

The Foundation Review

Volume 13 | Issue 3

9-2021

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Peter C. Weber
Auburn University

Robert Long
Independent Fellow

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Recommended Citation

Weber, P. C., & Long, R. (2021). Assessing Philanthropic Impact: How the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Building Bridges Initiative Supported the Field of Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies. *The Foundation Review*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1578>

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Assessing Philanthropic Impact: How the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Building Bridges Initiative Supported the Field of Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies

Peter C. Weber, Ph.D., Auburn University, and Robert Long, Ph.D., Independent Fellow

Keywords: *W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Building Bridges Initiative, integrated impact services, nonprofit management education, nonprofit academic center*

Introduction

The Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) was a \$13.5 million, five-year (1997–2002) W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) program that aimed to increase the capacity of the U.S. nonprofit sector by funding nonprofit academic centers and programs. The initiative was grounded in the assumption that deeper understanding, better-prepared leadership, stronger organizations, and effective support systems would improve the sector's impact on the quality of life across local and national communities.

This study retrospectively evaluates the BBI 20 years after its end. While a growing literature investigates the growth of nonprofit management education (NME), the role of foundation funding is largely ignored. This article fills this gap by assessing BBI's impact — that is, whether the broad goals of the initiative were accomplished. This investigation is crucial at a time when higher education is increasingly relying on external funding and early funders of NME have moved away from funding individual programs in favor of larger infrastructure organizations or specific teaching approaches (e.g., experiential philanthropy). The retrospective evaluation offers lessons on the potentials and limits of private foundations' engagement with emerging academic disciplines.

The next section describes the background of the BBI by presenting the challenges facing the nonprofit sector in the 1990s and the BBI's design in its effort to address these challenges. That

Key Points

- In the 1990s, nonprofit management education was an emerging discipline with few established academic centers seeking to increase connectivity, build out the field, and gain financial sustainability. While organized philanthropy supported this development, foundations' impact on individual programs and the field more broadly is unclear.
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Building Bridges Initiative, a \$13.5 million, five-year program to fund nonprofit academic centers as a strategy to increase the nonprofit sector's capacity, exemplifies the potentials and limits of a private foundation's engagement with emerging academic disciplines. This article assesses the long-term sustainability of grant investments and to what degree successful projects were integrated into the ongoing operation of universities, and examines the achievements and limitations of this philanthropic effort.

(continued on next page)

is followed by a description of the evaluation methodology, a discussion of results and key findings, and an articulation of key implications for future practice.

Background

Nonprofit organizations operated in a significantly changed environment in the 1980s and

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Key Points (continued)

- This analysis finds that the initiative advanced the institutionalization of nonprofit management education by legitimizing grantees both within and outside universities, supporting program delivery and expansion, and fostering collaborative networks. However positive those outcomes, the strategy raises broader issues concerning philanthropic impact, as grantees struggled to ensure long-term sustainability, connections to practice, and expanding the field beyond U.S. borders.
- This study is intended to help foundations understand their impact on large-scale institutions like universities and colleges as well as on narrowly focused program areas. It concludes by offering alternative strategies for collaboration between the foundation sector and academia.

