

The Foundation Review

Volume 13
Issue 2 *Shifting Power in Philanthropy*

6-2021

13.2 Full Issue

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Recommended Citation

(2021). 13.2 Full Issue. *The Foundation Review*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1574>

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Shifting Power
in Philanthropy

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THE FoundationReview®

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

VOL. 13 ISSUE 2 | JUNE 2021

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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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Cover Photo:

People gathered in Minneapolis, Minn. for the George Floyd family memorial service on June 4, 2020. (Unsplash)



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Editorial

Dear readers,

Themes for issues of *The Foundation Review* often arise from our observation of what we see happening in the field or the interests of sponsors. Appropriately, the genesis for this issue on *Shifting Power in Philanthropy* was bottom-up — we received several submissions for open (unthemed) issues that were related to how philanthropy is engaging more and differently with communities and thought it warranted a focused issue.

Over the past eighteen months, the deep racial disparities in everything from access to basic needs (food, housing), to policing practices, to the ability to work and learn remotely, were laid bare. While many foundations had already begun re-examining how they could center equity in their work, this internal work has accelerated and the external scrutiny of the sector has ramped up. Demands for greater transparency, increased distribution of funds, and broader participation in decisionmaking about where money goes have increased. Articles in this issue address some of the opportunities and challenges in making these shifts.

Foster, Doksum, and Dwyer share the results of an evaluation of the Maine Health Access Foundation's place-based funding to communities to address systems issues that impede the access to essential services and supports. The evaluation and learning process spanned five of six years of the initiative, and generally found that partnerships contribute to effective systems change and that community-generated ideas spark innovative interventions. They adopted changes in practice like including those affected by systems problems to participate in the grant review process and offering longer-term, general operating support grants.

"Participatory grantmaking" has entered the lexicon and toolkit for grantmakers.

Meyer, Goering, Hopkins, Hyde, Mattocks, and Denlinger examine the participatory grantmaking process of a Baltimore, Maryland, community foundation that invested \$1.5 million in an initiative to support community-building and improvement activities in two communities. Deep trust and understanding the history and politics among community members are identified as critical to success.

While multiyear general operating support has been identified as one way to share power with grantees, **Hunnik, de Wit, and Wiepking** share insights into how unrestricted grantmaking influences the relationship between funders and grantees. Hidden and invisible power dynamics exist in the relationship, even when there are few formal restrictions on grantees' spending. Relaxing formal restrictions gives rise to some uncertainty about what grantees actually have to "prove" to get or maintain funding.

Lynn, Nolan, and Waring argue that developing resilient strategies that can withstand shocks like a pandemic is critical; sharing power to develop and adapt strategy is key to developing resilient strategies. They argue that strategy resilience centers people and organizations instead of the power of financial resources. At the core of this theory is the assumption that given today's complexities, philanthropy must use its power differently — releasing control over organizations and their change strategies while using its unique position, reach, and voice to work in solidarity with community leaders.

While much attention is paid to decision-making about awarding funding, **Beer, Patrizi, and Coffman** examine how foundation strategy, evaluation, grantee reporting, and monitoring processes have allowed foundations to retain their power and sidestep direct accountability to the people and communities they say they want to serve. They argue that substantial shifts in decision-making power and how foundations act in relation to others are needed if funders are to be held to their commitments to equity and justice.

Stakeholder engagement in identifying what needs to be changes is probably the most basic first step in power-shifting. **Yonas, Sloan, Hollis, Sizemore, Elliott, McMurray, and Pearlman** describe how discussion groups empowered young people to reflect on events that impacted their lives. Recommendations on school discipline reforms, greater access to diversion and prevention programs, and changes to court-related fees, fines, and restitution policies informed the foundation's grantmaking.

Dymnicki, Hooker and Goldberg reflect on the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation's National Character

Initiative to support organizations seeking to advance character development among youth. In order to shift the grantor-grantee power dynamic, the initiative focused on building grantee capacity, based on grantee priorities.

Ricci, Csuti, and Ramirez follow up on an article in *The Foundation Review* published in October 2016 that described a new vision for grantmaking at The Colorado Trust that shifted power from the foundation to community residents. Based on learning from the first five years, The Trust is pivoting to a new approach based on community organizing. The focus will be on building community capacity, rather than individual organizational capacity.

Each of these articles provide a view on what it means to shift power and what it takes to do it. They define power-shifting differently, focusing on varying levels of decision-making and various aspects of the whole change-making enterprise. Fundamentally, all aspects of a foundation will need to change in order to truly share power — it has to be embedded in everything from strategy to proposal review to evaluation processes. These articles offer some insights into how to begin this journey.



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

Teresa R. Behrens, Ph.D.
Editor in Chief, *The Foundation Review*
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for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University

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Shifting Power in Maine: Findings From a Six-Year Community-Based Health Initiative

Susan Foster, M.P.H., M.S.S.W., S.E. Foster Associates; Teresa Doksum, Ph.D., M.P.H., Independent Consultant; and Charles Dwyer, B.A., Maine Health Access Foundation

Keywords: *Systems change, community engagement, partnerships, power*

Introduction

In 2013, the Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF) launched a grant initiative supporting communities statewide to address system gaps impeding the ability of the most vulnerable individuals to obtain equitable health-related services and supports. The foundation's Community-Based Initiatives (CBI) comprised three individual programs:

- *Healthy Communities (HC)* aimed to transform communities into supportive environments that enabled people to live healthier lives. Communities received support to come to consensus around a community-defined health issue that became the focus of their system-change efforts.
- *Thriving in Place (TiP)* aimed to help older people and people with chronic conditions to maintain or improve their health to remain thriving members of their communities.
- *Access to Quality Care (A2QC)* aimed to address the needs of those lacking health coverage by developing systems of care that delivered sustainable, high-value services and supports.

This article presents findings and lessons learned from an evaluation and learning process that spanned five of six years of the initiative. It describes the context in Maine in 2013, MeHAF's grantmaking strategy, the design of the initiative and its theory of change, the evaluation methodology, and key findings. The article concludes with a discussion of what MeHAF learned about shifting power from the funder closer to community, how those lessons have informed its

Key Points

- Between 2013 and 2019, a Maine Health Access Foundation community-based initiative provided place-based funding to communities to address system gaps and inefficiencies that impede the ability of Maine's most vulnerable individuals to obtain essential services and supports. To rebalance power between the funder and grantees, the foundation introduced grantmaking practices such as long-term, flexible funding and new ways of relating to and supporting grantees. The theory of change guiding the initiative was that systems change is more effective and sustainable when communities develop cross-sector partnerships and engage community members in planning. The foundation guided the evaluation team to conduct a developmental, participatory, and adaptive approach focused on systems change rather than on individual health outcomes.
- This article presents findings and lessons learned from an evaluation and learning process that spanned five of six years of the initiative, describing the context in Maine in 2013, the foundation's grantmaking strategy, the design of the initiative and its theory of change, the evaluation methodology, and key findings. Those findings support the original theory that partnerships contribute to effective systems change and that community-generated ideas spark innovative interventions in such social determinants of health as social isolation, stigma, and poverty.

(continued on next page)

The foundation guided communities to address social determinants of health based on a growing evidence base suggesting that when communities collectively reorient systems, services, and policies toward addressing underlying conditions (e.g., poverty) that contribute to poor health outcomes, people are more likely to access services and supports that improve health downstream.

current strategy, and what implications this has for philanthropy more broadly.

Background and Initiative Design

In 2013, Maine was experiencing significant challenges affecting the health and well-being

of its most marginalized citizens. The state did not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, leaving thousands of people uninsured. Maine has the nation's highest median age and one of the highest rates of disability (Fralich et al., 2012), yet resources to help older residents remain in their homes and communities were not sufficient or fully effective. Finally, significant cuts in public health infrastructure were making it more difficult for communities to respond to the complex health needs of their most vulnerable citizens.

That year, MeHAF initiated a set of programs to support place-based community health improvement activities. Place-based grantmaking focuses on improving outcomes within specific geographic areas, rather than on a specific issue or cause (Murdoch, 2007). The foundation designed the initiative using several intersecting approaches: community change initiatives (Bailey & Jordan, 2006; Brown & Fiester, 2007; Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010), meaningful community engagement (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), and partnership or network development (Jolin, Schmitz, & Seldon, 2012; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). The foundation guided communities to address social determinants of health¹ based on a growing evidence base suggesting that when communities collectively reorient systems, services, and policies toward addressing underlying conditions (e.g., poverty) that contribute to poor health outcomes, people are more likely to access services and supports that improve health downstream (University of Wisconsin, n.d.). The CBI centered on the idea that improved health sits at the intersection of many systems and sectors within communities, and that change should be sustainable (Trent & Chavis, 2009; Wong, Norris, & Solomon, 2009).

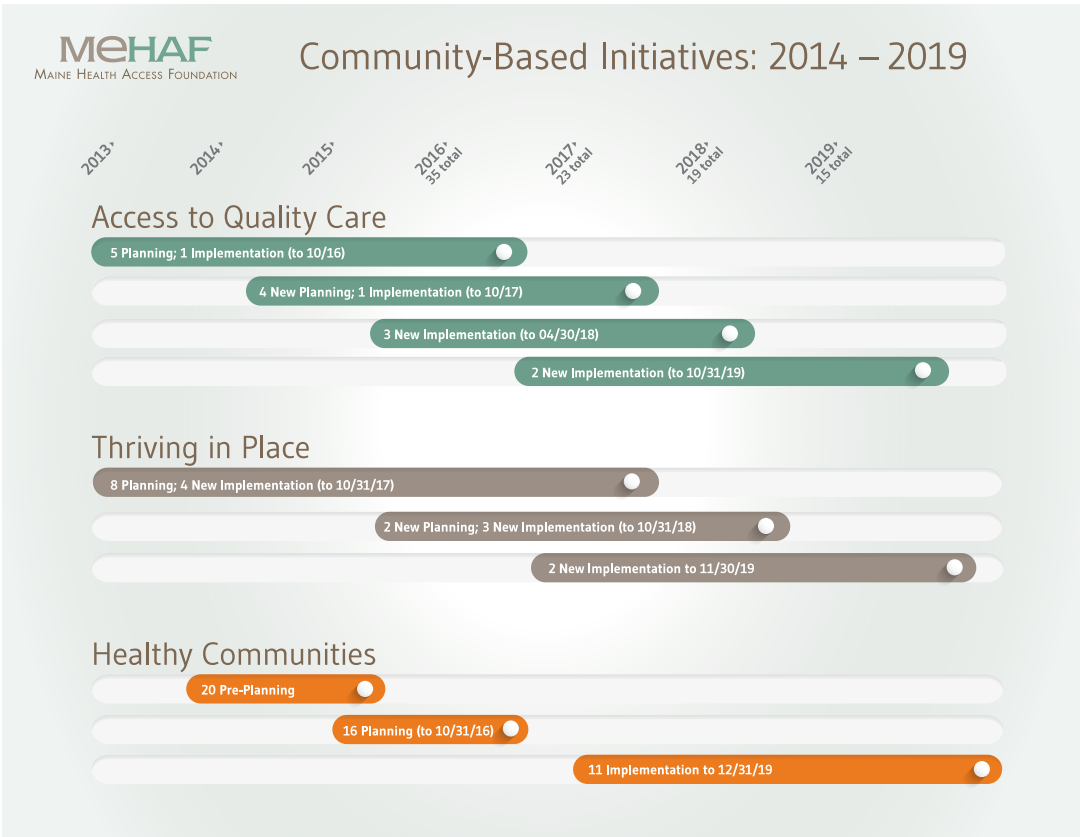
The CBI funded up to 35 grantees at any one point between 2013 and 2019. (See Figure 1.) At the end of the planning phase, grantees applied to move to the implementation phase, resulting

Key Points (continued)

- Learning from the community-based initiative suggests that changing the power dynamic between funders and grantees can facilitate project success. This article concludes with a discussion of what the foundation learned about shifting power away from the funder and closer to the community, how those lessons have informed its current strategy, and what implications this has for philanthropy more broadly.

¹ Social determinants of health are defined as “conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks” (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2020, para. 6).

FIGURE 1 Initiative Timeline



in some attrition. Implemented through several rounds of funding, the TiP and A2QC programs consisted of several cohorts that entered the initiative in different years.

Grantmaking to Facilitate System Change

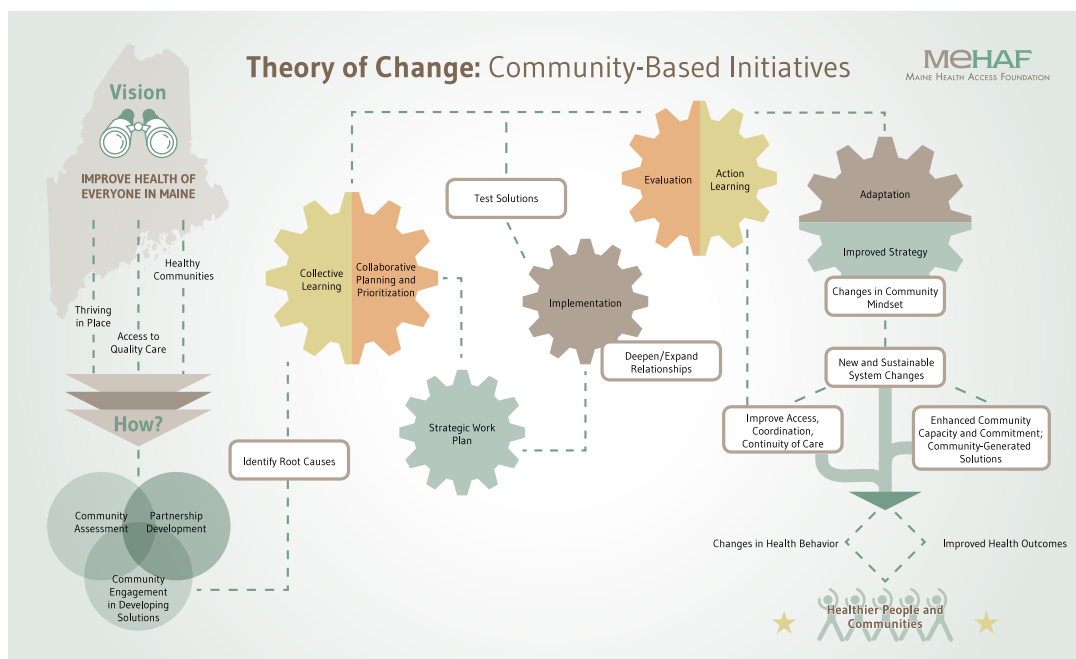
The foundation understood that systems change is a long-term process, so the programs built in planning periods to allow communities time to build collaborative networks and develop work plans. Healthy Communities grantees received initial “pre-planning” grants to help them convene organizations and community members to develop consensus around a community-defined health issue. Grantees in all three programs received planning grants followed by three years of implementation funding. Required elements, such as multisector partnerships and the engagement of community members, were

intended to bring communities together to drive and sustain change.

Changing the Funder-Grantee Power Dynamic

In order to address the power imbalance between funders and grantees, MeHAF adapted its traditional practices in four key ways:

1. Program officers reimagined site visits, traveling to communities and participating in local meetings and activities. Learning about the diversity of communities in Maine helped program officers realistically assess what was achievable and be more flexible with grant funds.
2. Program officers became thought partners, using their networks to help grantees

FIGURE 2 Original CBI Theory of Change

overcome obstacles and arranging meetings among peer organizations to share ideas.

3. Staff designed progress reports that asked meaningful questions, and they consistently read the reports and used them to spur productive conversations with grantees.
4. The foundation provided additional resources as needed, such as a consultant to provide strategic support and facilitation to community collaboratives at key pivot points in their development.

An Emphasis on Learning

In addition to its grantmaking, MeHAF invested in collective learning. Biannual learning-community gatherings afforded grantees the opportunity to build relationships with each other and to learn from subject matter experts and one another. Gatherings were professionally facilitated and centrally located at a retreat center, and grantees were reimbursed for travel expenses. An external learning and evaluation team was engaged in 2014 to provide evaluation

support, ongoing learning, and local evaluation capacity building. Finally, MeHAF provided funding to some grantees to support local evaluation and product development.

The Evaluation Design Process

The foundation sought an evaluation and learning approach that was systems-focused, developmental, adaptive, and participatory. In communications with potential evaluation teams, MeHAF emphasized that the evaluation would not assess success based on a set of measures decided upon by the funder. Instead, it would focus on how things worked and what strategies made a difference. Evaluation was to be more about discovery and learning than about monitoring and accountability. The standards the foundation used focused on grantees' commitment to collaborative partnerships and the level of inclusion of community members in the design, implementation, and assessment of program strategy. An emphasis on quantitative measures of health outcomes would have meant unrealistic expectations given the time frame and resources.

TABLE 1 Evaluation Indicators and Questions

Indicator Type and Description	Evaluation Questions
Systems Change: Behavioral/structural/practice/policy changes within and across organizations and service systems that increase coordination, collaboration, and access to services and supports	What systems gaps were identified? What changes were observed in various systems?
Partnerships: Relationship building, leadership, trust, participation, common sense of purpose	How did partnerships develop? What was the perceived contribution of partnerships to observed systems changes?
Community Engagement: Active, meaningful participation in the project; roles; new skills acquired; activities; leadership development	How were people most affected by the health issue involved in the process? What mechanisms were used to lower barriers to participation? What was the perceived contribution of community engagement to observed systems changes?
Sustainability: Effective community changes stay in place and continue to evolve to promote progress toward long-term health and equity goals. Relationships created during the initiative continue to grow and drive social action to improve health.	Which project components and systems changes were sustained? How and by whom? What roles are partners, including community members, playing in sustainability?

Within these parameters, the evaluation and learning design drew from several theoretical frameworks: developmental evaluation (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2011), evaluation of social innovation (Preskill & Beer, 2012), network theory (Plastrik, Taylor, & Cleveland, 2014; Vandeventer & Mandell, 2011), and collective impact evaluation (Preskill, Parkhurst, & Splansky Juster, n.d.a).

Using a developmental evaluation approach, the evaluation team became embedded in the initiative's learning community gatherings and conducted telephone interviews with each grantee to create grantee profiles, which were shared among grantees and staff to identify common themes and unique grantee characteristics. The profiles guided the development of data collection tools and the theory of change. (See Figure 2.) The theory of change represented what change was expected to look like, depicting a nonlinear pathway toward change.

Each project had unique characteristics and operated under variable local conditions, so

the evaluation plan had to include indicators broad enough to apply to grantees regardless of health issue or specific strategy, yet inclusive enough to cover variable approaches to meeting their goals. The final indicator list, which was reviewed by grantees, became the foundation for data collection instruments. (See Table 1.)

To address the evaluation questions, the evaluation team used mixed methods to collect data from various sources:

- *Document review* — This consisted of content analysis of grantee proposals, semi-annual progress reports, local evaluation reports, and other grantee-produced documents.
- *Grantee meeting observations* — Evaluators attended learning community meetings, documented themes that emerged from them, and conducted participatory exercises to elicit grantees' interpretation of preliminary findings.

TABLE 2 Example Targets and Strategies for Systems-Change Efforts

Targets	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social isolation• Underserved individuals in rural areas• Supports for aging safely in place• Gaps in mental health and substance use prevention services• Social determinants of health, such as poverty and food insecurity• Stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors associated with poverty, aging, and mental health and substance use disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social engagement activities, revitalizing senior centers• Evidence-based programs for older adults (e.g., tai chi, falls prevention, chronic disease management)• School-based restorative justice practices, recovery coach training• Food insecurity screening and referrals, summer meals programs, healthy cooking classes• Intergenerational activities with youth and older adults to build relationships and help reduce stigma associated with aging• Training for health care providers on poverty and stigma, stigma reduction campaigns

- *Project director surveys and interviews* — Between 2016 and 2018, evaluators conducted an annual, quantitative, web-based survey of project directors’ opinions about progress. Response rates ranged from 100% in 2016 to 72% in 2018. After each round, the team conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with project staff to obtain more in-depth information. Since there were only five A2QC projects, those survey findings were not included among the findings.
- *Case studies* — Added to the evaluation design in 2016, case studies highlighted innovative projects and provided in-depth descriptions of emergent issues such as social isolation and stigma.
- *Technical assistance site visits* — During 2017 and 2018, the evaluation team visited each grantee to interview stakeholders and observe collaborative meetings. Following each visit, the evaluator shared a brief report with the grantee, including recommendations for local evaluation design.

Results

Evaluation findings support the theory of change that partnerships and community engagement were primary contributors to effective system change. Key system changes reported by communities included

improvements in coordination of services and supports, spread of innovative and evidence-based programs and systems solutions to rural areas, and increased organizational commitment to addressing social determinants of health. Community members identified and led responses to systemic challenges such as rural transportation, social isolation, and stigma. (See Table 2.)

System Changes

Community assessments revealed system inefficiencies resulting in poor coordination, service gaps, and duplication of services and supports. The majority of grantees made substantial progress in improving how systems work to benefit the people they served. Grantees reported that they identified gaps in services, increased access to and coordination of services, and enhanced service availability and uptake in rural communities. They also increased the efficiency and responsiveness of existing services and supports and expanded awareness of services. (See Table 3.)

Developing new mechanisms for reaching people of all ages who are underserved or isolated was an early and ongoing focus of systems-change efforts (Foster & Doksum, 2016). Social isolation adversely affects the health and well-being of older people, but communities learned that feelings of loneliness and

TABLE 3 System-Level Changes, 2016 and 2018

Which system-level changes are being made, either directly or indirectly, as a result of your initiative's work?				
System-Level Changes	Agree or Strongly Agree			
	HC 2016	HC 2018	TiP 2016	TiP 2018
New mechanisms to reach underserved/isolated individuals (e.g., screening, alert systems, neighbor-to-neighbor check-ins, newspapers/social media)	60%	50%	78%	75%
Enhanced service coordination (e.g., referral systems, case review meetings, common forms)	60%	13%	78%	50%
Mechanisms to integrate health and behavioral health and/or social services (e.g., food insecurity screening in health care settings)	27%	13%	67%	25%
Identification of gaps in services (e.g., via provider meetings and knowledge exchange)	87%	88%	100%	100%
Strategies to increase awareness of eligibility criteria and available services (e.g., navigators)	60%	63%	89%	100%
Mechanisms to increase access to services (e.g., in-home services, transportation, flexible hours, efforts to decrease wait time)	47%	0%	89%	50%
Mechanisms that improve transitions from one level of care to another (e.g., warm handoffs, home visits, transportation)	20%	38%	78%	50%
New strategies to address social determinants of health (e.g., transportation, recreation, changes to built environment, access to healthy foods, community gatherings)	67%	88%	89%	100%
Total Number of Grantees Answering Question	15	8	9	4

disconnection can affect the behavioral health of youth as well. Communities implemented a wide array of activities to build social connection. (See Table 2.) The popularity and impact of these activities underscored the need to address root causes of presenting health problems.

Later in the implementation period, there was increased evidence that projects were successfully spreading innovative programs to previously underserved geographic areas (Foster, 2020). Pilot programs were a low-cost strategy for testing, adapting, and demonstrating the feasibility of new ideas. Grantees were particularly successful in using this process to

establish new food access programs, evidence-based programs for older adults, and other community improvements. (See Table 2.) Local success bred interest and funding from municipalities, built the capacity of small organizations that adopted the programs, identified new community leaders, and helped grantees learn that documenting results helped make the case to sustain programs and provided information for future project leads.

The majority of HC projects and nearly all TiP projects addressed social determinants of health, most often around food insecurity. Through partnerships developed with health

“Our partner organizations are thinking differently about what ‘community engagement’ looks like in action, are sharing methods and resources with each other.”

care providers, grocery stores, farmers, food banks, and food cupboards, grantees identified people experiencing food insecurity, raised awareness of hunger, and created stronger food distribution networks.

The A2QC projects surfaced more intractable system gaps than did the other two programs. In a stressed health and social support system, people without health coverage are the first to lose access to care. However, several A2QC projects made strides in educating health care providers on social determinants of health, improving communication and coordination between acute care and community-based services, and increasing access to primary and behavioral health care and social services.

Partnerships and Their Contribution to System Change

All MeHAF grants included funding for a coordinator who was instrumental in creating healthy, sustainable partnership collaborations. One of the most positive evaluation findings was that grantees’ yearslong investment in building relationships with partners resulted in increased trust, understanding of roles, and shared responsibility for results. Keeping partners engaged during the planning phase was resource-intensive, but once communities came to consensus on a health issue they would address, partners consistently and enthusiastically participated in the collaboratives. Most groups eventually operated smoothly, and some collaboratives added larger provider networks to share knowledge and resources. Project directors attributed this

positive shift to the value partners were getting from collaborative participation.

Project director surveys produced similar findings. The majority of grantees in both programs and cohorts (2016 compared to 2018) agreed with nearly all positive indicators of partnerships, such as increased communication, referrals, resource sharing, and trust. (See Table 4.)

Notably, grantees were much less likely to report collective efforts to respond to policy opportunities and challenges, attributing this to the regressive policy environment in Maine at the time. Almost all grantees across programs and years agreed or strongly agreed that new collaborative efforts resulted in action that advanced their goals. Project directors provided numerous examples of how partners worked differently together because they knew more about each other’s services and about client preferences.

Most key sectors directly involved in the priority topic were eventually engaged at the level needed for the project. These included home- and community-based services, public health, mental health, community health centers, community action agencies, media, volunteer networks, transportation, and substance use prevention and treatment. However, grantees reported difficulties engaging some health care institutions affected by financial struggles, mergers, and leadership turnover. Other sectors from which grantees wanted more involvement included local government, businesses, public safety, and the faith community. By the end of the initiative, however, municipal government increasingly engaged in sustaining project activities.

Leadership and network structure evolved over time. Many partner networks moved from centralized to distributed leadership models as projects matured. This involved organizations and project leaders actively letting go of power and control over direction. One project that ceded control to local community members observed that leading from outside the community was neither productive nor appropriate for sustaining the program. Network structure also shifted — from “hub and spoke,” with the coordinator at the center of all activities, to

TABLE 4 Relationships Across Organizations, 2016 and 2018

Rate your agreement with the following statements about relationships across organizations and sectors.				
Statements About Relationships	Agree or Strongly Agree			
	HC 2016	HC 2018	TiP 2016	TiP 2018
Communication has increased.	93%	88%	88%	100%
Community awareness/endorsement of projects has widened.	92%	100%	100%	100%
New collaborative efforts are resulting in action that advances goals.	92%	100%	75%	100%
Increased referrals are seen across sectors.	85%	75%	62%	100%
Sharing of resources, data, and/or other information has increased.	85%	100%	75%	75%
Trust among diverse and competing organizations has increased.	85%	88%	75%	100%
Partners are responding collectively to policy opportunities and challenges.	54%	50%	50%	25%
Total Number of Grantees Answering Question	15	8	9	4

smaller “constellations,” or work groups. This change accelerated the pace of the work and built a sense of shared ownership that facilitated sustainability. For example, one project transitioned from the grantee guiding it to becoming a “backbone organization model,”² with grantee staff providing administrative, logistical, and grant-writing support to four working groups. Even with more manageable structures, supporting a collaborative network required dedicated coordinator time.

Grantees credited partnerships with accelerating the impact of the systems-change work. A notable effect of partnership development was on sectors other than public health and health care. Partners from fields as diverse as law enforcement and education not only agreed to be collaborative members, but also began embracing broader ideas from other fields about

“The idea that the coordinator function can fade away at the end of a grant is unrealistic; in fact, collaboration demands constant attention to process and relationships.”

— Project Coordinator

how to make communities healthier and more connected (e.g., integrating restorative practices into schools, embracing youth supports to prevent drug use, addressing food insecurity, and supporting community meals).

² Backbone functions are performed by dedicated staff with specific skills to coordinate such collective impact functions as grant writing and facilitation (Preskill, Parkhurst, & Splansky Juster, n.d.b).

TABLE 5 Logistical and Leadership-Building Supports for Community Members

Logistical Supports	Leadership-Building Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible options for when and how to participate• Compensation such as honoraria, stipends, paid consulting arrangements• Transportation assistance (e.g., rides to meetings; gas cards)• Meals during meetings or grocery gift cards• Child care or babysitting stipends• Interpreter services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scholarships to conferences• Coaching and peer-learning sessions• Orientation and leadership training on topics such as meeting processes, collaborative decision-making, public speaking and advocacy• Opportunities to present at community events or conferences

Community Engagement and Its Contribution to Systems Change

In the earliest phase of the CBI, most grantee collaboratives were comprised primarily of organizational representatives. Grantees soon learned that simply inviting community members to the table was insufficient to create lasting change. Most learned that genuine community engagement required innovative strategies over multiple years to thoughtfully engage, support, and retain members of the community as meaningful participants. They accepted that one size did not fit all community members, who needed to participate in different ways depending on their individual circumstances.

One of the most common strategies grantees used to facilitate community engagement was to create a formal structure for participation, such as a steering committee, action team, or paid community consultant position. Other projects had several community members serve as equal partners on the collaborative body of organizational representatives.

Most grantees provided supports to facilitate community member engagement, especially underserved individuals. They also made intentional investments to support skill building and leadership development among community members. (See Table 5.) These investments increased community members’ ability to actively participate in grant-funded activities, build confidence to express their opinions, lead project design, and develop effective

working relationships with organizational representatives.

By the final year of the initiative, most grantees reported that community members were making significant contributions to the design, implementation, and success of their projects. Community members identified and led the response to systemic challenges such as rural transportation, social isolation, and stigma. Their personal experiences and knowledge of what the community needed and would accept enabled them to design activities that would be well received.

Community members of all ages influenced changes in the overall direction of projects. For example, stigma emerged as a major barrier to the success of several of the projects, primarily as a result of community members becoming more vocal about their treatment by the systems that were designed to help them (Foster & Doksum, 2019). Stories from community members revealed that people experience stigma related to food insecurity, mental health and substance use, and aging. As a result, many grantees redirected resources to activities designed to reduce such stigma, which helped change community attitudes and reduce bias on the part of health care providers, educators, food resource volunteers, and other service workers.

The idea that community members were essential partners in community change initiatives was not initially shared by all grantees, but it

was striking how prevalent that view became by the end of their grants. Most grantees eventually reported that addressing complex health-system issues takes a community response and that strategies were more effective when their design was informed by community members. Some even considered nurturing local leaders among their greatest achievements. The CBI's efforts to engage community members resulted in community-driven and more effective and lasting improvements to health care and other systems.

Sustaining the Gains

Sustainability in community health initiatives has been defined in two dimensions: the systems changes themselves and the relationships formed as a result of the initiatives (Wong et al., 2009). Interviews conducted with grantees after the end of their grants revealed that many CBI communities were able to sustain multiple critical components of their systems-change projects, and reported that both the systems changes and the relationships they had built over many years would likely be sustained:

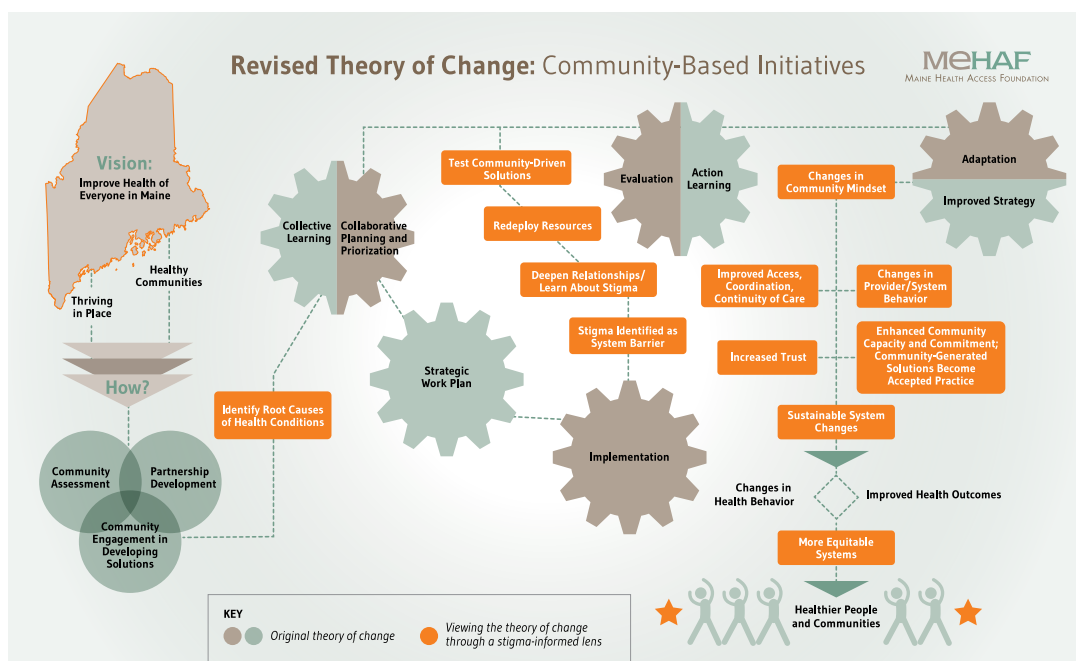
- *Systems change:* Creative, relatively low-cost solutions that primarily used existing resources were the most effective way to improve systems and were especially important in rural areas where resources were scarce.
- *Partnerships:* Most collaborative networks formed during the grant period are still functioning because they are highly valued by their members and are proving effective at responding to emergent needs, including COVID-19. Partners played a key role in supporting activities once the grant ended; their willingness to adopt activities increased when projects could be demonstrated to be effective and feasible.
- *Community leadership:* Community leaders continue to provide invaluable input into the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities in many grantee communities. Cultivating community leaders helped to ensure that project activities were sustained.

Most grantees eventually reported that addressing complex health-system issues takes a community response and that strategies were more effective when their design was informed by community members.

