywords in Italian comprised 802 words.

Second, we developed an algorithm to calculate a score of similarity between the textual description of each funded project contained in Compagnia's database and each set of SDG keywords; the score was calculated as a percentage of the total number of keywords mentioned in the project description out of the total number of keywords available. The scores ranged from 0%, representing the absence of any keyword, to 100%, representing the presence of all keywords. A matrix was then created with the similarity scores for each project relating to each SDG. It is notable that since this algorithm is not related specifically to SDG keywords, the approach could be applied to different sets of keywords involving other objectives.

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics of Similarity Score on SDGs

SDGs	Projects With at Least One Keyword	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum Value
1. No Poverty	83%	8.1%	6.3%	42.3%
2. Zero Hunger	79%	4.6%	4.2%	41.7%
3. Good Health and Well-Being	81%	2.9%	2.4%	16.9%
4. Quality Education	81%	5.7%	4.8%	29.3%
5. Gender Equality	83%	5.4%	4.2%	27.8%
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	53%	1.7%	2.1%	13%
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	67%	3.5%	3.5%	41.2%
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	93%	6.8%	4.7%	28.1%
9. Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure	89%	6.9%	5.2%	34.8%
10. Reduced Inequalities	92%	6%	4.1%	28%
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	93%	6.3%	4.2%	33.3%
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	76%	3.5%	3.3%	26.4%
13. Climate Action	62%	2.7%	2.9%	35.9%
14. Life Below Water	27%	1.7%	3.4%	50%
15. Life on Land	62%	2%	2.2%	19.6%
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	72%	2.6%	2.5%	15.9%
17. Partnership for the Goals	82%	5.1%	4.4%	27.8%

Sample

A total of 5,140 projects funded by Compagnia di San Paolo from January 2015 to February 2019 were collected from the foundation's database, which contains a variety of information about those projects: titles and descriptions, thematic sectors, grant approval dates, and funding levels. The project description was identified as the target variable because each contains rich textual information about the characteristics of the work. From the database of 5,140 projects, we eliminated projects for which a description was not available ($n = 684$) and projects whose descriptions did not contain matching keywords for any SDG ($n = 45$). The final sample comprised 4,411 projects distributed among the foundation's five departments:

- Social Policies: 37% ($n = 1,632$)
- Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage: 34% ($n = 1,502$)
- Cultural Innovation: 12% ($n = 512$)
- Research and Health: 10% ($n = 462$)
- Philanthropy and Territory: 7% ($n = 303$)

The distribution corresponds to the current organization of the foundation, under which the number of projects and economic resources are not equally distributed among its departments (Compagnia di San Paolo, 2018).

Data Analysis

Analysis was begun by using descriptive statistics on the similarity scores to map the alignment of the 4,411 projects with the SDGs. Then, for each SDG a subset of "highly significant" projects was computed, identifying only those projects beyond a significant cutoff threshold calculated as the mean of the total similarity scores plus two standard deviations. The identification of this cutoff allowed us to identify a specific group of projects highly related to the SDGs.

TABLE 2 Descriptive Statistics of the SDGs Projects Subgroup

SDGs	Similarity Score Cutoff	Number of Projects	Mean Value
1. No Poverty	20.7%	146	25.6%
2. Zero Hunger	13.1%	216	16.8%
3. Good Health and Well-Being	7.7%	244	9%
4. Quality Education	15.4%	145	19.1%
5. Gender Equality	13.9%	105	18.3%
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	5.8%	260	7.2%
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	10.4%	176	13.2%
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	16.1%	157	20%
9. Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure	17.3%	256	19.6%
10. Reduced Inequalities	14.3%	138	18%
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	14.8%	132	18%
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	10.1%	151	13.4%
13. Climate Action	8.5%	135	12.2%
14. Life Below Water	8.4%	186	12.7%
15. Life on Land	6.4%	130	9.2%
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	7.5%	224	9.3%
17. Partnership for the Goals	13.9%	191	17.5%

Further analysis was carried out to include the distribution of projects with SDG-alignment potential among Compagnia's five departments. Then, each of the 4.411 projects was assigned to the SDG with the highest similarity score value to obtain a complete distribution of projects, both numeric and economic, among the SDGs.

Finally, a correlation analysis was performed to understand potential interrelationships among SDGs.

Results

Similarity Scores

The mean values of the similarity scores for each SDG ranged from 1.7% (for goal No. 6, Clean Water and Sanitation, and goal No. 14, Life Below Water) to 8.1% (for goal No. 1, No Poverty); the overall low values are related to the presence of several projects with a similarity score of 0. (See Table 1.) Considering for each SDG the combination of the number of

projects with at least one keyword and the mean and maximum value of the similarity score, there were six SDGs most related to the projects: No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; Reduced Inequalities; and Sustainable Cities and Communities. The goals most underrepresented were Clean Water and Sanitation and Life Below Water.

There are some specific features to consider. The Affordable and Clean Energy goal is represented by a small, niche set of projects (mean score = 3.5%; maximum value = 42.1%), while Partnership for the Goals is covered partially, but from a great variety of projects (mean score = 5.1%; projects with at least one keyword = 82%).

Highly Significant Subgroups

Identifying a cutoff threshold allowed us to identify a specific subgroup of "highly significant" SDG projects. (See Table 2.) These data confirmed the previous identification of six goals

TABLE 3 Distribution of Each SDG Project Subgroup Among the Compagnia di San Paolo Departments

SDGs	Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage	Social Policies	Research and Health	Cultural Innovation	Philanthropy and Territory
1. No Poverty	10% (n = 15)	64% (n = 93)	6% (n = 9)	3% (n = 4)	17% (n = 25)
2. Zero Hunger	35% (n = 75)	34% (n = 73)	6% (n = 13)	14% (n = 30)	12% (n = 25)
3. Good Health and Well-Being	10% (n = 24)	67% (n = 163)	14% (n = 33)	7% (n = 17)	3% (n = 7)
4. Quality Education	14% (n = 21)	60% (n = 87)	9% (n = 13)	5% (n = 7)	12% (n = 17)
5. Gender Equality	8% (n = 8)	81% (n = 85)	2% (n = 2)	6% (n = 6)	4% (n = 4)
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	29% (n = 76)	40% (n = 105)	9% (n = 23)	7% (n = 18)	15% (n = 38)
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	33% (n = 58)	18% (n = 32)	20% (n = 35)	19% (n = 34)	10% (n = 17)
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	21% (n = 33)	34% (n = 54)	18% (n = 28)	8% (n = 12)	19% (n = 30)
9. Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure	26% (n = 67)	15% (n = 39)	21% (n = 53)	23% (n = 60)	14% (n = 37)
10. Reduced Inequalities	17% (n = 24)	51% (n = 70)	14% (n = 19)	5% (n = 7)	13% (n = 18)
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	38% (n = 50)	35% (n = 46)	2% (n = 3)	3% (n = 4)	22% (n = 29)
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	28% (n = 42)	30% (n = 45)	15% (n = 23)	11% (n = 17)	16% (n = 24)
13. Climate Action	23% (n = 31)	28% (n = 38)	20% (n = 27)	12% (n = 16)	17% (n = 23)
14. Life Below Water	22% (n = 41)	40% (n = 75)	14% (n = 26)	12% (n = 22)	12% (n = 22)
15. Life on Land	47% (n = 61)	18% (n = 24)	6% (n = 8)	5% (n = 7)	23% (n = 30)
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	12% (n = 26)	61% (n = 136)	15% (n = 33)	6% (n = 13)	7% (n = 16)
17. Partnership for the Goals	21% (n = 40)	28% (n = 54)	16% (n = 30)	14% (n = 27)	21% (n = 40)

as the most closely related to the foundation’s work. The focus on the most significant groups of projects also found strong contributions to the goals of Quality Education, Gender Equality, and Partnership for the Goals. On average, the medium similarity score was 19%; that is, “SDG projects” contained one keyword for every five possible keywords. The average score decreased significantly for SDGs related to climate change, nature, and water.

When looking at the distribution of the SDG projects among the five departments of Compagnia di San Paolo, the majority — 12 — were found in the Social Policies department. (See Table 3.) Social Policies was mainly relevant to work related to poverty, well-being, education, gender equality, water, and institutions. The projects of the Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage department were mainly involved with work on hunger, environment, and sustainability. Research and Health projects

made contributions to the areas of climate, energy, and technology and innovation; Cultural Innovation projects contributed to industry and innovation, and energy; and the Philanthropy and Territory projects were mainly relevant in the areas of the environment, sustainability in cities, and work.

Distribution and Correlation

The data substantially confirmed the results regarding the distribution of the projects among the 17 SDGs. (See Table 4.) Four of them — No Poverty; Quality Education; Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; and Sustainable Cities and Communities — accounted for about 60% of the foundation’s 4,411 projects and almost 70% of the economic resources. The highest share of foundation projects, almost 25%, was aligned with the No Poverty goal, along with 30% of the total amount of economic resources.

TABLE 4 Distribution of Projects and Economic Resources per SDG

SDGs	Number of Projects	Percentage	Total Economic Resources (in Euros)	Percentage	Project's Average Value
1. No Poverty	1,077	24.4%	86,910,415	28.6%	80.697 €
2. Zero Hunger	184	4.2%	15,735,855	5.2%	85.520 €
3. Good Health and Well-Being	20	0.5%	807,000	0.3%	40.350 €
4. Quality Education	514	11.7%	27,370,450	9.1%	53.350 €
5. Gender Equality	303	6.9%	20,128,398	6.7%	66.430 €
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	15	0.3%	331,502	0.1%	22.100 €
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	213	4.8%	6,910,619	2.3%	32.444 €
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	329	7.5%	17,857,890	5.9%	54.279 €
9. Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure	525	11.9%	54,232,131	17.9%	103.299 €
10. Reduced Inequalities	301	6.8%	15,325,538	5.1%	50.915 €
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	520	11.8%	37,973,446	12.6%	73.025 €
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	83	1.9%	3,546,325	1.2%	42.726 €
13. Climate Action	56	1.3%	2,157,000	0.7%	38.517 €
14. Life Below Water	77	1.7%	2,751,974	0.9%	35.740 €
15. Life on Land	37	0.8%	1,184,674	0.4%	32.018 €
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	14	0.3%	407,000	0.1%	29.071 €
17. Partnership for the Goals	143	3.2%	8,691,082	2.9%	60.777 €

Considering the comparison between distribution of projects and economic value, the hierarchies were maintained with limited fluctuations (i.e., Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure had 12% of the projects and 18% of the economic resources; Affordable and Clean Energy had 4.8% of the projects and 2.3% of the resources). A high variance in the average value per projects was found, based on a median value of 68,000 Euros. Projects aligned with the goals of No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; and Sustainable Cities and Communities had an average value significantly higher than the projects related to the other SDGs.

The correlation analysis among the similarity scores of each SDG was conducted on the full set of 4,411 projects. (See Table 5.) Thanks to the large amount of data, all the correlations were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Considering the effective size of the associations, the analysis

showed three that could be considered highly significant (r coefficient ≥ 0.70): Decent Work and Economic Growth was highly correlated to Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure ($r = .70$) and Reduced Inequalities ($r = .71$). Also, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure was correlated to Partnership for the Goals ($r = 0.72$). Considering the large size of our sample, moderate correlations ($r \geq 0.50$) also can be interpreted as statistically significant (Taylor, 1990); in this case, several other correlations among the SDGs were highlighted.