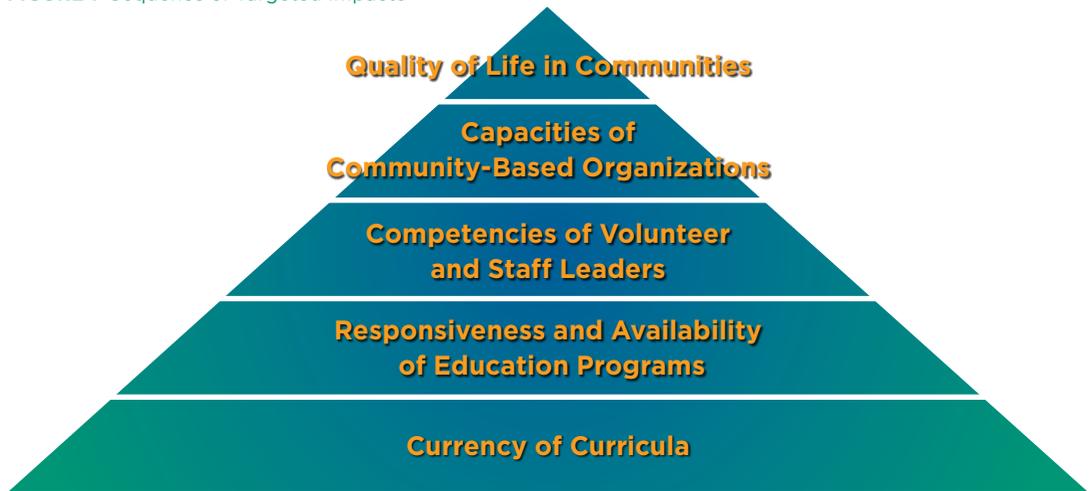
Private philanthropy participated in a loosely coupled but coordinated response to these challenges, funding NME following earlier investments in infrastructure organizations like Independent Sector and the Foundation Center.

Since the 1980s, shifts in federal spending, advances in technology, and changing demographics and income distribution altered the relationship between the nonprofit sector and government. Declining government funding and demands for effectiveness pressured the sector to seek alternative revenue sources and increase efficiency, creating a disconnect between the reality of a professionalizing nonprofit sector and the public image of a social sector rooted in volunteerism (Clotfelter & Ehrlich, 1999; Salamon, 1999). The high-profile charity scandals of the 1990s (e.g., United Way, NAACP, Foundation for New Era Philanthropy) further compounded the social sector's existential crisis in highlighting similar financial mismanagement practices across sectors (Gibelman, Gelman, & Pollack, 1997). These financial, policy, and ethical challenges increased the demand for professional training of nonprofit leaders, volunteer and paid staff, and board members.

The growth of NME responded to the sector's transformations in the 1980s and 1990s. Wish and Mirabella (1998) documented the substantial growth of nonprofit programs at U.S. universities, with 17 offerings in 1990, 32 in 1992, and 76 in 1997. Nonprofit management education grew at the master's level against the backdrop of expanding management support organizations (Smith, 1997) and developing nonprofit research centers, journals, and organizations (Hall, 1993). For instance, Independent Sector reported 19 academic centers devoted to the nonprofit sector in 1988 and 24 in 1991 (Crowder & Hodgkinson, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1988). Yet, while on an upward trend, NME was not yet fully established within higher education.

Between the 1980s and early 2000s, organized philanthropy supported academia's response to the challenges facing the nonprofit sector. Several foundations identified key actors driving

FIGURE 1 Sequence of Targeted Impacts



Source: Robert Long. *Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education: An Initiative That Is Unleashing Resources for the Common Good* [Confidential programming update], p. 3, 2001. Robert Long Papers, personal collection, Murray, Kentucky.

change in managerial practices, including philanthropic, nonprofit, and multisector infrastructure organizations (Backer, 2001). Various foundation initiatives strategically focused on academic programs to affect systemic change (Poscio, 2003).

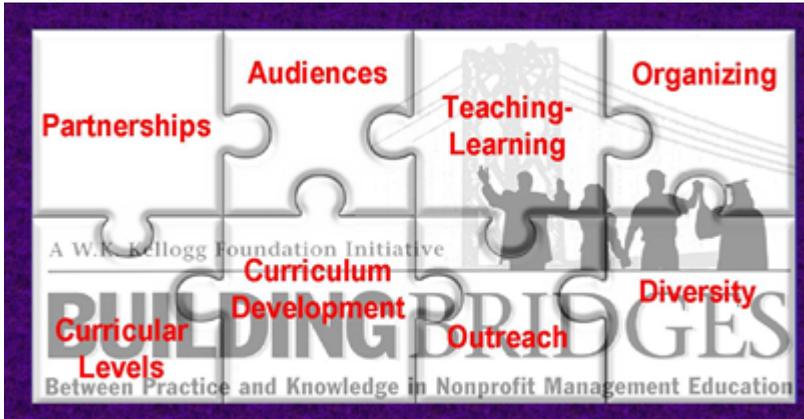
Foundation efforts aimed to improve the sector's capacity while institutionalizing NME within academia to cultivate both the new nonprofit leaders of the 21st century and an informed citizenry.