- *Cross-sector and community-member relationships:* The centrality of relationship building to the success of the CBI became clearer each year. Many communities reported that their work to build mutual trust and support, identify and address stigma, and respond to social isolation and loneliness had resulted in a shift in attitudes and an increase in community connectedness.

Findings from the evaluation of the CBI support the original theory of change, but lessons learned over six years added key components and nuance. The revised theory of change recognizes that addressing stigma and building trust help change mindsets, which is critical to creating equitable systems that improve health for everyone. (See Figure 3.) Even the most data-informed systems-change strategies will not work if a community does not learn about and improve how people are treated in those systems.

Grantees reported remaining challenges: securing funding to sustain key positions and supports, and ensuring that services are coordinated and well-known to all who need them. In some cases, changes in key personnel were crises, especially in rural communities where one person tends to hold multiple roles. The communities that distributed leadership across partners to carry out activities and to sustain their initiatives tended to be more resilient in the face of change.

FIGURE 3 Revised Theory of Change

MeHAF'S Relationship With Grantees

The foundation's grantmaking strategy and efforts to shift power and decision-making to local leaders were important factors in these programs' success. Grantees frequently expressed their appreciation regarding program officers' flexibility, enthusiasm, and willingness to partner to make their projects successful. Grantees said that they felt trusted and understood. They spoke most positively about the following aspects of MeHAF's approach to grantmaking:

- **Flexibility:** Communities were empowered to use their funding to meet needs as they emerged.
- **Multiyear funding:** Four years of total funding enabled communities to plan, experiment with new ideas, and learn from failure and success.
- **Progressive thinking about health:** Program officers encouraged grantees to focus on the most pressing barriers to health and wellness in their communities, which led to innovative

interventions around stigma, poverty, and social isolation.

- **Measuring progress at the system level:** The foundation supported developmental and participatory evaluation that focused on systems change rather than individual health outcomes.
- **A focus on learning:** This involved learning community gatherings, creating peer-learning and relationship-building opportunities, and offering community-specific opportunities for growth.

Grantees made a number of recommendations to MeHAF to further its efforts to shift power to the communities it funds and thereby enhance its impact:

- Provide general operating funds.
- Continue the focus on learning, but consider other options (e.g., virtual, shorter-length

meetings) due to the costs of travel from remote communities.

- Increase emphasis on training grantees in leadership, community organizing, and communications.
- Convene discussions across funders on how to sustain initiatives that work.
- Magnify MeHAF's voice in informing policy.

Discussion

Findings from this evaluation support what MeHAF understood from the beginning: that it takes time for community-based systems-change efforts to take root, grow, and bear fruit. By the final year of the initiative, evaluation findings were increasingly positive. Using terms like “breakthrough,” “acceleration,” and “deepening” to describe their efforts, grantees reported positive results associated with the changes they were making.

Grantees were less successful in promoting policy change. The prevailing policy climate in Maine during the period of the community-based grants was not amenable to change, so it was not surprising that grantees focused on local efforts and preserving the public health system. All of the grantees bought into the idea that collective action through partnerships is the most effective way to generate change, and that the involvement of community members improves project design, ensures that interventions are better received, and contributes to sustained change. Community engagement, when practiced in earnest, changed the focus of the work and made strategies more effective.

An undergirding theme was that stigma arose as a systemic barrier only when the community voice was harnessed. Findings from the evaluation reinforce the importance of community-driven solutions to complex health problems, and they suggest that the theory of change must include addressing stigma in order to create more equitable systems to improve the health and well-being of all Mainers.

This initiative has provided insights on what forms of learning and evaluation are important to grantees (e.g., rapid feedback; stories to illuminate successes and challenges). The foundation's support of the external evaluation team was a critical factor in the success of the work. The foundation gave the evaluation team full access to documentation and many opportunities to interact with and build relationships with participants. These supports contributed to a high participation rate for annual surveys and site visits.

Since the grant programs ended, MeHAF has continued to move even further toward trust-based grantmaking, adopting many of the recommendations provided by the CBI grantees. For example, it has changed its grant review process to include more people with firsthand experience with the issues being addressed, through their own lived experience and as service providers. The foundation is also increasing its use of general operating fund grants and providing more support for organizational capacity building to community-based organizations serving marginalized populations. Finally, MeHAF is placing increased emphasis on equitable grantmaking, in which grantees are partners who co-design solutions to the problems they face. Grantees fully endorsed the idea of grantee gatherings to facilitate learning, but it was suggested that MeHAF could enhance learning through cross-initiative convenings.

Implications for Philanthropy

This experience produced lessons that have implications for how foundations use the power, resources, and tools at their disposal:

- Engage in learning and self-assessment around racial equity; reflect on current grantmaking practices and ask if they perpetuate inequity.
- Use one's networks and relationships to amplify the concerns of grantees and the communities they serve; for example, serve as liaison or convener between local organizations and state agencies.

- Identify community information needs that will help grantees advance their efforts, and agree on evaluation practices that bring the most value to their communities.
- Develop deeper relationships with grantees (e.g., by visiting them or volunteering in local organizations); increase understanding of the communities in which projects operate.
- Provide longer-term funding to give grantees the time to form relationships across differences, which is the underpinning of collaborative change. Whether the initiative is place-based or issue-driven, engaging organizations and community members with lived experience of the issue as partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the work leads to greater success.
- Be flexible with funding and timelines to enhance projects' ability to adapt. Stay in regular communication with grantees to assist them as their needs evolve.

Data Strengths and Limitations

This learning and evaluation process aimed to assess systems change and highlight social innovation. On the whole, it achieved its goals. Using a mixed methods approach helped evaluators assess change over time on indicators of systems change; employing participatory methods to promote shared sense-making engaged grantees and strengthened the evaluation. Case studies helped evaluators document how innovation occurred at the local level.

The evaluators obtained project director survey, site visit, and interview data from almost every grantee, so the findings are representative of the initiative as a whole. The site visits were particularly rich opportunities for data collection and learning more about the context and environment in which grantee work was being done. Attempts to gather information on partnership development via self-assessment tools had mixed results; to reduce burden on grantees, using these tools was not a required part of the evaluation, so participation was variable from year to year, making the data difficult to analyze across grantees and over time.

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Walking the Talk in Participatory Philanthropy

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Keywords: *Participatory philanthropy, community foundations, CBPR, community building, community-based organizations*

The Changing Landscape of Philanthropy

The philanthropic sector has recently been called on to increase community engagement and beneficiary voice in funding decisions — to democratize philanthropy (CF Leads Cultivating Community Engagement Panel, 2013; Enright & Bourns, 2010; Fifield, 2017; Ruesga & Knight, 2013; Twersky, Buchanan, & Threlfall, 2013). Indeed, in 2018 Inside Philanthropy identified “participatory grantmaking” as the “most promising” reform effort in the philanthropy sector, and in 2019 the World Economic Forum recognized it as one of six key trends (Gibson, 2019, p. 33–34).

Participatory grantmaking ranges from soliciting constituent feedback on areas of concern to encouraging active constituent participation in or control over grantmaking decisions, program implementation, and outcome evaluation. This movement is a response to criticism of traditional, donor-driven grantmaking, which can be risk averse and unresponsive to community-defined needs, and can limit the ability of foundations to build civic capacity, leadership, and self-governance in the communities they aim to strengthen (Buteau, Chaffin, & Buchanan, 2014; Gibson, 2019; Johnson, 2016; Millesen & Martin, 2014).

The growing desire among funders to meaningfully engage communities is grounded in both social justice and democratic ideals of self-determination and citizen participation, and recognition that community members

Key Points

- The philanthropic sector has been called on to increase community engagement and beneficiary voice in funding decisions — in other words, to democratize philanthropy — and foundations have responded with a variety of innovative grantmaking models. One of those, participatory grantmaking, comprises practices that range from soliciting feedback from constituents to encouraging their active participation in or control over grantmaking decisions, program implementation, and outcome evaluation. Little research, however, has examined the perceptions of foundation or community stakeholders involved in participatory grantmaking initiatives.
- This article examines the participatory grantmaking process of a Baltimore, Maryland, community foundation that invested \$1.5 million in an initiative to support community-building and improvement activities in two communities it had engaged with in the past. It uses data from focus groups and interviews conducted over the five years of the initiative that sought to learn how the foundation’s involvement was perceived and experienced, and in what ways its model of participatory grantmaking influenced collaboration and trust among community-based organizations and resident engagement in and ownership of programs and activities.

(continued on next page)

If philanthropy is to effectively address inequality, it must give away both money and power.

possess valuable expertise regarding local conditions, needs, and solutions to community problems. Mobilizing this expertise can enhance impact and sustainability, and deciding with community members how and where to allocate resources is seen by some as necessary for the renewal of civil society broadly (Bell & McCambridge, 2018; Enright & Bourns, 2010). Others argue that minimizing the control and influence of “elite philanthropists” is also critical to the health of American democracy (Gilothe, 2018; Rooney, 2018). As Davies (2019) suggests, philanthropy is at a crossroads: If philanthropy is to effectively address inequality, it must give away both money and power.

Foundations are responding to these calls and experimenting with a variety of practices, such as crowd-sourcing project ideas and funding decisions (Wales, 2011); engaging nonprofit service providers and clients to decide on the scope and content of the request-for-proposal process and, sometimes, the final grant awards (McNamara, Cumming, & Pulis, 2018); and venture philanthropy models that engage both donors and community leaders to identify high-performing nonprofits for support (Miller, Gollub, Kaufman, & Danzig Epelman, 2014).

Key Points (continued)

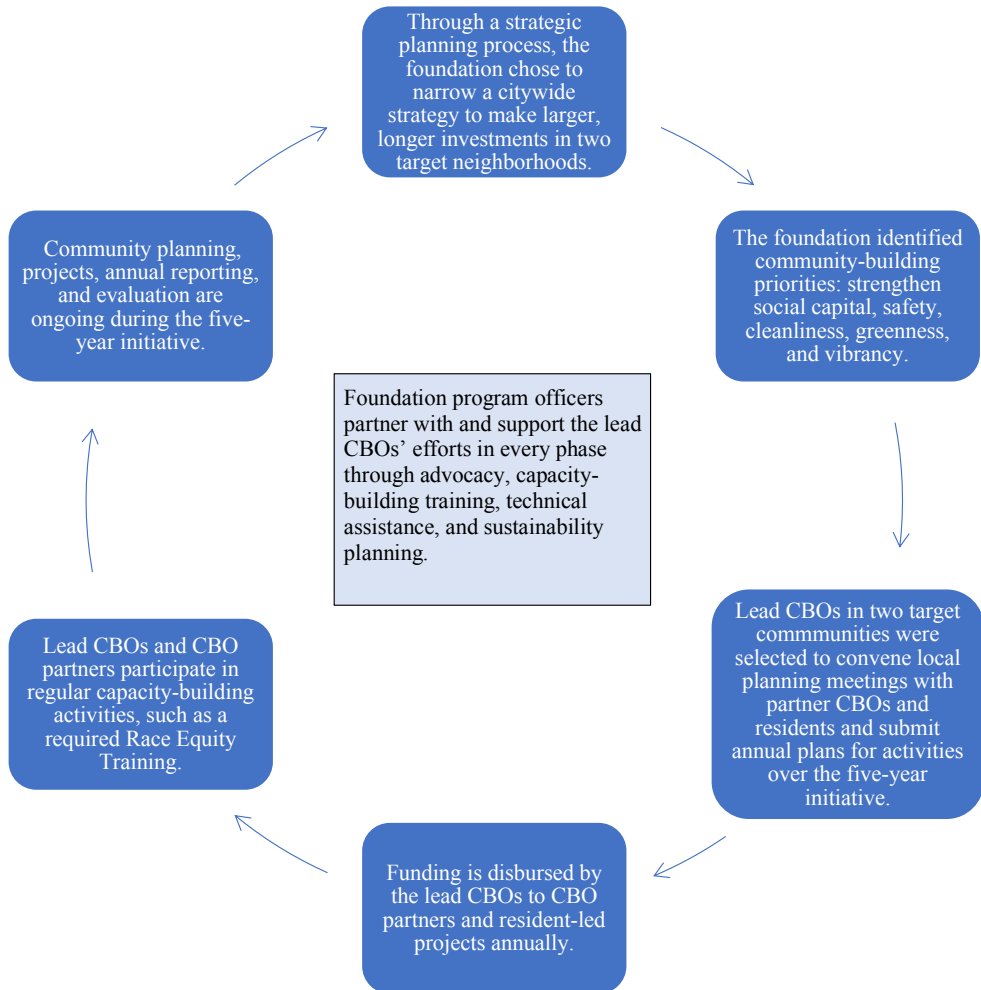
- Learning from the community-based initiative suggests that changing the power dynamic between funders and grantees can facilitate project success. This article concludes with a discussion of what the foundation learned about shifting power away from the funder and closer to the community, how those lessons have informed its current strategy, and what implications this has for philanthropy more broadly.

Participatory budgeting, adopted mostly in Latin America but gaining popularity in Europe and North America, asks citizens to decide how city budgets should be spent and may also hold promise for foundation funding-allocation processes (Baiocchi & Lerner, 2007; Justice Funders, 2020; Lerner & Secondo, 2012).

The variety of methods employed has led some to question what participatory philanthropy actually means (Gibson, Levine, & Dietz, 2010), and while enthusiasm for participatory models is high, some have raised questions about such potential risks as the influence of slick marketing on funding decisions and a slide to the “middle,” where only safe, uncontroversial grant proposals get funded (Kean, 2007). Clearly, what is called for is careful research that examines participatory processes and outcomes, and accurately reflects and includes the perspectives of key stakeholder groups. This article examines the participatory grantmaking process of a Baltimore, Maryland, community foundation in order to improve future participatory philanthropy projects and their evaluations.

Community foundations are uniquely positioned to transform philanthropy. Since their creation in 1914, U.S. community foundations have distinguished themselves by serving and building community among residents in specific geographic areas, composing boards of community members, and empowering those boards to inform and guide donors about pressing community needs (Colinvaux, 2018; Graddy & Wang, 2008). Their impact has increased alongside their significant growth in numbers and scope — 300% since the 1980s (Colinvaux, 2018), to make up 10% of all foundations in the United States (Mazany & Perry, 2014).

Even so, changes within the last decade — commercial charitable gift funds, grassroots giving circles, and online resources like Guidestar and Charity Navigator — have challenged community foundations to prove their value (Bernholz, Fulton, & Kaspar, 2005; Mazany & Perry, 2014). Those working in urban communities of color have been criticized for perpetuating white-dominated, elite philanthropy models

FIGURE 1 Framework for Foundation Participatory Philanthropy Initiative

(Love, 2015). If they expect to lead — and even survive, many argue, community foundations must put even more decision-making power in the hands of the communities they support (Easterling, 2011; Mazany, 2019; National Taskforce on Community Leadership, 2013).

One Attempt to Walk the Talk

The community foundation examined here engaged in a version of participatory philanthropy in which it made an investment of \$1.5

million over five years¹ to support community-building and improvement activities in two communities with which it had prior engagement. (See Figure 1.) Parkside and Harborview, discussed in this article,² could be termed “tip-ping communities” because they presented not only reinforceable strengths, but also challenges that if unchecked could debilitate the areas.

Lead community-based organizations (CBOs) in each community were the key point of contact

¹ The initial investment was intended to be for three years, but the foundation added two years of funding to extend the full initiative timeline from 2012 to 2016.

² The names of the two communities have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

for the foundation, and were the agents through which all foundation funds were distributed in each community. These lead CBOs were required to:

1. Identify and work with several other CBO partners.
2. Convene community planning processes annually to identify priorities for action.
3. Establish and revise annual budgets.
4. Support and distribute small grants to a wide range of resident-led activities, enhancing bridging and bonding social capital among diverse groups and improving safety, cleanliness, greenness, and arts and culture.
5. Participate with partner CBOs in ongoing capacity-building activities, including a training titled “Race Matters” to center racial equity in their collaboration.

While the proposals submitted by the lead CBOs had to satisfy these criteria, the foundation gave significant decision-making power to communities. There was a shared decision-making process every year among lead CBOs, their partner organizations, and participating residents. These partners identified and revised projects and budgets without intervention by the foundation. The lead CBO reported annually on these activities and accomplishments, along with revised budgets. Additionally, the funding model went beyond giving money for projects, encompassing capacity-building investments in the lead and partner CBOs; support for conferences and board, staff, and leadership trainings; and technical support related to business operations.

A critical part of the foundation’s power-sharing model was the high-touch role played by two foundation program officers, one for each community, who served as liaisons with the lead CBOs, the foundation board, and evaluators from the University of Maryland. While approximately .5 of a full-time equivalent of their positions was officially allocated to these activities, they spent significantly more time than that

to support the lead CBOs in their community convening, planning, and resource-allocation work and to manage challenges as they arose. The program officers also advocated for additional funding from the foundation and leveraged additional investments from the foundation’s partners to support community plans and activities.

Over the five years of the two-community initiative, more than 50 resident-led projects received small grants dispersed by the lead CBOs that ranged from \$500 to \$15,000. The funding supported renewal of urban gardens; community cleanups and tree plantings; redesign of public spaces, including lighting, safety improvements at busy intersections, and mural projects; summer movie nights in the park; intergenerational and cross-race dialogue/art projects; and youth-led events and entrepreneurship activities, such as a mobile delivery service of produce from a neighborhood farm.

A community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach guided the research: the university research team collaborated with foundation program officers and lead CBO staff to design and conduct focus groups and interviews with core participants in 2014, two years into the initiative, and at its end, in 2016. Two key research questions guided the qualitative data collection and analysis:

1. How was the community foundation’s involvement in the initiative perceived and experienced?
2. How did the foundation’s model of participatory grantmaking facilitate or hinder collaboration and trust among neighboring CBOs and increase resident engagement in and ownership over program planning and activities?

Method

We used a purposive sampling strategy to capture perspectives among foundation program officers assigned to each community, lead CBO staff, and core participants, including community residents and staff from partner CBOs. Six

focus groups (n = 23) and 12 individual interviews were conducted in 2014, and three focus groups (n = 10) and two interviews with community foundation program officers were conducted in 2016, yielding a total sample of n = 47.

In addition to gathering perspectives from those playing different roles in the initiative, we were conscious about recruiting a diverse representation of participants to gain perspectives across race, class, age, and gender. Providing demographic information was voluntary, thus demographic information was not provided by all participants. (See Table 1.) While we actively recruited for diversity and allowed anyone to participate in either a focus group or individual interview to establish a sense of trust and transparency, we were ultimately reliant upon those who agreed to participate. According to analyses of 2010 U.S. Census data for the neighborhoods, our sample was representative in terms of age and gender; however, white and middle- to high-income residents were somewhat overrepresented (personal communication).

Employing CBPR best practices, university researchers, foundation staff, and lead CBO staff worked together to develop the semi-structured interview guide used for focus groups and interviews, which included questions to capture participants' perspectives on the following:

- the initiative's decision-making processes, goals, and impacts;
- the level and effectiveness of the support provided by the community foundation;
- the extent and nature of interactions among partner organizations and between these CBOs and community residents;
- implementation strengths/benefits and challenges; and
- the usefulness of the evaluation process itself in guiding decision-making during the initiative and identifying meaningful lessons learned to be applied to future initiatives.

TABLE 1 Demographic Information for Focus Groups and Interview Participants

Variables	N(%) / M
Age	39.28
Gender	
Male	15 (36.6)
Female	26 (63.4)
Race	
White/Caucasian	29 (72.5)
Black/African American	10 (25)
Hispanic/Latinx	1 (2.5)
Income	
< \$25,000	7 (18.4)
\$25,000–\$74,999	22 (57.9)
\$75,000 >	9 (23.7)

While standardized, the semi-structured nature of the interview guides allowed members of the research team to engage in significant probing during conversations and collect rich data.

Individual interviews were conducted over the phone or in person, lasted anywhere from 20 to 60 minutes, and were recorded and immediately transcribed. Focus groups were held in respective communities, lasted approximately 90 minutes, and were recorded and immediately transcribed. Once collected, data from focus groups and interviews were de-identified before analysis to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted following data collection in 2014 and 2016 using a cyclical coding approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020). First-cycle coding entailed two researchers simultaneously open coding all transcripts from the 2014 wave of data collection (one by hand using Microsoft Word, the other using the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo), generating well over 100 descriptive, in vivo, and process codes (Miles et al., 2020). The two research members met weekly while coding to discuss code choices and initial definitions, reach consensus, and

Key components of the participatory grantmaking approach included lead CBOs partnering with as many other CBOs in their communities as possible, and a high degree of autonomy, power, and flexibility for lead CBOs and planning teams to identify and fund a variety of resident-led projects, big or small.

revise codes before second-cycle focused coding (Charmaz, 2014) or pattern coding (Miles et al., 2020), which produced a distilled number (48) of codes that formed the basis for the 2016 wave of data collection. After this second wave, the research team adopted a template approach (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), using the initial list of codes and “sensitizing concepts” (Padgett, 2017, p. 151) from the literature on community building and participatory philanthropy to develop a structured codebook used to reanalyze all transcripts.

Using NVivo, the research team created a coding hierarchy and proceeded to reread and recode all transcripts from both data collection waves, remaining open to new/emergent codes as analysis proceeded. Over several weeks of coding, the researchers met regularly to discuss coding and code definitions, discrepancies in interpretation, and their annotations or “jottings” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 86), and engaged in what Strauss and Corbin (1994) call “constant comparative analysis,” examining patterns as well as inconsistencies and irregularities.

Results

We consider here two related themes, both central to participatory grantmaking processes. First, we look at the engagement and

partnership benefits and challenges that resulted from the funder’s high-touch, flexible, and shared decision-making approach. Second, we consider one of the most important components of any participatory endeavor — the shifting nature of trust between the funder and communities, and then within the communities themselves.

Engagement and Partnership: Benefits and Challenges

Key components of the participatory grantmaking approach included lead CBOs partnering with as many other CBOs in their communities as possible, and a high degree of autonomy, power, and flexibility for lead CBOs and planning teams to identify and fund a variety of resident-led projects, big or small. These components of the funding model resulted in deeper collaboration among neighborhood CBOs and greater resident engagement, ownership, and leadership development than these communities had experienced previously. The CBOs’ staff and community members alike recognized the benefits of being able to rapidly pursue actions they prioritized rather than comply with top-down, predetermined activities or strict foundation requirements. A core participant from the Parkside community observed, “They said, ‘What do you wanna do?’ ... We had \$2,700, and so we did a little bit of all those things with that initiative.” A member of the Harborview CBO staff remarked,

What I really appreciated from [the foundation] was they trusted to receive the input from residents of the organizations in saying “this is what we need; and let’s go ahead and do it,” and didn’t hover over or micromanage. ... I found sometimes with other funders that jumping through all the hoops and the obstacles makes people want to disengage.

“I think one of the biggest outcomes would be leadership,” a participant with one of the Harborview community’s partner CBOs said. “Give that opportunity that sometimes residents have never had,” such as a budget proposal, that would create a “teachable moment.”

Another member of a Harborview partner CBO had this advice:

For someone to say, “I want to do this project and I want to do it in the next three weeks,” just make sure that the association president signs off on it and you have five other residents or six other residents on your block who are going to support it, and it can happen and it can happen quickly instead of going through all the bureaucracy of it.

The foundation’s participatory approach quickly generated a variety of creative, resident-led projects and resulted in important collaborative outcomes in both communities. Participants described making new connections, normalizing and deepening existing relationships, competing less, and working more intentionally and strategically on common problems. “A lot of projects are co-led as opposed to led individually,” a staff member from a Harborview CBO noted. “It’s a lot of the same players, but just much deeper connections.” A Harborview core participant said the approach may have “normalized some relationships and some connections that should have already been a priority for our different organizations.” Another core participant from that community said, “I see the impact in how our programming is more thoughtful and intentional because we are working together more instead of competing with one another.”

Increased collaboration became the foundation for greater bridging social capital. “The neighborhood is diverse,” a core Parkside participant said; “they’ve done things to bring the neighborhood back together.” A Harborview core participant observed,

The goal is to build connections and relationships between members of a really diverse community in terms of age, ethnicity, and cultural background, and to do that through the process of collaborative leadership development among all kinds of people who might not have seen themselves or been empowered as leaders before.

Such capital also laid the groundwork for conversations about power, racism, and inter-organizational competition. One CBO member in Parkside described experiences from a

The foundation’s participatory approach quickly generated a variety of creative, resident-led projects and resulted in important collaborative outcomes in both communities.

first-of-its-kind event that was hosted by a Jewish CBO and co-sponsored by a CBO largely representative of African American youth:

I think [the members of the host CBO] were really sincere in their outreach. ... One of my young people, who’s not the most patient, attended the [event] and was like, “Those people are racist.” ... So I think there’s, it’s not like all happy sort of feeling. But I think getting close enough so that stuff can come out is a good sign, rather than just having no contact whatsoever. ... I think the more that we’re authentically connected, the more opportunity there is to talk about that kind of stuff.

Social capital was also built between CBO and foundation staff, as a key aspect of the foundation’s multiyear grantmaking approach was not to just disperse money and review grantee reports, but instead to work hand-in-hand with lead CBOs to support projects, identify successes and failures, and discuss strategy. A staff member from Parkside’s lead CBO observed,

I think the idea of a three-year process, a three-year grant that would allow you to actually dig deep into the subject without having to reapply each year, without having to think about whether or not your report showed enough progress or not, it allowed them to become a more intimate partner with us, where you could actually interact with the funder as a partner — meaning [we could say to them], “This isn’t working. And we think it’s not working because of this. We think we need to do this instead.” Those are strategic discussions that you have inside your organization all the time, but ... a lot of people are just not comfortable with a funder because you just don’t know what they’re gonna do.

Nevertheless, a CBO staff member in Parkside recognized the “delicate line” this required foundation program officers to walk:

I have definitely heard critiques from people I trust deeply in the community that believe it’s inappropriate for an elected official or a funder to have any real formal role. And so there’s a line that you have to be careful with. And I think they’re very cognizant of that line. They want to be there to bring resources to the table, to use their own interests in building neighborhood agendas, to assist, without overriding the wishes of the people who are living and working there. A delicate line.

Even when that line was walked well, the approach posed some noteworthy challenges. For instance, program officers were essentially creating unanticipated position responsibilities and tasks for themselves as the initiative unfolded. The Parkside program officer observed,

I would say in this work we took more of a hands-on organizer role in some instances, or more of a, “I’m a voice at the table with everyone else” role, versus, “Let me just give you a grant and you go do.” And that’s not normal for foundation work because, obviously, it takes a lot of staff time to do that, and usually that happens beyond your regular 9-to-5 workday. And so you’re talking about evenings and weekends.

Reconfiguring their positions also meant continual negotiation not only with CBO staff and community members, who were used to a more traditional top-down approach from funders, but also with their foundation colleagues and board. The program officer for the Harborview community said,

We had to defend our work all day, every day, to fellow staff, to most of our leadership, and to the board. ... And — I told [the other program officer] this many times — I am so grateful that we had each other to say, “No, we’re staying the course in this work.” And staying focused on resident engagement, resident leadership, community engagement: that this is like a long-term investment. And the work was very personal to both of us. ... I think the conversation started to change in terms of people better understanding the work,

... before moving on to another neighborhood or more, that there is sort of an understanding, recognition, and investment in the people who are doing this work from the staff person, ‘cause there’s a lot of defending our work, defending our neighborhoods while we were also in the mix trying to sort through relationship stuff within the neighborhood context.

Additionally, as appreciative as the community members were of program officer availability and flexibility, and their own role in funding and programming decisions, there were still concerns and unmet needs. At times participants wanted more directive “guidance” and goal clarity, oversight, and expertise from the foundation. “I think there was just a lot of confusion on what [the foundation] wanted out of these dollars,” a Parkside member said. “So having clear guidance would have been helpful, I guess.” A core participant from Harborview said,

The best thing that [the foundation] can do for us in terms of providing us with help is in specific and targeted capacity building within the organization. ... Let’s say you give us your communications person. She sits in our office for one day a month ... and thinks about what we can do.

These statements suggest that despite the foundation’s efforts to support CBO capacity building, some stakeholders were hoping for even greater assistance with planning and capacity-building activities. A core participant from Harborview pointed to the need to help the CBOs engage issue experts:

We live in what I would refer to as a transitional neighborhood. We are pretty deep into a transition, so what I would have hoped for is for some guidance and resources ... not only monetary, but also for people who have done this before and have some experience with taking a neighborhood and guiding it along in a way that isn’t haphazard. That is what I hoped for it.

The depth of capacity-building needs among partner CBOs and the amount of resources necessary to build their capacities and competencies may have been underestimated by the foundation in this initiative.

Trust/Mistrust

The level of involvement by foundation program officers and the multiyear funding commitment strengthened social capital between the community foundation and grantees. Lead CBO staff members said this sharpened reciprocal understanding and generated unusually high levels of intimacy, honesty, transparency, and trust, which led to more effective collective problem solving. A Harborview staff member said,

There's just been this kind of creation of trust at this point where you don't feel like you have to hide things that aren't necessarily going well; you can ask for feedback ... without being concerned that you might, that it might, create a problem for the funder — that they think there's a problem with your work.

Trust within communities, however, rested on history, and there were distinct differences between how much trust the participatory grantmaking strategies generated in Harborview and in Parkside. Most participants recognized that using a lead CBO as a fiscal agent to distribute money flexibly and quickly across a wide variety of groups made sense logistically, especially since many smaller block clubs did not have 501(c)(3) status. However, both the historical extent of collaboration or factionalism in the community and the character and perceived level of legitimacy of the lead CBO were critical to whether stronger relationships and trust were generated in the process. When asked about replicating the strategy in other communities, one core participant in Harborview remarked:

In addition to whoever the lead is going to be, it needs to be a very strong organization; they need to be respected in the community and know their community. There also needs to be already — if not in place, at least in conversation — a network of partners. ... I feel if the nonprofit partners for [Harborview] had not already had, at some level, history and relationships and had worked on things in the past, whether in some it may have been more closely than others, we at least had some connection. And that I think helped us move forward quickly, and we didn't have to go through all that — the dating and coordinating and getting to build trust and getting to know each other — because we had already gone through all that.

The level of involvement by foundation program officers and the multiyear funding commitment strengthened social capital between the community foundation and grantees.

This common view of collaboration in Harborview contrasted with numerous comments from Parkside community partners about both the history of factionalism there and the limited ability of the lead CBO to effectively bring groups and residents together. One Parkside core partner said:

It seems like there's been a lot of infighting, and somebody gets mad and leaves one board and goes to another board, and same thing happens. And they're jumping boards, and instead of it being one conglomerate group, which you would think is [the lead CBO], it's not happening.

Another Parkside core participant went further, condemning the funding-distribution strategy and the lead CBO and suggesting the initiative may have done more harm than good:

I think the money — well, the goals of [the foundation] — were positive; their intentions were good. Their implementation was very poor. I think the funding did more harm to [the] neighborhood. I think it was used as a political weapon. It was routed through an organization that ... doesn't have a lot of support, and it was used as a political weapon to [pressure] the people that received it. Because they [the lead CBO] need partners in order to get more money. So, it would have been much better had [the foundation] bypassed the target organization and made it available. I understand that's a little bit more paperwork, it's a little tougher to manage when you're dealing with 12 or 14 little block clubs, but it removes the harm that was done.

[F]oundations intending to implement a participatory grantmaking model need to think very carefully about the use of a lead CBO as both a convening and a fiscal agent.

Especially in communities with a history of factionalism, like Parkside, careful assessment of the lead CBO's capacity and legitimacy is critical. Participants described a number of factors affecting such legitimacy, including an organization's history of communication, its capacity to set goals and track progress, the representativeness of its board, its leaders' interpersonal and relationship-building styles and their abilities to bridge differences in the community, and its track record of sharing power and credit for accomplishments with other community groups and stakeholders. A number of core participants in Parkside criticized the lead CBO as failing in many of these areas.

Even in Harborview, where collaboration was high, the lead CBO staff were well aware that having the role of the fiscal agent could threaten the trust they had previously built with partner CBOs. Said one staff member,

We now have Memorandums of Understanding with our partners, and we hadn't had that kind of formal contract set up; and we've learned it's really pretty necessary. But it's just something new that we hadn't negotiated before with some of our really close partners. ... I mean, negotiating — that level of formality — can be helpful if there's a breach in trust or people don't do what they say they're gonna do. But having to negotiate over that kind of formal agreement when ... you're used to having a very informal, trusting relationship, can make things a little uncomfortable initially.

Clearly, foundations intending to implement a participatory grantmaking model need to think very carefully about the use of a lead CBO as both a convening and a fiscal agent.

Discussion

Responding to recent calls to deepen their engagement of and accountability to members of the communities they support, foundations are experimenting with participatory grantmaking and citizen-led community-building practices. This study begins to give voice to stakeholders involved in one community foundation's participatory grantmaking and community-building initiative. While this analysis identifies a number of key benefits of this grantmaking approach, it also demonstrates that the devil in participatory grantmaking is in the implementation details.

Key benefits and impacts described by participants related mostly to the quality of interorganizational relationships and increased collaboration and social capital within neighborhoods and between CBOs and the foundation. (See Table 2.) While these outcomes are not the neighborhood-level improvements (crime, educational achievement, economic development, etc.) that foundations and their donors typically emphasize, they are nonetheless valuable outcomes that are important to capture when measuring "success" in community-building and participatory grantmaking efforts.