Detecting Connections

Determining whether an organization is contributing to the SDGs, and in what manner, is not an easy task. Coverage of topics inside the SDG framework appears to be incomplete because it does not include some areas, such as culture, that characterize the daily work of many organizations and that are certainly relevant. Several studies have raised the issue that some areas,

TABLE 5 Correlation Analysis Among SDGs Similarity Scores

	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
1. No Poverty	-	.51	.53	.41	.60	.40	.23	.67	.59	.64	.50	.39	.29	.38	.31	.38	.51
2. Zero Hunger		-	.29	.29	.36	.37	.32	.60	.52	.48	.46	.55	.28	.21	.33	.25	.45
3. Good Health and Well-Being			-	.41	.47	.42	.26	.50	.44	.50	.45	.30	.23	.31	.25	.39	.45
4. Quality Education				-	.41	.24	.22	.47	.43	.55	.41	.23	.26	.16	.21	.52	.48
5. Gender Equality					-	.30	.12	.54	.38	.59	.32	.21	.20	.18	.21	.48	.34
6. Clean Water and Sanitation						-	.32	.37	.35	.34	.46	.33	.22	.19	.29	.24	.29
7. Affordable and Clean Energy							-	.36	.51	.23	.35	.39	.34	.17	.26	.19	.40
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth								-	.70	.71	.58	.54	.36	.33	.33	.44	.59
9. Industry, Innovation, And Infrastructure									-	.58	.53	.55	.37	.34	.31	.36	.72
10. Reduced Inequalities										-	.47	.36	.33	.20	.23	.53	.54
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities											-	.49	.41	.30	.47	.35	.51
12. Responsible Consumption and Production												-	.38	.33	.31	.23	.51
13. Climate Action													-	.24	.32	.28	.41
14. Life Below Water														-	.18	.16	.22
15. Life on Land															-	.16	.31
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions																-	.34
17. Partnership for the Goals																	-

such as mental health (Izutsu et al., 2015), human rights (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016), and culture and arts (European Alliance for Culture and the Arts, 2016), have been somewhat ignored by the SDGs. These limitations help explain how difficult it can be for organizations to detect a connection between their mission and the good of humankind and the planet.

Foundations have a special stake in the approaches to implementing the SDGs: They play a major role in civil society and a wide spectrum of work, from the arts and social policy to the environment and scientific research. An understanding of their role in the SDG project can be relevant in calibrating their alignment with those goals, appreciating their contributions to the U.N.'s mission, and fostering possible transitions to work more closely linked to SDGs. These shifts are in their very early stages of development within Compagnia di San Paolo, as the nature of the SDGs and of the foundation's projects are highly complex and do not always share the same realms of language and conceptualization.

And, as noted in a Charities Aid Foundation America (2016) blog post, philanthropy could encounter real barriers to impact on those SDGs (i.e., Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) that require partnership with the private sector and government intervention. Moreover, some experts (e.g., Watkins, 2015) have affirmed that the philanthropic sector was conspicuously absent from the SDG debate. In sum, there is consensus that foundations should play a role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but the scope of that role is not clear.

How, then, does a philanthropic organization create a road map to alignment with the SDG project? We assume that these institutions must first understand clearly their own current efforts and how they are connected to the SDG framework. While some organizations, including companies (Vodafone Group, 2019) and international agencies (Bergman et al., 2018), have already attempted to reach this objective, to our knowledge no grantmaking philanthropic foundations have attempted to verify empirically

Our study analyzed how the entire activity of Compagnia di San Paolo from January 2015 to February 2019 aligned with the Agenda 2030's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

their contribution to the SDGs. And this is what we attempted to do with our foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo.

Alignment: Compagnia di San Paolo and the SDGs

Our study analyzed how the entire activity of Compagnia di San Paolo from January 2015 to February 2019 aligned with the Agenda 2030's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The textual description of each of the 4,411 board-approved projects was compared to a wide set of specific keywords associated with the 17 SDGs in order to detect those goals most closely aligned with the foundation's activity and the possible interrelations among the goals themselves.

Overall Contribution

First, we found that Compagnia's contributions were particularly notable in work involving eight SDGs: No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Quality Education; Gender Equality; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; Reduced Inequalities; and Sustainable Cities and Communities. Less substantial was the alignment of the foundation's work with the SDG areas of climate, water, and energy. These results are consistent with Compagnia's mission; issues such as poverty, education, work, innovation, and sustainability are expressly included in its programming documents. Its lesser contributions in environmental areas reflect current foundation programming, in which the environment is treated as an issue interrelated to a number of activities as opposed to a distinct goal.

Some of these results are similar to those evidenced in the COF's SDG Funders platform, which summarizes the level of funding for SDG-aligned projects from foundations around the world — although the bulk of them are U.S.-based funders. Quality Education is the goal most closely related to the foundations' grantmaking, and this stands true in the case of Compagnia di San Paolo; in contrast, alignment with the Life Below Water and Climate Action goals is limited among both Compagnia and the foundations on COF's platform. In the middle ground, however, significant variations are evident and probably due to differences in missions and other characteristics. In general, foundations are contributing significantly to SDG No. 3, Good Health and Well-Being, while Compagnia's alignment is limited. It should be noted, however, that the SDG Funders sample is weighted toward U.S. foundations, and the distribution of Compagnia's funding to SDG-aligned work is similar to other foundations based in southern Europe.

Contributions Distributed by Department

Our analysis also considered the distribution among Compagnia's five departments of those projects most related to the SDGs. As expected, the Social Policies department funded and administered most of the foundation's projects aligned with the SDGs, especially those involving the areas (e.g., poverty, education, gender equality) we found most represented by the projects. We also found several notable features and some anomalies: the Zero Hunger and Life on Land goals had a high incidence of aligned projects within the Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage department.

There are two explanations for this. First, each department oversees a range of issues and funds a variety of projects that deal with those issues. And, second, the foundation explicitly promotes transdisciplinary work. For example, over the past few years Compagnia has funded Turin and the Alps, a program whose main aim was to support projects that reinvented the relationship between the city's residents and the mountains. This program was located within the Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage department — which also deals with projects framing the

landscape as both a natural and cultural legacy. And the Cultural Innovation department funds work aligned with the Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG that promotes the transition of nonprofits involved in such fields as contemporary art and audience development to full-fledged social-enterprise models, as well as innovative and often technologically innovative projects.

Finally, while the foundation does concentrate its funding in the northwestern part of Italy, it has implemented several projects in Africa; it is that work that further explains Compagnia's significant contributions to the SDGs for eradicating poverty and hunger.

While this blending of domains is clearly evident and reflective of the foundation's transdisciplinary approach, we cannot exclude that the identification of the contribution of each project to SDGs could depend in part on the keywords used and the description of the projects. Among the Zero Hunger keywords, for instance, are some that are very general and that could be used in a range of forms (e.g., "productivity," "product"). This anomaly can explain, for instance, the high frequency of aligned projects located within the Art, Cultural Activities, and Heritage department (e.g., "artistic product").

Interrelationships Among the SDGs

Third, we explored the associations among the SDGs themselves, and the data confirmed our preliminary expectations. Poverty, work, and economic growth; innovation, infrastructure, and inequality reduction are firmly aligned with the work funded by the foundation, and our analysis found considerable interrelationships among these areas. One example of cross-fertilization can be found in the concept of social innovation (Mulgan, 2006), currently an area of work in which Compagnia di San Paolo is more engaged.

Many other significant associations were found, even if of limited magnitude. Once again, the areas of the environment, climate, energy, and water appeared to be relatively isolated and with weak associations: conversely, there were many associations among all SDGs related to the

citizen, civic awareness, social rights, and related aspects (e.g., cities, work, gender, education).

Evidence suggests that two distinct macro areas can be identified within the activity of the foundation: The first is related to people and citizens. Compagnia di San Paolo's current primary focus, and thus its major contribution to the SDGs, involve projects that align with almost all those SDGs for which citizens are the main beneficiaries, and the work of the foundation's five departments extends to issues that are not directly connected to their main missions. Moreover, data empirically confirmed that the same Compagnia project can contribute to more than one SDG. Projects involving labor markets, for instance, directly align with the goal of Decent Work and Economic Growth, but some of those projects also impact Quality Education; Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; and Sustainable Cities and Communities. These cross-relationships are not a new finding; several studies have shown that such links among SDGs are inevitable and that there is a high degree of interdependence (Pradhan et al., 2017; Nilsson, Griggs, & Visbeck, 2016; Le Blanc, 2015).

The second macro area of Compagnia's work involves climate, water, land, and energy: While the health of the environment and the future of the planet are the specific beneficiaries, these are inextricably linked to the long-term quality of human life. Compagnia di San Paolo has just begun to work explicitly on these ecological goals, and they are not mentioned as such in its charter.

Despite its substantial merit, our study has some limits that must be acknowledged.

- **Keywords:** The use of keywords for the computation of the similarity score has potential to generate some bias. As was recognized, keywords for some SDGs were general enough to be assigned to projects unrelated to a specific goal, and for further study a more complex strategy of text analysis based on natural language processing is recommended. In our case, the large amount of available data allowed

Poverty, work, and economic growth; innovation, infrastructure, and inequality reduction are firmly aligned with the work funded by the foundation, and our analysis found considerable interrelationships among these areas.

us to be confident that overall, the data analyzed were reliable and interpretable. Furthermore, the identification of those projects highly related to the SDGs was an additional strategy for obtaining reliable evidence.

- **Single-source data:** Another limitation is the consequence of the fact that the research involved only one foundation; the data refer specifically to Compagnia di San Paolo and as such are not generalizable. Still, other foundations could adopt our research approach using their own data. Moreover, a merging of data from many foundations with banking origins, similar to Compagnia, could provide an overview of the work undertaken by all those foundations in Italy.
- **Intent versus implementation:** The evidence for our study was based on project descriptions created by grantees. Subsequent changes in the actual implementation of those projects were a possibility even if there were no substantial thematic shifts.

Conclusion

From a methodological perspective, our research represents, to our knowledge, the first attempt to map empirically the contribution of a large private philanthropic foundation to the Sustainable

Development Goals in the early period of the U.N.'s implementation of the project. The work of today's foundations encompasses many areas; the SDGs are an interest framework that can inform that work.

As for Compagnia di San Paolo, the in-depth evidence uncovered by this study could deepen the foundation's understanding of its own work and purpose and its relationship to other national and international institutions, particularly in encouraging other foundations to replicate this research. With adequate analytical solutions, philanthropic institutions could map their contribution to SDGs using strategic documents, grantmaking records, historical data, and similar sources, and then determine which role to assume in relation to the SDGs: grantmaker, connector, facilitator, watchdog.

A comprehensive overview of the contribution of the world of philanthropy to Agenda 2030 could be effectively reached and data-sharing among international institutions (e.g., Council on Foundations, the Rockefeller Foundation) should be systematically applied. Considering the experience of Compagnia di San Paolo, the analysis was conducted in order to support the transformation that brought the foundation to be better aligned to SDGs from a thematic and organizational point of view. The analysis responded to the foundation's internal debate and demonstrated that the current spectrum of its activities was already related to Agenda 2030 and that this alignment to SDGs was a reality.

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Archiving Forward and Backward: Two Perspectives on Capturing the Impact of Limited-Life Foundations

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Keywords: Archives, foundation, spend down, limited life, preservation, records management

Introduction

The records a foundation creates document its grantmaking and make it possible to tell both the foundation's story and the story of the nonprofits and initiatives it supported. In addition, "the records of foundations can provide guidance for future generations in tackling new and continuing social problems" (Craig, 2012, p. 6).

For any foundation, creating an archives makes it easier to locate important documents, such as board minutes and grant agreements, and to understand and learn from its own history. For limited-life foundations, the documents stored in archives are even more critical. They are a unique fingerprint of the foundation's impact: the only authentic record left after the last staff member has moved on to other work. Archives preserve and provide access to the raw data embodied in these records that allow future researchers to analyze, study, and make sense of a foundation's grantmaking and its impact on people and communities.