The WKKF's investments in NME started by establishing the Philanthropy and Volunteerism program area in the late 1980s. The foundation made a first formal step with a cluster of grants under the Academic Center of Excellence initiative in the late 1980s and early 1990s. (See Appendix 1.) Under this initiative, the WKKF awarded 13 grants, averaging \$1,335,594 and ranging from \$150,000 to \$5.75 million. The initiative targeted three levels, focusing on large comprehensive academic centers (with the largest grant supporting the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University), regional academic centers of pre-service training and continuing education (e.g., University of San Francisco, Case Western Reserve University), and local models of educational programming (e.g., Grand Valley State University, State University of New

York-Oneonta, Duke University). This initial set of grants informed the BBI design, strengthening the case that was made to the WKKF board for investing in academic programs that strategically connected higher education and the fields of practice.

Design of the Building Bridges Initiative

Within the WKKF's Philanthropy and Volunteerism program area, the BBI broadened the Academic Centers of Excellence initiative. The foundation appropriated \$13.5 million to fund the BBI (a second and separate cluster of grants approved by the WKKF board after the initial 13 grants under the Academic Centers of Excellence), with an average of \$1 million per grantee. Twenty-seven organizations participated in the BBI, 19 U.S.-based organizations and eight in Latin America: Thirteen of U.S. organizations were new grantees and six were existing grantees funded through the Academic Centers of Excellence initiative. (See Appendix 2.) The BBI's programmatic goals aimed to improve the capacity of nonprofit organizations to better serve their communities and adapt to a changing nonprofit management environment, challenged by the policy, financial, and ethical pressures detailed in the previous section.

FIGURE 2 Guiding Principles

Source: Robert Long. *Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education: An Initiative That Is Unleashing Resources for the Common Good* [Confidential programming update], p. 4, 2001. Robert Long Papers, personal collection, Murray, Kentucky.

A Sequence of Targeted Impacts was at the center of the BBI, linking investments in higher education to capacity-building efforts. (See Figure 1.) The sequence offers the core of a logic model linking currency of curricula and competencies of volunteer and staff leaders with improving the quality of life in the community. The logic model assumed that if the curriculum has strong currency within the field of practice, then it would engage current and prospective practitioners as well as improve volunteers' and staff leaders' competencies, thus strengthening the capacities of community-based organizations and increasing the positive impact on the quality of life in their communities. The model recognized that the work was not linear, requiring ongoing formative evaluation and looping back over time to adjust the curricula as the participants reflected on the results of their application of the lessons in practice. As this process unfolds, the capacities of community-based organizations to realize their missions continues to improve and the quality of life in communities improves.

The BBI strategy relied on a set of interwoven guiding principles that combined the findings of

the initiative's planning phase and the WKKF priorities. (See Figure 2.) The strategy's effectiveness was informed with the presence of a set of the puzzle pieces within each grant, the combination distinctive to the context of the specific grant. Efforts were made to help ensure that the principles were present among the selected set of grantees, anticipating that they would learn and share their approaches and experiences with each other through the course of the BBI and thereby promote the application of such guiding principles across the field of practice during and beyond the time they shared through the BBI.