This examination also identifies, however, several aspects of participatory grantmaking that did not work so smoothly, and lessons learned that may be useful to other foundations considering participatory grantmaking and community-building practices. Among the most critical lessons is that the effectiveness of having a lead CBO convene a planning process and distribute funding is highly dependent on the history of factionalism within the target community and the legitimacy of the lead CBO in the eyes of both other CBOs and residents. Ultimately, our findings relate directly back to questions raised by Gerzon (1995) over two decades ago:

How can grant making be structured to maximize the community's role, while still guarding against the tyranny of localism? When communities are divided, how can grant money be targeted to foster community-based consensus, rather than further arm polarized interest groups? (p. 194–95)

TABLE 2 Key Benefits, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Benefits	Challenges	Lessons Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of intimacy, transparency, collaboration, and trust between foundation program officers and lead CBOs, which resulted in candid and ongoing strategic conversations about initiative successes and failures • High resident engagement, ownership, and leadership development as a result of the flexibility and autonomy provided by the foundation for groups to carry out a variety of innovative projects in each community • Enhanced collaboration among CBOs that generated authentic relationships and bridging social capital, which set the stage for conversations about power, racism, and interorganizational competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of existing factionalism within one target community • Limited legitimacy of the lead CBO in one community as perceived by some partnering CBOs and residents • Limited organizational and communication capacity of the chosen lead CBO in one community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistically assess foundation program officer time needed to generate high trust and collaboration among participating CBOs and navigate complex neighborhood power dynamics. • Accurately assess the lead CBO's legitimacy and capacity. • Enhance communication and conflict-resolution training for foundation program officers, particularly when working in factionalized communities. • Explore more broad-based funding distribution models, like participatory budgeting, to decrease the power of a lead CBO and enhance transparency and communication with community stakeholders. • Identify creative ways to engage donors directly in participatory funding processes to strengthen the connections between donors wanting to be engaged and residents wanting donors who "roll up their sleeves" and participate in grassroots projects.

As illustrated in our analysis, the answers to each of these questions depends largely on the unique history and context of each community. Even the best-planned participatory grantmaking process will struggle under conditions of community factionalism or organizational disarray, as was seen in the Parkside community.

In communities like Parkside, other options are preferable. The foundation could assign to the community a program officer highly skilled in communication and conflict resolution to provide extensive support and technical assistance to the lead CBO and its partners. Alternatively, the foundation could adopt a more broad-based and decentralized funding distribution approach, such as participatory budgeting. This model could increase transparency, decentralize power within a community, and put funding distribution decisions more directly into the hands of residents. Foundations can either partner

with lead CBOs to implement a participatory budgeting process or directly implement one themselves.

Participatory budgeting models raise critical questions of their own, however — especially for community foundations working within complex, diverse urban communities — and could impact neighborhood stability and the health of existing CBOs. For instance, an ethnography of participatory budgeting practices by Ganuza, Nez, and Morales (2014) argues that participatory budgeting fosters civil society centered around citizens rather than community associations. Would such practices undermine the legitimacy and strength of existing CBOs, which many times serve as critical anchors in communities? Both the lead CBOs described here, for instance, continue to operate in and provide important community-building functions to these two communities, and a void would be felt if they were weakened or closed their doors.

A second important lesson learned from this evaluation is a reality check concerning the level of foundation infrastructure necessary to successfully implement a participatory grantmaking strategy[.]

A second important lesson learned from this evaluation is a reality check concerning the level of foundation infrastructure necessary to successfully implement a participatory grantmaking strategy, as staff time and professional development at both foundation and CBO levels is necessary to manage ongoing engagement, convening, and communication work. This initiative demanded exceptional effort by foundation program officers, who had to provide a steady, visible presence throughout the initiative, respond to CBO capacity needs, and navigate complicated neighborhood power dynamics. Top foundation leadership must understand these realities and recognize that program officers may need to dedicate themselves full time to participatory grantmaking and community-building processes and be given significant professional development training in community-building and conflict-management practices, especially for diverse and factionalized target communities. If top leadership and colleagues are not tuned into these demands, program officers may find themselves squeezed from both ends and face burnout.

As with all research, this study raises many more questions for investigation. One critical perspective not captured here is that of donors. What benefits and challenges would arise if donors were more engaged directly in community-building and grantmaking decisions? Some of our participants wanted more donors and foundation board members to “roll up their sleeves” and witness their efforts

directly, rather than simply reading reports of results. Additionally, given the growing desire for engagement particularly among younger donors, how could community foundations go even further than the foundation studied here and involve donors in the participatory process? Perhaps donors could review and vote alongside residents on which resident-designed projects or initiatives their donation dollars should fund. There may be strategic advantages to community foundations of doing so. Miller et al. (2014) document how changes made by the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund toward a venture philanthropy model that engaged both donors and community members more directly in funding allocations resulted in increased donations and network expansion.

Another set of questions relate to the long-term impact of this initiative and whether or not foundation leaders and donors felt the money was “worth it.” While interviews with top foundation leadership and donors were beyond the scope of this project, we know the foundation continues to support these two neighborhoods, that the two lead CBOs are still operating, and that the program officers felt the capacity, leadership development, and relationships built among partnering CBOs and diverse groups of residents were the most important outcomes. The Parkside program officer reflected on this:

I feel like that’s the larger story. And if there’s a takeaway, that’s the takeaway: It’s really the importance of building partnerships in the community, the importance of developing inter-generational and diverse leadership in community, and building capacity of community-based organizations so that there are paid staff who are community organizers, paid staff who can spend time, energy, effort focused on key issues in the neighborhood. That has nothing to do with safe, clean, and green and vibrant, although if those things are in place, safe, clean, green, and vibrant begin to happen.

Nevertheless, these neighborhoods would still be considered tipping communities, as factors beyond the foundation’s control (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recession, polarized political climate, and protests for racial

justice seen in the past few years) greatly impact the economic health and social well-being of these urban communities and others like them across the nation.

Strengths and Limitations

The CBPR approach adopted for this research presented both advantages and challenges. Working closely with community partners over a five-year period helped ensure the research included the perspectives and met the needs of various stakeholders. This “prolonged engagement” (Padgett, 2017, p. 186) enabled data collection at two time points and enhanced the quality of that data. However, the demands of the CBPR approach, which required nearly bi-monthly meetings with community partners, precluded gaining full “saturation” during qualitative data collection and analysis.

For instance, ideally, we would have interviewed residents beyond the core participants (which may have yielded a more representative community sample, since a number of leaders from the partner agencies who chose to participate were white) and collected multiple types of qualitative data, including observational data (from community and core team meetings in each neighborhood and foundation board meetings) or archival data (such as transcripts of meeting minutes). Formal member checking of transcripts was also not feasible, as study participants had limited time or desire to carefully read through them. Nevertheless, we did obtain reactions to our analyses when we shared findings and data summaries with participants at key community stakeholder meetings (Padgett, 2017).

Despite the limitations of this research, our presentation of findings may be helpful to other foundations engaging in participatory

If [foundations] pay closer attention to their participatory grantmaking practices and community-building efforts, they may both compete better for donors and have a stronger ability to strengthen civic capacity and social cohesion in the communities they seek to support and revitalize.

grantmaking and community-building initiatives in economically and racially diverse urban communities.

Conclusion

Community foundations will likely remain important anchor institutions across the United States. And yet, to survive, thrive, and increase their impact they are being challenged to examine their grantmaking practices and to innovate to satisfy both the donors they court and the communities they serve. This study offers some initial insights into how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of participatory grantmaking and begins to address the critical importance of foundations carefully considering the implications of their funding methods. If they pay closer attention to their participatory grantmaking practices and community-building efforts, they may both compete better for donors and have a stronger ability to strengthen civic capacity and social cohesion in the communities they seek to support and revitalize.

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(In)equality Through Unrestricted Grantmaking: Examining Trust and Power in the Collaboration Between the Dutch Charity Lotteries and Their Grantees

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Keywords: *Unrestricted grantmaking, flexible funding, foundations, collaboration, funder-grantee relationship, expectations, power*

Introduction

Recent developments show a trend among large foundations toward a model of more flexible, trust-based, unrestricted funding practices (Di Mento, 2019). An interesting and relevant question is how staff at grantee organizations experience this type of funding. A funder–grantee relationship is arguably always unequal, with both visible and invisible power dynamics. To examine these dynamics, this article provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Dutch Charity Lotteries (DCL) — a large social enterprise providing unrestricted funding to a wide range of nonprofits — and a sample of their grantees.

Most funding from foundations and governments comes with restrictions on how it should be spent. An unintended negative consequence of such restrictions is that they can lead grantee organizations into the “nonprofit starvation cycle”: unrealistic expectations about overhead costs incentivize grantees to prove to potential funders that they are operating as efficiently as possible by cutting overhead costs, which reinforces funders’ expectations and can ultimately threaten organizational survival (Gregory & Howard, 2009). This cycle has been documented in the United States (Lecy & Searing, 2015) and Germany (Schubert & Boenigk, 2019). Preliminary analyses covering a limited period (2007–2017) in the Netherlands do not provide evidence for declining overhead ratios (Van der Woude, 2020), and more research is needed to

Key Points

- Since 1989, the Dutch Charity Lotteries have provided multiyear unrestricted funding, a type of grantmaking that is fairly unique for the Netherlands, to a wide range of nonprofits at home and abroad. This article shares insights into how unrestricted grantmaking influences the relationship between funders and grantees, specifically highlighting how staff at a sample of grantee organizations experience collaboration with this large social enterprise. It discusses hidden and invisible power dynamics that exist in the relationship, even when there are few formal restrictions on grantees’ spending.
- Grantee representatives interviewed for this study stated that openness and honesty in communication with the Dutch Charity Lotteries leads to mutual trust, and that they experience few formal restrictions. Nevertheless, even unrestricted funding may come with stated or unstated expectations from the funder, and many grantees reported that receiving the grant support leaves them with a sense that they have to “prove they’re worth it.” Relaxing formal restrictions gives rise to some uncertainty about what grantees actually have to “prove.”
- To ensure a more equal collaboration, it is advisable for foundations to try to detect and consider expectations that are explicit and implicit, conscious and unconscious, and address these. This article offers suggestions for how foundations can do so.

document the potential existence of the cycle in different settings.

Unrestricted grantmaking may break the nonprofit starvation cycle. Altschuler & Tirona (2019) argue that unrestricted funding increases the flexibility of nonprofit organizations, allowing them to respond better to opportunities and challenges. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such practices improve grantees' organizational and project impact (Wallace & Saxton, 2018). Riemer, Frank, Rubin, and Merrow-Kehoe (2017) conclude that grantees of a community foundation in Connecticut were "better able to achieve their mission," making progress in "accomplishing strategic plan goals [and] strengthening and/or sustaining their infrastructures," and have been nimble and flexible in carrying out strategic plans in "the face of unpredictable operating environments" (pp. 34–35). Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Eckhart-Queenan, Etzel, and Silverman (2019) suggest that unrestricted funding strengthens nonprofits, because it can be a powerful tool to solve the chronic problem of underfunding.

The Dutch Charity Lotteries

Since 1989, the Dutch Charity Lotteries (Goede Doelen Loterijen) — comprising Vrienden Loterij (Friends Lottery), Nationale Postcode Loterij (Dutch Postcode Lottery), and the BankGiro Loterij (BankGiro Lottery) — have provided funding to nonprofits primarily in the Netherlands, but also abroad. In total, the lotteries employ over 400 people and support more than 100 nonprofits in the areas of social issues, environment, health and well-being, and arts and culture (BankGiro Loterij, 2021).

The Dutch Charity Lotteries (DCL) operate with three permits in the Dutch lottery market. All the lotteries in the Netherlands are, since January 2020, obliged to grant 40% of their revenue to societal causes. There are two exceptions, the State Lottery and the Lotto, which are run

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by the Dutch government and grant 15% and 18%, respectively, of their revenue to societal causes (Nationale Postcode Loterij, 2021). The DCL states that their grants must support innovative, green, and social projects, in line with their overarching objectives and mission for a healthy civil society. The largest share of grants goes to organizations in the fields of international development and environment through the Postcode Lottery, while smaller amounts are allocated to social and health-related projects (Friends Lottery) and culture (BankGiro Lottery).¹ In 2018, the DCL donated 511 million euros (approximately \$614 million) to nonprofit organizations. The overarching company Novamedia — which also runs smaller Postcode Lotteries in Sweden, the UK, Germany and Norway — is placed among the largest private donors in the world (City A.M., 2020).

To qualify as a possible grantee, organizations must fulfill some basic requirements, including having a minimum amount of their own fundraising income, at least a national outreach, and standing as a professional and typically

¹ This article focuses on nonprofits that receive funding from the Dutch Postcode Lottery and Friends Lottery. The Postcode Lottery typically makes grants of at least 500,000 euros and a maximum of 22.5 million euros per year, for at least five years. The Friends Lottery provides smaller unrestricted grants, ranging from approximately 3,000 to 3 million euros per year, typically for five years. In addition, the Friends Lottery allows grantees to sell their own tickets through their lottery, with profits going directly to the grantee.

The DCL describes their grants as “unrestricted, long-term, and based on trust” — an interesting point, because unrestricted funding might also contribute by helping to equalize the power relationship between funder and grantee.

certified organization, and they must work in one of the sectors that the DCL supports. The DCL’s annual grantmaking process involves four steps:

1. The Charities Department, which is also responsible for maintaining relations with grantees and monitoring their evaluations, makes a first selection on the eligibility of applications.
2. The Charities Department and the board of directors make a long list of possible grantees.
3. The board of directors decides on the final selection.
4. The supervisory board approves the selection.

Power and Unrestricted Funding

The DCL describes their grants as “unrestricted, long-term, and based on trust” (Goede Doelen Loterijen, 2019, p. 2) — an interesting point, because unrestricted funding might also contribute by helping to equalize the power relationship between funder and grantee. Based on the resource dependency theory and principal-agent theory, Froelich (1999) and Van Puyvelde, Caers, Du Bois, and Jegers (2012) argue that a funder–grantee relationship is based on an unequal power relationship. Funders (the “principals”) have the resources on which nonprofits (the “agents”) depend. If funders set requirements or conditions for their investments, nonprofits will

try to meet them, even if this conflicts with their mission and operations.

However, power is a complicated concept. Gaventa (2006) defines three forms of power:

1. *Visible power* can be defined as the visible and definable forms of power within a collaboration; examples are formal agreements, structures, and authorities.
2. *Hidden power* is held by the ones with power: those deciding who is involved with making important decisions and what is on the agenda.
3. *Invisible power*, the final form, can be described as the psychological and ideological boundaries of power.

Invisible power connects with Foucault’s (1978) perspective on power: it may reside in discourses and in being “observed.” As people in today’s postmodern society are increasingly focused on enhancing their individual well-being, they have lost sight of those who “observe” (Bauman, 2000; Rossi, 2004). As a result, power has become invisible and elusive, or, from a Foucauldian perspective, internalized and normalized. Foucault therefore states that power exists in discourses: in language, in the actions of people, and in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relationships. While the relationship between actors with power (on the side of the funder) and without power (on the recipient side) may appear more equal in unrestricted grantmaking, one might question whether power is actually being exercised in a more subtle, less visible, and maybe even unintentional way.

Given that most assessments, evaluations, and reports are to gauge grantee performance, our research aims to identify how DCL grantees experience the funder–grantee relationship — with a look at trust and power and their impact on the efforts being executed. We will specifically examine the role of unrestricted, long-term grantmaking, as well as the explicit and implicit expectations of both the DCL and those grantees. The scope of the current study

TABLE 1 Organizations and Information

Organization	Interviewee(s)	Sector	Role in Organization	DCL Beneficiary	Income From DCL/Total
Health Organization 1	Relationship manager (Two interviews)	Health	Innovator	15-19 years	0-25%
Health Organization 2	Director	Health	Innovator	10-14 years	50-75%
Health Organization 3	• Marketer • Financial employee	Health	Advocacy and spokespeople	15-19 years	0-25%
Health Organization 4	Account manager	Health	Service provision	0-4 years	0-25%
Environmental Organization 1	• Director • Relationship manager	Environment	Innovator	5-9 years	0-25%
Environmental Organization 2	Director	Environment	Innovator	0-4 years	0-25%
Environmental Organization 3	Director	Environment	Agitator and maverick	10-14 years	25-50%
Environmental Organization 4	Account manager	Environment	Advocacy and spokespeople	>20 years	0-25%
Human Rights Organization 1	Connecting officer	International and human rights	Advocacy and spokespeople	0-4 years	0-25%
Human Rights Organization 2	Director	International and human rights	Innovator	5-9 years	0-25%
Human Rights Organization 3	Director	International and human rights	Service provision	>20 years	0-25%
Societal Organization	Vice president	Societal and social causes	Service provision	5-9 years	0-25%
Dutch Postcode Lottery	Relationship manager 1		Funder		
Dutch Postcode Lottery	Relationship manager 2		Funder		

does not entail the consequences of unrestricted grantmaking for the actual work of the organizations, which is discussed elsewhere (Wiepking & De Wit, 2020).

Our results can help both funders and grantees rethink their relationships and the partially implicit and unintentional power relationships they characterize. The suggestions that follow

from our results may contribute to ways of engaging and collaborating that are constructive for both funders and grantees.

Research Design

Given that the DCL provides grants to over 100 nonprofits, we used maximum variation sampling to select a variety of grantee organizations to be interviewed.² We invited grantees of the

² When COVID-19 struck, six planned interviews were delayed or canceled. The sample does not represent the whole population of nonprofits collaborating with the DCL, but it reached a saturation point after 13 interviews. Nine were conducted in the first two weeks before the pandemic hit the Netherlands, and four after the impact became clearer. Questions were asked of those four respondents about how their organizations were dealing with the pandemic and how flexible funding impacted their work amid a global health crisis. Those respondents indicated that unrestricted funding allowed them to shift priorities to address the most urgent needs.

Two main themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the role of trust and power in the collaboration between the DCL and their grantees; and (2) the explicit and implicit expectations of both the DCL and the grantees.

Dutch Postcode Lottery and the Friends Lottery in the sectors of health, the environment, societal and social causes, and international and human rights, and across organizational roles — “service provision,” “advocacy and spokespeople,” “innovator,” and “agitator and maverick” — derived from Robert Bosch Stiftung (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, 2014, pp. 40–41). (See Table 1.)

We conducted and analyzed 15 semistructured interviews: 13 with representatives of 12 nonprofit organizations and two with relationship managers of the Dutch Postcode Lottery. (See Table 1.) All interviews were coded using two coding cycles. In the primary coding cycle, we used both descriptive and in vivo codes to analyze the first seven interview transcripts. In the secondary coding cycle, we coded axially. The final codes were used to analyze the last eight transcripts.

Two main themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the role of trust and power in the collaboration between the DCL and their grantees; and (2) the explicit and implicit expectations of both the DCL and the grantees.

The Role of Trust and Power in the Collaboration

When asked to characterize the collaboration with the DCL, the representatives of the grantee organizations described it as “transparent,” “honest,” “trustful,” and “communicative.” In

discussing the evaluation of the collaboration, the director of one of the human rights organizations said:

I honestly expected that it would be a formal conversation with an agenda and where we would be critically questioned. Well, for us, I can say that ... we had a very pleasant and open conversation about what is going well, what is going not so well, what we can still develop. They also asked about our impact, how we want to do it. So, I found it a very open, informal conversation where we could exchange information with each other. And constructive instead of critical.

Another characteristic of the relationship mentioned most frequently by the respondents is “trust.” The trust within the relationship described by the respondents has two layers. First, they say that the DCL trusts the grantees’ expertise; as an account manager for one of the environmental nonprofits phrased it, the DCL considers the nonprofit organizations the “expert in their field.” The second layer of trust comes from the DCL’s low level of monitoring. The DCL does not interfere with the operations of the nonprofits; when it comes to spending decisions, the unrestricted funding really is unrestricted. Also, evaluations are infrequent: generally, once a year.

The transparency in the collaboration is described by the respondents as “open communication.” The contact takes place in different ways and on different levels, from face-to-face contact to email, and DCL relationship managers talk with directors of the grantees and vice versa. All forms of contact are often described as “informal” — personal and characterized by a pleasant atmosphere. However, the contact is also described by some respondents as “businesslike”: it is, and always will be, a relationship based on agreements. An account manager for one of the health-related grantees described the relationship with the Friends Lottery as “extremely fruitful”:

Look, [the Friends Lottery] is just a party that of course involves charities which they think are doing something good for society, etc., but also the ones that are easy to market, in the end that can

contribute to more [lottery] tickets being sold. ... With the Friends Lottery, the collaboration is very interesting. You can make things big, think big. ... You can go from small wishes you organize for one client to a large recruitment drive where you try to recruit, I don't know, tens of thousands of new participants. And everything in between. And that's good.

As illustrated here, the collaboration is more than just a funder–grantee relationship. The collaboration can be used for other goals, generating brand awareness for the DCL through the “goodwill” of nonprofits, or using each other's network to connect and collaborate with other organizations.

Equality: Objective Versus Subjective

The second and most interesting (potential) barrier is the equality within the collaboration between the DCL and their grantees. We left the interpretation of the term “equality” up to the respondents because we wanted to see if different respondents would interpret this term differently. When asked if their relationship with the DCL can be defined as equal, all respondents said “no.” The answers and interpretations of the respondents can be divided in two forms of equality: “objective equality” and “subjective equality.” In terms of objective equality, 12 respondents mentioned that they are, to a smaller or larger extent, dependent on DCL funding. The account manager for the health grantee remarked,

No, there's never an equal relationship. No. Because they are the ones with the big money that support us. So if you look purely at the collaboration, it's never an equal relationship. But I don't have the feeling that they are Big Brother telling us what to do. ... Is there equality between a mother and her child? No. But it's a healthy relationship.

And this is where the second form, subjective equality, emerges. Almost all respondents say that they experience the collaboration as equal, mostly because of the open and trustful nature of the collaboration. This experience of equality allows the respondents to, for example, say “no” to requests of the DCL. The account manager for the environmental grantee explained,

[T]he collaboration is more than just a funder–grantee relationship. The collaboration can be used for other goals, generating brand awareness for the DCL through the “goodwill” of nonprofits, or using each other's network to connect and collaborate with other organizations.

If [the request] is achievable, we do it. ... If it doesn't work, I also say that. And [the DCL] also accept that. In that sense, it doesn't feel like that you always have to say “yes.” If we cannot do it, then we can be honest, which is also fine.

Mutual Dependency

To deepen the subjective experience of equality, we provoked respondents by stating in the interviews, “without charities, no Charity Lotteries.” Not everyone acknowledged this statement, but 11 respondents did. One of them, the director of an environmental organization, said,

Yeah, it's a tricky subject, because ... the one who pays has power. But sometimes it gets overestimated, because the funder does not always have an idea. And I think that what's happening is some kind of interplay, a balance We have the idea, a knowledge network, and we are the ones executing it. And you have the funder, the DCL, who have interests in the idea being executed well, because they think it's a good idea. In that sense, you can state it pretty straightforwardly: The idea is worth money, and the network we have is also worth money, and [the DCL] has to pay for that. If you keep it that simple, then it's a beautiful exchange.

“The idea” that the director talks about is the network and the projects of the organization, with which the DCL can increase their legitimacy by associating themselves with the

“goodwill” of their charity. Therefore, the most cited characteristic of “the idea” is the ability to generate brand awareness for the DCL. We call this subjective experience of equality and dependency the “mutual dependency” within the collaboration. From the interviews it became clear that if respondents were aware of the reciprocity within the collaboration, they experienced the power distribution at the subjective level as more equal. As a result, how the objective, unequal power distribution is dealt with differs for each individual: if someone is aware of the reciprocity, transparency, and trust within the collaboration, that person experiences more room to maneuver.

Explicit and Implicit Expectations

The second theme of the results focuses on the expectations within the collaboration. At the start of the collaboration with the DCL, the nonprofit signs a contract. In the interviews with the DCL relationship managers, we asked what agreements can be found in such contracts. At first, they said that the agreements are not that extensive, meaning that not much is mentioned apart from subjects like evaluation, payments, and marketing. Said one, “If other funders are mentioned [in marketing campaigns], we also want to be mentioned.” These agreements are in line with what the respondents from the nonprofits had to say about the contracts.

Explicit Expectations

In researching the expectations within the relationship between the DCL and their grantees, we used five goals for their unrestricted and long-term support that the DCL mentions in some of their communications (Goede Doelen Loterijen, 2019). These goals are not formal requirements for each grantee, but instead reflect the way in which the DCL describes their general goals for improving civil society:

- Strengthen effectiveness.
- Stimulate innovation and risk taking.
- Guarantee independence.

- Increase effectiveness.
- Initiate a snowball effect.

Most respondents said that they did not know about these objectives before our interviews, but do recognize the objectives as characterizing their collaboration with the DCL. How strongly the objectives apply differs from one organization to another. One respondent stated that independence and innovation are the most recognizable effect for their organization; for other interviewees, all five objectives were important; there were even two respondents who regarded none of these objectives as relevant for their organization. In answer to our question about whether the objectives are realistic and achievable, one respondent said you will never achieve everything for all objectives — something other respondents agreed upon.

Expectations of the DCL Relationship Managers

We also asked the DCL relationship managers about their expectations of the collaboration with the grantees. In addition to the agreements stipulated in the contract, they stated transparency and timely reporting are expected. These are “unwritten explicit expectations”: not stated in the contract, but discussed as part of the collaboration. To identify further expectations, we asked the relationship managers to describe the “ideal grantee.” One of them said,

The ideal grantee just does good work [laughs]. I think the ideal grantee is a kind of partner. It's like a marriage, right? So the grantee challenges you now and then. They make you aware of things and finish their homework on time ..., and also take you on an adventure, maybe. You know? That you try things together, financing innovations you'd never thought would be possible.

Parts of this quote directly relate to perceptions of grantees. “Finishing their homework on time” can be linked to the timely submission of reports. The challenge in the collaboration can be linked to the intention that the nonprofits continue to innovate and take risks. Strengthening each other's brand — the

marketing — can be found in the “adventure.” In this respect, the expectations of the collaboration partners are at the same level.

However, one key result from the interviews is that it is unclear where meeting the explicit expectations ends: When is the DCL mentioned enough in marketing campaigns? When has enough innovation been shown? When do you “finish your homework on time”? We asked the relationship managers what was not stated in the contract but was nevertheless important for the collaboration. “There’s a lot which isn’t mentioned in the agreement,” one responded.

How should grantees deal with the fact that “there’s a lot” which is not explicitly mentioned in the collaboration contract? This probably affects the funder–grantee relationship, and has an effect on the agreements, expectations, and objectives within the relationship. The freedom of unrestricted funding may cause expectations within the collaboration to become vague — blurring the line between explicit and implicit expectations. By “implicit expectations,” we mean the expectations within the relationship that are not written in formal agreements and are not discussed.

When we asked the DCL relationship managers why collaboration with a grantee might be ended, one replied that they “decide whether an organization is still socially relevant.” It also emerged later in the interview that another reason for terminating the relationship could be when a grantee is given the opportunity to participate in a campaign but refuses to do so and “there are a hundred other nonprofit organizations willing to participate.” These trade-offs are conscious thought processes for the DCL, but our research does not show whether the grantees are also aware of this.

Implicit Expectations: Conscious and Unconscious

In the interviews, we asked the respondents whether they experience implicit expectations as part of the collaboration. Most respondents said there were none, or that they were not aware of any. Two respondents were aware of

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implicit expectations: the director of the societal organization claiming that the DCL wants to facilitate a “political counterforce” (as a result of the DCL’s objectives); the director of one of the human rights nonprofits stating that the DCL expects their grantees to “keep innovating and not slow down.” But, as the conversation about the different expectations went on, more interviewees unconsciously mentioned implicit expectations. The most important was that grantees must continuously “prove their worth” in the collaboration.

Proving Your Worth

The collaboration between the DCL and the grantee organizations is described as “unique.” Besides the unrestricted nature of the grants, another aspect to consider here is the reputation of the DCL in the Dutch philanthropic sector. Although the DCL is sometimes criticized in the public debate — mostly relating to the selection of grantees — the DCL’s grants are typically considered prestigious. They are announced at a gala which has no equal in the Netherlands in terms of size and splendor. “It’s a club that does something enormous,” according to the director of an environmental organization. Another said:

From our analyses it becomes clear that the funder-grantee collaboration between the DCL and their grantees is characterized by transparency and trust. Our respondents stated that openness and honesty in the communication from the DCL builds mutual trust.

They're sort of the Champions League. ... [You are] kind of elected, you are their grantee; and from there comes a lot of appreciation and also a lot of a sense of responsibility, like ... we must spend the [funds] the right way.

These observations relate to the implicit expectation that the organizations must prove themselves to be worthy of the collaboration. There is a "sense of responsibility" to spend the money correctly. "If the Friends Lottery asks me something, then we release a press statement or a photo," the director of a health nonprofit said. "Look, they have priorities. If I compare it with something else, then I'm willing to take that extra step to get it done."

Here, that grantee is willing to take "that extra step" to get things done for the DCL. But not every respondent agreed with the statement that they need to prove themselves to the DCL. Four respondents did not find it difficult to say "no" to marketing requests from the DCL, because of the transparent and trusting nature of the collaboration. Therefore, how people experience the implicit expectation of proving their worth depends on three factors: their personal interpretation of the nature of the collaboration; their experience of dependency on the DCL grants; and the sense of responsibility to ensure the funds are spent in the "correct" way,

sometimes keeping the nonformal goals of the DCL in mind.

Theoretical Interpretation

From our analyses it becomes clear that the funder-grantee collaboration between the DCL and their grantees is characterized by transparency and trust. Our respondents stated that openness and honesty in the communication from the DCL builds mutual trust. This is in line with the definition of an integrative collaboration (Austin, 2000): a high level of mutual resources and concern, and honest, open, efficient, effective, and frequent communication. The DCL explicitly states that the collaboration with their grantees is based on trust and partnership, incorporating multiple moments of formal communication, such as evaluations, and of informal communication during events such as charity galas, for example (Goede Doelen Loterijen, 2019).

In line with principal-agent theory (Van Puyvelde et al., 2012), the collaboration between the DCL and their grantees is objectively unequal. However, because the respondents experience a high level of trust and mutual dependency within the collaboration, grantees experience the power dynamics as more equal. This subjective equality is in line with Ganesan and Hess (1997), who state that trust (in researching the relationship between a buyer and a seller) is built on two aspects: credibility and benevolence. Credibility is based on the intention and ability of the collaborating partners to keep promises and commitments. In addition, various characteristics of the collaboration partners, such as competencies and reliability, can influence these aspects. The second aspect, benevolence, is based on the attributed qualities, intentions, and characteristics of the collaborating partners, showing genuine concern for the partner. The interinstitutional trust (the DCL's vulnerability engendered by placing responsibility for spending the money on the charities, and the credibility the charities radiate toward the DCL) and the interpersonal trust (the mutual transparency) between the DCL and their grantees lead

to the balance of power being experienced as equal (Austin, 2000; Ganesan & Hess, 1997).

Personality seems to play a role in the relationship, but it is an open question whether respondents would be able to say “no” if the structures of the relationship were different. Social interactions are structured by formal and informal norms (Nee & Ingram, 1998). In this case, the few accountability requirements are formal norms, while informal norms include the relaxed atmosphere in social interactions. Respondents feel that they can ask for help when needed, be open about organizational choices, and have personal conversations during meetings; these are all informal norms that structure social relations and contribute to an open and trusting relationship. As such, our interviews show that power dynamics depend on both interpersonal and interinstitutional aspects.

Power

Another insight that emerges from our analyses is that there are implicit expectations in the collaboration. These can be divided into conscious and unconscious expectations. When we relate this to Gaventa’s (2006) three forms of power, the first, visible power, can be defined as the explicit expectations in the collaboration. The second, hidden power, is held by the DCL: they decide which grantees they want to work with. The question of whether a grantee is still “socially relevant” is an example of how this level of power works: the DCL decides, without direct involvement of the grantees.

Gaventa’s final form of power is invisible power, which can be described as the psychological and ideological boundaries of power (Foucault, 1978; Gaventa, 2006). The unconscious implicit expectation among representatives of the grantees that they have to prove themselves to the DCL can be interpreted as an example of invisible power. Two factors are important here. First, the uniqueness of and dependence on unrestricted, multiyear funding, as well as the DCL’s reputation as a highly regarded actor in the Dutch philanthropic sector, increases the respondents’ sense of responsibility to maintain the collaboration. To do this, they will increasingly have

Another insight that emerges from our analyses is that there are implicit expectations in the collaboration. These can be divided into conscious and unconscious expectations.

to demonstrate to the DCL that they work efficiently and effectively, competing with other nonprofit organizations (Lecy & Searing, 2015). Even if respondents are reluctant to express this in the interviews, there will always be unconscious competition among nonprofits. If they want to distinguish themselves from other organizations, they will have to demonstrate to the DCL their worth: for every grantee, as a relationship manager observed, there are a hundred others.

Second, there is uncertainty about the DCL’s objectives. Grantees must “continue to innovate,” as one respondent stated, but it is unclear to what extent they should innovate, and what other objectives grantees should meet with the DCL funding. For example, the lack of clarity about the status of the DCL’s nonformal goals as specified in a brochure (Goede Doelen Loterijen, 2019) confronts grantees with a gray area in which they feel that they have to prove their worth, but are not certain what it is they have to prove and how they can best do this.

How do grantees cope with this uncertainty? Besides interpersonal relations, there may be institutional dynamics that play a role. Oliver (1991) distinguishes five types of organizational response to external pressure: acquiesce, compromise, avoid, defy, or manipulate. We recognize acquiescence in our data, with grantees complying with the expectations and even proactively acting in line with them — for example, by mentioning the funder’s name in communications. Avoidance also occurs, when respondents seem to ignore whatever the funder thinks of them, but active defiance does not

Our research shows that building equal and trust-based relationships is not an easy endeavor. Funders should be aware of the complex power dynamics in their collaborations. A funder is typically most powerful in terms of financial resources, but grantee organizations possess different kinds of resources.

seem a strategy used by the grantees we interviewed. Objectives can also be compromised or even manipulated: the DCL's objectives are fairly broad, and how they work out in practice might depend on the grantee. How organizations "innovate" or "snowball" strongly depends on the values and mission of the organization.