Establishing Foundation Archives: A Reader and Guide to First Steps (Rose & Stapleton, 1991) is likely the only resource available that directly addresses archiving the records of foundations. It was published in 1991, however, and is woefully out of date. The authors of this article hope that by sharing their experiences establishing the archives of two limited-life foundations — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies — they can offer guidance to other foundations. These foundations began planning their archives at different stages in their corporate life, one at the beginning of its

Key Points

- Foundations that document their knowledge through an archives are creating a rich legacy of information. Archives preserve and provide access to the raw data that allow researchers to study and analyze grantmaking and its impact on people and communities.
- Limited-life foundations may have an even greater incentive to capture their work in an archives: Once they close their doors, much institutional knowledge is lost. By examining two specific cases — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which began planning for its archives early in its work, and the Atlantic Philanthropies, which began the process later — this article discusses what it means to build, manage, and preserve an archives of a limited-life foundation.
- This article also offers recommendations for foundations seeking to plan and structure an archives, with specific suggestions for organizing and preserving records at various stages of an organization's lifespan.

existence and the other during its sunset years, both dedicating time and resources to preserving their legacies.

At each foundation, program officers, administrators, and trustees all had a hand in creating, storing, preserving, and managing the records that would become part of the archives. In the heat of grantmaking, little thought was initially given to how and where files were stored or how they were labeled or named. The volume

of documents, in both physical and digital form, held in Atlantic Philanthropies offices around the world was daunting. The staff at the Wilson Foundation were working at such speed and storing records in so many folders in so many digital storage locations that they were in danger of losing track of records that documented major initiatives as well as the foundation's history.

This article describes the work the authors have done and continue to do for these two foundations. It also recommends actions that foundation staff can take to begin creating an archives, and concludes with suggestions for foundations at different stages of their lifespan.

Opening Strong: The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr., believed that to make effective change, the impact should be felt from the start yet carry long into the future. To do both, he earmarked a portion of his estate and the eventual sale of his beloved Buffalo Bills to fund his namesake foundation. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation began operating in 2015 with assets of \$1.2 billion to spend by 2035. Wilson wanted the foundation's grantmaking to be directed by those who knew him. The founding documents contained two key stipulations. The first was the appointment of four life trustees, each of whom knew Wilson. The second was a limited life for the foundation: "It is my intent that the Foundation not have perpetual existence, but rather that the funds which will eventually be transferred to the Foundation be distributed for charitable purposes within a period of twenty (20) years" (Wilson, 2012, para. 2).

According to David Egner, president and CEO of the Wilson Foundation, the impetus to create a foundation archives came out of conversations he had with Maura Dewan, vice president for corporate affairs, and Jeffery Littman, one of the four life trustees, about how to document the foundation's story. Their list of pros and cons tipped heavily in favor of the pros: honoring Wilson's values, documenting the evolution of the organization, and contributing to knowledge in the field of philanthropy about strategies for

A foundation's archives typically includes only a small percentage of the records it creates. Deciding what should be permanently saved in the archives requires foundation staff to understand the whole universe of records.

sunsetting. "We knew there would be a story to tell and learnings to share," said Egner (personal communication, August 12, 2019). "We were afraid if we waited until the end of the foundation's life, we would have forgotten what happened in the early days."

The Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University began working with the Wilson Foundation on strategic visioning in 2017. As the conversation around developing an archives grew, the Johnson Center offered consulting support. In November 2018, the first of this article's authors began working with the foundation to more fully develop an archiving plan, including criteria for what needed to be saved and a system for preservation and access.

Locating and Managing Records

A foundation's archives typically includes only a small percentage of the records it creates. Deciding what should be permanently saved in the archives requires foundation staff to understand the whole universe of records.

The first step is to conduct a records inventory, looking across the organization at all the types of documents it creates. Everything is fair game: emails, grant files, minutes of board meetings, and much more. The next step is to determine which documents constitute a "record" (e.g., minutes, personnel policies, annual reports, emails agreeing to a grant amendment), and which do not (e.g., duplicate copies of minutes,

TABLE 1 Retention Schedule for Communications Record Group

Communications Records: Documents Created or Received by the Communications Team		
Records Series: Communications	Storage Location	Retention Period
Annual reports	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive (both versions)
Audio and video	SharePoint	Archive
Branding	Electronic = SharePoint Paper = Office archive	Archive
Contact lists for events, grantees, mailings	SharePoint	EoFL
Email (general)	Outlook	3 years
Email (subject specific or important)	SharePoint	EoFL + 7 years
Events	SharePoint	Archive
Media coverage	SharePoint	Archive
Media kits and press releases	SharePoint	Archive
Photos	SharePoint	Archive
Presentations	SharePoint	Archive
Promotional materials – foundation	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive
Promotional materials – grantees and projects	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive
Reports	Paper = Office archive Electronic = SharePoint	Archive
Social media	SharePoint as PDF	Archive

emails about the staff picnic, research published by other organizations).

Foundation staff members can make a quick inventory of the kinds of documents they create and determine which should be considered a record: Does the document provide information about important decisions or transactions? Does it contain information about key people, activities, or events? Keep in mind that emails to a grantee are records, but so is a photo of the white board from a planning session for a major initiative. Each department may find it helpful to create a file plan that describes what kinds of documents it creates, where they are saved, and which should be included in the archives.

Foundation leadership can direct a more comprehensive inventory of the organization’s records. The records interviews with Wilson staff uncovered some pain points resulting from

the on-premises server, the desire to keep this highly mobile staff connected, and the need to collaborate both inside and outside the organization. Not only did the records inventory allow for better records management, but it also led to improved access to shared files and facilitated collaboration.

Once a records survey has been completed, a retention schedule can be developed that defines how long each type of record should be kept. (See Table 1.) Some types, such as accounts payable or bank statements, can be destroyed after a set number of years. Other records should be kept permanently; these have archival value because they:

- Provide evidence of the foundation’s activities, such as grants, evaluations, reports, and publications;

- Document how the foundation’s mission was carried out, such as board and committee minutes, annual reports, and financial statements; or
- Have enduring legal, regulatory, administrative, or historical value, such as articles of incorporation, audits, photographs, and trustee interviews.

The Wilson Foundation created a unique category for end-of-foundation-life records. These are records to be retained through the year 2035, when the foundation ceases grantmaking, and then the number of years established by the foundation’s retention schedule. Many of these are financial and administrative records of operations rather than programs. For example, accounts payable records are typically retained for seven years, after which they can be destroyed. Once the Wilson Foundation spends down and completes payment on all grants and contracts, those accounts payable records must be retained for an additional seven years.

A records-management policy¹ can help everyone in the foundation understand what is expected when it comes to creating and storing documents. It should define responsibilities, identify the systems where records can be stored, and describe how to destroy records whose retention periods have expired.

This policy is also a good place to define how staff are expected to manage email. Some foundations delete all emails from the electronic mail system after a certain number of years; others retain email indefinitely. In either case, staff should not use their email in-box as a filing system. Good email hygiene includes:

- deleting junk mail, subscriptions, or interoffice messages that are no longer relevant.

Most important, set aside time to manage email so the task does not become overwhelming. At the Wilson Foundation, a “records day” was dedicated time for staff to clean up email, file important records in the shared file system, and delete documents and emails that were clogging in-boxes and keeping people from working efficiently.

Building the Archives

Developing an archives for a foundation involves a sequence of steps — selection, arrangement and description, preservation, and access. At the Wilson Foundation, the focus has been on selecting records and ensuring they will be preserved through the spend-down period.

In archival terms, selection is “the process of identifying materials to be preserved because of their enduring value, especially those materials to be physically transferred to an archives” (Pearce-Moses, 2005, p. 356). The following groups of records should be organized by department, and then chronologically:

- *Board records*, created in support of board meetings, capture strategic decisions. They include minutes, agendas, committee reports, grant approvals, financial reports, and trustee and senior correspondence and email.
 - *Corporate records* are created to provide guidance to the board in managing the foundation, and include documents such as articles of incorporation, resolutions, and bylaws.
 - *Program records* document the evolution of strategies that shape grantmaking, including evaluations, theories of investment, cross-sector research, and the thinking behind major initiatives.
- saving important emails with associated files,
 - downloading important attachments and storing them in the appropriate project folder, and

¹ For more information on records management, visit ARMA International, the nonprofit organization for information professionals, at arma.org.

Paper documents, placed on a shelf and forgotten, will most likely still be legible in 20, 50, or even 100 years. This is not the case for digital records. Born digital records require special attention if they are to survive indefinitely.

- *Grant records* include grant applications, supporting documents, grant agreements, reports, amendments, and associated emails.
- *Communications records* describe the foundation's work and priorities, and include annual reports, press releases, websites and social media, and speeches.
- *Foundation history records* capture major events in the life of the organization, and may include biographies of the founders and key staff, oral history interviews, timelines, organizational charts, photos, and videos.

An archives-management policy can help to codify these series as archival and define how and where they will be preserved.

Most of the records created by the Wilson Foundation will be born in a digital environment. Paper documents, placed on a shelf and forgotten, will most likely still be legible in 20, 50, or even 100 years. This is not the case for digital records. Born digital records require special attention if they are to survive indefinitely. While a physical archives has been established to preserve and provide continued access to analog (print) documents and historical objects, a more technical solution was required for digital records.

Managing and Preserving Digital Records

Digital records are susceptible to viruses, data loss, and obsolescence. Developers of proprietary formats may change or cease to support them. "Digital data requires continuous, active intervention to preserve it" (Brown, 2013, p. 195). For the Wilson Foundation, there was no guarantee that a PowerPoint presentation created for a board of trustees meeting in 2018 would be compatible with the software environment of 2035, when the foundation spends down.

To address this, the foundation's archivist evaluated digital preservation systems based on the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's criteria for Levels of Digital Preservation.² Preservica, a cloud-hosted digital preservation solution, was ultimately selected. It meets the key criteria for preserving and authenticating files in all formats over the long term, provides secure cloud storage, checks for viruses, and is ready to use out of the box. Preservica offers the option to set up a user-friendly access portal for all staff to conduct research, and it uses open export protocols that will make it easier to transfer the foundation's records from the preservation system to an external institutional repository after the spend-down process is completed. In another bonus, the Archives of Michigan, a government entity responsible for preserving records for all the state's agencies, had recently set up a consortium of Preservica users that offered reduced subscriber rates and a regional user group to lean on for advice.

Foundations of any size, with or without dedicated information technology staff, can create a digital preservation plan. In *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, Trevor Owens (2018) lays out three approaches:

1. Create an inventory of records that will be preserved and describe them. Include key information such as the department or person who created the records, number of records, record type, and where they are stored. Save a copy of the records to a

²The alliance released a new Levels of Digital Preservation assessment tool in October 2019; see <https://ndsa.org/activities/levels-of-digital-preservation/>

cloud storage location, such as Amazon Web Services Glacier or Microsoft Azure. The key is to make sure this backup copy is stored in a geographic location separate from where the original records are saved.

2. Buy a hosted solution, such as Preservica or ArchivesDirect,³ that offers “user interfaces to automate a lot of the work required for checking and maintaining copies of your content” (Owens, 2018, p. 115).
3. Invest in staff with the technical ability to configure and run open-source software, such as Archivematica,⁴ combined with a storage service, such as DuraCloud.⁵ Management of open-source tools requires time and attention.

The Wilson Foundation has 15 years left to build the archives before closing its doors. The foundation started early and is committed to dedicating resources to the task. However, as the case of the Atlantic Philanthropies that follows will show, starting early is not a prerequisite for leaving behind a robust archives.