The BBI applied the guiding principles in a coherent strategy, linking the field of practice with higher education and encouraging a "two-way flow of information between the needs of the field of practice and the research and teaching in higher education" (Robert Long, November 20–21, 1996, p. 5).¹ The "engaged institution" strategy centered on community–university strategies with grants combining the guiding principles to build bridges between academia and practice. During the development and launch of the BBI, particularly through the grantee selection process, a more precise set of

¹ Robert Long. *Philanthropy and Volunteerism in Higher Education: Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge* [A Program Initiative Progress Report to the Board]. Robert Long Papers, personal collection, Murray, Kentucky.

programming targets emerged to support the evaluation development, assessment, and reporting that flowed across the Sequence of Targeted Impacts and offered another level of detail to the initiative's guiding principles. It was during this time that the Integrated Action Plan was being developed. All efforts were made to identify and describe programming targets that built naturally out of the early design work reflected in the targeted impacts and guiding principles. The Integrated Action Plan (Robert Long, August 12, 1996)² identified seven programming targets:

1. Develop nonprofit management competencies.
2. Expand multidisciplinary of curriculum.
3. Increase academic programs' responsiveness to practical needs.
4. Increase diversity in leadership.
5. Increase policy development capacity of participants.
6. Increase financial development capacity of participants.
7. Foster institutionalization.

The BBI adopted various programming elements to expand educational programs, creating connections between practitioners and academics that built on each other to foster co-learning opportunities intertwining practice and knowledge:

- *Engaging the field.* In the planning phase, the foundation deliberately engaged the field of NME to develop a practice-informed strategy. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, program officers of the Philanthropy and Volunteerism program area participated in the annual conferences of the field's scholarly, professional, and infrastructure organizations. In 1995, the foundation conducted a targeted, yearlong inquiry, interviewing more than 90 practitioners and academics. This broad engagement established connections with the future BBI grantees. An informational session, held at the WKKF's offices in Battle Creek, Michigan, on June 3–4, 1997, launched the initiative.
- *Commitment to diversity.* The applicants for the core grants were required to form a leadership team including both practitioners and academics. If funded, the leadership teams managed the projects. Initiativewide, leadership teams reflected a diversity profile, including race, gender, and professional background (practitioners and academics). At the end, 143 individuals participated in a project team, with 51 serving full terms and 92 partial terms (Camino & Heidrich, 2000).
- *Promoting organizing and connecting.* Opportunities to support connections among grantees emerged and were encouraged to promote cooperation and shared learning. For example, Connecting Strategies minigrants totaling \$57,210 were awarded to seven proposals in 2000, with grants ranging from \$2,250 to \$13,600. The Building on Bridges minigrants awarded a total of \$100,000 to six proposals in 2002, with grants ranging from \$13,340 to \$29,660. The minigrants built on distinct opportunities that emerged during the BBI to advance the guiding principles. The grants supported various related activities, including conducting additional networking experiences, expanding evaluation efforts, sharing lessons learned, and supporting partnerships among BBI grantees for additional collaborative activities.
- *Support and networking system.* Across the BBI, leadership teams participated in initiativewide networking events to provide opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas and promoting collaboration. Leadership teams met in four learning communities, maintaining the connections among grantees

²Robert Long. *Philanthropy and Volunteerism in Higher Education: Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge* [Integrated Action Plan], pp. 5–8. Robert Long Papers, personal collection, Murray, Kentucky.

The primary objective was expanding NME's reach and access to increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector. The second objective was to institutionalize NME by increasing the capacity of practitioners, scholars, and institutions. The underlying theme of these objectives was to strengthen the connections between academia and practice, the two ends of the bridge.

and providing opportunities for peer learning. In addition, the initiative team used the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) annual conferences to communicate results. It organized annual informal networking for BBI members and colleagues, assisted participants' conference presentations, and sponsored Building Bridges breakfasts.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation is framed as a retrospective cluster evaluation assessing the process and impact of a programming initiative, the BBI. The key purposes of the BBI are stated in the Integrated Action Plan. The primary objective was expanding NME's reach and access to increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector. The second objective was to institutionalize NME by increasing the capacity of practitioners, scholars, and institutions. The underlying theme of these objectives was to strengthen the connections between academia and practice, the two ends of the bridge. The seven programming targets

presented in the Integrated Action Plan offer a framework for these two key objectives, including a range of activities that were taking place among the selected grantees and represent the types of work underway across the emerging field of practice. Their identification and articulation grew out of all the BBI development and early implementation efforts, particularly the project and cluster-evaluation design work.