"The Idea" as Symbolic Capital

There is one factor that counters this unequally distributed power relationship between the DCL and their grantees: mutual dependency. As the director of the environmental nonprofit said, the DCL essentially pays their grantees for their "idea," referring to the knowledge (the network and projects) of the grantees that the DCL does not have. Therefore, the DCL and their grantees are dependent on each other: the grantee on the funding, and the DCL on the "idea," with which it can generate brand awareness so it can sell lottery tickets. Sales revenue is what the DCL needs to achieve its vision: improving civil society (Goede Doelen Loterijen, 2019). Essentially, while the funder possesses economic capital, it can be argued that the grantee brings the "symbolic capital" on which the DCL's lottery tickets sales rely (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013; see also Bocquet, Cotterlaz-Rannard, & Ferrary,

2020). Given this distribution of different types of resources, some hidden power can also be situated at the grantee organizations. Hence, both the DCL and the nonprofits have invisible power in the collaboration, emphasizing the need for transparent communication and mutual trust to acknowledge this distribution of power (Austin, 2000).

Discussion and Conclusion

Unrestricted funding may have several benefits, including less bureaucracy, greater flexibility to react to changing circumstances, more financial security, more room to build a strong organization, and increased autonomy (Wiepking & De Wit, 2020). Unrestricted funding is often one of the instruments used in "trust-based philanthropy." Yet there is more to trust-based philanthropy than just relaxing formal grant restrictions. Trust-based philanthropy is described as "an approach to giving that addresses the inherent power imbalances between funders, nonprofits, and the communities they serve," which includes "multi-year unrestricted giving, streamlined applications and reporting, and a commitment to building relationships based on transparency, dialogue, and mutual learning" (Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, 2021, p. 1).

Our research shows that building equal and trust-based relationships is not an easy endeavor. Funders should be aware of the complex power dynamics in their collaborations. A funder is typically most powerful in terms of financial resources, but grantee organizations possess different kinds of resources. Without their work, the donor has nothing to fund. This gives grantees power, but it can also lead to expectations regarding, for example, brand awareness. Mission drift is often mentioned as a possible effect of restricted funding, but can also occur when beneficiaries feel they need to develop attractive projects that do well in marketing campaigns.

The case of the Dutch Charity Lotteries is salient because they combine a low level of formal agreement and high levels of trust in their grantees with a broad vision of the civil society

they want to contribute to. At the same time, it is a large social enterprise, and its primary purpose is selling lottery tickets, for which it highlights the work of beneficiaries in marketing campaigns. On the one hand, because of these unique characteristics, we have to be careful in generalizing these findings to other contexts. We do believe the relationship between the DCL and its grantees provides an excellent case study of power dynamics in trust-based grantmaking. Power can be visible, hidden, or invisible. To achieve more equal collaboration, it is advisable for foundations to try to detect and consider the expectations that are explicit and implicit, conscious and unconscious. Even unrestricted funding may come with expectations, hidden or unhidden, on the part of the funder, and many grantees will feel that they have to “prove they’re worth it.” Relaxing formal restrictions may give rise to a gray area in which there is uncertainty about what grantee organizations actually have to prove.

Broadly speaking, funders can adopt three strategies to handle explicit and implicit expectations. First, they can choose to clearly communicate their overall goals, so that beneficiaries know better what is expected from them. This seems suitable for foundations with a clearly defined vision, mission, and theory of change. A second possible strategy would be the opposite. A large grantmaking organization like the DCL, which funds different types of organizations in different sectors, could try to abandon all expectations and let beneficiaries freely decide what to do with their grants. However, as we have shown, full absence of expectations

seems impossible. A third strategy is to adopt a somewhat flexible approach, and to constantly redefine the purpose of the grants in close cooperation with the beneficiaries. This suits the ideals behind trust-based grantmaking, in which funder and grantee try to establish equal relationships and where the grantee is taken seriously as the expert in the field. This requires more than unrestricted funding, and may ask from funders a type of self-reflection which may be inconvenient but necessary to ensure a level playing field (Wong & McGrath, 2020).

Not all our respondents were equally aware of the mutual dependency we described in this article. Interpersonal relations, the duration of the collaboration, and the type of nonprofit activities may all play a role in the extent to which subjective equality is recognized. When there is awareness of the different types of resources that both sides bring to the table, funders and grantees can create the relationship that is needed to work toward a truly integrative collaboration based on mutual dependency and trust.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Dutch Charity Lotteries for supporting their work, and especially Laura Santacreu, Margriet Schreuders, Odiel Evenhuis, and Dorine Manson for their help throughout the project. They would also like to thank the respondents and the grantee organizations for their participation. Pamala Wiepking additionally thanks the Stead family for supporting her work. We are grateful to René Bekkers and Lorraine Nencel for their comments on previous versions of this article.

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Strategy Resilience: Getting Wise About Philanthropic Strategy in a Post-Pandemic World

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Keywords: *Strategy, networks, adaptation, systems, resilience, power*

Introduction

We are living at a profound moment in global history. COVID-19 has shaken the foundations of our economic, social, and health systems. No corner of society has been left untouched by the pandemic's effects, including philanthropy. As of this writing, funders around the world have given more than \$16.4 billion in coronavirus funding, an amount far exceeding that of five other recent disasters (Candid, 2020). Many are also adopting new practices, such as providing unrestricted support, reducing asks of nonprofit partners, pooling funding, and prioritizing community listening (Council on Foundations, 2020).

The current moment presents an opportunity not just to adapt, but also to grow in how foundations approach strategy and use their power. During 2020, we collectively observed a common phenomenon in the wake of the pandemic and ensuing turmoil: some philanthropic strategies struggled to find their footing while others adapted easily, harnessing previously unanticipated opportunities to influence change. Recognizing that mass disruptions are likely to increase as communities seek greater social and economic equality and the climate crisis deepens, what wisdom might we draw from 2020 to inform future funding approaches?

It is in this context that this article explores ways foundations can design grantmaking strategies that are responsive and adaptable in the face of disruption. We posit that the term resilience, often applied to social-sector organizations, also holds relevance for large-scale philanthropic efforts seeking systemic change. A philanthropic

Key Points

- Public and private systems worldwide have been disrupted by COVID-19, cutting across all types of philanthropic priorities. Amid this uncertainty, some philanthropic strategies have struggled to find their footing while others have adapted easily, harnessing previously unanticipated opportunities to achieve change. Why have some philanthropic strategies been more successful than others? What wisdom can we draw from this moment that can help us prepare for the future?
- During times of crisis, the concept of resilience is frequently applied to nonprofit organizations and their leaders. This article flips the vantage point toward funders, proposing a theory to explain what makes some philanthropic strategies more durable than others in the face of disruptions. Drawing on case examples across diverse settings, literature on resilience, and the authors' own observations, it proposes five elements of resilient philanthropic strategies: They release control over pathways and outcomes; support networks rather than solutions; address systems, not symptoms; focus on transformative over transactional capacity; and align philanthropic power to supplement, not supplant.

(continued on next page)

strategy is resilient when it supports the ability of grantees to collectively achieve long-term aims amid significant disruptions in context. We hypothesize that this resilience hinges on the

extent to which networks of organizations have the power and capacity to drive change, and are not beholden to funder-driven analyses of what is needed to make progress on the ground.

This article begins by situating the notion of resilience within broader conversations about strategy in philanthropy, while also acknowledging the term's history and use across fields and over time. The section that follows lays out a theory and related elements for designing philanthropic strategies that are able to transform in the context of unforeseen challenges. Case studies are provided to illustrate what such strategies look like in practice.

In statistics, the aphorism that “All models are wrong, but some are useful” is used to convey limitations of conceptual models in the face of real-life complexities. We hope that, instead of convergence around a new grantmaking model, this article sparks new and useful ways of thinking about philanthropy's role. Fundamentally, we hope that readers take away from this article the idea that foundations must use their power and resources differently — releasing control over change pathways to others and using their power to work in stronger partnership alongside community leaders. For this reason, we believe a theory of resilience in philanthropic strategy is needed, and see it as a starting place for further discussions that test the salience of these ideas.

Philanthropic Practice

Like all fields of human activity, philanthropic thought and practice has evolved in response to the ebb and flow of broader intellectual and sociopolitical currents. Two approaches that have had widespread uptake are strategic philanthropy and, more recently, emergent philanthropy. The former, mostly derived from the business world, emphasizes measurable goals, often based on carefully crafted theories of change matched to wider strategic objectives (Giridharadas, 2019). Under the strategic philanthropy model, foundations determine the endpoint and the best path forward; grantees help deliver them to their destination. This transactional and top-down conception of philanthropy has arguably been useful in tackling

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well-defined problems that lend themselves to data-based measures of success and have a clear relationship between inputs and outputs.

There is growing acknowledgement, however, that strategic philanthropy is less adept at addressing complex problems. Otherwise known as “wicked” or systems

Key Points (continued)

- Recognizing that COVID-19 is only one of many disruptions our world is likely to face, this article seeks to offer a new way of thinking about strategy resilience that centers people and organizations instead of the power of financial resources. At the core of this theory is the assumption that given today's complexities, philanthropy must use its power differently — releasing control over organizations and their change strategies while using its unique position, reach, and voice to work in solidarity with community leaders.

problems, these challenges are typified by their interconnectedness and the interplay of divergent factors that can make even the best planned — the most strategic — interventions

The Slippery Slope of Resilience

Resilience is a slippery concept. Despite its expanding use across domains as varied as ecology, planning and disaster management, business, psychology, and systems analysis, there remains a certain imprecision about what it is and why it is worth fostering.

Some commentators have even labeled it a buzzword with little more than “rhetorical appeal” (O’Hare & White, 2013, p. 276). Yet among the many think tanks, government agencies, foundations, and nonprofits that employ it regularly, it has come to be considered an unassailable good.

There is, though, a growing chorus of scholars and practitioners who are questioning whether resilience might be so beneficial, suggesting instead that pursuing it often perpetuates the status quo (Suarez, 2020). Some go so far as to suggest that it supports the dominant neoliberal ideology, or even that it preserves and provides rhetorical cover for the “hegemonic status quo of dispossessing, predatory capitalism” (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016, p. 144).

The turn against resilience has become increasingly common, but there are some attempting to redeem or rebrand it. By emphasizing the power dynamics underlying the conventional understanding of the concept, they argue for a “radical resilience,” by which they mean holding “out the possibility of optimistic alternatives centered on hope, renewal and transformation” (Jon & Purcell, 2018, p. 309). This is not merely bouncing back to a predisturbance state, but rather a “bouncing forward” toward something new (Cretney & Bond, 2014, p. 21). Resilience in this radical conception should convey “a sense of adaptive capacity, a pro-activity and potential for learning” (DeVerteuil, 2015, p. 27).

fail (Meadows, 2008). Problems like climate change, human rights abuses, forced labor, homelessness, hunger, gun violence, systemic racism, the threat of nuclear weapons, and mass incarceration are the result of interconnected causes and cannot be meaningfully addressed with programmatic solutions. Whether tackling these problems locally or globally, philanthropic efforts working systemically seek to change the conditions that produce the problem, rather than infusing new programs to mediate the problem for those most affected (Darling, Guber, Smith & Stiles, 2016)

With complex problems, causes and effects cannot be linearly determined, rendering unsuitable approaches that predefine progress indicators and pathways to change. Complexity calls for more flexible and adaptive approaches that have lately been encapsulated under the rubric of emergent or adaptive philanthropy, a core tenet of which involves a rebalancing of the power relations between funders and grantees when it comes to strategy (Kania, Kramer, & Russell, 2014). Patrizi & Heid Thompson (2011) have hinted at what this rebalancing can look like: “Foundations need a core set of partners in strategy development, negotiation, and debate — partners who have the experience and knowledge necessary for successful implementation and who can productively challenge foundation assumptions” (p. 56).

Emergent philanthropy has become increasingly popular among foundations, but it too can fall short in significant ways. Ownership of strategy and outcomes remains tied to funder priorities, an arrangement that proved problematic for many foundations as the pandemic and related crises began to unfold. Some strategies lost relevance as new challenges and opportunities rapidly unfolded and internal foundation processes inhibited nimbleness and adaptability. We posit that emergent philanthropy prepares well for complex problems, but less so for disruptions. And while strategy co-creation may represent a “critical mindset shift” (Kania et al., 2014, p. 4) with this form of philanthropy, an even greater release of control may be required moving forward.

Emergent philanthropy's emphasis on power-sharing, networks, and systems approaches represent important progressions. However, they can be expanded further to encompass a more diffuse model of strategy making that supports rapid-cycle learning and adaptation. Such approaches solve for both complexity and disruption. Resilience, as we are using it here, does not mean a return to predisturbance status quo; it means the inherent strength of a network of organizations working in concert to not only survive disruption but to redefine their approaches as opportunity permits — to bounce forward, not merely to bounce back. (See sidebar on opposite page.) Determining when these occasions have arrived and how best to react is a question for networks, not funders.

Elements of Philanthropic Strategy Resilience

Drawing examples from across diverse philanthropic settings and literature about what builds resilience, we propose five elements of **resilient philanthropic strategies**. (See Figure 1.) We believe these may be the critical features to develop strategies that are responsive to disruptions, able to adapt or even transform quickly to act on both risks and opportunities, and capable of changing goals to match the current context and needs without losing sight of long-term

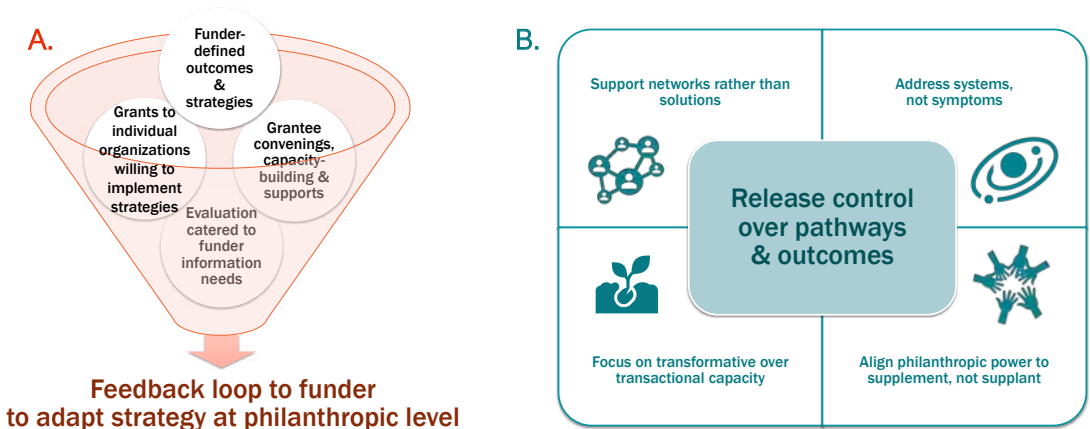
visions. At the core of these elements is the operating assumption that philanthropy must use its power differently — releasing control over individual organizations and pathways to change and using its power to complement networks of organizations.

The case studies that appear with this article present tangible examples of how foundations can deploy resilient philanthropic strategies and use and share their power in new ways.

Release Control Over Pathways and Outcomes

One of the most salient insights proffered by emergent philanthropy is the effects of power asymmetries between funders and grantees. These dynamics are not only reflected in the obvious imbalance created by financial power, but also by how these imbalances impact organizational behavior and strategy making (Reich, 2018; Fisher, 1983). The bureaucratic process ties grantseekers — in often subtle ways — to the strategic direction of the funder. Compounded by requirements to provide a constant stream of metrics and financial data, this leads toward conservatism at the expense of transformative risk-taking. Likewise, these imbalances distort the transfer of information and, importantly, the exchange of feedback, without which

FIGURE 1 Comparing a Typical Philanthropic Funding Model (A) to a Resilient Philanthropic Strategy (B)



there is little hope for learning (Patrizi & Heid Thompson, 2011). For a strategy to be truly resilient, these exchanges are vitally important by allowing for rapid recalibration in response to disruption. It must, however, go beyond a simple acknowledgement of power dynamics, which can only be the first step; the second step — more significant and less easily fulfilled — is for funders to relinquish control over outcomes and pathways and allow organizations and networks to define and redefine their own.

To those working in the philanthropy sector, this means a shift in how strategies are designed and evaluated. Grantmakers should resist the urge to offer up detailed descriptions of the problem and its context and to specify outcomes, theories of change, metrics, and measures. Instead, the emphasis should be on describing a problem and broad goal, and then supporting organizations best positioned to achieve it. Multiple pathways could be identified not to define which ones should be funded, but instead to consider how funding might be positioned to resource whichever pathway is most relevant

given changing circumstances. Foresight tools, like scenario mapping, could be used to justify strategic flexibility and to engage partners so they have the opportunity to describe what they understand about the context (Darling et al., 2016; Snow, Lynn, & Beer, 2015).

From a funding perspective, this also means maximizing the flexibility of the grants themselves, whether through general operating grants, rapid response grants, or multiyear funding (Bell & McCambridge, 2018). Decisions about where technical support is needed — whether for evaluation, capacity building, facilitation, or convening — should be made with partners, not on behalf of them. Foundations may even release control over these resources, having providers report to and take direction from partners in the field.

None of this means that grantmakers no longer have a seat at the table. Instead, it means their status is redefined as being just one actor among many. They are a single piece on the chess board, rather than the chess player

Case Study No. 1: Art for Justice Fund

The Art for Justice Fund supports artists and activists working together to disrupt mass incarceration. In 2018, over 100 grantees gathered for a three-day retreat in New Orleans, Louisiana, where they engaged in immersive activities to educate and inspire grantees about each other's work, foster networking and collaboration, and celebrate progress and community. This launched a strong grantee network where members actively engage with one another online and through project collaborations.

While staff are clear about the Fund's ultimate goals — reducing prison populations, promoting justice reinvestment, and changing the narrative around incarceration — grantees have wide latitude to define their own outcomes and tactics. Fund staff look for opportunities to support grantees' leadership efforts, using their power to connect leaders with resources and to amplify and draw attention to their work. In addition, the Fund explicitly seeks to use the power and influence of its founder, art collector and philanthropist Agnes Gund, to inspire other art collectors to donate funding to reduce mass incarceration.

This flexible approach has worked well in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overcrowding, combined with the inability to quarantine or practice social distancing in jails and prisons, presented a grave threat. Grantees adapted quickly, creatively, and effectively, drawing connections between the plight of prisoners to the larger public health crisis and sharing information with one another about what was and wasn't working.

(Darling et al., 2016), and also not the one who defines the board, its boundaries, or who plays. It requires an acceptance that many of the moves are outside the control of funder decision-making, and not all critical decisions and actions are being made by actors the funder has financially supported.

Support Networks, Not Solutions

Strategy resilience benefits from being embedded within a network of people and organizations who share a common vision along with whatever other areas of focus or commitment they hold. Addressing crises calls for inclusive coordination among actors who control financial resources and power and those most affected and in a position to judge the success of innovations (Gargani & McLean, 2017). Networks that include diverse actors are better positioned than any single actor to quickly respond to unanticipated challenges and opportunities brought about by disruption. They do this by weaving social ties, accessing new and diverse perspectives, openly building and sharing knowledge, creating infrastructure for widespread engagement, and coordinating resources and action (Searce, 2011).

Resourcing networks represents a contrast over funding strategies that focus on taking so-called proven solutions to scale. Solution-centric approaches are often hampered by several erroneous assumptions:

that individual, stand-alone programs can achieve ambitious goals; that if we know from [random control trials] that a program works in one place, it will work everywhere; and that innovation won't be discouraged by an overarching reliance on programs that have been shown to work in the past. (Schorr, 2016, p. 2)

Indeed, disruptions demand forward-looking thinking and innovation rather than reliance on past assumptions about how to produce impact.

In some cases, foundations may fund the creation and strengthening of new networks. This can be needed when either networks do not already exist or existing networks are too specialized

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and narrow in their focus to be innovative and adaptive. In other contexts, networks already exist and the philanthropic opportunity is not to expect new relationships, but to work with members to understand what they need to strengthen the health of the network.

Funders interested in supporting networks must be mindful of network connectivity, health, and results (Taylor, Whatley, & Coffman, 2015). Connectivity refers to the composition of networks and how connections across members are structured. Network health has to do with the ability to sustain member enthusiasm and commitment to achieve shared goals. Results refers to the extent to which a network is achieving desired results on behalf of its membership and broader constituency. The ability to achieve results is always dependent on the composition, connectivity, and health of a network. We also posit that the networks must have capacity to innovate — that is, to act in unexpected ways that might depart from tools, processes, and knowledge that has worked in the past.

Address Systems, Not Symptoms

We believe resilient philanthropic strategies are particularly relevant when the shared vision is focused on tackling a complex, systemic problem. This requires bringing together multiple organizations with the skills to see when and where the system is ripe for disruption (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2013), and where these disruptions can affect underlying problems, not just ameliorate symptoms. These skills are even more important when the network seeks to influence equity outcomes, as deep equity work is not just about changing who is defining the problem and addressing symptoms, but also changing how systems drive the problem and reinforce historical patterns that lead to inequities (Petty & Leach, 2020). The skills include listening to and finding opportunities for action as well as applying feedback loops to understand the impact of actions being taken in the network (Sussman, 2004).

As anyone working on systems change knows, systems are often resistant to change and

inclined toward the status quo. Moments of major disruption can help us to see where systems are fragile to intervention. For example, the stimulus bill in 2020 revealed a crisis-driven opening in the federal government system where both political parties agreed on something that was previously far from a mainstream idea — to distribute cash payments to working Americans to stabilize their incomes. Moments of major disruption, however, can also make clear where systems are resistant to changes, as seen by the difficulty in building consensus on the use of masks even as the scientific evidence supporting their broader public health value was mounted. These disruptive moments can also trigger systems failures at those points of fragility, forcing action to fix the system and creating opportunities and threats in how the system failure will be addressed (Crutchfield, 2009). These fragilities are the natural result of how systems evolve and grow, becoming more complex and with more behaviors, actors, feedback loops, and interdependencies. The system over

Case Study No. 2: Blueprint to End Hunger

The Colorado Health Foundation initiated a multistakeholder planning process using a fairly standard stakeholder process in 2017. The resulting Blueprint to End Hunger outlined a systemic- and policy-change strategy to transform hunger issues in Colorado. Initial plans were made to stand up a program office to implement the blueprint, led by stakeholders representing many different perspectives on a governing council. However, the foundation, which had deepened its commitment to equity, paused to ask: What should our role be in this process?

In 2018, a facilitated meeting with the CEO and program staff internally generated an explicit plan for how to release the foundation's power over the process, including over choices made in the hiring of the executive director, design and focus of the evaluation, and where and how foundation staff should show up. The foundation continued to refine this relationship, including accepting feedback. For example, the program office and its governing council asked the foundation to restructure the funds from a contract basis to a flexible, multiyear grant commitment. Additionally, when requested, the foundation has deployed its resources and reach via a policy team to move forward specific priorities in alignment with the program office.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the adaptive capacity of the program office allowed its staff to rapidly shift focus — they asked the foundation for seed money to set up a crisis-response function that other funders could add to in order to respond to immediate hunger needs. The new function expanded the reach, credibility, trust, and visibility of the Blueprint program office dramatically, positioning it to have greater impact on future systems-change strategies even as it helped the office lead the pandemic crisis response.

time becomes too complex for any one actor to cognitively fully understand, which makes it possible for fragilities to emerge without being seen (Crutchfield, 2009).

Philanthropic strategies that seek to build a whole-systems approach into the network can help partners to sense when these systemic opportunities exist, find leverage points to act on, and advance change via strategic experiments and learning. Funding can be deployed to help build systems skills, fund the cost of system-sensing work, create spaces for shared analysis and strategy development to occur, or otherwise actively support the network to bring a whole-systems lens. It can also help the network to consider, well before a disruption happens, whether they have members with the reach and influence to intervene in many different parts of a system, rather than being limited to a specific narrow point of leverage. Finally, philanthropy can help to resource system sensing and information sharing at higher levels during critical points in time, recognizing the need for sensing and communication across different parts of the system may be much higher during disruptive moments like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focus on Transformative Over Transactional Capacity

Responding to a disruptive event in meaningful ways requires the ability to adapt and even to transform strategies. Here, transformative capacity is inclusive of, but also beyond, adaptive capacity. It is inclusive of the abilities to assess the external environment, selecting strategies and tactics suited to the context, and rapidly adapting as the context adapts (Lynn, 2014); and do this work in partnership, adapting with others in order to move beyond the limited skills and opportunities of any one organization. It also depends on shifting not only strategy, but also near-term or even longer-term outcomes.

In other words, instead of reacting to a disruption by protecting current goals and strategies, networks with transformative capacity are actively transforming strategies and even organizations to take advantage of where

opportunity exists. In practice, this requires a network where adaptation is not a protective behavior — a way of ensuring each organization can maintain its role and place in the network (a more transactional way of adapting). Instead, adaptation is a transformative behavior across organizations, which requires that specific characteristics exist within the network:

- multiple organizations with the ability to engage in ongoing system sensing;
- transparent, trusted, and timely communication within the network, so the subset of organizations with strong systems-sensing skills are not isolated from the actions of others;
- organizations being “porous, to permit information, ideas, and perspectives from the outside” (Sussman, 2004, p. 8–9), and the willingness of such organizations to use information about systems changes, something which depends, in part, on their trust in the organizations delivering the information (Krackhardt, 1992);
- individual organizational capacity to adapt, including flexibility in resources (Sussman, 2004), which can conflict with the culture of scarcity that exists in the many nonprofit contexts; and
- many organizations within the network who have the habits of taking risks and innovating, as innovative organizations are more prepared to adapt than most (Sussman, 2004).

Philanthropy has a role to play in building transformative capacity: to not restrict how resources are used by each organization to the point of limiting their ability to respond, which includes not designing grants that are tied to deliverables. Philanthropy can also identify ways that its funding strategies are either increasing competition and thus decreasing trust, or may be helping to overcome competitive dynamics that often exist. Philanthropy can recognize and celebrate when organizations step back to create space for a very different skill to take the lead,

not just celebrate and reward the organizations whose work is leading the charge at a given moment. Finally, philanthropy cannot penalize, overtly or in future funding decisions, organizations and networks that take bold risks, try new approaches, and sometimes fail.

Align Philanthropic Power to Supplement, Not Supplant

Power imbalances between funders and community leaders are widely recognized within philanthropy. Indeed, this is evidenced by countless papers, presentations, and blogs devoted to helping funders mitigate power differentials that get in the way of honest

conversations about what's needed to achieve better outcomes for communities.

Recently, conversations in philanthropy have expanded beyond mitigation, encouraging funders to cultivate awareness of their power so they can more responsibly share and wield it. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's (NCRP) *Power Moves* guide, for example, encourages funders to share their power by "nurturing transparent, trusting relationships and co-creating strategies with stakeholders" and to wield their power by "exercising public leadership beyond grantmaking to create equitable, catalytic change" (Ranghelli, 2018, p. 6).

Case Study No. 3: N Square

In 2014, the leading funders in the nuclear security space came together to invest in a new organization, N Square, with a goal of building a collaborative that would disrupt and stimulate innovation in a stagnating field of experts and advocates in order to accelerate the achievement of nuclear security goals.

N Square, which focused on building a network of innovators, was initially housed within one of the funding partners, but was moved to an independent fiscal agent, giving it more freedom and flexibility. After a first year of active participation in many different levels of decisions, the funders (who function as a collaborative and an advisory body for the organization) agreed to be more selective about which decisions they would hold authority over and where they would let go and trust the executive director and her staff.

The funders, executive director, staff, and network partners have all steadily built their network-development and systems skills, going through multiple processes to gain an understanding of the types of networks needed and apply systems-sensing skills to assess what it would take to enable the field to operate more effectively. One of N Square's signature interventions has been the creation of a network of fellows who are trained in design skills, systems thinking, innovation approaches, and more. These emerging and established leaders then prototype bold solutions for the nuclear security space. Simultaneously, N Square has worked closely with key organizations to help build their capacity for innovation and design.

When the worldwide pandemic disrupted the in-person structures by which N Square steadily knits together the network and field, the team shifted very rapidly. Within weeks, they had identified not only the need to move to a virtual model, but also the opportunity to increase fieldwide competency in distance collaboration (including, but not limited to, next-level virtual convenings and virtual workspaces). In addition, they launched a futures and foresight training series designed to prepare leaders to manage uncertainty and better prepare for future disruptions. This program included decolonized methods, helping build the community's resilience at a time when many were still reeling from the initial shock. They also retooled took existing programs to work effectively online, taking advantage of unanticipated change to build a more substantial international network that collaborates seamlessly, both synchronously and asynchronously, across time zones.

Philanthropic strategies that seek to harness funder power to supplement, rather than supplant, that of community leaders are better positioned to support strategy resilience. Funders that disregard such dynamics or seek to mitigate them without a full exploration of the ways that power can be activated in support of communities are more likely to freeze in the face of disruption. They may spend time internally analyzing strategic implications and options from a perch too distant from those closest to emerging challenges and opportunities. Indeed, the crises of 2020 led many foundations to shift toward more flexible grantmaking by loosening restrictions on funding and allowing grantees to redirect funding (Dalberg Advisors, 2020); yet, in that moment, many struggled to find purpose beyond this grantmaking role, especially when tightly controlled visions of strategy lost relevance in the COVID-19 context.

Funders must recognize that leaders outside the foundation are best positioned to determine pathways to change, and focus instead on how to use philanthropic power to supplement and strengthen community power. The NCRP (Ranghelli, 2018) encourages funders to use their power to:

1. Convene stakeholders and play a role at other convening tables.
2. Organize and collaborate with other philanthropic peers and other sectors.
3. Bring visibility to critical issues and amplify the voices of the most marginalized.
4. Deploy nongrant financial resources to advance grantee and foundation goals.

Conclusion

In this article, we sought to introduce a new lens by which to assess the quality and effectiveness of philanthropic strategies, particularly

those that seek to influence change in complex, dynamic systems and continue to bring value amid disruptions. We argue that the concept of resilience, often applied to nonprofits, also holds relevance for foundation strategy. In the context of an increasingly uncertain and complex world, we believe that the collective adaptation and even transformation of strategy should be a key consideration for foundations.

The theory we propose in this article dovetails with critical conversations taking place about power, race, and equity in the social sector. Foundations must do a better job in cultivating awareness of their own power and locating ways to simultaneously cede, share, and wield it in support of community power. This can happen when foundations release control over the pathways to change, support networks of organizations working together toward systemic change, and seek to build transformative capacities. Foundations should neither freely use their power nor abdicate it. They must think about how to be responsible with the power they have, using it to supplement that of community leaders who are closer to both the challenges and opportunities at hand.

The crises of 2020 have produced a watershed moment for philanthropy. How can we use the lessons of that year to get wiser about strategy and the role of foundations in supporting community success and self-determination? What might it look like for foundations to work in solidarity alongside grantees and other community leaders? We hope the theory shared in this article illuminates a path forward, a path in which philanthropy uses its power differently to support systemic change. We invite foundations and their partners in change to reflect on how the concept of resilience might apply to their philanthropic strategy and to further refine the ideas shared here. It is through such collective dialogue and refinement that we build shared wisdom and confront the opportunities, uncertainties, and disruptions ahead.

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Holding Foundations Accountable for Equity Commitments

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Keywords: *Foundation strategy; evaluation; learning; accountability; equity*

Introduction

In the face of the dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities disproportionately, and the endemic racial injustice highlighted by the Movement for Black Lives, foundations across the U.S. philanthropic sector are making new public commitments to advance a more equitable and just society (Daniels, 2020a; Maurrasse, 2020). However, some organizations committed to racial equity and justice and critics of main-line philanthropy have expressed skepticism and even cynicism about these pledges, noting that the sector has a history of actions that fail to live up to, and can work at cross-purposes with, its promises (Daniels, 2020b).¹

This concern was captured during the summer of 2020 in a published letter from 17 Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) leaders in the HEAL Food Alliance (2020). Representing organizations that do grassroots food and agriculture justice work, they called on food systems funders to “see the urgency to unite and build together rather than continuing a pattern of paternalistic practices that entrench our marginalization, reinforce a culture of white supremacy, and devalue the knowledge and genius in our communities” (para. 4).

A number of large and small foundations have taken steps to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in how they work. Changes include shifting the foundation–nonprofit relationship to be more trust-based and reciprocal (Salehi, 2020) and creating participatory grantmaking

Key Points

- In recent years, foundations of all types and sizes have made commitments to advance racial equity and justice. But good intentions can be undermined by the strategic and administrative structures and processes that shape foundation decisions. Social critics have deconstructed and shed light on the ways in which institutional operating procedures reinforce racism and other forms of injustice in police departments, the courts, and health and welfare agencies. So too, foundation practices warrant serious review.
- This article examines how foundation strategy, evaluation, grantee reporting, and monitoring processes have allowed foundations to retain their power and sidestep direct accountability to the people and communities they say they want to serve. Without substantial shifts in decision-making power and how they act in relation to others, foundations may be making equity and justice promises that they ultimately will be unable to keep.
- In this article, we advocate for a transformation in how foundations conceive of and operationalize foundation accountability, such that communities and grantees hold funders accountable for living up to their equity commitments.

mechanisms that give community members power over resource allocation (Wrobel & Massey, 2020). In addition, numerous examples exist across philanthropy of foundation program

¹ Skepticism is at least in part because foundations themselves are a product of tax policies and regulations that have allowed the accumulation of inequitable wealth (Justice Funders & Resonance Collaborative, 2019a; Villanueva, 2018).

officers and program teams centering equity in the way they do their work (e.g., see the range of foundations represented in programmed sessions at CHANGE Philanthropy's Unity Summit, CHANGE Philanthropy, 2019).