**Closing Strong:
The Atlantic Philanthropies**

Unlike at the Wilson Foundation, the decision to plan for institutional archives may come nearer to the end of a limited-life foundation’s operations. While such a delay in planning may present challenges, the case of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it can be done successfully. Many lessons can be drawn from this experience that may benefit foundations seeking to preserve their archives and demonstrate that planning archives in the sunset years is possible.

There are many reasons why planning for an institutional archives may not begin until later in a foundation’s lifespan. Atlantic Philanthropies operated anonymously for the first 15 years of its

**Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation:
Top Five Takeaways**

1. Ask each staff member to make a quick inventory of the kinds of documents they create and determine which are records.
2. Initiate a comprehensive records inventory to capture the kinds of records that are being created and where and how they are stored.
3. Write a records-management policy to help staff understand what is expected of them when it comes to managing documents and email.
4. Write an archives-management policy to define record series and how and where records will be preserved.
5. Put together a digital preservation plan.

existence and, therefore, communications and archives had not been of interest. Furthermore, until 2002, Atlantic was not a limited-life foundation; thus, archival planning would not have been a matter of urgency. In Atlantic’s final decade, however, attention turned to its legacy and the lessons it could share with other limited-life foundations. It was at this point that the importance of preserving Atlantic’s vast archives became more apparent.

While the online and print publications generated by Atlantic’s robust communications program in the past several years provide a wealth of information on how the foundation operated over the four decades of its existence, the raw materials contained in the office files present even greater insight into its grantmaking and such landmark decisions as to go public and, later, to spend down. From an archivist’s perspective, Atlantic’s records represent a diversity in grantmaking programs and geographic areas

³ Other options are available, at a variety of price points.

⁴ See <https://www.archivematica.org/en/>

⁵ See <https://duraspace.org/duracloud/>

FIGURE 1 Online Finding Aids for the Atlantic Philanthropies Collection at Cornell University

Atlantic Philanthropies Archives, 1921-2018.
Collection Number: 8540

Contents

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- [Restrictions on Access](#)
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Series List

Series IV: Grant files

Sub-Series A: Australia grant files

The Australia Vietnam Medical Foundation (Hue Mail)

Baker Medical Research Institute

CRW Trust/Commit to Encourage Creative Philanthropy in Australia

Queensland Australia Queensland (Gen.)

Merida Research Institute

Multisite Handicapped Association

Pharmaceutical Australia

Queensland Institute of Medical Research

Queensland Institute of Medical Research Charitable Trust

Queensland University of Technology

Atlantic Philanthropies Archives, 1921-2018.
Collection Number: 8540

Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections
Cornell University Library

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Title:
Atlantic Philanthropies Archives, 1921-2018.

Repository:
Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections

Collection Number:
8540

Creator:
Atlantic Philanthropies (Organization)

Quantities:
2000 cubic feet.
1.91 terabytes.

Language:
In English.

Restrictions on Access

Only grant files for all areas except those for the United States are open to researchers. Access to all other records is restricted until completion of processing.

Atlantic Philanthropies Archives, 1921-2018.
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Multisite Handicapped Association

Pharmaceutical Australia

Queensland Institute of Medical Research

Queensland Institute of Medical Research Charitable Trust

Queensland University of Technology

National College of Ireland 1991-2009

creator: National College of Ireland

Biographical / Historical
The National College of Ireland was formerly known as the National College of Industrial Relations.

Box 308 Folder 12 Third sector research. 1997

Processing Information
Grantee name appeared as National College of Industrial Relations on original folder.

Box 308 Folder 13 #7063 (#91-41). Pilot programme. Initiatives for access to third level education for second chance and mature students 1991-1993, 1995

Processing Information
Grantee name appeared as National College of Industrial Relations on original folder. Title supplemented with FLUXX title.

Higher Education

Universities

Educational Management

Drop-Out Prevention

Box 352 Folder 6 #7235 (#94-03). Centre for Educational Opportunities-- strategic plan and mentoring programme 1994-1997

Scope and Contents
Dublin office cabinet file ref: 26/2/2. Cab. 3, Dr. 2A.

Processing Information
Title supplemented with FLUXX title. Copies of checks removed.

Access restrictions apply.

and can serve as a rich resource for academics interested in such areas of study as post-apartheid South Africa, peace in Northern Ireland, or marriage equality in the Republic of Ireland, to name a few.

Doing Some Homework

The first step a limited-life foundation staff should take is to learn the basics of what archives are and how they work. For a quick overview, the Society of American Archivists (SAA)

presents a good summary on its website (<https://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives>).⁶ In order to understand how their archives will be used, staff should also acquaint themselves with how archival materials are made accessible to researchers.

Archives use online finding aids to provide researchers with a summary of a collection, provide its historical context, and, perhaps most importantly, list an inventory of included records. (See Figure 1.) Finding aids are published on the repository's website and can also be discovered through a quick online search. A researcher studying a foundation's archives without a finding aid would find the work difficult, if not impossible: Atlantic's archives, for example, constitutes a collection of approximately 1,200 banker boxes of records. Foundation staff should note that finding aids are not webpages; they are straightforward digital stand-ins for the collection itself and, as such, simplify research.

Finding aids are created after a collection is processed. Processing is a labor-intensive task by which an organization's records are rehoused, inventoried, arranged, and described. Files are removed to acid-free folders, placed in acid-free boxes, and then inventoried at the folder level. Digital media, such as DVDs and CDs, are flagged and removed so their contents can be transferred to a more stable digital format. Finally, each folder is reviewed for sensitive information before the box is bar-coded and labeled. Digital records are more challenging than their analog counterparts; they require active maintenance in digital preservation systems due to the speed of technological obsolescence as well as the fact that such records can be easily damaged. The records are then arranged, ideally following the original file-keeping system of the foundation, and a finding aid is written.

Reaching Out to an Archival Institution

Armed with a basic sense of how archives work, foundation staff should begin researching possible repositories that have the capacity to preserve their organization's archives in perpetuity. Viable

candidates can be universities with ties to the foundation, or those with special collections or academic programs that overlap the subject areas addressed by the foundation's grantmaking. A foundation may also consider an archival institution with special focus on philanthropy, such as the Rockefeller Archive Center or the Philanthropy Archives at Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis. Foundation staff should browse potential repository websites to evaluate their collections, the ease of accessing those collections, and the presence of digital records. Some questions to ask when selecting an archival institution include:

- Does the repository have the resources to process the collection in a timely manner?
- Does it have the capacity to manage digital preservation and migration over time?
- Does it include other collections of a similar nature and interest to researchers?
- Will the repository promote the collection through outreach and storytelling?

Depending on the size of its collection, a foundation should plan on contributing funds to hire additional temporary staff to process the collection. In the case of Atlantic, Cornell University was chosen not only because it was founder Chuck Feeney's alma mater and a major recipient of Atlantic's funding, but also because its Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections has an excellent reputation for its work in preserving digital records, which have a strong presence in Atlantic's archives. Cornell, located in Ithaca, New York, also has the capacity to host symposiums and exhibits and to organize other outreach efforts to encourage the use of the Atlantic Philanthropies Archives.

In 2014, the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections was invited by Atlantic to apply for project-planning funding. After the submission was approved, Cornell hired an archives

⁶The SAA has also published a book on donating an organizations' records to a repository; the book can be ordered through its website: (<https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-orgrecs>).

In addition to providing the transfer of title, the deed of gift outlines the physical transfer of the collection and lists types of records to be included, excluded, or restricted from the archives.

consultant to survey all paper and electronic records at Atlantic's offices in New York City, New York; Belfast, Northern Ireland; Dublin, Ireland; and Bermuda; she drafted an in-depth processing plan and proposed a structure for the collection. After successfully demonstrating a strong, well-thought-out plan for Atlantic's archives, Cornell was awarded the grant to process and house the collection.

Opening Strong Lines of Communication

When a suitable repository has been selected, close communications between foundation and repository staff should be initiated and maintained for as long as the foundation's doors remain open. This would begin with the drafting of a deed of gift between the foundation and the repository. In addition to providing the transfer of title, the deed of gift outlines the physical transfer of the collection and lists types of records to be included, excluded, or restricted from the archives. While drafting this list, foundation staff should consult their records retention policy as well as the repository to discuss what should not be included in the archives. Invoices for office supplies, for instance, have little informational or evidential value; human resources records contain far too much personal and sensitive information and are not worth preserving. Foundation staff should also call attention to sensitive records that they may not want researchers to immediately access. In many situations, confidential documents are restricted for a period of time before researchers are allowed to access them. It is important to note that restrictions are not immediately reversed on the date they

are scheduled to end. Rather, staff will re-review records at that time to ensure that sensitive information is not provided to researchers.

In the case of Cornell and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the deed of gift also established the Archives Advisory Committee, which facilitated continued and regular dialogue between Cornell and Atlantic and allowed for Atlantic to remain an active participant in planning the future of its archives. Twice a year, the committee has met with project staff in New York City or in Ithaca, New York. Furthermore, Atlantic staff with close connection to the project have held biweekly phone conferences with archives staff to discuss such important matters as coordinating shipments, setting time limits on restricted materials, and approving of outreach efforts. These meetings became less frequent as the project proceeded and details were ironed out. This regular communication has been beneficial to both organizations; Atlantic remains aware of every step of the archives project, while project staff benefit from Atlantic's institutional knowledge.

Shipping Records

To ease the transition of archival records from the foundation to the repository, foundation staff can work with the repository archivist to develop a consistent process for shipping records. While preparing shipments, foundation staff should consult the deed of gift to ensure that excluded records are not transferred. Although repository staff will weed excluded records from collections, it saves time and money for both organizations if records such as phone bills and invoices are not shipped in the first place. Files should be boxed in the order in which they were originally kept in filing cabinets and desk drawers.

To accurately provide context to future researchers, the archivist must understand who created or managed the records in a box sent to the repository. An organization-wide standard for labeling should be implemented and followed by staff as they prepare materials for shipments. Such a standard should include the name of the person or office where the files originate. Although such details seem minor, mislabeled or

unlabeled boxes can complicate archival processing. In several instances, it appeared that boxes received from Atlantic's offices were packed and labeled by staff who were not necessarily the same individuals who created or kept the records they contained. Boxes were often unlabeled or mislabeled. In several instances the names of the individuals who packed boxes appeared on the labels, which initially led project staff to believe that they were the names of the staff members in whose offices the records were originally kept. While the detective work of identifying records and their original keepers are part and parcel of an archivist's job, it can be particularly challenging and time-consuming in processing a collection as large as Atlantic's, especially when boxes arrive in multiple shipments over the course of several years. In the case of Atlantic, these challenges were greatly abated by the close communications with Atlantic staff, who have the deep institutional memory that the project staff simply do not have.

Transferring Digital Materials

In addition to paper records, foundations will have voluminous digital materials that should be in the archives, including office files, email, social media, websites, and databases. This project may seem intimidating, but the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it does not need to be. File servers from Atlantic's offices have been saved on hard drives and sent to Cornell.

While digital records can easily be transferred to a hard drive, emails can be trickier to capture and save. Since late 1998 Atlantic's staff emails have been captured and preserved by Symantec, to which Cornell will continue to have access. Given the volume of emails saved, the Archives Advisory Committee decided to preserve only the emails from CEO accounts. Although software exists to identify and redact sensitive information such as Social Security numbers and bank account information, none are sophisticated enough to identify other types of confidential information. For this reason, access to emails will continue to be mediated by Cornell staff even after the general restrictions are lifted in 2025.

In addition to paper records, foundations will have voluminous digital materials that should be in the archives, including office files, email, social media, websites, and databases. This project may seem intimidating, but the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it does not need to be.