The study assesses retrospectively the long-term sustainability of grant investments. Previous studies and evaluations of the WKKF linked the sustainability of academic centers to institutional stability and academic credibility (Larson & Barnes, 2001; Larson & Long, 2000): Requisites of institutional stability are stable funding, organizational fit, and community connections, whereas academic credibility relates to the centrality of the center's mission to the university and the involvement of faculty in the center's activities.

The assessment relies on semistructured interviews with individuals connected to the BBI (including grantee project teams and foundation program officers), grantee reports, and WKKF publications, along with input from other participants. Quantitative data gathered through BBI project evaluations included reported growth in institutional funding, curriculum development, program and service creation, and enrollment and participation in all activities. The original documentation was primarily used to describe the BBI design, objectives, and strategies, as well as identify the external and internal opportunities for the initiative. The former refers to the changed societal environment within which nonprofit organizations operated in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas the latter refers to the WKKF programming that informed and shaped the BBI.

Qualitative data was collected through 12 interviews with members of 11 of the 19 U.S. grantee teams. (See Table 1.) All academic participants in the BBI for whom contact information could be located were contacted. The interviews were conducted with the BBI participants who responded to the authors' emails. Interviews

were conducted via Zoom in the spring and summer of 2020, lasting between 45 minutes and two hours. Qualitative data is used to address the impact of BBI grants on grantees and long-term sustainability of grantees. (See Appendix 3.)

The analysis relies on triangulating interviews, initiative documentation, and participant observation. The assessment presents these data through three lenses:

- Theory of change (successful strategies of the BBI),
- process evaluation (level of implementation of guiding principles), and
- outcomes evaluation (whether the BBI achieved its goals).

This evaluation assesses the impact of the initiative with two key audiences in mind: funders and nonprofit academic programs/centers. It aims to provide funders and grantees with evidence of impact, thus supporting the case of investments in NME.

Retrospective evaluations are advantageous in that they offer a simple and efficient way of collecting data to assess change over time. Yet, some limitations must be acknowledged, particularly regarding demand characteristics and memory-related problems. Demand characteristics refers to the subjective motivation of interviewees to positively assess a program or initiative; memory-related biases and distortion relate on how specific events are recalled and described (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000). For this study, BBI participants who agreed to be interviewed likely tended to be generally committed to NME, although their responses were both positive and negative. Participants’ personal experience and the development of the programs they were part of probably influenced their recollections and descriptions.

Results

Theory of Change Alignment

Retrospectively, the degree of alignment of the grantee with the initiative’s theory of change

TABLE 1 Interview Participants

U.S. Building Bridges Initiative Grantees
Arizona State University
Case Western Reserve University
Georgetown University
Grand Valley State University
Indiana University
Johns Hopkins University
Nonprofit Services Consortium, St. Louis
Northwestern University
Western Michigan University
Yale University (2 interviews)

impacted the BBI’s success and the ultimate sustainability of the grantee. Specific BBI strategies (mixed leadership teams as well as networking and connecting) were instrumental in achieving some programming targets, whereas the absence of clear strategies for increasing the commitment of internal resources linked sustainability to the grantee institution’s broader alignment with the initiative’s theory of change (that is, the selection of grantees that incorporated some of the guiding principles). The alignment emerged at the level of the program fit within the academic unit, commitment of university resources to the program, and the value commitment of the institution to academic-community partnerships.

The mixed leadership teams ensured an attention to practice in program implementation. These strategies and program fit (both within the institution and the academic unit) were key factors in fostering institutionalization. One interviewee noted, “Being within a non-traditional college in a nontraditional school means there has always been an appetite for being different and not conforming to norms

Connections to the seven programming targets in the Integrated Action Plan emerged during this analysis. For example, investment of university resources tended to follow increased collaboration across academic units and community partnerships.

that constrain some other universities trying to do what we do.” Interviewees observed that in general smaller schools could work “outside the organizational box,” whereas “thick organizational culture” constrained more prestigious universities. Several interviewees cited the fit as important at the department level, where “colleagues” could be champions or barriers. Some programs successfully overcame institutional barriers; these successes depended, however, on funding, which generated short-term support for the duration of the grant.