Noted observers of philanthropy (e.g., Bernholz, 2020; Karibi-White, 2020), however, suggest that efforts like these alone, as critical as they are, will not be impactful enough to undo the long history of white supremacy and institutional racism in philanthropy held in place by deeply rooted cultural and procedural norms that center whiteness (Villanueva, 2018). Indeed, ultimate decision-making power within philanthropy, which rests with trustees, remains largely in the hands of white people. According to a Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) report published in late 2020, almost 60% of foundation CEOs reported that their own board was more than 75% white (CEP, 2020). Without giving up substantial decision-making power and undergoing more transformational shifts in how they act in relation to others, foundations may be making equity and justice promises that they ultimately will be unable to keep.

In this article, we advocate for a transformation in one such set of structures and processes through which foundations hold power: how they conceive of and operationalize accountability in their approaches to strategy development, evaluation, and grantee reporting and monitoring. We call for accountability routines to be reimaged, so that BIPOC-led grantees, and BIPOC communities in particular, can meaningfully scrutinize, contest, and critique foundation decisions and hold funders accountable for living up to their commitments to equity.

We write this article having spent most of our careers as evaluators and strategy consultants in philanthropy. Collectively, we have worked with well over 100 foundations, and two of us have worked as foundation staff. We regularly conduct research on the sector and benchmark the strategy, evaluation, and learning practices (e.g., Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2020; Coffman, Beer, Patrizi, & Heid Thompson, 2013; Patrizi, Thompson, Coffman, & Beer, 2013). All

Our aim is to use our observations of the inner workings of many large foundations to highlight the need for structural and process reform in service to equity. We hope to reinforce the messages that BIPOC leaders have been sharing for years about the changes that philanthropy, as well as the evaluation and strategy consultants who support it, need to make in order to live up to a commitment to advance racial equity and justice.

three of us are former leaders of the Evaluation Roundtable (Patrizi is the founder), a 30-year-old network of evaluation and learning leaders in 150 foundations in the United States and Canada, the majority of which give out \$10 million a year in grantmaking or more.

Our perspective and critique are thus focused primarily on midsize and large foundations, where we observe that biased structures, processes, and mental models maintain a tenacious hold. Staff and board members committed to equity are making progress on some of the problems we highlight. And in smaller foundations with a history of social justice work, where local and regional ties support accountability based on strong community relationships, we suspect it is easier to find examples of structures and norms that support more equitable power relationships.

We also are three white women. Our aim is to use our observations of the inner workings of

In exchange for tax-exempt status, U.S. government regulations require little of private foundations other than that they give 5% of their assets annually to qualifying nonprofits. Foundations ostensibly are accountable for contributing to the “public good,” but structurally they are unfettered by any real constraints on how they do that or for whom.

many large foundations to highlight the need for structural and process reform in service to equity. We hope to reinforce the messages that BIPOC leaders have been sharing for years about the changes that philanthropy, as well as the evaluation and strategy consultants who support it, need to make in order to live up to a commitment to advance racial equity and justice. We also hope to support increasingly diverse foundation staff working to transform their organizations in service to equity by highlighting the deeply embedded institutional processes that can undermine their efforts.

The Problem With Accountability in Philanthropy

In exchange for tax-exempt status, U.S. government regulations require little of private foundations other than that they give 5% of their assets annually to qualifying nonprofits.² Foundations ostensibly are accountable for contributing to the “public good,” but structurally

they are unfettered by any real constraints on how they do that or for whom.

In response to real or anticipated questions about philanthropy’s value (e.g., Porter & Kramer, 1999), over the last two decades many foundations have taken steps to demonstrate that they do in fact produce value, or public good. They use elaborate strategy development processes intended to confirm that their funding choices are rational, explained, and, at least on the surface, aligned to produce results. They articulate measurable outcomes to signal a commitment to what they hope to change. Dashboards aim to provide trustees with snapshots of strategy performance to assure them that things are on the right path toward producing public benefit.

Foundation strategy and its artifacts — dashboards, performance metrics, learning agendas, and other tools — offer a veneer of “depoliticized,” rational decision-making with ostensibly neutral rules and processes (Mathison, 2018). At the core of many of these processes is the assumption that expert- and foundation-led planning, along with grantee performance monitoring routines, will result in the most efficient and effective route to social-change outcomes. By overrating foundation expertise and locking the funder’s values, preferences, and assumptions directly into the processes used to set strategy and assess achievement, foundations close down opportunities for democratic input and contestation. It is nearly impossible to challenge decisions that are legitimized by these kinds of technocratic processes because they render invisible the role of influence, persuasion, and power within institutions.

These processes isolate foundations from the realities of people who are doing and experiencing the work. Being sealed off from authentic grantee and community scrutiny and contestation is a structural feature of the sector, as foundations are formally obligated to no

² For an analysis of the legal and regulatory history of the philanthropic sector and the ways in which this regime reinforces the maintenance of private power, see Justice Funders (2019a) *How Did We Get Here? Institutional Philanthropy in Context* at justicefunders.org/resonance/how-did-we-get-here.

constituency beyond their trustees. The primary mechanism of accountability, the foundation board, typically is composed of individuals nominated by a foundation president or by others within their professional networks, or by family members. While board members may have esteemed credentials and skills, we rarely have seen or heard boards challenge foundation staff decisions and assumptions in meaningful ways, particularly with respect to those pertaining to power and whose perspective has priority on what constitutes progress and how to attain it. To the contrary, efforts are made to simplify, condense, and depoliticize what boards see and understand.

Throughout these processes, foundation accountability and its burden are displaced onto grantees. Even though foundations set the agenda, determine the outcomes, and establish how success will be assessed, nowhere in this set of routines do we see foundations put themselves on the line for performance against their own promises. Rather, their monitoring and evaluation processes largely are aimed at revealing whether grantees deliver on measurable outcomes and to what extent the aggregation of grantee work advances foundation's goals. When combined with full control over the allocation of resources, this version of accountability ensures that the entire foundation ecosystem — from grantees to strategy consultants to evaluators — is centered on and captured by the funders' own interests.

Grantees Are Captured By Funder Interests

Political scientist and philanthropy scholar Megan Ming Francis uses the phrase “movement capture” to describe what happens when funders, acting as self-interested actors, use their financial positioning to influence the strategies of civil rights organizations (Francis, 2019). Generally interested in promoting their own goals and ideas about how to achieve them, foundations can act in ways that pull grantees toward the whitewashed, power-blind, and

Political scientist and philanthropy scholar Megan Ming Francis uses the phrase “movement capture” to describe what happens when funders, acting as self-interested actors, use their financial positioning to influence the strategies of civil rights organizations.

technocratic mindset that is prevalent across mainline philanthropy, and away from grantees' often-transformative views on the change that is needed and how to get there.

Nonprofits operating with a worldview and problem frame that align with the foundation's need not fear being captured in these dynamics; they already fit with the foundation's mental model for social change. However, organizations operating with a different point of view and set of assumptions, even when they share the same goal, have a hard choice to make — retool their work to align with the funder's, forego the money, or find ways to exercise agency and self-determination despite funder constraints (perhaps outside of the funder's view).³

Once grantees are selected, they can be further captured through grant reporting, monitoring, and evaluation arrangements. This practice has deep roots from the early days of evaluation in philanthropy. Using research that Erica Kohl-Arenas (2016) conducted on the farmworker movement in the 1960s, Kohl-Arenas and Francis (2020) describe how a grant from the Ford Foundation helped organizer Cesar Chavez found the National Farmworker Service

³ A.O. Hirschman's classic *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970) points to the conundrum faced when “consumers” are unable to freely exit nor express real voice to improve an exchange; in many cases, like it or not, loyalty is the only choice left.

Center. Ford’s requirements for monitoring and evaluation led to “fiercely negotiated funding agreements” that ultimately pushed the movement away from organizing at a critical moment:

Consumed by administrative work and depleted by hunger strikes (and other movement challenges), Chavez ultimately accepted a foundation-approved translation of farmworker organizing that explicitly disallowed any pressure on the “economic sphere” — in other words, against big agriculture (divest) or for collective farmworker ownership (invest). (para. 8)

This same dynamic remains in play today for groups receiving funding following the widespread Black Lives Matter protests during the spring and summer of 2020. Allison R. Brown, executive director of the Communities for Just Schools Fund, warns of the same kind of grantee capture for Black-led groups receiving foundation dollars to support their work for justice: “Philanthropy will require more onerous reporting and evaluation of outcomes within white-centered frames. The ones who will lead us, who must, will be waterboarded with irrelevance, distractions, minutiae” (Brown, 2020, para. 11).

Funder control of grantees through grant restrictions and requirements has long been criticized by advocacy groups such as the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), as well as by philanthropy support organizations and networks such as the Justice Funders, PEAK Grantmaking, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, and the CEP. In recent years, many advocates, such as NCRP and the newer Trust-Based Philanthropy Initiative, have more explicitly tied these practices to the philanthropic sector’s history and participation in systemic oppression (Salehi, 2020). Extensive funder requirements and limits on grantee action don’t just exhaust and distract grantee

organizations from their work, they also reinforce the idea that nonprofit organizations are fundamentally accountable to enacting the foundation’s goals and preferences.

Although the foundation presumably holds itself accountable for impact, the way in which the principal–agent accountability relationship is operationalized casts the grantee as agent acting on behalf of the principal’s (the foundation’s) interest and terms. Accountability in this relationship is one-way, internal, and flows from grantees to the foundation.⁴ This hierarchical and one-directional accountability routine, where the underlying belief is that organizations — grantees — should be held to account for what they deliver, reinforces grantee capture.

Strategy Is Captured

Civil society is populated with thousands of independent actors and institutions, each strategizing about how to achieve change within social systems. Yet many foundations ignore this complexity and act as if they are the master strategists within these systems. Although challenges to this version of strategic philanthropy have emerged over the past several years, many foundations hold onto this paradigm even while they soften their language and add more avenues for gathering input from a broader range of actors. At most, foundations and their disproportionately white staff and trustees⁵ bring particular world views, disciplinary lenses, and lived experiences to the work of framing the problem, setting the social-change goal, making the final choices about how to realize the goal, and defining what success is and how it will be recognized.

Organizations deeply embedded in the work and communities, which are most likely to feel the effects (either negative or positive) of the foundation’s actions, may be included in landscape scans and listening tours to offer input for

⁴ Alnoor Ebrahim (2003), in a history of accountability surrounding nongovernmental organizations, has noted the particular asymmetry in the accountability relationship between funders and these organizations.

⁵ The most recent systematic study of the racial demographics of foundation staff, completed by the Council on Foundations (2016), found that “racial/ethnic minorities” comprised 12.4% of all foundation executives in 2015. A 2017 report by BoardSource (2019) found that 85% of foundation board members are white, and 40% of foundations have boards that are all white.

the foundation's consideration. They, however, rarely are invited to provide feedback on, or better yet, have the opportunity to seriously contest, the fundamental assumptions and choices of foundation strategy once the foundation has charted its course. These dynamics seal off foundations from real listening and ways of working that could advance equity and cede power to communities experiencing the effects of marginalization. It also shields them from grappling with the consequences of their actions.

Strategy consultants, too, typically are invited in after key choices about problem and solution frames have been made. Their remit is to bring ideas to fruition without challenging underlying thinking and boundaries. Foundation strategies rarely receive robust scrutiny based on empirical data about the structural drivers of inequities (especially power). In the end, the strategy is the foundation's but it is the grantees' responsibility to execute it.⁶

Evaluation Is Captured

Evaluation, as practiced now in philanthropy, is hampered from contesting foundations' fundamental thinking and assumptions about what they do, how they work, or the consequences that stem from the foundation's choices. As with strategy, most foundations set or approve all evaluation terms for their strategies — what the questions are, who the evaluator is, what the scope of inquiry is, what the design should be, which data matter, and, most importantly, what constitutes success. Evaluators come in after strategies have been determined and, in our experience, typically after at least a first round of grantees have been funded. Evaluators may play a post hoc role in clarifying the thinking and assumptions behind foundation strategies, but usually in order to see if they play out as anticipated in producing the foundation's articulated outcomes.

Evaluation, as practiced now in philanthropy, is hampered from contesting foundations' fundamental thinking and assumptions about what they do, how they work, or the consequences that stem from the foundation's choices.

Initiatives like the Equitable Evaluation Initiative, led by Jara Dean-Coffey, are questioning the ways in which evaluation orthodoxies in philanthropy reinforce inequities. One such orthodoxy is that grantees and strategies are the subject of evaluative inquiry, but not the foundation and its own choices and behaviors.

Foundations almost exclusively focus the evaluation lens on their grantees or their programmatic strategies. Rarely is the evaluator the foundation itself, its practices (beyond stakeholder perception surveys), and its strategies. While foundations have begun to examine their own diversity and ask about the diversity of their grantees' staff and boards, and the diversity of vendors, more fundamental questions about how they have incorporated equity into strategy development, funding priorities, and funding mechanisms is lacking (Luminare Group, Center for Evaluation Innovation, & Dorothy A Johnson Center for Philanthropy, 2017, p. 3).

Evaluation capture manifests through evaluation techniques that import logic to the strategy and reify it, rather than question it against other alternatives — thus isolating foundations from authentic challenges. The confirmatory exercise of looking for evidence that the foundation (or more accurately, its

⁶ *The Nonprofit Quarterly* president and chief editor Ruth McCambridge (2016) critiqued a spate of public apologies from "strategic philanthropy" proponents, in which they acknowledged that the trend had resulted in an autocratic foundation wresting of power from nonprofits and communities. However, her critique illustrated how these mea culpas were qualified by a pledge simply to temper the worst effects of the trend by not taking the degree of control so far that it prevents the foundation's success.

An emphasis on learning as part of the evaluative role in philanthropy has emerged in recognition that foundations are attempting to address problems that are deeply rooted in complex systems, and that navigating those systems requires a regular sensing of system dynamics and a revisiting of assumptions about the best way forward.

suite of grantees) has achieved its intended results means that measurement and evaluation work together to legitimate foundation choices. Because evaluators use “taken-for-granted forms of problem definition, solutions, and indicators of success,” evaluation has become a practice to rationalize and normalize foundation actions and the neoliberal values on which a great deal of philanthropic funding is based (Mathison, 2018, p. 113).

Even Learning Is Captured

An emphasis on learning as part of the evaluative role in philanthropy has emerged in recognition that foundations are attempting to address problems that are deeply rooted in complex systems, and that navigating those systems requires a regular sensing of system dynamics and a revisiting of assumptions about the best way forward. Envisioned as a way to make visible and then test a foundation’s thinking (and thus in theory to combat the trap of foundations being sealed off from critique), we notice that learning practice in many foundations instead tends to focus on how to adjust so that they can accomplish what they want to accomplish, rather than challenging deeply held assumptions and hypotheses about change.

Foundations that see themselves as the owners of strategy also see themselves as the primary learners. In 2018 benchmarking research of foundation evaluation and learning staff from 145 larger foundations, 43% of respondents reported that one of their priority tasks was designing and/or facilitating learning processes within the foundation compared to only 16% prioritizing learning facilitation with grantees and other external stakeholders. Similarly, evaluation reports that may reveal information about foundation or grantee impact and insights were most often shared within foundation walls, with 40% sharing with grantees never or rarely and 62% making reports available to the general public never or rarely (Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2019). This reinforces our observation that many foundations learn, interpret data, and draw conclusions in relative isolation, cut off from different points of view and challenges to their interpretations of what data imply for action.

On its surface, the increased focus on philanthropic learning feels more relational and collaborative. It signals that foundations recognize that they do not, in fact, have the power to fully predict and control social change. However, if learning routines fail to provide opportunities for participatory learning among the foundation, grantees, and communities being served, then it too falls prey to capture and fails to live up to its potential as a mechanism for democratizing power relationships.

Breaking Out of These Routines

Without fundamental rethinking about how foundations share their power over thinking and decisions, or without consequences for acting in ways that fail to align with or even undermine their own espoused equity goals and values, foundation’s technocratic routines — from strategy development through evaluation — become an expensive and time-consuming symbolic performance for legitimation purposes. The result is that their system, sealed off from challenging feedback, remains intact and foundations retain power.

It is no wonder that foundations can operate with significant gaps between their promises and their actions around equity. They do because they can — signaling the need for systemic change within foundations and more generally across philanthropy.

The situation is not bleak. Many in the field recognize the need for change, and a growing number of foundations and philanthropic support organizations and efforts, such as CHANGE Philanthropy and its member organizations, the Trust-Based Philanthropy initiative, and the Justice Funders network, are pulling the sector in this direction. In addition, many individual foundations have proposed and are enacting change. As noted, a range of solutions have been proposed to mitigate foundation control over nonprofit organizations and to reduce the ways they capture and distort action in favor of foundation problem framing, priorities, and risk tolerance. For example, flexible general operating support reduces constraints on grantee agency. Board and staff composition that reflects a broader array of lived experience and perspectives can result in strategic priorities rooted in a deeper awareness and structural analysis of power and oppression. Trust-based relationships with grantees can increase the ability for foundation staff and grantees to negotiate on more equal footing. A shift in program staff role identities and job descriptions that make community engagement a prerequisite for grant decisions can result in shared power over resource allocation.

Beyond this, however, we believe that preventing the sealing-off and self-legitimizing practices endemic to philanthropy is critical for holding foundations accountable for their promises on equity and justice. We think several substantial changes to institutional structures and practices are necessary to open up foundations to real democratic contestation and critique.

The Principal-Agent Accountability Relationship Must Be Flipped

The accountability relationship between grantees and funders is one-way and focused inward from grantees to the foundation. The grantee

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is the agent in this relationship, accountable to the funder. The foundation is the principal, accountable to a vaguely defined public good, even though “public” constituencies are missing in the accountability equation.

This principal-agent accountability relationship will continue to sabotage foundation efforts to move toward equity and justice. We ask: How can philanthropy's self-sealing and self-legitimizing routines be pushed open when equity is the goal, enabling an accountability relationship in which foundations are accountable (as agent) to structurally marginalized and oppressed communities (as principal)?

Flipping the principal-agent relationship would require that foundations:

1. *Name their constituencies.* Foundations must be accountable to people who are experiencing inequities and to the organizations that are themselves accountable to these

The more foundations can form meaningful, long-lasting relationships with the constituencies they prioritize, include representatives from these constituencies on their boards and staff, and behave as co-conspirators in change rather than master strategists acting from a distance, the more it will matter to them when those constituencies express disappointment in foundation choices.

communities: not in the abstract (naming them as distant beneficiaries), but specifically, so that these constituencies are aware of their principal status and know that the foundation is accountable to them for working in ways that are viewed (and tested) as legitimate and of value.⁷

2. *Make precise commitments to these constituencies about the kinds of behaviors for which foundations are accountable.* Foundations must make explicit (and visible) commitments about how they work and the intended effects of their work, with a right-sized sense of their potential contribution — not confusing their role with those of grantee organizations. Because accountability is relational, this would drive foundations to base their actions and commitments on the interests and aspirations of their constituencies rather than their own.

3. *Institute mechanisms for these constituencies to hold foundations accountable.* This means:

- *Transparency about what was done and the consequences.* This requires data about the foundation's choices (not just grantees') and their effects on whom, so that constituencies can judge whether this work is in alignment with their aspirations and whether the consequences are acceptable. It also requires transparency about whether desired outcomes have occurred, as well as data on other positive and negative consequences of funding flows and for whom.
- *Relationships that enable those affected to contest and sanction the work.* Foundations must cultivate a deep connection to, and regular interaction with, their constituencies. This creates avenues through which constituencies can provide input and feedback on foundation choices, not just in the lead-up to decisions (as in conventional landscape scans or listening tours), but after and in response to ongoing decisions.
- *Consequences when there is a gap.* This is the missing and truly transformational piece in the foundation accountability dynamic. For a foundation that does not live up to its commitments, there is no equivalent to being fired, voted out of office, or losing customers and market share. Endowments endure regardless. The only consequence is reputational, in the form of public critique that a foundation may or may not pay attention to. This is where the foundation's leadership and board have to move beyond a verbal "commitment to impact" that is defined, controlled, and ultimately moderated internally. The more foundations can form meaningful, long-lasting relationships with the constituencies they prioritize, include representatives from these constituencies on their boards and staff, and behave as co-conspirators in change rather

⁷ We recognize this is a partial solution as some organizations are inevitably left out, but it makes clear the choices foundations have made and allows them to be contested if necessary.

than master strategists acting from a distance, the more it will matter to them when those constituencies express disappointment in foundation choices.

Strategy Routines Must Align With the Flipped Principal-Agent Relationship

In addition to recasting foundations and communities and grantees in a more meaningful accountability relationship, other philanthropic routines must be reimagined so that they work against the sealing off of foundations and enable outward-facing accountability. At the very least, strategy routines must include real and ongoing opportunities for BIPOC and grassroots organizations to deeply inform or challenge the foundation's frame, assumptions, and actions. We take our guidance from efforts emerging in the field.

The Resonance Framework, developed by Justice Funders and the Resonance Collaborative (2019b), lays out how a “just transition in philanthropy” would look if foundations moved along a continuum from being extractive with grantees and communities to being restorative, with the ultimate goal of being regenerative. For foundation strategy specifically, this would mean foundations need to move from developing strategies that center the funder's interests to restorative strategies that are deeply informed by community needs and movement priorities. Going even a step further, regenerative practice would turn strategy development over to movement leaders, who would be accountable to their base of community members rather than to their funders.

Moving along the continuum from extractive to restorative to regenerative practice requires that foundations give up power and shift control and decision-making about financial resources away from themselves and toward communities impacted by wealth accumulation and the extractive economy. This requires foundations to acknowledge that the technocratic mental

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models many bring to the work don't serve them well and to explore alternate frames drawn from not just like-minded friends, but also from a much wider range of actors. Choices about whose interests are being prioritized should be made explicit, along with the trade-offs those choices imply.

Consider, for example, the funders in the HEAL Food Alliance letter. A food systems funder's desired outcome may be to support food security (defined as consistent individual caloric intake) in particular geographic areas. To reduce racial disparities in food security within those communities, the funder might develop a strategy that uses a “food access” frame designed to increase the availability and affordability of healthy food options for Black and Indigenous families.⁸

Using this problem-and-solution frame, the funder's strategy might focus on improving food distribution through existing supply chains (large-scale farms and corporate markets) for communities experiencing food shortages (perhaps via trusted community food banks, local

⁸ This example is taken from an overview of the food justice movement provided by FoodPrint, <https://foodprint.org/issues/food-justice/#easy-footnote-bottom-7-1304>, brought to our attention by the staff of the Colorado Health Foundation as they tested their own choices about how to frame the issue of food security for their Food Access and Security funding area.

school lunch programs, or other distributors). Advocacy grants could focus on changes to federal and state food policies, local tax incentives for grocery stores, and increased appropriations for free lunch programs at schools and community centers. Using this approach, families may, in fact, experience easier access to food and increased caloric intake. If efforts are well-placed, racial disparities in food access and food security might decrease. This will look like success.

Local organizations working on food security in those communities, however, may have wanted the foundation to use a different frame than that of food access. If they had early avenues to challenge the foundation's problem frame and its assumptions about appropriate solutions (as the HEAL Food Alliance letter did), they would encourage the foundation to use a "food justice" frame instead; one that focuses on the political and economic forces that limit access to land and capital for local small-scale Black and Indigenous producers and markets. This alternate frame would lead a foundation to instead support organizations (like those named in the letter) that already are deeply connected to communities experiencing food shortages and already working on alternative political and economic arrangements that can create the kind of food systems communities want. It may take longer for food security disparities to go down, but alongside this outcome the community would see other changes that they prioritize and that the foundation's chosen approach would actually work against: community economic development, environmental sustainability, worker protections, locally owned assets and decision-making, and cultural preservation of food traditions.

Evaluation and Learning Must Facilitate Opportunities for Contestation and Critique

Consistent with the Equitable Evaluation Framework (Equitable Evaluation Initiative, 2019) and the calls from many others for evaluators to use their roles to help incite change (e.g., Neubauer & Hall, 2020; McBride, Casillas, & LoPiccolo, 2020), we want to see philanthropic evaluation and learning work in service

of equity. We want evaluation to reinforce the flipped principal-agent relationship and better enable foundations to live up to their racial equity and justice commitments.

Reimagined, evaluation and learning would stop centering the foundation's interests. It would do less legitimating of foundation decisions and stop reinforcing the neoliberal ideology and uneven power dynamics that are entrenched in strategic philanthropy (Mathison, 2018). Instead, evaluation would act as a kind of social conscience and force foundations to grapple with the preferences and perspectives of people who are affected by problems but typically shut off from power and decision-making (Schwandt & Gates, 2016).

The primary "client" of evaluation would shift from being the foundation to being the constituencies to whom the foundation has named itself accountable. With these groups as the principal and the foundation as the agent, the evaluation would focus on holding the foundation accountable for how it behaves in these relationships rather than the other way around.

This vision requires the practice of philanthropic evaluation and learning to look quite different. An equitable evaluation approach would help to counter philanthropy's tendency toward technocratic mindsets reflected in tools and processes that tend to mask the moral, social, and philosophical roots of social and racial justice problems. It would reveal the assumptions behind, and interests served by, the choices shaping the work. It would perform a "system sensing" function, routinely surfacing multiple perspectives, revealing biases, and making visible the often-invisible forces that drive social crises and inequities.

Under a flipped principal-agent relationship, strategy evaluation, just like foundation programmatic strategy, would look quite different. Foundation strategy evaluation traditionally accepts the assumptions embedded in strategy as they are, and looks instead at whether grantees (as agent) are accomplishing the foundation's (as principal) outcomes. Reimagined, strategy

TABLE 1 Boundary Critique Questions

	How Does the Strategy (or System It Aims to Shift) Look Now?	How Should It Look (From the Perspective of Different Constituencies)?
Sources of Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is the beneficiary? 2. What is the purpose? 3. What is the measure of improvement or success? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whose interests should be served? 2. What should be the purpose? 3. What should be the measure of success?
Sources of Power	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Who is the decision-maker? 5. What resources are controlled by the decision-maker? 6. What conditions are part of the decision environment? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Who should be in command of resources and in a position to change the measure of improvement? 5. What resources should be controlled by the decision-maker? 6. What conditions should the decision-maker not control?
Sources of Expertise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Who is considered a professional/expert? 8. What expertise is consulted? 9. What or who is assumed to be the guarantor of success? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Who should be considered an expert? 8. What should count as relevant knowledge? 9. Where should those involved look to ensure that improvement will be achieved (e.g., consensus of experts, the involvement of stakeholders, experience and intuition of those involved, political support)?
Sources of Legitimation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Who is treated as a legitimate stakeholder? 11. Where does legitimacy lie? 12. What worldview underlies the creation and maintenance of the system in question? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Who should be treated as a legitimate stakeholder? Who should argue the case of those stakeholders who cannot speak for themselves? 11. What should secure the emancipation of those affected from the premises and promises of those involved? 12. What different visions or meanings of improvement should be considered, and how should they be reconciled?

Source: Reynolds, 2007

evaluation would use a normative approach that focuses not just on whether grantees and their partners are doing things right, but whether the foundation is doing the right things in the first place (Schwandt & Gates, 2016).

Boundary critique, for example, is one technique for using evaluation as this kind of critical voice and as a way of cultivating the critical voices of others (Ulrich, 2005). This equity-focused technique invites multiple perspectives (decision-makers, field experts, witnesses, and beneficiaries) on choices about a strategy's purpose, how resources are allocated, who is within the sphere of concern, the types of expertise that count, and what constitutes success for actors in

that system. It compares stakeholder group perspectives about what a strategy (or system the strategy aims to shift) is now, with ideas about what it could or should be. (See Table 1.)

Without considering the perspectives of each stakeholder group, boundary choices can exclude people, limit our mental models, cause us to make our time horizons too short, and reinforce the status quo (Schwandt & Gates, 2016). For example, in the food-access example, a funder may include systems related to food distribution within its boundary of concern while excluding from concern their effects on systems of food production and land ownership, with significant consequences to communities and

to BIPOC landowners and producers who are already experiencing structural racism.

Useful during strategy development or during a foundation's strategy review process, this process of revealing any divergence in stakeholder ideas about a strategy's boundary choices can help a foundation to know if it is doing the right things from the perspective of those who are affected by the work but structurally excluded from shaping it. If stakeholders are not united in their vision for the system, the foundation has to choose whose interests to prioritize and explain its rationale for that choice. The function of learning becomes calling out these different points of view and helping the foundation and other stakeholders to process these differences together and find their way forward.

Finally, and importantly, evaluation reimagined would still look at whether results are being achieved. But the definition of success, and judgments about whether enough progress has been achieved, would be made by constituencies who are experiencing both inequities and the work firsthand. If adjustments are needed, then grantees and the foundation, both of whom are accountable to these constituencies, must respond.

Conclusion

Foundations cannot effectively support a more democratic, equitable, and just society as long as they operate as closed systems with no real opportunities for contestation, critique, and meaningful participation from those who structurally are at the losing end of inequities. Power has to be redistributed and real mechanisms to support authentic foundation accountability have to exist.

The kind of transformative change needed to meet philanthropy's commitments to racial equity and justice requires disrupting and shifting the power held by one actor in the philanthropic ecosystem — foundations. Many experiments are underway; we believe a reimagined view on accountability will support these efforts. While evaluators and strategy consultants can contribute to power shifts by reimagining their role and purpose and pushing back on the myriad ways they are captured by foundation interests, unless the foundation has decided to make real changes, external actors are limited in what they can do.

Foundations and the full range of their internal constituents — leaders, staff, and board — have to be willing to turn the accountability lens on themselves and assume some actual risk. They need to find the innovators within their own organization and other (often smaller) foundations to follow — but not stop there. They have to be deeply conscious of how their systems, structures, and routines reinforce inequitable power dynamics and keep them sealed off from the perspectives and challenges of others.

What we call for here is a full reimagining of the role of foundation policies and procedures that, intentionally or not, have held foundations captive to a history of power and domination over grantees, particularly BIPOC-led groups and others working in the communities affected by the problems foundations are trying to solve. In other words, funders have to seriously consider the question that Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, posed in a *New York Times* op-ed: "Are you willing to give up your privilege?" (Walker, 2020).

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Youth and the Juvenile Court System: A Community Foundation's Commitment to Integrating Voice and Community Expertise

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Keywords: *Youth, juvenile court, philanthropy, racial equity, participatory research*

Introduction

The juvenile court system was established with the goal of diverting young offenders from the destructive punishments of adult criminal courts and ensuring rehabilitation of the individual juveniles. In Pennsylvania, the system's guiding principle is balanced and restorative justice that allows for balancing community protection needs with providing accountability and competency development for children who are adjudicated delinquent.

This principle is incorporated into the purpose clause of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act (1976/2010a). In juvenile court, once a child is adjudicated delinquent — i.e., found to have committed an offense beyond a reasonable doubt and found to be in need of treatments, services, and/or rehabilitation — then the court moves to disposition, which is the term used for “sentencing” in juvenile court. In Pennsylvania, the court may impose a wide array of conditions at disposition, but the primary decision is whether the child will be at home on probation or placed in a juvenile justice facility (Pennsylvania Juvenile Act, 1976/2010b). A child's case remains open until the juvenile court believes that the terms of disposition have been satisfactorily completed or until the child's 21st birthday, whichever comes first (Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 2005).

In Allegheny County in 2015, there were 3,328 referrals to the juvenile probation system and 2,672 youth admissions to secure detention and alternative-to-detention facilities. Of the referrals

Key Points

- The staggeringly disproportionate numbers of youth of color in the juvenile court system in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, compelled the Pittsburgh Foundation to launch the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot project. The initiative sought to learn from youth who have firsthand knowledge of the juvenile court system and from those at risk of such an experience in order to inform the foundation's efforts to improve outcomes for youth.
- This article outlines the foundation's process for engaging youth and stakeholders in a meaningful way to improve its grantmaking and to better support systems change that leads to reducing youth court involvement through assessment of policies and practices that create the school-to-prison pipeline.
- To ensure solutions were driven by affected youth instead of the foundation's own agenda, discussion groups planned in partnership with youth-serving organizations empowered young people to reflect on events that impacted their lives, on their hopes and dreams for the future, and on ways the juvenile court system can listen to their voices and respond with meaningful changes.

(continued on next page)

Key Points (continued)

- An analysis of the discussions was shared with participating youth and members of an advisory group to confirm the findings, which included recommendations on school discipline reforms, greater access to diversion and prevention programs, and changes to court-related fees, fines, and restitution policies. The recommendations have informed the foundation's grantmaking, and over the past three years led to the funding of 23 grants totaling \$1.4 million.
- The project revealed the importance of respectfully listening to and learning from youth to understand the circumstances affecting the quality of their lives, and of ensuring that insights from youth will result in more effective models for change.

to juvenile probation, 76% were nonviolent cases. The most common charges involved drugs, theft, and failure to pay court fines (Carlino & Clark, 2015; Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2013). In terms of detention, in 2013 fewer than 25% of youth in confinement in Pennsylvania had committed a violent crime, such as homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, or sexual assault (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2013). Nationally, nearly 40% of detained youth have committed a technical violation of probation or a drug possession or low-level property offense.