Project staff have been given access to Atlantic's SharePoint file-storage platforms and its grants management (Fluxx) and corporate entity (Secretariat) databases, from which they have begun extracting records. In October 2018, Atlantic transferred management of its website and social media accounts to Cornell, the contents of which will be preserved for the archives.

Making the Website Legacy Ready

As a foundation winds down operations, it should consider reevaluating its website as a lasting resource for researchers. In 2016, Atlantic rebuilt its website in order to better create the narrative of its legacy. In addition to considering the story it wanted to present through the website, Atlantic also consulted with members of the philanthropic sector, its primary intended audience, to glean what they hoped to get out of the resource. As communications officers Elizabeth Cahill and David Morse have stated:

The foundation wanted its final (and posthumous) website to be something both more intimate and more exhortatory: an expression of why and how Atlantic had conducted its intensive, limited-term philanthropy, bundled together with stories about its experiences and some lessons it had learned along the way. It wanted a site where visitors do

Atlantic Philanthropies: Top Five Takeaways

1. Begin researching possible repositories with the capacity to preserve the foundation's archives in perpetuity.
2. Maintain close communications with the selected repository staff as long as the foundation's doors remain open.
3. Develop a consistent, well-thought-out process for shipping physical records and transferring digital content to the repository.
4. Consider reevaluating the foundation website as a lasting resource for researchers.
5. Share organizational resources that will assist in the arrangement and description of their archives.

not simply download data but inquire, peruse, weigh pros and cons, and, in the best case, draw inspiration and guidance for their own philanthropy. (Proscio, 2017, p. 32).

Given the volume of resources and level of curation, Atlantic's website has played an important part in helping archives staff understand Atlantic's history and identify the records in its archives. Even more importantly, as Morse and Cahill (2017) have stated, "it [will] continue to be useful even after Atlantic ceased to exist" (para. 13), and will serve as the starting point for most researchers. The publications and grants database available on the website will provide a valuable narrative that can guide research. Since the website's transfer to Cornell, it will continue to add new content for the foreseeable future, including the recent addition of a webpage, which guides visitors to the finding aid where the website will eventually be preserved once it is no longer on the live web. The rich resources available on the website, and its interconnectedness with the finding aid, will allow for a particularly seamless transition for researchers.

Providing Resources

In addition to maintaining open channels of communication with repository staff, foundations should share resources that will assist in the arrangement and description of their archives. Early on, the foundation should send repository staff any foundation publications that discuss the history of its grantmaking and capture its philosophy. Office and staff organizational charts are also useful to guide the identification and arrangement of records. Access to the foundation's grants-management systems would also help streamline archival processing. For Atlantic Philanthropies Archives staff, access to the foundation's Fluxx system has been invaluable. Fluxx stores records for each grant and grantee organization, and has supplied important information such as grant titles, grantee names, and geographical areas of impact. During processing, staff have frequently come across grant files labeled with nothing more than grantee name and grant number. Using the grant number, staff were able to locate the record for the grant and include the official title in the inventory.

Fluxx was also useful in helping staff identify the official names of grantee organizations. Over the decades of Atlantic's grantmaking, grantee names have sometimes changed. In order to create uniformity, grant files have been organized by the name of the organization as it appeared in Fluxx. Fluxx is also a rich resource for electronic grant-related records; Cornell's digital archivist has been working diligently to extract these records so they can be preserved after Atlantic's contract with the Fluxx database is closed.

While planning an institutional archives early in a foundation's existence is ideal, the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies Archives at Cornell demonstrates that the process can begin later in a foundation's lifespan, as long as communication remains strong and resources such as publications and a grants-management system are made available to archives staff. The care given to preparing shipments can greatly make up for the lack of a strong records-management program.

Begin Where You Are

There may never be an ideal time to start an archives. Whether a foundation is at the beginning of its life, like the Wilson Foundation; at the end of its life, like the Atlantic Philanthropies; or somewhere in between, the most important decision a foundation can make is simply to get started. Where and how you begin may depend on how close you are to spending down.

Foundations with five years or less could:

- Gather records in the core record groups outlined in this article (print and electronic),
- Retain a staff member with institutional memory to inventory and organize the records, and
- Consider locating an outside institutional repository early and talk with repository staff about which records should be donated and what, if any, access restrictions should be applied.

Foundations with five to 10 years could:

- Engage senior leadership in developing a policy to manage the archives,
- Seek the help of a consulting archivist to guide conversations about which records should be preserved and how best to set up systems to provide preservation and access,⁷
- Select and implement a system for preserving digital records designated as archival, and
- Collect and inventory physical records (printed documents and physical media such as CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes, photos, etc.) and store them in a central location.

Foundations with more than 10 years left could:

- Engage senior leadership in developing an information governance plan that includes

a records-management policy and retention schedules;

- Actively manage records through the retention schedule, file plans at the department level, establish a “records day” to help staff manage files, email, etc.;
- Hire an archivist to develop an archives-management policy and to manage the archiving program; and
- Develop methods for preserving physical and digital content.

Conclusion

When people think of archives, they frequently think of the past. However, so much of the work done by archivists looks to the future — the future condition of the records and the researchers who will use them. Just as an archivist must look ahead, so, too, must a foundation that wishes to preserve a legacy from which future generations can learn. Start where you are and seek the counsel of professional archivists to provide advice and hands-on assistance along the way. Although a foundation may have an end date on the horizon, it also has the opportunity to construct a well-organized, well-contextualized record of its past for the benefit of both current staff and future researchers.

Acknowledgments

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⁷The SAA website includes a directory of archives consultants; see <https://www2.archivists.org/consultants>

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Collaborating Within to Support Systems Change: The Need For — and Limits of — Cross-Team Grantmaking

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Keywords: Collaboration, systems change

Introduction

The challenges affecting our communities have pressed the philanthropic sector to become more organized, focused, and strategic in its grantmaking and social investing. With this shift, we have seen the rise of funder collaboratives, which help funders align their priorities; affinity groups, which help share knowledge on specific topics; and philanthropic-serving organizations, which help foundations become more effective. At the same time, many funders are grappling with how to organize their internal structures — often grouped vertically into fields such as education, health, or the arts — to support their overall mission. If done without intention, the internal organization of a foundation's grantmaking areas can lead to further silos and narrow views of how to support complex systems change.

The Kresge Foundation, like many other funders dedicated to systems change, has committed to working across sectors and has often emphasized the need for deeper and more meaningful collaboration to enable complex systems change. Kresge is not alone in proposing more collaboration. In fact, the call for greater collaboration has been a persistent drumbeat in nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. Much has been written about philanthropic collaboration, and most philanthropic organizations believe funder collaboration and coordination is important to their missions (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018). In a 2015 Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) survey of 637 U.S.-based, staffed grantmaking organizations, 80% of respondents said they believe it is

Key Points

- To be responsive to the many facets of communities' challenges and solutions, the Kresge Foundation works intentionally at the intersections of its seven grantmaking areas. One way it fulfills this intention is by awarding cross-team grants, which involve financial and intellectual contributions from multiple Kresge programs in order to enable cross-sector, multidisciplinary work among grantees.
- As Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and the field has increasingly expressed interest in cross-sector approaches to addressing long-standing challenges, Kresge partnered with the strategic learning firm Informing Change to explore how this approach to grantmaking and greater degree of internal collaboration is working from the point of view of Kresge staff and what enables or inhibits it, as well as whether and in what ways grantees uniquely benefit from cross-team grants.
- This article highlights key findings from this exploration, including grantees' appreciation for Kresge's cross-team approach. Nevertheless, the resource-intensive level of the foundation's internal collaboration compelled many Kresge staff to seek evidence of impact in the short term, despite the challenges inherent in measuring complex, emergent, and unpredictable cross-sector work.

(continued on next page)

Key Points (continued)

- Kresge's experience with cross-team grantmaking surfaces a deeply embedded challenge across philanthropy: the historical practice of structuring grantmaking work by program content area is often misaligned with the urgent need to work across sectors to drive complex systems change. As philanthropy seeks to support collaboration among grantees and launches new multifunder collaboratives to affect systems change, structures within foundations may need to change to actualize this ideal.

About The Kresge Foundation

The Kresge Foundation was founded in 1924 in metropolitan Detroit, Mich., to promote human progress. Today, Kresge fulfills that mission by building and strengthening pathways to opportunity for people with low incomes in America's cities, seeking to dismantle structural and systemic barriers to equality and justice. A private national foundation, Kresge employs 108 people and awards more than \$160 million in grants and social investments annually in communities across the U.S. through seven programs, and operates a Social Investments Practice that augments grants with other financial tools like low-interest loans and guarantees.

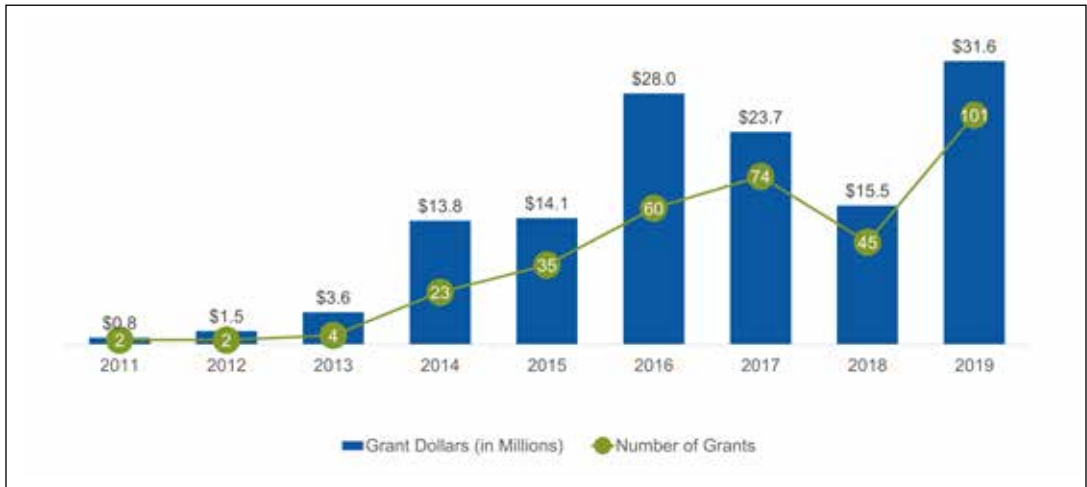
important to coordinate resources and actions with other funders working on the same issue. GEO noted, "The message is clear: The scale and complexity of the problems that the sectors seek to address require collaborative approaches. A go-it-alone mentality will not result in meaningful impact" (Bartzak, 2015, p. 1). However, much of the research on philanthropic collaboration has focused on how funders can or should collaborate with one another; little attention has been paid to how funders organize themselves internally and to what extent collaboration is happening within philanthropic institutions.

Kresge's commitment to external collaboration has pushed the foundation to consider how its internal organization into seven grantmaking areas — American Cities, Arts & Culture, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services — helps or hinders its overall mission of expanding opportunity in urban areas. This mission is deeply rooted in an analysis of the historical and current inequities affecting communities across the country. As Kresge deepens its place-based work, the question of how a national foundation with programs rooted in traditional fields can support systems change at the local level has grown more prominent. The foundation hypothesizes that, because people experience their lives beyond the boundaries of any one sector, staff need the flexibility to work across traditional disciplines and program siloes to advance comprehensive solutions.

Kresge is therefore increasingly seeking to understand when and how it can better meet its objectives by working across grantmaking teams, disciplines, and sectors (public, private, nonprofit, academic, and philanthropic). One way it fulfills this intention is by awarding cross-team grants, which involve financial and intellectual contributions from multiple Kresge grantmaking teams. Cross-team grants have added an important tool to the foundation's grantmaking repertoire and are now embedded in its operational practices.

As Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and the philanthropic field has increasingly expressed interest in cross-sector approaches to addressing long-standing challenges, the foundation set out to explore how this grantmaking approach and the requisite increase in internal collaboration is working from the point of view of Kresge staff, what enables or inhibits it, and whether and how grantees uniquely benefit from cross-team grants.

This article highlights key insights from an intentional effort to expand and deepen cross-team grantmaking, including an evaluation of the practice that situates lessons learned within the larger questions the philanthropic sector has increasingly sought to tackle: How do we bridge the gaps that disciplinary or topical silos

FIGURE 1 Number of New Cross-Team Grants Made Each Year

can create? What is the role of the philanthropic sector in seeding systems change? What evidence do we have that philanthropic practices, be they single-program grants or cross-sectoral partnerships, are impacting efforts to address long-standing challenges?

Background

In 2014, Kresge executives hypothesized that in order to advance urban opportunity for people with low incomes, they would need to work both within and across individual grantmaking programs. Executives took several steps to expand grantmaking norms to include cross-team efforts:

- Kresge’s CEO, Rip Rapson, declared that multidisciplinary work would be one of the “four fence posts” informing how the foundation fulfilled its mission, along with a focus on cities, expanding opportunity, and using the full range of capital tools at its disposal. As Rapson wrote, “foundations may organize their activities vertically in terms of fields of interest, but people live their lives horizontally.”
- The foundation established a short-term, \$2 million incentive pool that provided limited matching funds to encourage program

officers to source grants that would advance multiple program strategies.

- Kresge formally tasked a senior staff member with managing this fund and finding new ways to stimulate multidisciplinary initiatives.

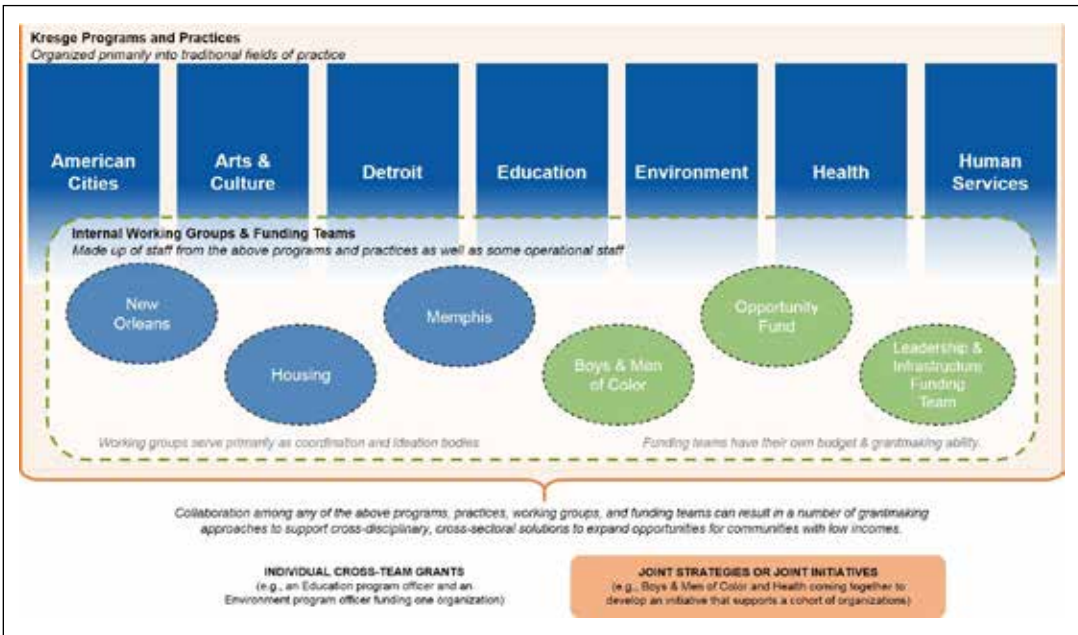
With these actions, Kresge’s cross-team grantmaking grew from four grants totaling \$3.6 million in 2013 to 23 grants totaling \$13.8 million in 2014. This momentum has grown dramatically over the years, with a dip in 2018 attributable to an increase in planning and coordination activities that resulted in several cross-team initiatives in 2019. (See Figure 1.)

Ways of Working Cross-Sectorally Inside the Foundation

While cross-team grantmaking is one way to seed innovative, cross-disciplinary, and multi-sectoral work, Kresge staff collaborate with one another — both formally and informally — in many other ways, including working groups and funding teams. (See Figure 2.)

Kresge is a networked organization, so staff often serve on internal work groups and funding teams that further the foundation’s mission. It currently has two place-based and four issue-based work

FIGURE 2 Ways of Working Cross-Sectorally Inside the Foundation



groups. Within each of these work groups, individuals from all grantmaking areas collaborate on strategies related to that place or issue and work to align their own team's resources to support those strategies. The place-based work groups are New Orleans and Memphis; issue-based work groups include Housing and Boys and Men of Color.

In addition to working groups, Kresge currently has two funding teams with their own budgets and strategies that cut across all grantmaking areas: the Opportunity Fund and the Leadership and Infrastructure Funding Team (LIFT). The Opportunity Fund aims to provide a responsive capacity to address efforts to protect and strengthen democratic institutions, advance civil rights, counteract hate and racism, support immigrant and refugee communities, serve the interests of cities, and advance civil justice to underserved communities. LIFT, a 13-person, cross-departmental committee comprising members from every grantmaking team and operational staff, focuses on:

1. providing high-quality opportunities for Kresge grantees to benefit from equity-minded leadership development programs and services;
2. supporting the field of nonprofit and philanthropic leadership development; and
3. strengthening relationships with membership associations, philanthropic affinity groups, and critical nonprofit infrastructure organizations.

Both funding teams and working groups can result in single-program or cross-team grants, and operate based on the theory that more cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral solutions to expand opportunity will be fostered when grantmaking staff from different programs of the foundation come together.¹

In addition to funding teams and working groups, two grantmaking teams can come together to develop a strategy that results in

¹ While this article focuses on internal collaboration, many grantmaking staff also sit on cross-funder collaboratives that seek to align Kresge's mission and resources with those of other funders, adding to the complexity surrounding cross-team grants.

some single-program grants, some cross-team grants, and/or joint convenings. These joint strategies and initiatives result in a cohort of grants with additional supports, such as technical assistance, communications support, and evaluation. Examples include the Health and Arts & Culture teams' Fresh, Local, Equitable (FreshLo) initiative, launched in 2015, and the Health and Environment teams' recently launched Climate Change, Health, and Equity (CCHE) initiative.

Designing a Meaningful Evaluation

As Kresge's cross-team grantmaking grew to 15% to 20% of its total grantmaking, the foundation acknowledged that simply tracking number of grants and dollar amounts was insufficient. Kresge had been operating on the untested hypothesis that providing communities with resources that allow them to address multiple challenges — challenges not contained to one sector or field — would enable them to be more responsive to community priorities. Kresge staff felt a responsibility to understand grantees' experience of receiving cross-team funding: Was it truly allowing them to work in new ways, or adding distinct value beyond that of a standard foundation grant? At the same time, the foundation sought to turn the evaluative lens on itself to understand what factors, practices, or structures facilitate and inhibit effective cross-team collaboration, and the extent to which cross-team grantmaking supports Kresge's overall mission.

The desire for continuous improvement led Kresge to engage in its first departmentwide evaluation of its grantmaking practice. It has been common practice for Kresge to support the evaluation of initiatives or programs, but this was the first time the foundation looked at its overall operations and their effect on its mission.

In order to fulfill its learning objectives, Kresge partnered with Informing Change, a strategic learning firm based in California's San Francisco Bay Area dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and impact of nonprofits, foundations, and multisector collaborations. A team from Informing Change, including the authors of this article, worked with key Kresge staff (also

As Kresge's cross-team grantmaking grew to 15% to 20% of its total grantmaking, the foundation acknowledged that simply tracking number of grants and dollar amounts was insufficient.

authors of this article) to scope the evaluation, develop its methodology, and customize the report. The following sections describe Informing Change's approach and key findings, and the implications of the evaluation for Kresge's future.

Five questions guided this exploration of the cross-team grantmaking experience for nonprofit grantee partners and Kresge staff:

1. To what extent and in what ways does the foundation's cross-team grantmaking contribute to or hinder nonprofit partners' ability to fulfill their missions?
2. What is the relationship between cross-team grantmaking and nonprofit partners working in cross-sector and multidisciplinary ways?
3. What are the major facilitators and barriers to effective cross-team collaboration within the foundation? What are Kresge staff learning about what it takes to be effective grantmakers who work both across teams and within unique programs?
4. To what extent is cross-team grantmaking an effective approach to further the foundation's mission?
5. What can Kresge's cross-disciplinary experience contribute to the philanthropic field?

These evaluation questions aimed to reflect Kresge staff's own assessments back to them, informed by the context and experiences of their nonprofit grantee partners. To protect the evaluation from potentially unwieldy sprawl, we used the five questions as boundaries for the research[.]

Limitations of the Inquiry

These evaluation questions aimed to reflect Kresge staff's own assessments back to them, informed by the context and experiences of their nonprofit grantee partners. To protect the evaluation from potentially unwieldy sprawl, we used the five questions as boundaries for the research and did not seek to:

- Evaluate whether nonprofit partners achieved their own intended outcomes,
- Investigate how cross-team grantmaking has affected the populations that nonprofit partners serve,
- Systematically compare cross-team grantmaking to single-team grantmaking,
- Investigate initiative- or strategy-specific collaborations, or
- Define Kresge's organizational culture and how the culture may or may not foster collaboration across teams.

As a result of these boundaries, this inquiry was therefore limited in its ability to determine whether cross-team grantmaking is a more effective strategy than single-team grantmaking, and

whether nonprofit partners' work resulted in markedly different outcomes for their communities because of their cross-team grants. These claims, while important and fertile ground for future inquiries, do not speak to the intent of the inquiry explored in this article, which was to better understand the experience of cross-team grantmaking for nonprofit partners and its functioning within the foundation.

We also acknowledge that the period of Kresge's cross-team grantmaking is relatively short term and much remains to be explored on the subject of collaborating within to support systems change. We believe that, despite the relatively short term of this evaluation, the findings will still resonate with and be useful to other foundation staff who, like those at Kresge, are continually iterating in efforts to work across grantmaking teams.

Methods

To answer the evaluation questions, Informing Change utilized a mixed-methods research design that included two phases: an exploration and design phase and a process-evaluation implementation phase. During the first phase, Informing Change conducted a desk review of grant reports, theories of change, logic models, and internal Kresge articulations of cross-team grantmaking. This desk review and interviews with Kresge grantmaking staff informed the development of a plan to guide the full process evaluation.

During the second phase, Informing Change surveyed Kresge grantmaking staff involved in cross-team grantmaking and utilized an array of qualitative methods to explore Kresge's hypothesis that "engaging in a multidisciplinary manner [through cross-team grantmaking] allows us to be more responsive to community priorities and to achieve a bigger impact." These methods included:

1. A "rich pictures" focus group, in which participants use drawing to describe relationships (Checkland & Scholes, 1990; Stevens, 2016). In this focus group, Kresge staff drew their conceptions of the

relationship between Kresge’s mission and their cross-team strategies, as well as how they experience the process of cross-team grantmaking.

2. Observations of cross-team site visits and planning meetings.
3. Photo-inspired interviews with nonprofit partners. Each nonprofit partner sent the interviewer a digital photo of “something that represents to you some aspect of multidisciplinary or cross-sector collaboration supported by your Kresge cross-team grant”² to serve as a jumping-off point for the conversation.
4. Collective interpretation sessions with Kresge’s Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation team and other foundation staff.
5. Focus groups with grantmaking staff to explore key issues that emerged in staff survey responses, and to elaborate on and make sense of findings.