The organizational grants focused on program development activities with an attention to long-term institutional commitments. Interviewees identified universities committing human and financial resources as crucial for guaranteeing nonprofit programming’s long-term sustainability. Institutional commitment to long-term funding, from assigning development staff to leadership involvement in fundraising, led to serious institutional investment. Interviewees also mentioned commitment to human resources, from development officers to faculty release time and line-item positions. Interviewees considered also limited support for administrative activity and graduate assistant support as positive institutional involvement.

By design, the grantee leadership teams included both practitioners and academics to foster connections to practice and responsiveness to

practical needs of professionals. According to a Centerpoint Institute evaluation, while most participants held a job title of professor (either tenured or tenure track, or adjunct or lecturer positions), nearly one-third were employed at nonprofit organizations, with the title of chief executive, financial officer, program manager, or administrator (Camino & Heidrich, 2000). Interviewees identified institutional factors such as the nature of community partnerships and the institutional value of “applied research” as influencing the long-term success of the community–academic partnerships created through the BBI. The value of “applied research” among academic colleagues and leadership, particularly in the tenure processes, was crucial for maintaining a focus on building community partnerships, helping solve problems, and contributing to the quality of life in needs beyond the grant period. Further, institutional reputation in the community determined both the quality of the partnership and acceptance of outreach work. The genuine quality of the community partnerships both informed supportive leadership and pushed less supportive leadership to get on board.

The strength of institutional silos, traditions, and culture affected the BBI’s impact. Interviewees noted that institutions free of “traditional silos” were more receptive to the BBI’s collaborative and interdisciplinary nature, leveraging the available networking opportunities.

Connections to the seven programming targets in the Integrated Action Plan emerged during this analysis. For example, investment of university resources tended to follow increased collaboration across academic units and community partnerships. In addition, the opportunities for multidisciplinary curricular development and applied research activity were reported as increasing in value among faculty and institutional leadership. Adjusting and developing programs to better align with the needs in the field of practice both informed the curricular content and professional practice. The examination of activity across the seven programming targets helped identify the range of activities that were fostering institutionalization.

Process Evaluation

Key lessons emerged from the BBI experience. Interviews suggest that the guiding principles were integrated to a varying degree into grantees' activities depending on context and institutional fit. The strategic use of engagement activities and requirements helped build relationships across traditional divides, both on and off campus. The minigrant programs, initiative-wide meetings, and sector-wide gatherings helped break down institutional silos, connecting people and programs that would not have typically come together. As an interviewee stated, an outside funder like the WKKF could put pressure on "working" collaboratively when the grantee university did not do so traditionally. The grant built bridges between academia and practice through educational services: "At the core of each grant is a partnership between the nonprofit community and the educational institution that is focused on improving practice and instruction" (Robert Long, 2001, p. 4).³

By design, the grantee leadership teams included both practitioners and academics. An example that was reported in several BBI evaluations and referenced multiple times during the interviews for this study is the positive link between scholarship in higher education and evaluation in the field of practice. Participants described assessment activities that added value to both the body of knowledge and the standards of practice. In reflection, this two-way flow of expertise and application across the "bridge" was described as having advanced the relationship between academic programs and nonprofit organizations that continues today for their situation. Many talked about specific activities that were launched during the BBI that have grown into valuable partnerships with area nonprofits, generating new strategies, improving programs, and increasing financial sustainability, just to name a few continuing impacts.