In the past three decades, schools have become a major source of referrals to the juvenile court system — a practice referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline. Minor disciplinary incidents that used to be handled by school administrators and counselors are now frequently referred to law enforcement, particularly at schools in poor communities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014; Advancement Project, 2005). However, a youth's acting-out behavior is often the result or symptom of a mental health need that has gone undiagnosed or untreated (Skowrya & Coccozza, 2006). In Allegheny County, young Black women are 10 times more likely than young

white women to be referred to the juvenile court system; young Black men face such referrals at a rate seven times higher than their white counterparts. Black youths in the county are referred to the juvenile court system at a higher rate than Black youths are across the nation, and white youths in the county are referred to the system at lower rates than they are nationally. Pittsburgh Public Schools police refer Black girls to the juvenile court system more than to any other entity, and most arrests made by Pittsburgh Public Schools police are for minor offenses that are not safety related (Black Girls Equity Alliance, 2020).

Trauma and mental health issues are common threads that link the diverse array of youth in the juvenile court system. Nearly 70% of youth involved with the court system have been found to have at least one mental health condition, compared to 22% of youth in the general population (Teplin, Abram, McClelland, & Dulcan, 2003; Coccozza & Shufelt, 2006; Teplin et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that more than 90% of girls and two-thirds of boys in the juvenile court system have experienced some type of abuse (Acoca, 1999; Holsinger, Belknap, & Sutherland, 1999). In addition, nearly 30% of juvenile court-involved youth have a disorder that seriously disrupts functioning; the most common are disruptive disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders (Coccozza & Shufelt, 2006). Childhood trauma and victimization are risk factors that can double the likelihood of juvenile delinquency (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hawkins, Abbott, & Catalano, 2000). These data demonstrate how a lack of safety leads many youths who are deemed “delinquent” to “act out.”

Inequity in the rates of juvenile probation involvement for youth of color and by gender has been highlighted nationally and locally (Rovner, 2014). Research conducted by the National Women's Law Center found that over the past two decades, girls' involvement with the juvenile justice system from courts through incarceration saw sizeable increases: Arrests increased 45%, court caseloads rose by 40%, and detentions increased by 40%,

while post-adjudication placement rose by 42% (Sherman & Black, 2015). In a comparison by race using 2009 delinquency data, Puzzanchera, Adams, & Hockenberry (2012) highlight the remarkably persistent and disproportionately high rates of Black youth in the juvenile court system: The vast majority (74%) of referrals for probation were young men; of these, 69% were Black and 25% were white (Rovner, 2014). In Allegheny County, Black youth accounted for 20% of residents ages 10 through 17, but accounted for 76% of the population screened at detention intake (Puzzanchera et al., 2012). And in the county for 2012, the rate of detention for Black youth was 19 times higher than for white youth: 114 per 1,000 compared to six per 1,000, respectively (Burns Institute, 2019).

For the Pittsburgh Foundation, which had selected young people ages 12 to 24 as a core population of focus for grantmaking, juvenile justice emerged as a key issue and the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot project was born. The goal of this initiative was to learn from and with youth who have firsthand knowledge of or are at risk of encounters with the juvenile court system in order to inform and shape the foundation's efforts to improve outcomes for youth. Engaging individuals most impacted by an issue to guide the foundation's understanding of context and opportunities for intervention — in this case, youth involved in the juvenile court system — is a best practice for promoting and achieving equity. This inclusion of the voices of those most impacted is the basis for participatory grantmaking that “helps shift the traditional power imbalances that exist in philanthropy” (McCoy, 2019, para. 2). It also ensures that solutions work for those they serve, and it helps to create sustained positive impact in communities while fostering trust in foundation–community relationships (Feierabend & Merenda, 2014).

The objective of this article is to report on the outcome of an inclusive and participatory approach to understand those most impacted by the systems that philanthropy aims to influence, and how their voices can be used to influence all aspects of philanthropic practice — grantmaking, convening, donor engagement,

Trauma and mental health issues are common threads that link the diverse array of youth in the juvenile court system. Nearly 70% of youth involved with the court system have been found to have at least one mental health condition, compared to 22% of youth in the general population.

and policy and advocacy platforms — to advance systems-change efforts and disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.

Methods

In the fall of 2015, the Pittsburgh Foundation's program and policy department launched the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot project with the following goals:

- Expand the foundation's knowledge regarding one of the Pittsburgh Foundation's target populations: young people ages 12 to 24.
- Identify a series of strategies designed to ethically gather, assess, and share the firsthand knowledge of the target population.
- Use these data to add to existing quantitative data.
- Collaborate with youth-service providers and advocates to inform the foundation's understanding and identify opportunities to better serve the target population.
- Identify opportunities for systems change with members of the target population through grantmaking, convening, and policy and advocacy initiatives.

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Core to this pilot were conversations with youth. Careful planning for the discussion sessions was undertaken with a commitment to fostering ethical, transparent conversations; having on-site support staff to help with immediate problems; and generating safe and creative activities to learn about the factors impacting youth experiencing the juvenile court system. As a first step, the foundation convened a group of adults and provider agencies to inform the discussions and interpret the data and findings. The organizations included local youth-serving organizations that have established close relationships with youth vulnerable to or with active involvement in the juvenile court system. In addition, relationships were established with five intermediary organizations and the youth they work with and serve. Two young adults were trained and paid to co-facilitate the five discussion groups: one who identified as woman and one who identified as a man, both with histories of juvenile court system involvement, and both employed by a human services agency as case managers for youth actively involved in the system.

During the sessions, participants were asked to reflect on a variety of topics, such as factors and events in their lives that brought them to where they are today, and on how their own voices and opinions have or have not influenced their experience. They were also asked to share their suggestions for changes to the juvenile court system that would better serve young people like them. A professional artist used visual note-taking techniques to sketch out participants' comments to further amplify their voices and to illustrate the powerful cycles that can prevent young people from reaching their potential. (See Figure 1.)

Focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and a qualitative analysis of the resulting data was conducted and implemented according to established standards (Bernard, 2000). Intermediary partner organizations were provided a copy of their transcribed discussions and given an opportunity to further illustrate concepts explored during the initial session; no changes were requested by our study

During the eight-month pilot, five discussion groups were conducted with 53 youth with an average age of 18. The vast majority had current or previous experience with the juvenile court system and had been previously suspended from school. They described the context of and varied influences on their lives, including hunger and homelessness, disruptive schools, and family addictions.

participants. Two of the project investigators analyzed the transcripts, and thematic codes were developed and applied to relevant segments of text. Consistent with Spradley's (1979) guidelines for conducting qualitative data analysis, as additional data were gathered, segments of the text were reviewed for recurring themes. The results that follow present those that were mentioned most frequently during the interview process.

Results

During the eight-month pilot, five discussion groups were conducted with 53 youth with an average age of 18. The vast majority had current or previous experience with the juvenile court system and had been previously suspended from school. They described the context of and varied influences on their lives, including hunger and homelessness, disruptive schools, and family addictions. Amber Knight, a trained community co-facilitator of the discussion sessions with the Pittsburgh Foundation's research who has her own lived experience with the juvenile justice system, summed up their narratives: "It's the

same story, with different storylines — neglect, and wanting more for themselves, their child or family” (O’Toole, 2017, para. 8). The participants voiced their frustrations with encounters with the juvenile court system and expressed a strong desire to be involved in decisions that affect their futures.

The discussion groups were designed by the foundation to be more than casual question-and-answer sessions; they were invitations to young people to share their experiences to help others examine, understand, and eventually transform systems that affect their lives. There was a commitment to ethical, transparent conversations; on-site support staff to help with immediate problems; and creative activities. The foundation convened a group of adults and provider agencies — a group that included Knight, who now served the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as a youth support partner — to guide the discussions and interpret the data and findings.

The young people arrived ready to share their experiences, both positive and negative. Despite their anger and confusion, they were often able to recall an adult — a foster parent, juvenile probation officer, caseworker, or teacher — whose interventions or advice had helped them overcome challenges and feel cared for. The young men and women asked for more adult confidants who could help them understand school placements, foster homes, or criminal charges, and could explain the choices available to them within those systems and help them to develop strategies to be successful and happy. The themes were shared back with the participants for their feedback.

The results of the focus groups included a report (Pittsburgh Foundation, 2017) that highlighted the themes emerging from the conversations and shared quotes from the participants. (See Table 1.) The report also presented their recommendations for the juvenile justice system and youth-serving organizations on how to better address their concerns. (See Table 2 on page 87.) The report was distributed to our local partners and shared with and by local and regional

media as well as nonprofit and philanthropic publications.

The report helped shape the juvenile court grantmaking initiative launched in 2017 by the Pittsburgh Foundation. Over the last three years, the foundation has awarded 23 grants totaling \$1.4 million; about 25% were to support interventions and 75% funded prevention programming. Specifically, grants from 2017 to 2020 have resulted in positive academic outcomes, including a 65% to 90% improvement in grade point average and 50% to 80% reduction in truancy. Health screenings and follow-up care were received by 1,275 youths. Thirty-five youths found employment and at six months had retained those jobs, and 62 youths were diverted from juvenile probation. In addressing recommendations from the focus groups for changes in the juvenile justice system, schools, and social services, the grants most frequently funded efforts to prevent and divert youth involvement in the court system, provide support from caring adults and mental health resources, engage youth as advocates, and to provide training opportunities. Common core strategies of these grants included a focus on academic outcomes, workforce and employment, and mental and physical health.

One example of a funded initiative is a formal, youth-focused diversion effort designed to give young people who commit a nonviolent, low- to medium-level offense the opportunity to remain in the community while the system addresses their needs, rather than face prosecution, conviction, and incarceration. This intervention is implemented in close partnership with local law enforcement, the Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Department, the city of Pittsburgh’s housing authority, the county’s district attorney’s office, identified family members, and other community stakeholders. It utilizes community-based service providers that support evidence-based, outcome-oriented programs and trauma-informed care resulting in academic success, personal and career development, good citizenship, savings for taxpayers, and a stronger community. Another funded initiative supports free, independent legal representation — counsel

TABLE 1 Themes From Youth Focus Groups: A Summary

Theme No. 1: The Importance of Listening to the Lived Experience of Youth
<p>Participants described how the circumstances in which they live and learn are significant factors in the challenges they face, especially involvement in the juvenile court system.</p> <p><i>"My mom tried to kill me, and I had to fight to survive, and I had to fight my mom, and then I got in trouble for fighting her."</i></p> <p><i>"Kids can get in trouble for smaller things that add up, like possession of weed or missing school, and then eventually they are just looked at as criminals and end up on probation."</i></p> <p><i>"I ran away when I was 12. It was the situation with my family."</i></p>
Theme No. 2: Differences in System Experience Based on Race and Gender
<p>Youth participants of color said they believed that their experiences might have been different if they were white, although many felt that being poor and having limited resources were the most important factors. They said they often felt they did not receive the benefit of the doubt, and made comments that demonstrated their awareness that white youth are frequently tracked into mental health services for behaviors that send Black youth to juvenile court.</p> <p><i>"Sometimes, especially in Black culture or inner-city culture, a lot of females are raised to be tough and hard and independent. So we're coming off as angry; that's all we know how to be, that's what we were taught since we were born, to be this person. It means you're out here in these streets because that's all you know. Your parents are teaching you how to take care of your family from a very small age."</i></p> <p><i>"My little brother was really young when he was put on probation. Him and his friends were shooting guns up in the air. He was immediately taken in handcuffs. His friend who was white just was sent to his mom. And they were doing the same exact thing. But my brother never got out of that cycle. He was treated like an animal and forced through [an alternative school], and he graduated without even knowing how to read properly. I would say it was a Black thing in his situation. No one said, 'Let me help him figure out what's going on. He can't read. Maybe that's why he's been acting out in school, because he's embarrassed.' ... So I believe it was a Black thing for him."</i></p>
Theme No. 3: Physical and Sexual Abuse
<p>A number of young women shared stories of sexual harassment and assault that they and other young women experienced in their homes, communities, schools, and programs.</p> <p><i>"I went to [an alternative school]; that's basically where it all started. The teacher was messing with me on a bad day. I was on my menstrual and I had my head down, and, um, and he came over and he touched me, and I don't like the way, 'cause he walks around with like a permanent boner, basically [others laughing, saying 'gross'], and I, like, turned around, like, whoa! I snapped, 'Don't touch me,' and I jumped up and he doinked me [touched his finger to her forehead], and I punched him in the face. Like, 'I was already uncomfortable with you putting your hands on me!'"</i></p> <p><i>"I went to this interview at [an independent living facility], and the dude's gonna be like, 'I can give you whatever you need — cock [said under his breath],' I swear. ... I swear to God, he said it like that: 'Cock!' And then he was like, 'Do you drink?' I said, 'Yeah, sometimes,' and he said, 'What if you drink with somebody like me, drink you right up out of your clothes?'"</i></p>

(continued on next page)

that is critical at the start of a youth's involvement in a court. The collateral consequences of a juvenile delinquency adjudication include negative employment background checks, removal or exclusion from public housing, loss of driver's license privileges, exclusion from military

service, and notice to school administrators of involvement in the court system. Other grants were provided to support a network of prevention-oriented, high-quality, out-of-school-time programs that engage youth in a variety of safe, caring, and supportive activities.

TABLE 1 Themes From Youth Focus Groups: A Summary (continued)

Theme No. 4: Criminalization of Youth Behavior in Schools and the Community
<p>The youth participants regard current disciplinary practices and guidelines in schools and other youth-serving systems as a setup where adults are just waiting for kids to make a mistake, and as soon as they do, label them as delinquents.</p> <p><i>"I just wouldn't lock kids up that quickly; small things shouldn't lead to probation or the label of probation that makes them a 'bad kid.' It always starts with in-school probation, and then escalates from there."</i></p> <p><i>"Adults are just waiting for kids to mess up!"</i></p>
Theme No. 5: Access to Caring, Supportive Adults and Mental Health Services
<p>Youth expressed the need for someone to listen to them, care, understand, share important information and options about their case, and, most of all, to believe in them. Across all the sessions, youth shared that they felt that the adults in systems that serve them are, overall, good people trying to help and just "doing their job," but only to get them to the next step in a process and not focused on their future.</p> <p><i>"They could just be like, 'How are you feeling today? Is anything on your mind? Did you eat? Are you OK?' I just like for people to show me that they care."</i></p> <p><i>"I want to say that the person that made a difference in my life was my youth support partner. She was the only one who was coming out there saying 'Cut it out; you can do better.'... She was believing that I could do better. ... She was the only one that had some faith in me, so once I started listening to what she was saying, that she was believing in me, that's what made me want to start changing."</i></p>
Theme No. 6: Race, Disproportionality, and Institutional Neglect
<p>Youth participants said that youth-serving systems were not doing enough to support them. They highlighted a variety of concerns, including classes that lack racial sensitivity, instruction that is culturally insensitive and that promotes negative self-images for youth of color, and issues of structural racism.</p> <p><i>"If we kill somebody, we go to jail. If cops kill somebody, they get a slap on the wrist."</i></p> <p><i>"However they're feeling that day, that's how they're going to prosecute. Say I'm a judge and I'm mad today because my kids got in trouble. ... I'm going to give them a harder sentence just because I'm mad, or less because I'm feeling grateful to be alive that day."</i></p>
Theme No. 7: Hopes and Dreams
<p>At the end of each group discussion, participants were invited to respond to the following question, in writing: "What is a hope or dream that you have for the future?"</p> <p><i>"Go back to school for social work, to become a mental health service provider to help kids in the system."</i></p> <p><i>"My hopes and dreams are to just be happy — I think I deserve it."</i></p> <p><i>"To live."</i></p> <p><i>"I wanna go to the Army and be the best mother I can be. I wanna be independent so I can be on my own and be a role model for my son so he can grow up not needing nobody, 'cause nobody has your back."</i></p>

Discussion

This article outlines a process for engaging youth and stakeholders in a meaningful way to improve the Pittsburgh Foundation’s grantmaking and to better support systems change, which is defined as reducing youth court

involvement through assessment of policies and practices that create the school-to-prison pipeline. It was designed to be responsive to the needs of those most impacted, and critical to its success was engaging with youth through organizations that had trusted relationships with them.

TABLE 2 Recommendations From Youth Focus Groups

Recommendation 1	Identify opportunities to address disproportionate system involvement among youth of color or with a focus on girls of color.
Recommendation 2	Support reform of school culture, curriculum, and disciplinary policies.
Recommendation 3	Identify opportunities to support prevention and diversion initiatives.
Recommendation 4	Identify opportunities to increase access to caring adults and mental health services.
Recommendation 5	Engage youth as advocates against system involvement by integrating their voices as agents of change among their peers and in their communities.
Recommendation 6	Support efforts to reform the system of restitution and court-related fees.
Recommendation 7	Explore and provide support for interdisciplinary training opportunities — for youth, families, and adults working in multiple spaces in schools, the community, and the juvenile court system — to promote developmentally appropriate, race-positive, gender-specific, tailored practices that are trauma-informed.
Recommendation 8	Support initiatives that combine data with youth expertise to identify and address disparities.

This approach also demonstrates the impact the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot program continues to have on the foundation's grantmaking and its relationships with grantees, policymakers, and other agents of systems change. The immediate distribution of grants to organizations working to prevent youth involvement in the juvenile court system, which was guided by recommendations from the report, was critical to maintaining relationships and continuing to build trust.

These relationships and the grantmaking are ongoing. In 2020, the foundation formally re-engaged its group of pilot grantees to understand how needs of youth have evolved. In February 2020, we surveyed these grantees to determine whether the report's recommendations from participating youth are relevant three years later and to discover what new issues may have emerged. For all 14 survey respondents, the recommendations still resonated and remained top priorities

in their own work, especially in training for youth, youth advocates, and school reform.

The survey also informed a convening of 23 grantees facilitated by foundation staff to hear from those working on the ground with youth and to understand the priorities among those experts with more of a focus on opportunities for systems change, and resulted in a request for proposals (RFP) for systems-change work locally. The focus areas that emerged from that process include an emphasis on changes to school climate and practices, such as revising discipline policies that perpetuate racial disparities and the school-to-prison pipeline; diversion initiatives and programs that redirect and prevent youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system; and changing policies regarding court fees and fines.¹

In addition to giving the foundation the opportunity to learn about whether the funded

¹ Funding decisions for this RFP were in process at the time of submission.

[T]he Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot program also has had an influence on policy work. One example of this is the findings on the devastating impact of juvenile court fees and fines.

projects had achieved its grantmaking goals, these convenings were popular among the grantees themselves. Prior to the meetings they engaged in planning for the bigger gatherings, which helped to create more productive convenings. Grantees found community in coming together and learning about both the successes and challenges of each other's work. As expected, the grantees sometimes faced similar challenges in creating large-scale systems change, but the camaraderie was essential in continuing to fuel the work of their own organizations. We learned from participants that these convenings might be more effective if they happened more consistently and, in some cases, went longer to create more space for generative and collaborative thinking. We intend to implement these recommendations in 2021.

In addition to its primary focus on improving the foundation's grantmaking to support better outcomes for young people in connection with the juvenile justice system, the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot program also has had an influence on policy work. One example of this is the findings on the devastating impact of juvenile court fees and fines. Nearly every state imposes costs on children, a burden that leads to more instability for families already in financial distress. In October 2020, foundation staff submitted a statement to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Procedural Rules Committee recommending revisions to the court's fees and fines policies. In addition to writing letters and public comment, foundation staff have shared information with

partner agencies as well as opportunities for them to advocate for these revisions.

This work was furthered through two projects that centered on sharing the juvenile justice initiative with the foundation's donor community. The first engagement project, the Explore Series, was an opportunity for donors to hear presentations from local nonprofits working to prevent or address the long- and short-term consequences of juvenile court involvement. The second project, the Juvenile Court Giving Circle, drew together donors and supporters over eight working sessions to learn more about the structure of the juvenile court system from community partners who are deeply engaged in this work. In the end, the giving circle granted \$75,000 to support programs that are proactively identifying at-risk youth and providing prevention services and programs to prevent engagement or re-engagement with the court.

Future focus groups elevating youth voices should include those with disabilities and who identify as LGBTQ. During our fall convening of juvenile justice grantees and the RFP process that followed, we worked with community partners and agencies to think about how to include youth voices in their proposals and in the foundation's own learnings, and plan to build on that work in 2021.

Overall, the benefit of deep learning, grantmaking that centers and amplifies the voices of those most impacted, and deeper relationships with community partners doing the work on the ground are vital to accomplishing systems change.

Conclusion

The stories of challenge and hope shared by these courageous youth participants underscored for us their remarkable resilience.

As one youth participant shared, "It is so easy to get into the juvenile system and so hard to get out." Youth are only "at-risk" when they are inadequately served by adults in the systems that surround them. The purpose of the Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot project is to center

and elevate the voices of youth, who are experts on their own experience and most impacted by the issues at the center of their involvement with the juvenile justice system. As another youth shared in a focus group, “A lot of things happened that got me there, and nobody ever went back and asked me what happened and how I had got there.”

This process, and the grantmaking, policy, and donor engagement that has resulted from it, remind us that potential solutions for how to effectively support youth start with listening carefully to their voices, sharing their recommendations, and committing to an agenda that centers their priorities — not the system’s priorities. Engaging thoughtfully, ethically, in a developmentally appropriate way, and in partnership with those most impacted by the issues that a foundation might address is the most effective way to identify necessary change and how to achieve it.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the 53 expert and courageous youth participants who shared their stories, and without whom this initiative would not have been possible. We are grateful to the intermediary agency partners and to Pittsburgh Foundation leadership for supporting this valuable learning.

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How to Encourage Sustainable Change: A Reflection on How Philanthropy Can Partner With Grantees to Build Organizational Capacity

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Keywords: *Learning community, funder-grantee relationships, organizational capacity building, collaboration, innovation*

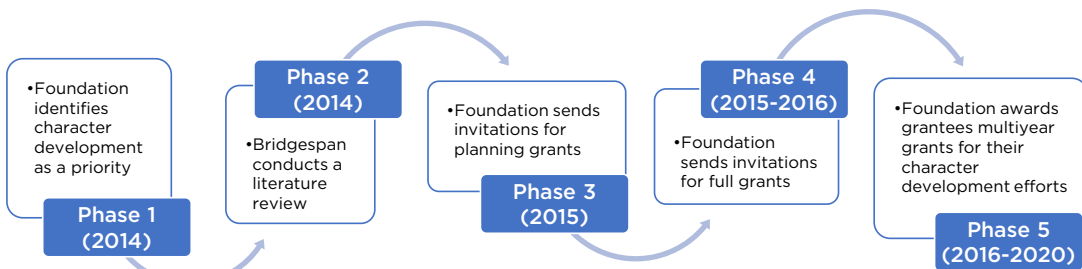
Introduction

Over the past few decades there has been an explosion of knowledge about how children grow, develop, and become learners, and about the factors that nourish or hinder their growth into adulthood. A convergence of research across scientific disciplines — neuroscience, early childhood, the social sciences, psychology, the science of adversity, strength-based approaches to human thriving, and the learning sciences — paints a dynamic and optimistic picture of human development (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2019; Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2020). For example, when children's interests, needs, and abilities are matched with opportunity and support, they develop neural pathways throughout childhood and into adolescence that help them master key knowledge and skills. The brain continues to develop from birth to adolescence, and is remarkably resilient in both learning new ideas and overcoming challenges during this time. This highlights the importance of the learning and development that occurs in multiple contexts, including after-school programs and other out-of-school-time settings (American Institutes for Research, 2019).

Research on promoting youth development and character consistently cites adult training, skills, and relationships with youth as vital to positive outcomes (Hamilton et al., 2016; Moroney & Devaney, 2017; Van Dam et al., 2018). Caring adults, whether they are schoolteachers, YMCA

Key Points

- In 2014, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation embarked on the National Character Initiative to support organizations seeking to advance character development among youth. The initiative sought to promote lasting change by focusing on building grantee capacity that was based largely on grantee priorities.
- This article highlights key findings from an evaluation of the foundation's approach to the initiative by elevating the perspectives of grantees, foundation staff, and field experts who served as consultants. It discusses supports the foundation provided to grantees and three key transformational elements in capacity building: proactive and responsive technical assistance, a culture of learning, and opportunities for partnerships.
- The evaluation surfaced key lessons for grantmakers looking to embrace a capacity-building orientation and shift the traditional funder-grantee dynamic. Funders should consider the strategies discussed in this article to support long-term growth and sustained practices beyond the life of a grant that, ultimately, lead to improved outcomes for organizations and the people they serve.

FIGURE 1 Phases of the National Character Initiative

staff, or Scout leaders, help youth achieve their fullest potential (Paisley & Ferrari, 2005). Because of this body of evidence, and inspired by Stephen Davison Bechtel, Jr.'s own childhood experiences in the Boy Scouts of America, in 2014 the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation designed its first and only national initiative.

The National Character Initiative (NCI) sought to bolster youth-serving organizations in supporting character development and to advance the practices of adults who work with young people. It invested in organizational capacity building, with a focus on program quality and infrastructure. The foundation provided a total of \$130 million in funding to these organizations, and provided peer learning that was grounded in evidence-based practices to adults who worked at these organizations (S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, 2019). Throughout the initiative, the foundation pivoted from a prescriptive grantmaking approach, focused on common outcomes and goals across the grantee portfolio, to a focus on building deep relationships with grantees to understand how best to support each organization and build its capacity according to its readiness and ability to engage in the work.

Starting in 2019, the foundation partnered with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a retrospective evaluation of the initiative's grantmaking approach from the perspectives of grantees, foundation staff, and field experts who served as consultants. With this aim, AIR reviewed documents (including

grantees' proposals and information about the NCI from the foundation), observed meetings of five grantee communities of practice (CoPs) during an in-person convening, surveyed all grantees and partners (54 of 97 invited people completed this survey), conducted in-depth telephone interviews with 29 grantees and two partners, and interviewed seven foundation staff.

In this article, we explore findings from AIR's retrospective inquiry into the initiative. We describe the NCI's grantmaking strategy, the supports provided, key transformational elements that helped promote capacity building in grantees, and steps other grantmakers can take to promote capacity building and sustainability of innovative practices and infrastructures.

The Foundation's Strategy and Approach

The foundation determined that it would focus on promoting character development, and subsequently went through a multistep planning process. (See Figure 1.) First, the board identified a set of character strengths that it wanted to develop in young people, including courage, empathy, fairness, integrity, respect, responsibility, teamwork, and work ethic (Goldberg, Rummel Sharvit, & Singh, 2018). This helped to ground the work and clarify what is and is not character development. One foundation staff member provided the definition that emerged: "Character is about perseverance and working hard ..., being a team player ..., and having a positive influence on others. These values allow you to be constructive in what you do

FIGURE 2 Initiative Grantees (by Cohort)

and improve your effect on the community.” The foundation, however, did not require each grantee to define character this way, or even to use the language of character development. Instead, as a way to promote sustained practices after the funding period ended, it allowed each organization to use the terminology that worked for them.

The foundation then engaged the Bridgespan Group, a nonprofit management consultant to other nonprofits, to review the landscape of character development nationally. Bridgespan recommended areas where the foundation could have the greatest impact and identified individuals and organizations that were national leaders in character development. The foundation then turned to La Piana Consulting for a comprehensive scan of the identified organizations and assessment of their internal capacity and stability. The scan, which focused on the organizations’ financial history, current financial state, and ability to partner with the foundation at scale, included conversations with the organizations’ leaders, a reputation analysis, and a review of each organization’s structure (e.g., reach/scale, level of influence the national office had on affiliates/locals). From this scan, the foundation identified a group of candidates and invited them to submit grant proposals.

Third, using criteria similar to those for the multiyear grants, the foundation made short-term (nine to 12 months) planning grants to 13 national organizations. These grants were smaller, but still significant in size (ranging

from \$240,000 to \$600,000, but most around \$250,000), and focused on projects that were ready for implementation. The introductory grants gave the foundation an opportunity to assess the organizations’ goals and their capacity as potential long-term partners by having them manage or complete a finite project, such as improving a survey instrument. Foundation staff described these planning grants as critical to understanding where the organizations were starting from and what was realistic in terms of goals and outcomes.

The foundation then invited a set of organizations to submit multiyear, comprehensive proposals, which were evaluated using four criteria:

1. *Reach and population served* — out-of-school-time providers that served large numbers of youth ages 5 to 18;
2. *Alignment of mission* — organizations whose mission focused on promoting the set of character strengths established by the foundation board and were in one of the five target cohorts (See Figure 2.);
3. *Commitment of leaders* — receptivity and commitment to the initiative as well as willingness to learn from others; and
4. *Organizational capacity and stability* — organizations that were in good financial health and would be able to both effectively use

The foundation paired each grantee with a program officer and associate, who served several roles. Some were traditional program officer roles, but others were more unique to the foundation.

funding toward the intended goal and sustain funding after the grant period ended.¹

Ultimately, the foundation invested in 24 grantees; all 13 of the grantees who received planning grants then received multiyear grants. These were categorized into five cohorts: seven large national youth development organizations, three national sports and play organizations, three national nature-based organizations, five policy organizations, and six California-based organizations. (See Figure 2.)

Supports That Contributed to Increased Capacity Building

In interviews and surveys, grantees, foundation staff, and partners elevated four supports provided by the foundation that were central to the NCI's success: convenings, CoPs, access to field experts, and deep relationships with foundation program staff.²

Convenings

The foundation hosted convenings of grantees and partners (field experts, other foundations, policymakers, and influencers) initially once

a year starting in 2016, and then twice a year beginning in 2019.³ The two- or three-day in-person convenings included sessions about current research and policy related to character development, and also provided significant time for CoPs to meet.

These convenings were an opportunity for representatives of grantees with diverse roles in the character development field to come together and build knowledge that they then brought back to their organizations. For example, grantees in the evaluation CoP learned from one another's work developing measures and instruments to be used for program evaluation, and grantees in the program CoP worked together to develop tools to aid their programs' transitions to virtual formats in response to COVID-19.

Communities of Practice

The foundation organized CoPs that met during the in-person convenings and, in some cases, virtually. There were five CoPs, organized based on staff role: programming and practice (18 members), research and evaluation (15 members), policy (21 members), strategy (14 members), and organizational leadership (13 members). Through these groups, grantees had opportunities to share knowledge with each other, collaboratively problem-solve challenges, celebrate successes, partner on new projects or initiatives, and think strategically about how to bolster the work of each organization to have a larger influence on the field.

Foundation staff recognized that the convenings and CoPs were an opportunity for grantees to discuss the commonalities in their work and partner on specific projects or initiatives. The foundation increased the frequency of

¹ Two organizations initially were not as financially stable as the others, but because they had strong leadership and some positive momentum, the foundation decided to help them build stability by supporting them in developing their fundraising capacity and infrastructure. This reflected the foundation's intention not to privilege organizations that already had a degree of capacity and stability.

² In support of the NCI, the foundation dedicated two full-time program officers and two full-time program associates to work directly with grantees; part of the associate director's time was focused on policy grantmaking, and part of the education director's time was focused on oversight. A small portion of the evaluation learning officer's time was devoted to helping with evaluating the convenings, and a portion of the education team administrator's time supported foundation staff and convening planning.

³ The second convening in 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19.

convenings and CoP meetings after hearing about the value of these activities from grantees, and provided grantees with access to several field experts who delivered specific content at the convenings or through webinars:

- La Piana Consulting helped grantees establish their goals and develop grant plans early on, and also facilitated the organizational leadership CoP.
- Randel Consulting, a management consulting firm, oversaw planning of the convenings and CoPs.
- Collaborative Communications, a strategic communications firm, helped grantees with communication plans and storytelling to maximize dissemination efforts.
- Members of Fowler Hoffman LLC, a policy strategist, contributed to the policy CoP and advised the foundation on its California grantmaking.
- Equity Meets Design, a racial equity advising firm, conducted workshops and provided other support during two convenings to create space for equity conversations among grantees and expand their thinking around it.

Deep Relationships With Program Staff

The foundation paired each grantee with a program officer and associate, who served several roles. Some were traditional program officer roles, but others were more unique to the foundation. For example, in a traditional role, program officers regularly met with grantees via one-on-one monthly calls, attended local and national events, met with grantee board members, and used these opportunities to gain insight into organizations and their relationships with local branches. But unique to the NCI was the program officers' level of engagement with the grantees and the depth of those relationships.

Deep relationships, trust, and multiyear commitments enabled foundation staff to become thought partners and allies to the grantee

In AIR's interviews and surveys, the grantees, foundation staff, and field experts described three transformational elements that were pivotal in promoting capacity building and led to grantees' objectives largely being achieved: proactive and responsive technical assistance, a culture of learning, and opportunities for partnerships.

leaders, rather than just compliance officers stewarding foundation funds. This level of engagement was possible, to some extent, because the program officers had a manageable number of grants (under 25). Finally, program officers served as advocates and sought to highlight their grantees' work in the field and with other funders. One foundation staff member observed:

As we start to exit the field, our work is to advocate and highlight the work of our grantees but also to continue to push the learning agenda, helping grantees think about what's next, help them feel a sense of readiness for continuing their work, and really uncovering all the good things they do but also the things they still need to improve on.

Key Elements in Promoting Grantee Capacity Building

In AIR's interviews and surveys, the grantees, foundation staff, and field experts described three transformational elements that were pivotal in promoting capacity building and led to grantees' objectives largely being achieved: proactive and responsive technical assistance (TA), a culture of learning, and opportunities for partnerships.

“Through this whole process it was up to the grantee to determine what they needed. ... We would ask questions [and use the answers to] identify what type of technical assistance and access to field experts would be helpful.”