What We Learned

Our findings had two foci: the nonprofit grantee partner experience and foundation staff’s experience.

Filling Critical Needs for Nonprofits

From the nonprofit partners, we learned that cross-team grants fill a critical funding need for cross-sector and cross-disciplinary work. All nonprofit organizations that participated in this study expressed a belief that their cross-team grant helped them advance their missions due to the explicit support for cross-disciplinary and/or cross-sector approaches. The scarcity of funding for collaborative work makes these grants all the more valuable.

The grants also enabled nonprofit partners to participate in convenings and conversations,

Cross-Team Grant Recipients: Some Examples

- An organization that integrates arts and culture into urban revitalization efforts to reduce property vacancy and build creative place-making
- A group that builds job-readiness skills and creates employment pathways through partnerships with businesses and neighborhood associations
- A city department of art, culture, and tourism that brings together local artists, cultural groups, and housing development cooperatives in communitywide arts and farmers markets
- An organization that connects urban health agencies across the U.S. to support collective and collaborative learning about the relationship between climate change and community health
- A community development finance institution working with five communities to deepen community resilience by strengthening cultural expression, the social fabric, and the built environment to better withstand and rebound from climate-related challenges

stimulating new connectivity in the spaces where they work. As a result, organizations reported stepping into spaces between disciplines to diffuse information and innovation. A common challenge of working across sectors is lack of shared vocabulary; nonprofit partners reported that the cross-team grants allowed them to share language and lessons learned with colleagues in adjacent sectors who otherwise would not have access to that knowledge. Disseminating information in this way catalyzed better collaboration by getting more people on the same page. Nonprofit partners attributed their ability to do

² Interviewees were further prompted that, “The photos can be of anything from the literal (e.g., a theory of change or a chart of collaborating teams, organizations, sectors) to the abstract (e.g., a car engine representing the complex coordination of parts), and can be serious, humorous, or puzzling. Photographic quality is not important, so long as the image is clear and you can talk about why you chose it.”

The nonprofit-partner perspective illuminates a strong foundation of strengths related to cross-team grantmaking upon which Kresge can continue to build. Complicating this picture, however, was the mixed feedback from Kresge staff on the process of cross-team grantmaking.

these things, in large part, to Kresge program officers' attentive and responsive engagement with them, in addition to the critical funds the grants provided.

Informing Change also found that a cross-team grant can help shift nonprofit staff behavior toward greater internal collaboration. In the words of one nonprofit grantee partner:

Other strictly arts funders have not required internal collaboration. The cross-team grant helped to introduce me to some other teams and forced some of those collaborations to happen. Without a cross-team grant like this, I think I'd be much more siloed off within the organization since there hadn't been a history of my position collaborating with community development projects.

Challenges for Grantmakers

The nonprofit-partner perspective illuminates a strong foundation of strengths related to cross-team grantmaking upon which Kresge can continue to build. Complicating this picture, however, was the mixed feedback from Kresge staff on the process of cross-team grantmaking. When asked whether cross-team grantmaking is "worth the effort," staff responses ranged from "Yes, absolutely" (47%), to "It varies widely and depends on the grant or situation" (30%), to "It could be, if processes were improved" (20%);

3% reported they were unsure of the relative cost-benefit ratio.

Much of this ambivalence, we believe, stems from the foundation's grantmaking infrastructure — and varying degrees of staff knowledge about how best to use it. Elements of this infrastructure include administrative support for scheduling meetings and managing team logistics, which are organized by grantmaking area; Kresge's online grants-management system, which has been adapted but not optimized for use across teams; and staffing and supervision structures, which differ across grantmaking teams and result in varying degrees of decision-making power that cross teams must grapple with and reconcile.

This infrastructure has evolved for single-program grantmaking. A majority of grantmaking staff who participated in our study (74%) say their efforts on cross-team grants are hindered by gaps in or friction created by these internal structures and processes, which leave grantmaking teams with the knotty challenge of being accountable to specific program budgets while endeavoring to combine resources to support collaborative work. As a result, many staff view cross-team grantmaking as an "add-on" to their already full workloads, rather than as a main strategy for achieving their team goals. Deepening these accountability challenges, collaborative work often muddies the distinct contributions of any one program to particular outcomes. An inability to identify their team's contribution as "effective" causes anxiety for staff who have been accustomed to still-prominent fieldwide definitions of impact. Emergent, collaborative efforts often depart from the linear pathways to measurable outcomes assumed in traditional program evaluation.

Staff who had positive cross-team grantmaking experiences shared some common traits. These staff described themselves as able to facilitate shared decision-making processes, which often entails translating vocabularies and ways of thinking across sectors and disciplines. Those more comfortable with cross-team efforts could explain to their fellow team members how and

why nonprofit partners' work often unfolded in ways staff did not expect.

It is important to note that all of these more tangible facilitators and barriers to cross-team grantmaking (e.g., grants-management systems) are situated within an organizational culture. Concurrent with this evaluation, Kresge has been undergoing both a racial equity learning journey and an organization culture analysis. For example, in the late summer of 2019, the foundation dedicated its two-day all-staff retreat to explore issues of organizational culture as one of several approaches to interrogate the broader context of how we deploy all the tools at our disposal. One area for future exploration not covered in this inquiry is whether and how organizational culture affects cross-team grantmaking and the requisite internal collaboration at Kresge.

Integrating Evaluation Findings

In late April, Kresge's Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation practice held a programwide forum to discuss the primary findings of the evaluation and to invite program colleagues to share their own insights, reflections, and potential next steps. This forum was an opportunity for the program department and several adjacent departments (communications, grants management, and social investments) to reflect together on the evolution of their cross-team grantmaking processes and situate the evaluation findings within broader forms of collaboration already occurring across the foundation and within the foundation's organizational culture. A few staff reflections are worth naming:

1. *Mechanisms to fund multidisciplinary work:* Multidisciplinary and multisectoral work is funded by both single-program teams (e.g., Education, Health) and cross-team grants. As teams deepen their systems-change strategies, foundation staff are increasingly thinking about their own fields' siloes and how to best position philanthropy to tackle the root causes of the most intractable problems impeding access to opportunity.
2. *Cross-team grantmaking as a tool:* Funders often talk about the multiple tools we hold (e.g., grantmaking, communications, networks, knowledge) and which tools help us tackle which problems. The forum discussion showed that program staff see cross-team grantmaking as yet another tool, so it is important to figure out what problem this tool is best suited to solve. Cross-team grantmaking should not be the end goal itself, but instead should serve a larger purpose.
3. *Staff capacity:* Given the complexity and the additional work cross-team grantmaking requires, we must consider onboarding and staff development part of codifying cross-team grantmaking practices, so that the next generation of grantmakers is well-equipped to use all of the philanthropic tools at their disposal.

The evaluation also offered several short-term operational recommendations for the foundation:

- Share learnings from nonprofit organizations back with Kresge colleagues, modeling collaborative behaviors internally. This can lead to an expanded or deeper network for both the program officer and nonprofit organizations.
- Consider assigning a staff person to provide administrative support to cross-team grantmaking efforts. This person can help track cross-team grants data and can also support the calendaring and scheduling of cross-team collaboration meetings and related events.
- Create and use a resource guide to help teams and individual staff working on cross-team grants. Contents could include internally written materials such as guidelines for launching a cross-team grant or tools to help vet ideas for possible cross-team grants.

[T]he evaluation helped the foundation think about larger questions of alignment, end goals, evolving practices, and organizational culture.

- Ensure that staff with cross-team grantmaking responsibilities have adjusted workloads or schedules to allow them more time and thinking space to utilize cross-team grantmaking effectively.

However, and perhaps more importantly, the evaluation helped the foundation think about larger questions of alignment, end goals, evolving practices, and organizational culture. It lifted up internal complexities and the ways in which Kresge's systems are or are not well set up to foster collaboration across program areas; named the evolution of the array of cross-team grantmaking practices over the past several years; and provided space for staff to step back and think about how to refine these practices in light of ongoing learning.

This evaluation, specifically the inquiry into the foundation's internal processes, has already yielded useful insights. As Kresge seeks to further improve its grantmaking practices and become a more effective organization, it must tackle the following:

1. *Measure outcomes of cross-team grantmaking:* Program staff struggle with defining the success or impact of cross-team grants, demonstrating the need for an intentional shift in staff thinking about what counts as success in cross-sector or cross-disciplinary work. Instead of looking for long-term outcomes that correspond to the long timeline and resource investment required for collaborative cross-team grantmaking (e.g., a major policy change), staff must identify more near-term outcomes (e.g., building momentum) resulting from these grants.
2. *Codify grantmaking practices:* Program staff and adjacent teams regularly collaborate with one another, and individual program teams are investing deeply in multidisciplinary and cross-sector work. As the foundation's strategies have evolved, staff have found creative ways to address the root causes impeding access to opportunity in the communities where Kresge works. However, codifying those practices has not caught up. This evaluation has provided an opportunity to begin this process as the foundation's cross-team and place-based work deepens. In the first half of 2019, Kresge developed four cross-team funding opportunities, including two initiatives. Cross-team grantmaking and its complexity is only increasing.
3. *Create ongoing learning opportunities:* The April program forum made clear that staff are hungry and ready for more reflection and learning. The Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation team is committed to creating more learning opportunities for staff to ensure that the lessons learned about supporting multidisciplinary work are being implemented. One way they are doing this is by writing more about Kresge's practices through teaching cases and case studies so that learnings benefit the whole philanthropic field, not just Kresge staff. In 2017, Kresge commissioned a teaching case of the FreshLo evaluation and in September 2019, in partnership with GEO and the Equitable Evaluation Initiative, the foundation shared that teaching case with other funders.

How Kresge Is Expanding Its Cross-Team Work — and Why

The ongoing work and ideation of place- and issue-based working groups, cross-programmatic funding teams, and evaluations of key cross-team initiatives has helped Kresge's cross-team grantmaking practice mature. While there was a downturn in new cross-team grants in 2018, working in a cross-disciplinary manner has become deeply embedded in the foundation's DNA, prompting it to launch several cross-team

initiatives in 2019 that exemplify its continued investment in the intersections of program areas. Together, these initiatives accounted for 56 of the 101 new cross-team grants made in 2019, totaling \$31.6 million. We describe a selection of these initiatives.

Working at the Intersection of Established Fields

One way Kresge deepens cross-team work is by working “at the intersection” of established fields. The CCHE initiative, a four-year, \$20 million commitment from the Environment and Health teams, is one example. It comprises three strategies:

1. building the capacity of health care and public health institutions to reduce their contributions to climate change and support climate resilience;
2. building the leadership of health care and public health practitioners to engage on climate policies and practices; and
3. strengthening community leadership to advance equitable policies and practices that build community resilience and reduce health risks.

The evolution of this initiative is a window into how cross-team collaboration often develops within Kresge. Years ago, the Environment and Health programs began making grants together within the first two strategies with no intention to develop an overarching initiative. As the work matured, grantmaking staff and managing directors began to integrate lessons from their existing cross-team grants with those emerging from other initiatives (such as the Environment program’s Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity initiative). They realized that adding a component to support community-driven solutions that improve public health and climate resilience would add significant value to the field. Staff from both programs co-developed the third, community-based strategy, working through several iterations of it with Kresge’s leadership and trustees prior to formally adopting the entire initiative.

The ongoing work and ideation of place- and issue-based working groups, cross-programmatic funding teams, and evaluations of key cross-team initiatives has helped Kresge’s cross-team grantmaking practice mature.