Proactive and Responsive Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is designed to increase capacity building in organizations and communities through providing an individualized and hands-on approach, often after training is conducted (Katz & Wandersman, 2016). More research is needed to identify the functional components of TA (Fixsen et al., 2005), but the limited research suggests that successful TA includes both proactive and strategic as well as responsive and customized support (Katz & Wandersman, 2016). This approach can also promote capacity building within grantees because responsive TA addresses grantees' requested needs and proactive TA pushes grantees to develop in ways that allow them to continue the work after the grant support ends. One grantee said that the foundation's program officers

created space for exploration of better ways to not only use the funding, but leverage it with other partners. They worked with us when the context or environment changed and the work needed to shift. They were responsive while holding the integrity and spirit of the work.

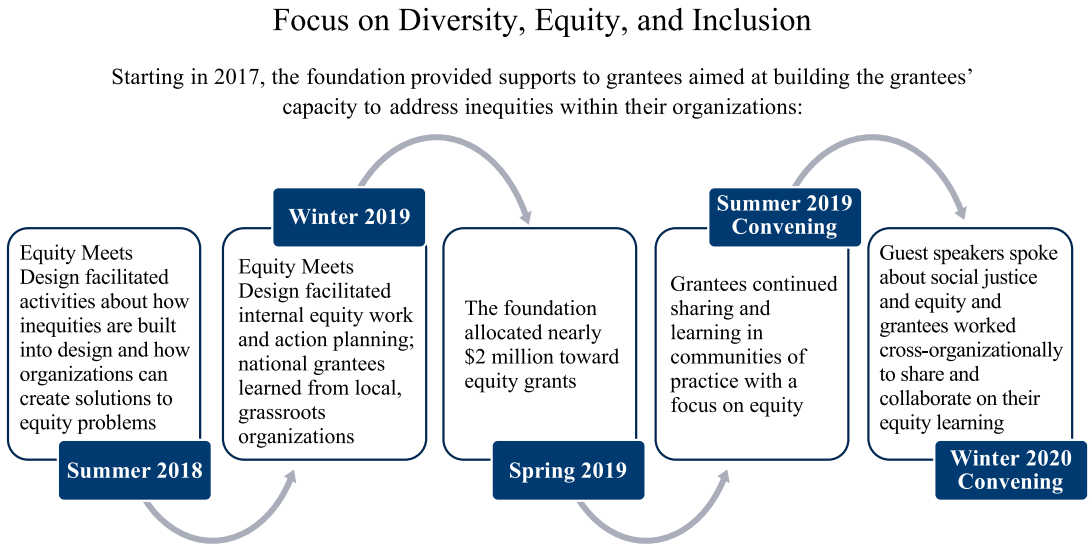
In terms of proactive TA, the foundation requested that field experts from La Piana Consulting solicit feedback early on from grantees regarding their organizational needs and goals for the grant. The foundation also helped to convene a workshop on character development, held by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in 2016,

to support each organization's understanding of the field's literature. Program officers worked with grantees during the grant period to help them track their progress toward achieving their organizational goals and to help them modify those goals as appropriate. Furthermore, they helped grantees conceptualize and write proposals for future funding to communicate their work successfully to the foundation, providing edits on draft proposals. In one case, the foundation's organizational effectiveness team had weekly calls with a grantee iterating on survey design to coach and support their work. Additionally, one program officer had regular coaching calls with grantees to help them think through program design.

In terms of responsive TA, one foundation staff member described how the program officers tried to identify strategies and offer supports that would help grantees achieve their own goals and shorter term milestones along the way: “Through this whole process it was up to the grantee to determine what they needed. ... We would ask questions [and use the answers to] identify what type of technical assistance and access to field experts would be helpful.”

The responsiveness of the foundation to grantee needs was also reflected in the way that convenings were planned. Randel Consulting, in partnership with members of the strategy CoP, developed the agenda for each convening and for some CoP meetings to ensure that the agenda met a broad range of interests and needs across grantee staff serving different roles (e.g., CEOs, program managers). Staff from Randel Consulting solicited input from grantee staff using such methods as informal conversations and online surveys before and after a convening, and incorporated this feedback into convening plans. “Constant feedback [was] being provided on what was most useful and how to make the experience better” in future convenings, one grantee said.

The evolution of the CoPs also illustrates the foundation's balance of proactive and responsive TA. After consulting with field experts, the foundation originally identified three CoPs:

FIGURE 3 Stages of DEI Work Supported by S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation

programming and practice, research and evaluation, and policy. However, several individuals from different organizations felt that they did not fit into one of these three groups because they served roles within their organizations focused on program quality, staff practice, and capacity building across the system.

Organizational leaders also explained that they had limited opportunities to interact with other leaders of national character development organizations in a noncompetitive environment, and requested that someone outside foundation staff facilitate this group to allow a safe space to share ongoing successes and concerns. The foundation granted both requests by adding two additional CoPs: a strategy group and a CEO group.

Realizing the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the field, in 2018 grantees requested support in addressing inequities within their organizations. Historically, there has been limited work seeking to advance DEI in character development and out-of-school-time programs (Smith, Witherspoon, & Osgood, 2018). While DEI grantmaking was not on its radar before grantees surfaced the need, the foundation's internal equity work at that time helped foster interest in supporting grantees

to do the same. In response to this request, the foundation first prioritized a learning agenda for exploring DEI in its grantee convenings to create opportunities for everyone to learn together, and then built it into a grantmaking strategy. (See Figure 3.)

First, the foundation hired the consultant Equity Meets Design to provide TA to grantees during two convenings on how inequities are built into organizational design and how organizations can develop solutions to address structural inequities. Equity Meets Design facilitated several sessions introducing its framework and tools, conducted focus groups with grantees, and attended several CoP meetings to learn more about the grantees.

Second, the foundation allocated nearly \$2 million for equity grants to some of the grantees. All 13 national organizations received DEI grants, and one DEI grant was given to all five California partner organizations to support their collective equity work. (Other grantees, particularly those added later in the initiative, were funded by the foundation for equity-focused work and therefore did not receive an equity capacity-building grant.) The 13 national

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organizations developed their focus and plan for these grants and had discussions with foundation program staff to hone the ideas. Some ideas were funded as is, and others went through more of an iterative process with foundation staff.

Grantees used these grants for at least four purposes (but each grant did not address all four purposes). The first was to assess organizational operations related to equity. The youth development organization Camp Fire, for example, worked with a consultant to conduct an audit of cultural appropriation in their practices, especially from Native American or Indigenous cultures, that resulted in a report with actionable next steps. Second, grantees used the funding to provide training about equity and access to national staff, board members, and practitioners. For example, Girls Inc., a network of nonprofits that support and mentor girls in an affirming environment, conducted a series of workshops for all levels of staff, from board members and senior leadership to program staff who work directly with youth. Third, grantees used the funds to incorporate equity into program planning and strategy. For example, staff

from the YMCA of the USA described including an equity lens by “making it an upfront expectation.” At every YMCA convening, a YMCA staff member said, “as they crafted their content around, for example, what is a leading practice around relationship building, [the staff facilitating the convening] always included diversity or examples of diversity as indicators.” This helped YMCAs integrate an equity lens into the organization’s character development programming and measure its progress toward that goal. Several members of Boys and Girls Clubs of America’s leadership were exposed to DEI frameworks and ideas at the foundation’s convenings, which spurred internal exploration into what was needed in that organization’s own work and led to the development of an equity taskforce in the national office and the elevation of a staff member into a leadership position for DEI efforts.

A Culture of Learning

A culture of learning is “one in which employees continuously seek, share, and apply new knowledge and skills to improve individual and organizational performance” (Association for Talent Development, n.d.). A culture of learning can build capacity of grantees from leadership to front-line staff because this type of culture values a more equal footing between funders and grantees as all parties learn together. However, while a growing number of funders argue that solving our most pressing social challenges requires strategies that embrace vulnerability, transparency, and iterative problem-solving (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Maxwell, 2007), others describe the difficulty of creating a culture where grantees feel safe talking about their hard-earned lessons (National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2018). To promote a culture of learning throughout the NCI, foundation staff were intentional in learning about character development alongside grantees (e.g., attending the 2016 National Academies workshop), doing their own learning by participating in webinars and reading research, creating peer-learning opportunities, building the capacity and skills of adults within grantee organizations, and

tracking progress by using individualized organizational outcomes.

First, because character development had not been one of the foundation's strategic priorities until 2014, existing staff lacked the relevant expertise. The foundation hired program officers and other staff from the field and provided intensive, ongoing training for existing staff. This fostered a culture in which foundation staff and grantees were learning about character development and youth development together. Further reinforcing the culture of learning, new foundation staff hired from the character development field embodied several youth development principles, including encouraging diverse perspectives (e.g., community and youth) and using a strengths-based (versus deficit-based) approach that highlights what each organization brings to the table (Durlak et al., 2007).

Second, the foundation created peer-learning opportunities (e.g., CoPs) and customized supports for grantees in different roles (e.g., separate CoPs for research and evaluation directors and CEOs), which were grounded in the idea of learning together. The staff also took a back seat (or were not involved) in most CoP meetings, as requested by the grantees, to maximize grantees' ability to learn. One foundation staff member said,

We believe in peer learning and listening to the people on the ground; they know best what they need, and we are in the position to support them in their learning and bring them together ... to share with each other what they've learned.

Third, the initiative focused on creating a culture of learning within grantees' own organizations by focusing on adults as a lever for promoting high-quality character development programs and youth outcomes. This allowed the foundation to embrace a capacity-building approach that invested in having grantees "learn, shift, and adapt based on what [they] learned," instead of focusing solely on achieving

In AIR's survey, completed by 54 grantees, over 88% reported achieving these outcomes (in descending order): building the capacity of staff in character development, strengthening professional development and training opportunities, building the capacity of staff in DEI, improving the quality of programming or services, and building capacity for research and evaluation.

youth outcomes.⁴ This same grantee described it as, "The old adage of teaching someone how to fish rather than giving them the fish ..., I felt like [that was] Bechtel. ... Truly, the money was used to teach us how to fish."

Fourth, grantees and foundation staff described how they embraced a culture of learning by measuring progress differently. One organization explained how, prior to working with Bechtel, it mostly focused on organizational outputs and outcomes — like counting the number of schools being served and increasing that number. As part of the NCI, a member said, it decided to have the measure of success "be less about [our organization] and more about ... how many schools have safe and healthy play." Another manifestation of this culture of learning is the types of outcomes that grantees reported achieving. In AIR's survey, completed by 54 grantees, over 88% reported achieving

⁴ The foundation did not consider many other approaches beyond focusing on adults, but did pursue approaches to create essential infrastructure (e.g., data systems, measures, or platforms; fundraising capacity) guided by the belief that strengthening the organizations overall would help bolster their character development work.

When managed effectively, partnerships between youth-serving organizations can build organizational capacity and contribute to increased social capital, public exposure, and the development of a learning organization.

these outcomes (in descending order): building the capacity of staff in character development, strengthening professional development and training opportunities, building the capacity of staff in DEI, improving the quality of programming or services, and building capacity for research and evaluation. These outcomes reflect a culture where grantees were able to grow and develop with support from the foundation, rather than one where the foundation held the knowledge and authority.

Members of all five CoPs reported fostering a culture of learning; AIR's staff confirmed this in its observations of three CoPs. One grantee said that "having the convenings and communities of practice meetings definitely signaled that Bechtel was interested in us learning, and shifting, and adapting based on what we learned." The members of the research and evaluation CoP were particularly emphatic in describing it as a unique and powerful learning opportunity. They explained that, prior to this grant, they never had an opportunity to develop relationships with other research and evaluation-focused staff who worked in similar organizations. They valued these opportunities and connections so strongly that they elected to have monthly calls (the only CoP to do so in addition to meeting during convenings) where one member would share something they had been working on or "that they thought would be interesting or [of] value to other members." These members called the connections and relationships formed here as "invaluable" because of the welcoming spirit,

"the wealth of information" available from the group, and the "affirming" nature of hearing from others struggling with similar issues. One member mentioned reaching out to just "about every member of the community of practice for something that they were either impressed by or wanted more information about." Another member said that a key factor contributing to the group's success was that "there was a lot of room [for us] to make it what we wanted it to be, not what [the foundation] had intended for it to be."

Opportunities for Partnerships

When managed effectively, partnerships between youth-serving organizations can build organizational capacity and contribute to increased social capital, public exposure, and the development of a learning organization (Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2017). Grantees and foundation staff reported that the initiative provided many opportunities for such partnerships, which led to promoting capacity building because grantees started relying on one another instead of the foundation for support. Specifically, in AIR's survey (completed by 54 individuals from 22 organizations), 100% of grantees agreed or strongly agreed that the NCI helped to establish a national collective of organizations that work in the field of character development, and 79% agreed or strongly agreed that the foundation provided guidance on how an organization could collaborate with others in the field. Several grantees said that this was the first time a group of organizations that focused on character development collaborated with each other and, perhaps more importantly, that these partnerships would continue years after the grant period ended. One grantee remarked:

I think one of the things that we all came to pretty quickly is the recognition that we could be called on to work together instead of in competition with each other, that there was a lot of opportunity to work either across common measures or sharing of tools or methodologies or processes, or even just the way that we structure our departments or manage our staff. So that we could get ... stronger.

Several grantees described how throughout the initiative they advanced their own work

and that of the field by partnering with other organizations. One example is The California Partnership, a collaborative of youth-serving organizations that came together through the initiative to develop a joint approach to bring social and emotional learning and character development content to the youth-services system in California. It decided on skills and the language it would use, which each grantee then incorporated into their agency's grant deliverable. Through this effort, the California School-Age Consortium, which promotes access to high-quality, affordable out-of-school-time programs for children, worked with some of the collaborative's agencies to design a social-emotional learning and character development curriculum for use in after-school programs.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Playworks, whose work improves the quality of play in school settings, secured joint funding from the Allstate Foundation to pursue a collaboration where the local Boys and Girls Clubs staff used Playworks strategies and resources, including its YD Toolbox open-source app, in their school programming and after-school clubs. This partnership allowed Playworks to reach a larger group of youth, and gave the Boys and Girls Clubs access to materials, training, and supports that could improve program quality. This approach is now being piloted in six Boys and Girls Club sites, with the intention to scale up. Commenting on this partnership, one staff member said its full impact "is not known yet":

What we're doing right now together is great, I think we don't actually know what the best story is going to be. ... The authenticity of this partnership means that we're going to respond to the needs that arise; we're going to co-create together.

Promoting Capacity Building Among Grantees: The Challenges

This article describes several benefits of promoting capacity building of grantees: fostering the sustainability of practices, developing the skill and competence of staff, and setting organizations up to secure future funding. But this approach, like any, also has a set of challenges.

This article describes several benefits of promoting capacity building of grantees: fostering the sustainability of practices, developing the skill and competence of staff, and setting organizations up to secure future funding. But this approach, like any, also has a set of challenges.

First, it requires foundations to allow grantees to set their own course and be accountable for meeting individualized goals and objectives, instead of establishing a shared set of outcomes and indicators for all grantees. The typically measured youth outcomes, such as increases in the number of youth served and gains in graduation rates, are much easier to track and compare across grantees. A related challenge relates to grantees using measures that focus on organizational capacity and staff competencies, which might not be as convincing to the field as the more common youth and adult outcomes. This can present challenges when a foundation is trying to demonstrate impacts of its work to others in the field of philanthropy.

Second, all foundation staff must embrace a capacity-building approach and be committed to changing internal practices to align with it. For example, Bechtel foundation staff noted that changing reporting requirements requires buy-in from leadership and that shifting processes can sometimes be slow and cumbersome. There were some internal struggles with adopting this type of approach, particularly given turnover in the role created to lead the initiative.

Third, relationship building and establishing trust between the foundation and grantees was not a given at the beginning of the initiative. In

As philanthropy seeks to facilitate lasting changes and launches collaboratives that promote sustainable improvements in organizational practices, funders should consider providing both proactive and responsive technical assistance, promoting a culture of learning, and creating opportunities for partnerships in order to reach these goals.

fact, it took significant time for that trust to be built, especially with leadership. Through the ongoing engagement with grantees and the program staffs' trust-based philanthropy approach, deep relationships were built and program staff were able to more effectively communicate grantee successes and challenges to foundation leadership. Additionally, as leadership became more directly engaged with grantees by attending convenings and CoPs, bilateral trust was ultimately established, but this process took time and was not without hiccups along the way.

Supporting Capacity Building Among Grantees: Steps for Foundations

We close with suggestions that foundations can consider when attempting to promote capacity building within grantees in their own initiatives.

- Gather extensive intel about the field the foundation plans to work within to identify its needs and strengths as well as the key and emerging players that can be supported.
- Use planning grants to allow the foundation to develop trusting relationships with organizations and determine their capacity to engage in the type of work that is the focus of the main grant.
- Make a multiyear commitment to grantees to allow them to learn, grow, and course-correct before having to apply for a new grant.
- Shift the goals of the foundation to focus on helping organizations think differently about themselves, be open to questioning themselves, and engage in new learning opportunities.
- Create opportunities for grantees to develop lasting partnerships: have staff make intentional connections between grantees where there is learning to be shared; show how the work is bigger than any one organization; demonstrate the value of organizations working together for a broader cause, such as getting legislation passed through advocacy efforts; and make time and space during convenings for grantees to learn from each other and identify ways to partner together.
- Establish indicators and outcomes that are individualized to the grantee, and focus on how to tell the stories of project impacts in ways that are compelling to the funder and broader community.
- Expect that implementing some of these approaches to build capacity among grantees will create some discomfort, particularly if it is being done for the first time. Provide opportunities for staff members to discuss challenges as they arise.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation's National Character Initiative has surfaced key lessons for grantmakers looking to embrace an organizational capacity-building orientation and shift the traditional funder-grantee dynamic. As philanthropy seeks to facilitate lasting changes and launches collaboratives that promote sustainable improvements in organizational practices, funders should consider providing both

proactive and responsive technical assistance, promoting a culture of learning, and creating opportunities for partnerships in order to reach these goals. These strategies can support long-term growth and sustained practices among organizations after grants end, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for organizations and the people they serve.

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The Revolution Within: What It Really Takes to Partner With Communities

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Keywords: *Resident-driven, community-led grantmaking, community change, building power, organizational transformation, power and privilege in foundations, risk taking in philanthropy*

Introduction

In October 2016, *The Foundation Review* published an article that described a new vision for grantmaking at The Colorado Trust; one that shifted power from the foundation to community residents to determine locally relevant issues and solutions for advancing health equity (Csuti & Barley, 2016). In the article, we discussed our frustrations with problems that continued to plague communities despite decades of funding from multiple sources. We talked about the arrival of a new CEO and his vision for a shift that focused simultaneously on social determinants of health as roots of health inequities and on resident-led solutions to problems facing communities.

We described what led us to eliminate the program department and replace program officers with Community Partners (CPs) — foundation staff throughout the state who lived in the regions where they would work and were thus better able to engage local residents and understand their challenges. We discussed our nascent journey into the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) space, and how we felt that would contribute to our new vision. We were an organization heading excitedly into an unknown future that we believed would result in something we had not seen in Colorado — measurable change, authentically planned, implemented, and led by residents of Colorado communities.

We certainly knew this would not be easy; the road would be rough at times and we would often be outside our comfort zone when communities pushed us in directions we might not want to go. We also knew we would make mistakes, come up against unforeseen challenges, and need to evaluate and adjust as we went. We

Key Points

- In October 2016, *The Foundation Review* published an article describing a new vision for grantmaking at The Colorado Trust that shifted power from the foundation to community residents to determine locally relevant issues and solutions for advancing health equity. It discussed major shifts underway at The Trust as it developed its Community Partnerships for Health Equity strategy, which it believed would result in measurable change that was authentically planned, implemented, and led by residents of Colorado communities.
- This article describes the initial years of the strategy, which began with a phased approach to sharing power with communities, and how the lessons from those years led The Trust to pivot to a new approach to achieving the effort's central vision. This next iteration, the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy, has evolved to include both building power in communities and wielding power in support of communities.
- This evolution is not complete. The Trust is still learning from the communities that continue in the phased approach as well as those who are part of the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy, and continues to go through major internal transformations that are necessary to authentically engage in community change work.

were clearly setting ourselves up for an adventure, but we had no idea just how adventurous the ride would be.

We began with a model we now refer to as the phased approach. After the period of restructuring and planning at the foundation, the regional CPs were first hired as full-time staff in 2015 and 2016. They joined a strategy team made up of Trust staff and a university-based researcher who were already envisioning guideposts for the work ahead.

Five years since the publication of that first article, The Trust continues to go through major transformations — not just in the Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE) strategy, but in all of our grant strategies. There were other transformations as well — in staffing and in the policies, processes, and procedures within the foundation, including our communications, evaluation work, finance and operations, and in our internal DEI work. These transformations that have permeated every facet of the foundation have been at varying times surprising, joyous, painful, difficult, and, above all, necessary to authentically engage in community change work.

This article describes the tumultuous journey of the initial five years of our CPHE strategy: what we did, what we've learned, where we are now, and where we hope to be in the next five years.

The First Five Years

We began with a model we now refer to as the phased approach. After the period of restructuring and planning at the foundation, the regional CPs were first hired as full-time staff in 2015

and 2016. They joined a strategy team made up of Trust staff and a university-based researcher who were already envisioning guideposts for the work ahead. These guideposts committed us to work that was to:

- Be authentically resident led.
- Meaningfully involve affected individuals and groups in the leadership, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the work.
- Address one or more social determinants of health.
- Seek to narrow a health equity gap.
- Address an important, established need in the community (based on both quantitative and qualitative data).
- Require a deep understanding of an issue by community members, so that root causes and solutions can be identified.
- Resonate broadly across diverse groups of people in the community — that is, a self-defined sense of place.
- Build local resources, capacity, and a team to do the work — in both the short and long term.

The strategy team divided the state into seven multicounty regions based on Colorado's health statistics regions, the geography of the state, and input from the CPs. Each region was home to a CP who would work in that region's communities.¹ Extensive quantitative-data packets were prepared that included population demographics, data on social determinants of health, and geographic information system maps of each region. Processes were developed along with tools for CPs to provide guidance on how to get to know their large regions and the communities and people within it.

¹ Two of the original Community Partners turned over since the start of the strategy.

As a result of this ongoing work by Community Partners, five specific phases emerged that exemplified how the work was progressing. This phased approach became the foundation of the work for the first five years:

1. *Connecting phase.* The CP developed familiarity with the region at large and its communities, including local geography; demographic trends; major industries, institutions, and employers; local stakeholders; power dynamics; and regional issues. This enabled them to learn about local power dynamics as they determined where and with whom to connect. During this phase, CPs conducted community visits, reviewed data, met with residents, and explored community interest in partnering with The Trust.
2. *Early development phase.* After a mutual agreement by the community and The Trust to work together, community members were invited to join a resident team that would formally partner with The Trust to address health equity issues. Initial team members were trained and supported to collect information from the broader community about issues faced and who was most impacted by them. Resident teams worked to deepen their understanding of equity, race, and power, and team processes were developed that ensured team diversity and inclusiveness, met language justice² needs, and set practices for managing team conflict and having tough conversations.
3. *Development phase.* The resident team continued to build capacity around equity and internal team processes, selected equity issues to focus on together, and engaged community members most impacted by those issues. Because the foundation could not directly give funding to resident teams without non-profit status, The Trust partnered with a fiscal sponsor. With the fiscal sponsor, staffing, capacity, and structures were put into place to facilitate moving into the next phase.
4. *Planning phase.* Resident teams received a planning grant to develop their community health equity plan (a requirement of The Trust), evaluation plan, and budget. Funding supported the teams to continue their capacity-building efforts to build power and take action on their issues. They researched potential solutions and formed partnerships to help implement solutions.
5. *Implementation phase.* During this final phase, the communities, with the resident teams leading, received five years of implementation funding, renewed annually, to implement their community health equity plan. The teams also worked with evaluators they selected to integrate evaluation and learning into their work. Building power and increasing community capacity to sustain these efforts was ongoing.

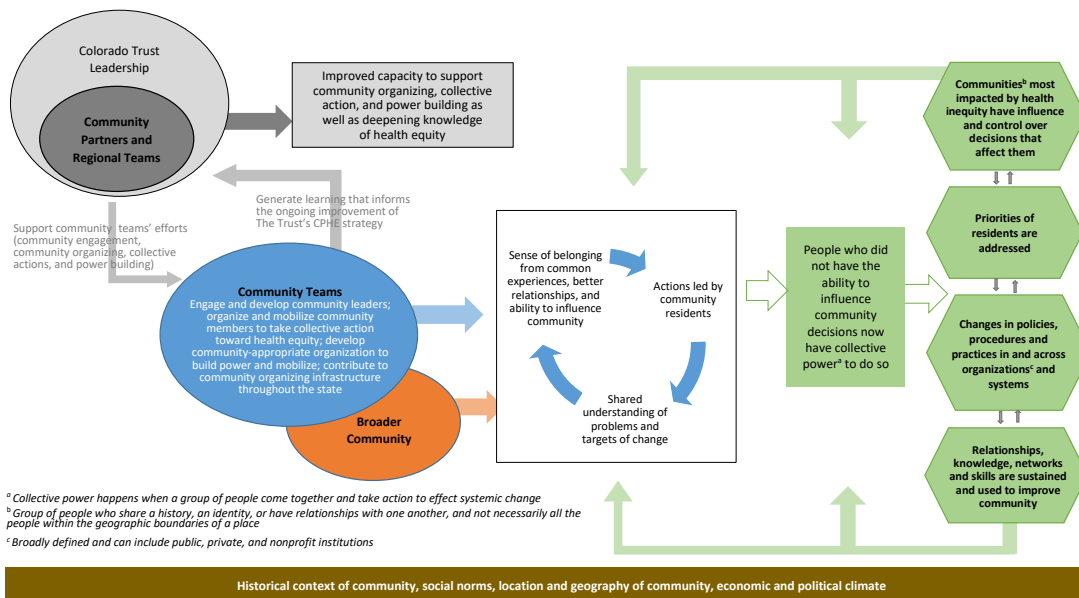
Learnings From the First Five Years

The many challenges, rewards, and learnings from the first five years of CPHE have been continuous, often painful, and always valuable. Despite the tensions inherent in ongoing learning and reflection and the changes in the work we have experienced, The Trust remains deeply committed to the CPHE strategy and its goal of building power in communities to achieve health equity. This section describes some of the prominent lessons learned from the phased approach that helped inform our current approach to the strategy as we move into the next five years.

Lesson No. 1: Clarify ‘Resident Led’ vs. ‘Resident Informed’

The origin of the CPHE strategy came from our vision to fundamentally change the way the foundation operated: by creating direct relationships between The Trust and communities, rather than through nonprofits, and by shifting control and decision-making to communities. Because the original strategy, named Community Based Participatory Grantmaking (Csuti & Barley, 2016), did not resonate with

² Language justice is a practice that creates intentional multilingual spaces to ensure that everyone has the right to speak in the language they are most comfortable and that any one language is not prioritized over another.

FIGURE 1 Community Partnerships for Health Equity Pathway of Change

community members, strategy leadership began to talk about the work as “resident driven” or “resident led.”

We wanted to relate to communities differently than we had in the past, to build the strategy alongside communities, and to hear unrestrained ideas from residents about how to make change. For these reasons, we erred on the side of less formality and structure and more openness to new ways of doing things when we initially entered communities. But what was intended as authentically partnering with communities felt unclear and confusing to residents who had not interacted with foundations before. Many communities, tired of being “helped” by well-meaning outside groups, were distrustful of us coming in with a different approach. Often communities were trying to figure out what this work was about, just as we were. We were walking the fine line between trying to give some guidelines and parameters and being too prescriptive, all while trying to build the strategy and internal systems to support it in real time.

Residents quickly began to come up with requests that challenged our notion of

resident-led work. Could communities determine the amount of funding they received? Could they determine our organizational staffing and decisions? Would The Trust fund services that local government was responsible for? Would the foundation fund improvements to private property? Could the foundation build a recreation center? A sidewalk? If the work is resident led, why, they asked, do communities have to go through an established process with Community Partners?

It became clear very quickly that we were not willing or able to be resident led in all aspects of the foundation’s work, and that we needed to communicate clearer parameters around what could be resident-led versus resident-informed. While there were certain aspects of the work that were resident led (e.g., determining team agreements and decision-making processes, defining which community issues to work on and their solutions), there were also many things that were resident informed. For example, while residents led the process of identifying the issues they wanted to address, often the proposed solutions were resident informed, with The Trust ultimately having influence over what was

funded. Or, while residents could select community evaluators or make requests for particular training or support around learning and evaluation, they could not themselves decide whether there would be an evaluation.

It also became clear that we needed to better align the resident-driven framework with our organizational vision of how to achieve health equity. Since the beginning of the strategy, we strived to build capacity and knowledge in communities around health equity, but in mid-2017, we shifted the focus to building power in communities to achieve health equity, which then became the explicit goal of the CPHE strategy. We built a pathway of change around power building, with long-term outcomes:

1. Communities most impacted by health inequity have influence and control over decisions that affect them.
2. Priorities of residents are addressed.
3. Changes are made in policies, procedures, and practices in and across organizations and systems.
4. Relationships, networks, knowledge, and skills are sustained and used to improve community. (See Figure 1.)

Evaluation interviews with community residents revealed the impacts of the early lack of clarity from The Trust on the strategy goals, roles, and parameters. Residents asked for a clearer, more streamlined process, with structures and supports in place. In response, The Trust set more explicit goals and milestones for each phase of the work and expectations for health equity alignment for community issues and solutions.

Lesson No. 2: Building Relationships, Structures, and Capacity Is Critical

Working directly with community members who were largely unfamiliar with foundations and had not previously engaged in this type of work was an early challenge. This was fundamentally different than working with nonprofits

While the strategy team began to roll out tools and trainings on health equity and programmatic tools around issue selection, root cause analysis, solutions research, etc., it became clear that there was also a different set of capacities needed for this work — technical capacities like meeting facilitation and conflict resolution, as well as knowledge and skills necessary to work with The Trust, such as creating documentation and working with budgets.

that are familiar with foundations, their culture and practices, and are poised to receive funding. Foundation staff were also not used to working directly with residents. We very intentionally focused on resident team members who were not nonprofit leaders or formal power holders. Consequently, residents needed more time to understand philanthropy and to build relationships with each other as they stepped onto newly formed teams together. Often, there were interpersonal conflicts on teams that mirrored racial, ethnic, and other dynamics of the community at large, and they needed to be addressed.

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with The Trust, such as creating documentation and working with budgets.

Just as relationships needed to be built within community teams, relationships and trust also needed to be built between the Community Partner — a foundation staff member — and community members. The prospect of a resident-driven strategy that was funded by an unknown foundation seemed too good to be true, and residents were skeptical. Residents were hesitant to get into a community planning process without seeing some demonstration of commitment from the foundation.

Although The Trust was most interested in the long-term equity plan in communities, we recognized the importance of demonstrating commitment. This resulted in what we called “short-term-win funding,” where communities were granted up to \$20,000 for smaller events like festivals and cleanups, and for such infrastructure improvements as solar-powered streetlights, a community garden, or a drinking fountain at the park. While this was intended as a way to show commitment and build trust, interviews with community members showed that these short-term wins were extremely important to communities. They demonstrated not only that the foundation was serious, but perhaps more importantly, also showed the broader community that resident teams were credible and would be working to bring change to their communities through this partnership. It also was a clear indicator to The Trust of the community’s need to take action earlier, rather than sitting in an extended planning period — a lesson that would become prominent in our revision of the model.

The Trust needed a mechanism for funding community groups that did not have a tax-exempt or nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. The Trust’s decision to contract with one central fiscal sponsor, as opposed to several regional or community groups, created consistency in the strategy but also added a complicated layer of

role coordination as this new partner entered the work. Resident teams put their processes and structures in place and hired staff,³ through the fiscal sponsor, to support the work. The fiscal sponsor then managed personnel, budgets, human resources, and liabilities on behalf of the community. This meant that teams selected staff to support their work who then needed to meet a set of requirements set out by the fiscal sponsor, and for whom a staffing relationship was managed by the fiscal sponsor. The foundation and fiscal sponsor also required a full-time coordinator position to serve as a point person for the work. While this coordinator was selected by the resident team, the position itself was non-negotiable and was funded through the grant to the community. These serve as further examples of resident-informed, and not resident-led, processes. While The Trust talked about its desire for resident-led work, we were making decisions that impacted the structures and staffing of the CPHE communities. Ultimately, the needs of the foundation to have consistent structures and systems in place came into conflict with desire to be truly resident driven.

The nuanced issues that we came up against in these first five years ranged from the liability associated with funding community events that included such things as pony rides and bouncy houses, child care, and food provision, to intense interpersonal conflicts and human resources issues. With each situation, the need for more structure and clarity became more apparent. As much as we wanted to create structures and processes that were simple, streamlined, and grassroots, this was difficult to do in practice, given the legal restrictions of a private foundation and the complexities of doing community work. The Trust did bend, adapt, and shift in important ways over these five years. However, we were not equipped as an organization to support resident-driven work to the extent that we wanted, and did not anticipate the vastness of issues we would need to confront.

³ Project staffing depended on the region and community, and included a variation of part-time, full-time, temporary, and grant-funded staff.

Lesson No. 3: Engaging the Most Impacted Is Difficult — and Essential

The CPHE strategy at its core is both a place-based and people-based approach to grantmaking. Patterns of disinvestment in low-income communities and communities of color have resulted in disparities in access to health-promoting resources. Structural inequities are the result of power and resources being organized differentially across lines of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, and other dimensions of individual and group identity (Baciu, Negussie, Geller, & Weinstein, 2017).