Centering Individuals Who Experience the Greatest Opportunity Barriers

Teams also arrive at joint grantmaking strategies by using a person-centered lens to examine the cross-sectoral barriers to opportunity that Americans with low incomes face. For example, the Kresge Education and Human Services teams launched their first joint initiative in 2019: Boosting Opportunities for Social and Economic Mobility for Families (BOOST). The BOOST initiative will support human services organizations and community colleges working together to address the social and economic mobility of students with low incomes. After an open, competitive process, the Education and Human Services teams awarded \$3.3 million to 10 community colleges and human services organizations in November 2019.

Program staff designed BOOST after realizing practice gaps between their respective sectors were producing suboptimal outcomes for low-income families. Specifically, the lack of alignment between human services organizations and postsecondary education institutions creates significant challenges for families seeking to increase their social and economic mobility. For students, juggling work, family, and school — without the critical supports that human services agencies provide — often leads them to drop their postsecondary educational pursuits. Meanwhile, many people supported by human services organizations face barriers when they try to enter higher education, or, if they are

TABLE 1 Network Code Principles

Principles	Showing Up at Kresge
Focus on mission, not organization: Collaboration requires prioritizing the shared goal or mission above any single organization's considerations.	Kresge's Urban Opportunity framework has helped center the foundation's mission. The foundation also recently adopted equity as a core value, which has served as an overriding "north star" for this mission.
Exercise trust, not control: Trust and shared values are far more important for true collaboration than formal control mechanisms, such as contracts or accountability systems.	Many of the foundation's cross-team structures (e.g., funding teams, place- or issues-based working groups) have helped grantmakers build trust with one another, learn about each other's work, and ideate ways to collaborate. These processes take time and can be impeded by other structures within the foundation (e.g., pace of grantmaking, siloed budgets).
Lead with humility, not brand: Grantmakers are often accustomed to being the strongest presence in the room or at the table. Using a collaborative mindset, however, requires organizations to work alongside their peers as equals and willingly take a back seat when others are in a better position to lead.	While philanthropic practitioners often don't consider themselves to be brand managers, each Kresge program has established a clear identity in the fields in which they work based on their unique approach relative to other field partners. Effective internal collaboration requires detaching oneself at least partially from this brand identity and demonstrating flexibility when entering less familiar fields.
Think like a node, not a hub: Those who embrace the collaborative mindset see their organizations as one part of a larger web of activity directed toward a cause, not as the hub of the action.	Working across teams at Kresge often involves new internal and external relationships that require more distributed responsibility and action, rather than a single line of accountability between one program officer and one grantee.

enrolled, are not connected to high-quality educational pathways that lead to family-sustaining careers. In short, a much greater proportion of underserved community college students could persist and graduate with support from human services agencies, while clients of human services could experience better mobility through post-secondary attainment.

Fostering Cross-Sectoral Work in Place

The American Cities program launched Kresge Innovative Projects: Memphis (KIP:M) in April 2019 for organizations working to strengthen neighborhoods and improve quality of life in Memphis, Tenn. Memphis is one of three priority cities for Kresge (along with Detroit, Mich., and New Orleans, La.). KIP:M is modeled after Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit (KIP:D), which since 2015 has dedicated \$9.2 million to 99 neighborhood-scale projects. KIP:D contributed significant intellectual capital to the development of KIP:M. In October 2019, Kresge announced 20 KIP:M grants totaling \$2 million; seven of these

grants involved financial contributions from multiple Kresge programs.

The Kresge Arts & Culture, Health, and Human Services programs each contributed grant funds to augment American Cities program funds for projects that address their respective strategies. Staff from each participating program helped review proposals and shape the recommended portfolio. Thus, KIP:M differs from the CCHE or BOOST initiatives, as the cross-team commitments are both based in place and not fully defined until program staff determine strategic fit based on applicants' submissions — a more nimble and organic approach.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Internal collaboration within philanthropic institutions can take many forms, including working across grantmaking program areas. As is the case with Kresge, cross-team grantmaking has become a way to tackle systems change in pursuit of a clear "north star" — expanding opportunity

in America's cities. However, collaboration for collaboration's sake should not guide foundations' internal organization. In *Cracking the Network Code*, GEO (2013) observes that organizations that are "collaboration ready" hold four key principles as values (See Table 1). While this publication focused on external collaborations, we posit that these important principles guide internal collaboration as well, including at Kresge.

While much has been published on external collaborations such as funder collaboratives and what makes them work, to our knowledge, this inquiry is the first of its kind to examine the collaboration between grantmaking programs within one foundation. As more and more funders — from small to large, from local to national — commit to systems-change work, we hope that this article spurs new thinking about how the internal organizing of a foundation can or should impact its mission. Despite the relative newness of this type of grantmaking for Kresge, we offer these insights from the foundation's experience as emerging lessons to other funders, whether working across two program areas or six, to better serve the increasingly multifaceted needs of their nonprofit partners.

Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and deepened substantially, and we also recognize the value of developing strong content expertise and networks within specific fields. Kresge, like most philanthropies, will continue to make the majority of its grants within defined fields of practice like Education or Environment. Doing so provides opportunities for strategic clarity and field influence that allows us to track movement toward long-term goals on specific issues. Cross-team grants will remain a critical tool in Kresge's philanthropic toolbox, deployed when strategies and fields naturally intersect, but — as alluded to earlier — will be used only in the appropriate contexts.

Cross-team grantmaking requires time, trust, and ongoing reflection. In addition to the values noted earlier, Kresge's cross-team grantmaking practice has benefited from a clear "north star," early activities to incentivize cross-team grantmaking, and the ongoing organizational

culture work the foundation is undertaking to deepen trust among grantmaking staff. Kresge has not yet arrived at clear-cut guidance on when to undertake cross-team grantmaking — and it might never, given cross-team grantmaking's fluid and context-specific nature — but it has committed to ongoing assessment, reflection, codifying effective practices, and sharing its learnings with the field.

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Executive Summaries

Tools

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Rubrics Versus Voting in Participatory Grantmaking

Oktawia Wojcik, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and Lesleigh Ford, Ph.D., Keely Hanson, M.P.A., Claire Boyd, B.A., and Shena Ashley, Ph.D., Urban Institute

Participatory grantmaking is increasingly being seen as an approach to philanthropy that can shift power dynamics. This article addresses whether changing the decision-making process in addition to changing the decision-makers has an effect on how grants are allocated. It examines the design of two grant review processes — one based on popular voting, the other a more traditional rubric approach — and compares their outcomes to learn whether a more open and discursive process based on popular voting for grantee selection helps to overcome bias against small organizations. They conclude that more consideration needs to be given to the criteria being used for selection, regardless of the method.

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Engaging Grant Beneficiaries in Human-Centered Design

Nicholas G. Randell, M.B.A., and Megan MacDavey, M.S.S.A., Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation

As part of ongoing efforts to engage grant partner voices in their work with young people who have intellectual disabilities, program staff at the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation looked at a way of designing solutions that puts them at the focal point of the process: human-centered design. This approach proved an effective team-building initiative with the potential to make grantmaking more participatory and to generate grantmaking opportunities that better incorporate beneficiary voice. This article describes human-centered design and its applications in a foundation setting. It shares one project that sought to understand barriers to a particular grantmaking objective, reflects on some learning for the field, and concludes with thoughts about where human-centered design can take us next.

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Understanding the Foundation's Role via Social Network

Todd L. Ely, Ph.D., University of Colorado Denver; Katie Edwards, M.P.A., The Nonprofit Centers Network; Rachel Hogg Graham, Dr.PH.; University of Kentucky; Danielle Varda, Ph.D., Visible Network Labs and University of Colorado Denver

Collaboration between foundations and other organizations is critical to the success of foundation-supported initiatives, but the power dynamics among foundations, grantees, and their broader communities can be challenging. This article leverages a social network analysis of community partners focused on addressing needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing shortages to illustrate how the results can constructively inform foundations on how they are viewed by community partners along dimensions of trust, value, resource contribution, activities, and contribution to outcomes.

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The Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool

Erika Takada, M.P.H., and Clare Nolan, M.P.P., Engage R+D; and Meera Mani, Ed.D., David and Lucile Packard Foundation

One of the challenges in systems evaluation is identifying meaningful indicators of interim progress toward longer-term change. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation's 10-year strategy, *Starting Smart and Strong*, partners with three California communities to develop and test solutions to support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be ready for school. This article explores how and why the three California communities and the Foundation have found the Formal-System Self-Assessment Tool to be a useful guide for focusing their efforts and creating greater understanding of their advancement. It also shares the tool's development process.

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Sustainable Development Goals: Exploring a Foundation's Contribution

Filippo Candela, Ph.D., Marco Demarie, M.A., and Paolo Mulassano, Ph.D., Compagnia di San Paolo

To understand how a foundation's work aligns with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals is useful to many philanthropic functions: communication; advocacy; offering a role in a common, worldwide effort; and evaluating the organization's own choices (explicit or tacit) against the background set by the project. Compagnia di San Paolo, an Italian grantmaking foundation, conducted a text analysis using a set of keywords extracted from grantees' project descriptions to measure how successfully its work aligned with the SDGs. This article describes the foundation's research methods and shares the results of its analysis, which found significant contributions to the goals in a number of areas funded by Compagnia and less alignment in others. The analysis is particularly noteworthy in its identification of an unintentional pattern of convergence between the foundation's activities and the SDGs.

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Archiving Forward and Backward

Lori Eaton, M.L.I.S., Found Archives, LLC; and Phoebe Kowalewski, M.A., M.L.I.S., Cornell University

Archives preserve and provide access to the raw data that allow researchers to study and analyze grantmaking and its impact on people and communities. Limited-life foundations may have an even greater incentive to capture their work in archives: Once they close their doors, much institutional knowledge is lost. By examining two specific cases — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which began planning for its archives early in its work, and the Atlantic Philanthropies, which began the process later — this article discusses what it means to build, manage, and preserve archives of a limited-life foundation. This article also offers recommendations for foundations seeking to plan and structure archives, with specific suggestions for organizing and preserving records at various stages of an organization's lifespan.

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Collaborating Within: Cross-Team Grantmaking

Chris M. Kabel, M.P.H., and Anna Cruz, M.A., Kresge Foundation; and AnnJanette Rosga, Ph.D., Theresa Esparrago Lieu, M.A., and Natalie Blackmur, B.A., Informing Change

Philanthropy has increasingly expressed interest in cross-sector approaches to addressing long-standing challenges. At the same time, there has been increasing attention to the impact of internal foundation culture on their external work. The Kresge Foundation has increased cross-team work in an effort to bridge across issue areas and partnered with Informing Change to assess the results. As philanthropy seeks to support collaboration among grantees and launches new multifunder collaboratives to affect systems change, structures within foundations may need to change to actualize this ideal.

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Call for Papers

For Volume 13, Issue 2: Shifting Power in Philanthropy

Abstracts of up to 250 words are being solicited for Volume 13, Issue 2 of *The Foundation Review*. This issue will be focused on **shifting power in philanthropy**.

In recent years there has been increasing emphasis on how foundations can balance maintaining a strategic focus with ensuring that the knowledge of grantees and community members is valued and included in the grantmaking process. For this issue we invite articles on foundation practices that shift power for strategy and grantmaking decisions to these stakeholders. These participatory grantmaking practices might include ways to include grantees and community members in any or all phases, from strategy development to the selection of organizations to be awarded funding.

Submit abstracts to submissions@foundationreview.org by May 31, 2020. If a full paper is invited, it will be due November 15, 2020 for consideration for publication in June 2021.

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 grantmaking 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.

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