From the outset, CPHE sought to partner with people in communities who experience adverse impact and treatment (unintentional and intentional discrimination) in their everyday lives. By focusing on equity, we knew early on that who we were working with in communities was as important as where we were working, how we were working, and what we were working on. It was crucial to engage those most impacted by inequities in the process of defining community issues and solutions, but this proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Some resident teams began with a cross-section of community members that didn't include those most impacted by systemic inequities, hoping to recruit others later. However, these individuals were difficult for teams to recruit and retain, and those most impacted by systemic inequities often struggled within teams to advocate for their interests. The length of the process and time commitment also presented a barrier to participation. Community health-equity plans were focused on populations that experience inequities, but the level of participation of those individuals in the decision-making process varied. Community Partners struggled with this issue throughout the five years, trying different tactics to recruit, retain, and center those most impacted by issues in the work.

One approach was to seek out and form relationships with informal leaders in communities of identity, and train those leaders early to lead aspects of the work rather than the foundation staff. This proved successful

in some communities. Another approach to recruit those most impacted by inequities was to pay them for their participation in the work. Once again, however, we experienced a gap between our commitment to honor the effort and participation of residents, and the execution of that commitment. We wanted to use monetary payments, with CPs and resident teams able to decide their structure for resident compensation. But teams across the state set up different systems for payment and had different expectations among team members around meeting attendance, responsibilities of the team members to receive payment, and so forth. It greatly increased workload for Trust staff, who managed all of the payments, and created tension across CPHE communities when they learned of different payment amounts in different communities. We shifted to a consistent and streamlined tiered-payment system with three levels of monthly payment depending on the level of resident participation, however, the practices remained inconsistent across regions and a challenge to manage. Regardless of how they were implemented, resident payments were controversial on the resident teams as well as within The Trust.

Payments at times created internal animosity on resident teams when people would not show up for all meetings but got paid nonetheless. Strategy staff at The Trust debated whether payments fostered community-mindedness in the right way. Most critical of all, despite exhaustive efforts we were unable to figure out how to pay everyone who participated in the work — including those who were undocumented or who were on public benefits and faced a cliff effect wherein they would lose public benefits because of the small increase in earnings for participating. Given the equity focus of this work, this reality was difficult for The Trust to accept. Ultimately, we made the difficult decision to end resident payments until we could find an alternative that met the needs of the diverse residents who participate in the CPHE work. Although most teams remained engaged, some lower-income residents left when that strong incentive for participation ended; their departure shifted the demographics of the teams

The phased approach to the CPHE work was a response to requests from both the Community Partners and resident team members for clarity. While it was responsive to that request, it was implemented while work was already in process.

and was a further setback to engaging those most impacted by inequities. In some communities, alternative approaches to compensation were piloted, such as a central pool of funding from the foundation based on participation that residents could then grant to partners (i.e., a donor-advised fund) or use for local projects. These had varied levels of success.

Lesson No. 4: Community Change Is Not Linear

The phased approach to the CPHE work was a response to requests from both the Community Partners and resident team members for clarity. While it was responsive to that request, it was implemented while work was already in process. We were forming the strategy as we were carrying it out, rather than forming it to meet our long-term vision of building power to achieve health equity. We were also working within a framework that foundations know well — planning and implementation grants.

Resident teams told us they appreciated the clarity of the phases and being able to see where they were going in the process. However, they were frustrated that the process took so long; many residents understandably did not want to sit at a table planning for many months. Some team members who had joined because they wanted to do things for their community got frustrated and left the team. While it is inevitable that this work is not for everyone — it is hard, long-term

work, with a lot of relationship building — we agreed that the process needed to be streamlined and was not accommodating community rhythms or how change takes place. Resident teams wanted to be taking action earlier, not only because of their own motivations, but also because they perceived skepticism in the broader community. The early actions that teams were able to take were important for both establishing trust in the foundation and gaining credibility with the broader community. It also helped resident teams practice making decisions together, planning, and spending money, even if the projects were small community actions or events.

The CPHE strategy was launched with eight communities that formed the first cohort, but new communities were continually entering the work. In each subsequent community, we adapted to streamline the process and add clarity, so some issues around timing of the phases were adjusted. However, it was clear to us that we needed to shift to an approach that centered action.

Lesson No. 5: The Strategy Demanded Dramatic, Unanticipated Shifts

Community Partnerships for Health Equity quickly became a cornerstone strategy of The Trust. From the outset, Trust leadership made the difficult decision to restructure staffing to best support the work we were trying to do in communities (Csuti & Barley, 2016). We knew at the time that this decision would make waves in the organization, but we did not anticipate the extent to which the CPHE strategy would set off changes in the foundation — in every department, at every level, and perhaps most of all, culturally. Notions among foundation leadership of what the work could or should look like often came into conflict with CPs' approaches. There was a culture clash between CPs who had largely been hired because of their community-mindedness, community experience, and positionality outside of philanthropy. This exemplified the chasm we were trying to breach in shifting to community-driven work. The coming together of these two perspectives would take time, careful attention, and a

continual building and repairing of trust over the next five years.

Not all of the structural changes that took place were required to implement a strategy like CPHE, but all were necessary to do it well. At times, it felt as if the strategy itself was pulling the organization along. To the credit of Trust leadership and board, with each challenge the strategy presented to the organization there was an openness and willingness to make change, and the commitment to the strategy deepened.

Beyond the hiring of CPs, there were other major shifts. Total foundation staff increased in size by 82% in 12 months, and we grew from one central office in Denver to nine offices throughout the state. The strategy also used contractors for facilitation, training, note taking, data analysis, evaluation, etc., on an as-needed basis. In 12 months, consultant contracts increased in dollar value by 295%. Clearly, considerable resources were dedicated to supporting the strategy. New practices, policies, and structures within The Trust were needed to support these changes.

The sharp increase in the number of staff and their diverse skills and experiences fundamentally shifted the composition and culture of the organization. It increased the appetite for community power-building work and deepened our understanding of what it takes. At the same time, the increase, along with inconsistencies in positions, skill sets, and hours across regions, was a management challenge. More changes would need to take place for the second five years to be successful.

Creating the Community Partnership Organizing Strategy

The central vision of the CPHE strategy — building community power to achieve health equity — remains unchanged, but lessons from the past five years have led The Trust to pivot to a new approach for achieving that vision. Community organizing is central to this next

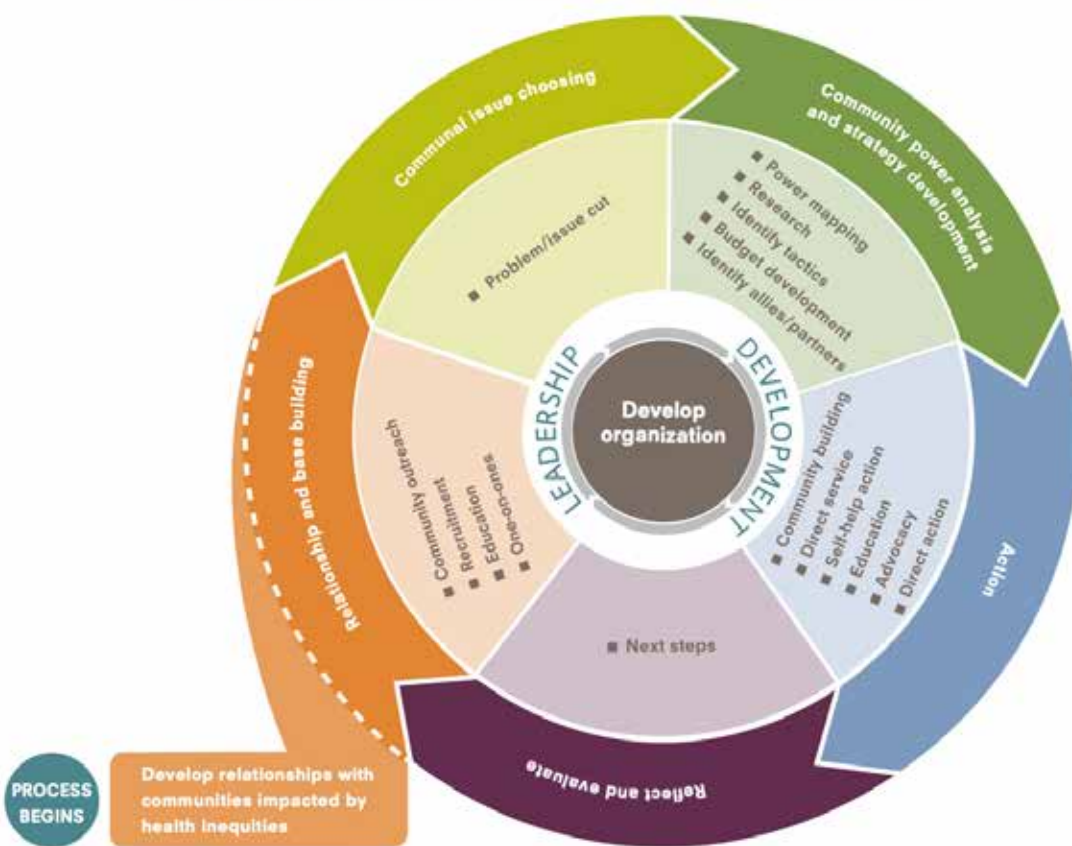
Community Partnerships for Health Equity quickly became a cornerstone strategy of The Trust. From the outset, Trust leadership made the difficult decision to restructure staffing to best support the work we were trying to do in communities.

iteration, called the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy. The foundation has again restructured staffing to eliminate several positions that existed in the phased approach and add new staff positions to support the strategy. Aligning position descriptions and onboarding processes allowed for a consistency across regions and communities that did not exist in the phased approach.

The Community Partner continues to oversee strategy in the region where they live and work. Each manages a regional team that now includes a senior community organizer, community organizers (one per community), and a project administrator,⁴ all full-time staff of the foundation.

Community organizers in each CPHE community support the development of a group of seven to 11 grassroots community leaders to organize around health equity issues in their community and create a durable organization, networks, and partnerships across the state to pursue systemic change. These leaders have personal experience with equity issues facing the community and their participation is not based on professional roles. While they do receive an honorarium for participation, the honorarium system allows residents to designate all or a portion of the amount to a nonprofit of their

⁴ Not all are new staff; some have shifted from previous roles in the phased approach.

FIGURE 2 Community Partnerships Organizing Cycle

This organizing cycle is not original to The Colorado Trust. It is a variation on many similar organizing cycles that have been developed in the field of grassroots community organizing over the course of the last 50 years.

choosing if accepting payment is problematic. A memorandum of understanding with The Trust outlines the responsibilities to be met to receive the honorarium.

Using the community partnerships organizing cycle as a guide (see Figure 2), these teams work together to prioritize local health equity issues. While communities may choose to work on similar issues, each develops a plan that is specific to their community's unique context, history, and environment. For example, a number of communities have prioritized safe access to parks and recreation; yet each has approached the issue differently: Some have organized and leveraged funding from other foundations to build

park spaces, while others sought to persuade city government to invest municipal resources.

Currently, 27 staff have been hired into the organization for the CPHE strategy. As new communities enter into partnership with The Trust, additional organizers will be hired. At its maximum, the strategy will have 42 full-time staff across the state, and the organization as a whole will have about 65 full-time employees. This is in contrast to 25 full-time staff at the foundation prior to the CPHE strategy, none of whom were remote staff.

As in the phased approach, the foundation has grappled with this high number of staff to support one strategy. In philanthropy, this can often

read as supporting overhead and operations over direct investment in community. However, strategy and foundation leadership have committed to this investment in human capital as crucial to the community organizing approach and its long-term success. As an investment in people and their ability to organize more people, ideas, and resources to build power, it is central to the foundation's commitment to health equity.

In contrast to the first five years, the new approach was led by the CPs, with particular influence from those who had community organizing experience and had already been using organizing tactics in their CPHE work. It clearly lays out goals and tactics of the strategy up front, as well as the cyclical approach to the work. (See Figure 2.)

Goal No. 1: Support community organizers in developing leaders in communities.

- Hire and work with community organizers to identify and develop leaders in partnering communities.
- Work with community leaders to identify and develop, through training and/or practice, the core competencies of community organizing, such as relationship building, issue selection, issue research, action, and evaluation.
- Support leaders in creating and identifying leadership development opportunities for other people in the organization rooted in self-interest.
- Partner with local, regional, and national grassroots organizations to provide training and support for community leaders.
- Provide honorariums to value contributions of a defined core group of community leaders.

Goal No. 2: Support communities to take collective action to change the policies, practices, and living environments in and across places, organizations, and systems.

- Work with communities to develop a strategy and tactics to achieve shared short-term and long-term goals.
- Leverage funds, social capital, and resources from The Colorado Trust to support resident actions.
- Support residents in taking a variety of actions, and direct funds to advance their goals.

Goal No. 3: There is a durable, community-appropriate organization in place to build power and mobilize resources beyond the investment of The Colorado Trust: recruit people, develop leaders, gather information and organize the money needed to accomplish the goals.

- Support communities to develop a structure, including defining community, mission, vision, goals and strategy, values and group norms, issues focus, leadership, staffing and volunteers, and decision-making processes.
- Support communities to determine an appropriate, durable fiscal structure and legal status.
- Support practices to promote ongoing improvement via evaluation and strategic learning.

Goal No. 4: Support communities in being a meaningful part of an organizing infrastructure that is being built regionally and across the state.

- Contribute to the pool of skilled, trained organizers across the state by ensuring that the partnership's community leaders have the qualifications to be employable community organizers as the infrastructure gains strength.
- Build greater alignment with other foundation strategies and organizations through shared training, agenda alignment, capacity building, leadership development, and policy advocacy.

The Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy builds on the successes of the phase approach and learns from its failures. The CPHE strategy evaluation revealed an increased sense of empowerment, agency, and efficacy among community members who participated in the strategy.

- Support the partnership's community leaders in building networks and aligned agendas with community organizing and advocacy groups across the region. Tighter networks across the state increases the likelihood of achieving wins that significantly improve people's lives and closes the health equity gap.

The process that community teams will go through has been clearly laid out and visualized by the CPs. This cycle, based on community organizing approaches that have existed for decades, adapts tried and true elements of organizing to The Trust's philanthropic context. One such adaptation from a typical, direct-action organizing approach is expanding the spectrum of community actions that could be supported by the foundation to include those that The Trust has not historically funded, and in recognition of the diversity of Colorado's communities and their readiness to engage in organizing. While grants to nonprofits remain a prominent approach to making community change under this model, there has been a shift in who drives this process. Community members now decide when and why a grant is needed, the amount and length of the grant, and to which trusted partner the grant should go in order to accomplish the community's goals.

Why This Pivot, and Why Now?

The Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy builds on the successes of the phase approach and learns from its failures. The CPHE strategy evaluation revealed an increased sense of empowerment, agency, and efficacy among community members who participated in the strategy. Communities continue to have a number of successes. Team members have felt empowered to run for — and have been elected to — local positions of power. Resident teams have worked to expand the number of candidates on a local ballot, increased parent engagement in the selection of a school superintendent, created new opportunities for youth, closed technology gaps, funded programs to fill service gaps, created new partnerships, and convened stakeholders, among other achievements. The prior work of resident teams built trust with the broader community and laid the groundwork for teams to respond quickly and effectively when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Colorado. The evaluation of CPHE to date has uncovered key wins around resident-identified priorities, shifts in local systems, and the ability of people most impacted by inequities to have greater control over decisions that affect them. Teams will no doubt continue to add to, and deepen, their accomplishments in the remaining years of implementation.

However, the Community Partnership Organizing Strategy makes explicit the focus on not only individual skills, leadership, and empowerment, but on building collective power — what happens when a group of people come together and take action and effect systemic change. We are investing in community organizing as the approach to help communities intentionally build collective power and make systemic change more effectively, and believe that this will be a more direct approach.

The cycle is action-oriented, emphasizing learning through continuous action, in opposition to the linear-phase approach that separated the planning and implementation process. Actions can be big or small, and include:

- *community building actions* — building relationships and expanding the base of the support network and network of influence in the community;
- *direct service actions* — doing something for the community, such as making grants to nonprofits to help groups address an issue residents are concerned about or to provide a needed good or service that is currently unavailable or inadequate;
- *self-help actions* — communities working toward supporting themselves, including making the decisions about how this is best achieved;
- *education* — learning about an issue through forums, workshops, etc.;
- *advocacy* — speaking on behalf of self-and/others; and
- *direct actions* — persuading a target to move with a specific engagement, request, confrontation, or demand, and shifting existing power structures.

In contrast to the phase approach, communities will draw upon action funding, administered by the foundation, depending on the size and scope of their proposed action. This is in contrast to the set amount of grant funding across each CPHE community, which was administered through a fiscal sponsor.

The new approach directly lays out a goal (No. 3) around the development of a durable community-appropriate organization, which could take a variety of forms (e.g., strengthening or joining an aligned organization, working through a fiscal sponsor, becoming a 501(c)(3), creating a donor advised fund, building a coalition). This makes clear the pathway for sustainability in a way that the phased approach did not. It also makes way for achieving Goal No. 4 — partnerships, networks, and coalition building that are necessary for systemic change, particularly in smaller communities.

In many ways, the pivot to the new approach is a natural deepening of the CPHE work of the foundation. While the CPs and strategy team needed to learn through experiences in communities, The Trust also needed to learn what it takes to support this work well.

In many ways, the pivot to the new approach is a natural deepening of the CPHE work of the foundation. While the CPs and strategy team needed to learn through experiences in communities, The Trust also needed to learn what it takes to support this work well. Five years ago, it was not ready to center and support community organizing in the CPHE strategy. This is likely for a variety of reasons, including a lack of understanding about community organizing and how it could be applied to a philanthropic context. It has also been an ongoing process to come to terms with the at-times controversial nature of community organizing, in which upsetting the status quo is a core tactic. Turnover in key leadership positions at the board and executive levels opened the door for more peer leadership and a deeper understanding of community organizing to create organizational readiness for this new approach.

Conclusion

This evolution is not complete, and The Trust will continue to learn from the communities that continue in the phase approach as well as those who are part of the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy approach. The tensions we are grappling with now differ from those of the past five years, but the tensions will always exist.

Currently, we are learning what it means to center community organizing within a foundation.

This includes not only the legal and fiscal limitations of what private foundations like The Trust are able to do, but also what the appetite is among foundation leadership for the ways that communities might push and challenge power holders. We are learning how to leverage our power to effectively resource the action cycle and to show up in support of CPHE communities when we need to. While the CPHE strategy began with a vision of sharing power with communities, it has evolved to include both building power in communities and wielding power in support of communities.

We have a challenge ahead of supporting a large number of communities, some of whom are following the phase approach and some of whom will be using the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy. This is in addition to many other ways that the CPHE communities with whom we partner are diverse (e.g., racially and ethnically, historically, in population size and density, politically, culturally). The new approach that amplifies organizing tactics, partnerships, and coalition building may be more challenging to get off the ground in some communities than others.

The work of the past five years has never felt settled. Operating in the space of constant tension, reflection, and change can be exhausting for strategy staff, for communities, and for the foundation. As we stated in the 2016 article, “It’s not easy for us. It’s not easy for residents. It’s certainly not keeping us in our comfort zone” (Caustic & Barley, 2016, p. 80). Yet, we believe that this is the slow, long-term work that needs to be done to see equitable community change. The relationships we have been able to build with communities in Colorado and the impacts of the strategy over the past five years are what keep us going. Despite the tensions, challenges, and failures of the past five years, we remain committed, asking: “What if it does work?”

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Delusional Altruism:

Why Philanthropists Fail To Achieve Change and What They Can Do To Transform Giving

Book Review by Steve Wilson

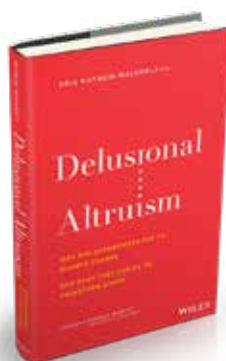
*No one buys a book entitled **Delusional Altruism** unless they recognize they might be making some mistakes and genuinely want to fix them.*

— Author Kris Putnam-Walkerly

Nearly everything but its title suggests *Delusional Altruism* is about the transformative role effective grantmaking can play in community life. Kris Putnam-Walkerly's book is partly a study of what happens when the best altruistic impulse gets mired in unintended consequences. Yet mostly it's a study in recognizing delusion's clever disguises, especially within the confines of institutional philanthropy, and offers dozens of strategies to turn good intentions into equitable and meaningful impacts.

Subtitled, *Why Philanthropists Fail to Achieve Change and What they Can do To Transform Giving*, these 256 pages show the reader how the journey of transformative grantmaking is most often a bumpy ride obstructed by mistaken assumptions, shiny objects and asking misguided questions. Putnam-Walkerly unpacks what happens when professionals in philanthropy are blinded by delusions like "Donor Distraction Disorder," with symptoms ranging from chasing philanthropic squirrels to getting pulled apart from within. She then contrasts that delusion with transformational suggestions, such as, stepping back to ask yourself and your team, "What are all the ways we can do this?"

Delusional Altruism is filled with clever phrases like "strap on your systems change goggles" and "create aerodynamic funding." The author's



Delusional Altruism: Why Philanthropists Fail To Achieve Change and What They Can Do To Transform Giving

Kris Putnam-Walkerly

Wiley, 2020

ISBN: 978-1-1196-06062

description of delusions such as "complexifying the simple, rather than simplifying the complex" are designed to make you laugh at the truth, whether you're a foundation program officer or CEO.

Other books on this compelling and timely topic come out of the behavioral sciences or are more academically based. *Delusional Altruism* is written in the form of a contemporary management book, filled with stories, interviews and brief case histories drawn from the author's 20-year career as a global philanthropy advisor. The jargon-free clarity of her voice is welcomed and very readable.

Topping Putnam-Walkerly's list of seven delusions is the scarcity mindset, which she effectively contrasts with the abundance mindset. For instance, Chapter Seven, "You Ask the Wrong Questions," is followed by a chapter entitled, "You Start with the Right Questions," that kicks off the largest section in the book, focused on Transformational Giving. The first of those right questions is "Why?" giving a nod to Simon Sinek's recent bestseller, *Start with Why*. Right question number three is "What Do I Know Already?" and is illustrative of the scarcity vs. abundance tension, pointing out that funders often run at such an intense pace they fail to pause and reflect upon what they already know.

Given philanthropy's hundreds of billions of dollars in endowments in the United States alone, one might easily believe the abundance mindset would be prevalent among philanthropists and their staff. Yet the author asserts just the opposite is true:

Many people naturally assume that wealthy people, foundation leaders, and celebrities feel abundance. And we assume their mind-set reflects this abundance. After all, they have big money, big ideas and often big passion. While it's true that the do have an abundance of resources and desire to do good, that doesn't mean that they themselves have a corresponding abundance mindset. Instead, they often feel guilty about investing in themselves, their organizations, and their philanthropy. Their mind-set is one of scarcity, not abundance.

An eight-question Scarcity Mindset Quiz in the first chapter points out how that mindset is revealed in workplace cultures valuing working harder, not smarter, or failing to make regular investments in talent, or too frequently asking "What's the cheapest way we can do this?" True to the form of widely esteemed management books by Peter Drucker, Jim Collins, and Patrick Lencioni, *Delusional Altruism* is framed around dozens of descriptive lists like these:

- Six ways philanthropists are overwhelmed
- 13 examples of bad behavior in philanthropy
- Two signs you suffer from donor distraction disorder
- Beginning with 12 "right" questions
- Nine ways to get time back in your day
- Seven steps you can take today

The author addresses equity as a critical component of transformative philanthropy, with several references to helpful guides, like Annie E. Casey Foundation's (2015) *Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide*, and reference to discussions with nonprofit equity advisor Maggie Potopchuk. Yet equity is noticeably absent in the book's the first 78 pages, focused on delusions. Is

not one of our greatest delusions denying philanthropy's long history of entanglement with wealth, power, and the deeply embedded structures of racism within our communities and our philanthropic institutions? Directly addressing delusions around race and philanthropy could be strengthened with an interview or case histories of BIPOC foundation staff discussing the overt and covert pressures they experience as a part of mainstream philanthropic cultures.

Always present throughout the book is the deep knowledge and optimism of the author's engaging personal voice. For instance, when talking about philanthropy's worst behaviors, she suggests, "Look, I love a gossipy tidbit just like everyone else, but that's not what this book is about." *Delusional Altruism* devotes more than 150 pages to addressing altruism's seven delusions by lifting up the seven contrasting traits of transformative giving, which are:

1. You start with the right questions
2. You see and act abundantly
3. You are fast
4. You transform lives
5. You are unstoppable
6. You found your North Star
7. You do what it takes

Here is where Putnam-Walkerly's passion for transformational giving really shines, with specific transformative suggestions, such as encouraging funders to make a strategic sprint, by offering seven-week or seven-hour approaches to strategy formulation. Or how to declutter the grant application process to speed up the work of transformation.

This book is written for those who show up every day to do the work of philanthropy, whether that be a staffer at one the world's largest foundations, or a small-town community foundation with a staff of two. CEOs seeking

to pivot their organizations by adopting 21st century best practices, will find the well-framed steps ready to be put into action. Those who are newer to the field will find the suggestions encouraging and practical. *Delusional Altruism* will also be helpful for trustees involved in the governance of foundations on behalf of their family or community; or when setting up a corporate foundation for the first time. Nonprofit leaders, especially development officers, may draw upon the book's insights as they engage with the program staff of their funders:

Pure and simple, delusional altruism prevents philanthropists from being as fabulous, catalytic, and impactful as they can be. Now is the time to take a deep look within yourself and within your organization to see if the seeds of delusional altruism have begun to sprout. The key is to act — and act now.

Kris Putnam-Walkerly has effectively captured the insights, the encouragement, and the humor of her presentations honed over 20 years in advising grantmaking organizations around the world. *Delusional Altruism* is a sensible and pragmatic guide for philanthropists that points the way to transformational giving.

To learn more, visit <https://putnam-consulting.com/delusional-altruism>.

Steve Wilson is a member of The Grantmaking School faculty and senior advisor at the Council of Michigan Foundations. He previously served as president of both the Frey Foundation and the Ruth Mott Foundation, and has been a leader in strategic philanthropy and community engagement in the state of Michigan for decades.

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Shifting Power in Maine: Findings From a Six-Year Community-Based Health Initiative

Susan Foster, M.P.H., M.S.S.W., S.E. Foster Associates; Teresa Doksum, Ph.D., M.P.H., Independent Consultant; and Charles Dwyer, B.A., Maine Health Access Foundation

Between 2013 and 2019, Maine Health Access Foundation provided place-based funding to communities to address systems issues that impede the ability of Maine's most vulnerable individuals to obtain essential services and supports. This article presents findings and lessons learned from an evaluation and learning process that spanned five of six years of the initiative. Key findings support the original theory that partnerships contribute to effective systems change and that community-generated ideas spark innovative interventions. The foundation shares what they learned about shifting power away from the funder and closer to the community, how those lessons have informed its current strategy, and what implications this has for philanthropy more broadly.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1561

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Walking the Talk in Participatory Philanthropy

Megan Meyer, Ph.D., University of Maryland; Emily Goering, Ph.D., Kaye Implementation & Evaluation; Karen Hopkins, Ph.D., University of Maryland; Cheryl Hyde, Ph.D., Temple University; Nicole Mattocks, Ph.D., University of Maryland; and Jonalyn Denlinger, M.B.A., J Denlinger Consulting

Foundations have implemented a variety of new grantmaking practices to increase community engagement and beneficiary voice in funding decisions. This article examines the participatory grantmaking process of a Baltimore, Maryland, community foundation that invested \$1.5 million in an initiative to support community-building and improvement activities in two communities. Based on qualitative data gathered over the five years of the initiative, this article offers some initial insights into how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of participatory grantmaking, and begins to address the critical importance of foundations that are carefully considering the implications of their funding methods.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1562

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(In)equality Through Unrestricted Grantmaking: Examining Trust and Power in the Collaboration Between the Dutch Charity Lotteries and Their Grantees

Olivier Hunnik, M.A., and Arjen de Wit, Ph.D., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; and Pamala Wiepking, Ph.D., Indiana University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Since 1989, the Dutch Charity Lotteries have provided multiyear unrestricted funding to a wide range of nonprofits at home and abroad. This article shares insights into how unrestricted grantmaking influences the relationship between funders and grantees. It discusses hidden and invisible power dynamics that exist in the relationship, even when there are few formal restrictions on grantees' spending. Relaxing formal restrictions gives rise to some uncertainty about what grantees actually have to "prove." This article offers suggestions for how foundations can try to detect and consider expectations that are explicit and implicit, conscious and unconscious, and address these to ensure a more equal collaboration.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1563

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Strategy Resilience: Getting Wise About Philanthropic Strategy in a Post-Pandemic World

Jewlya Lynn, Ph.D., PolicySolve; Clare Nolan, M.P.P., Engage R+D; and Peter Waring, M.A., Ridgeway Information

Drawing on case examples, the authors propose five elements of resilient philanthropic strategies: They release control over pathways and outcomes; support networks rather than solutions; address systems, not symptoms; focus on transformative over transactional capacity; and align philanthropic power to supplement, not supplant. Recognizing that COVID-19 is only one of many disruptions our world is likely to face, this article seeks to offer a new way of thinking about strategy resilience that centers people and organizations instead of the power of financial resources. At the core of this theory is the assumption that given today's complexities, philanthropy must use its power differently — releasing control over organizations and their change strategies while using its unique position, reach, and voice to work in solidarity with community leaders.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1564

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Holding Foundations Accountable for Equity Commitments

Tanya Beer, M.P.A., Center for Evaluation Innovation; Patricia Patrizi, M.S.S., Patrizi Associates; and Julia Coffman, M.S., Center for Evaluation Innovation

In recent years, foundations of all types and sizes have made commitments to advance racial equity and justice. But good intentions can be undermined by the strategic and administrative structures and processes that shape foundation decisions. This article examines how foundation strategy, evaluation, grantee reporting, and monitoring processes have allowed foundations to retain their power and sidestep direct accountability to the people and communities they say they want to serve. Without substantial shifts in decision-making power and how they act in relation to others, foundations may be making equity and justice promises that they ultimately will be unable to keep.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1565

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Youth and the Juvenile Court System: A Community Foundation's Commitment to Integrating Voice and Community Expertise

Michael A. Yonas, Ph.D., and Jennifer C. Sloan, M.P.H., Pittsburgh Foundation; Anna Hollis, B.A., Amachi Pittsburgh; Tiffany Sizemore, J.D., Duquesne University School of Law; Kathi Elliott, D.N.P., Gwen's Girls; Michelle McMurray, M.S.W., Pittsburgh Foundation; and Jeanne Pearlman, Ph.D., Pittsburgh Foundation

The Youth Voices Juvenile Justice Pilot project sought to learn from youth who have first-hand knowledge of the juvenile court system and from those at risk of such an experience to inform the foundation's efforts to improve outcomes for youth. To ensure solutions were driven by affected youth instead of the foundation's own agenda, discussion groups empowered young people to reflect on events that impacted their lives, on their hopes and dreams for the future, and on ways the juvenile court system can listen to their voices and respond with meaningful changes. Recommendations on school discipline reforms, greater access to diversion and prevention programs, and changes to court-related fees, fines, and restitution policies informed the foundation's grantmaking. The project revealed the importance of respectfully listening to and learning from youth to understand the circumstances affecting the quality of their lives, and of ensuring that insights from youth will result in more effective models for change.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1566

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How to Encourage Sustainable Change: A Reflection on How Philanthropy Can Partner With Grantees to Build Organizational Capacity

Allison Dymnicki, Ph.D., American Institutes for Research; and Alex Hooker, B.A., and Rebecca Goldberg, B.S., S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation

In 2014, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation embarked on the National Character Initiative to support organizations seeking to advance character development among youth. The initiative sought to promote lasting change by focusing on building grantee capacity that was based largely on grantee priorities. This article highlights key findings from an evaluation of the foundation's approach by elevating the perspectives of grantees, foundation staff, and field experts who served as consultants. It discusses supports the foundation provided to grantees and three key transformational elements in capacity building: proactive and responsive technical assistance, a culture of learning, and opportunities for partnerships. The evaluation surfaced key lessons for grantmakers looking to embrace a capacity-building orientation and shift the traditional funder–grantee dynamic. Strategies discussed in this article can support long-term growth and sustained practices beyond the life of a grant that, ultimately, lead to improved outcomes for organizations and the people they serve.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1567

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The Revolution Within: What It Really Takes to Partner With Communities

Courtney Ricci, Ph.D., Nancy Csuti, Dr.P.H., and Mia Ramirez, M.P.H., The Colorado Trust

This article is a follow-up to an article in *The Foundation Review* published in October 2016, that described a new vision for grantmaking at The Colorado Trust that shifted power from the foundation to community residents. The Trust believed its Community Partnerships for Health Equity strategy would result in measurable change that was authentically planned, implemented, and led by residents of Colorado communities. This article describes the initial years of the strategy, which began with a phased approach to sharing power with communities, and how the lessons from those years led The Trust to pivot to a new approach. This next iteration, the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy, builds power in communities and wields power in support of communities. The Trust is still learning from the communities that continue in the phased approach as well as those who are part of the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy, and continues to go through internal transformations necessary to authentically engage in community change work.

DOI: 10.9707/1944-5660.1568

Call for Papers

FOR VOLUME 14, ISSUE 3

Abstracts of up to 250 words are being solicited for Volume 14, Issue 3 of *The Foundation Review*. This issue will be an open (unthemed) issue. Papers on any topic relevant to organized philanthropy are invited.

Submit abstracts to submissions@foundationreview.org by **August 31, 2021**. If a full paper is invited, it will be due March 31, 2022 for consideration for publication in September 2022.

Abstracts are solicited in four categories:

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

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Questions? Contact Teri Behrens, editor, at behrenst@foundationreview.org or (734) 646-2874.

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

www.thefoundationreview.org

ISSN 1944-5660 | eISSN 1944-5679