The grantee selection process captured diverse programs, audiences, delivery systems,

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locations, and partnerships. The mixed leadership teams ensured academic programs' responsiveness to practical needs and helped developing and delivering training and education for nonprofit leaders. By establishing academic centers and programs, the BBI grants helped establishing educational and curricular models specifically related to the needs of nonprofit practitioners. The institutionalization of NME was one of the BBI's targeted objectives. Most selected grantees were academic institutions with an established approach to partnering with the nonprofit sector to deliver management education. The two exceptions were the Society for Nonprofit Organizations, which was developing a distance-learning system in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin, and the St. Louis Nonprofit Services Consortium, which was coordinating the work of 12 management education programs, including four universities. The BBI's breadth strategically planted multiple institutional seeds to grow NME. In fact, interviewees noted how involving multiple academic units in NME made them more broadly aware of activities at the university related to nonprofit studies, increasing

³ Robert Long, *Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education: An Initiative That Is Unleashing Resources for the Common Good* [Confidential programming update]. Robert Long Papers, personal collection, Murray, Kentucky.

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the understanding of interdisciplinary nature of the field and expanding the curriculum's multidisciplinary.

The BBI design further strengthened the partnership and integration among the grantees, the related support organizations, and the sector infrastructure. When the BBI launched, very limited connections existed among these enterprises, many being very early in their development. Supporting the range of efforts with grant funds and strategic connections during the BBI promoted the value of the two-way flow across the “bridge.” Respondents talked at length about shifts in perspective that advanced this result. As one concrete example, one interviewee described a bias at the academic institution toward basic research, one in which engagement of the field of practice was viewed as limiting the objective nature of the findings. While the initial effort may have been a bit forced as a requirement of the BBI, a transition to increased value of what was learned through a more applied research framing was described. Interviewees described how faculty who experienced this transition became fully committed to research that advanced the body of knowledge while informed the field of practice. This shift was a major change for the institution in question, and in the subsequent years attracted other faculty to get involved in the research/evaluation work of the program.

The process evaluation is an ongoing part of the program's learning journey, with the BBI

experience having informed each next step that has been taken in subsequent years. It is very likely that the current leadership may struggle to identify the connections and sequence of changes that evolved over the past 20 years. However, the participants in this study were confident of the impacts they offered, believing that the ripples from the BBI continue to inform the work.

Several of the programming targets in the Integrated Action Plan surfaced during the process evaluation. In some respect, the first six could be found in the interview contributions and they combined in a variety of ways to advance the seventh target — foster institutionalization. The focus on a two-way flow across the bridge promotes connections between the needs of practice and the programs being delivered, helping improve practice across nonprofit management competencies. Some of the programming targets were reported as directly impacting grantees. For example, the BBI design requirements helped promote diversity in leadership with its project team requirements. In addition, key nonprofit management topics (governance, policy, finance, etc.) were incorporated into networking sessions.

Outcomes Evaluation

From the perspective of 20 years after the end of the BBI, participants identified benefits of the initiative at the levels of programs and participants as well as the testing and implementing of specific program models. At the broader impact level, participants credited the initiative with advancing the institutionalization of NME and strengthening academia–practice connections, although the BBI's impact beyond the grantees is difficult to assess.

Interviewees identified lasting networks for both individual members and participating institutions as one of the major benefits of the BBI. As one interviewee recalled, at an institutional level, the initiative formalized relationships between diverse institutions, connecting small colleges, Midwestern public universities, and prestigious institutions on the two coasts. At the same time, interviewees highlighted the

BBI's success in creating strategic connections across disciplines and institutions that might not have otherwise taken place. At an individual level, interviewees noted that the BBI created networks that benefit them professionally to this day. One observed that "some Building Bridges convenings allowed people to meet, who then later were in the same spaces in other settings ... and realized they had other common interests that might be explored in research and other collaborations." Participants explored ideas that would not have naturally surfaced. The networking opportunities also supported collaborative communities of interest within ARNOVA around some research topics, such as the intersection of faith, religion, and philanthropy, that failed to attract substantive scholarly attention in the field.

The BBI grant supported grantees in implementing projects, increasing the availability of NME programs. The projects' scope varied, ranging from large-scale efforts to establish nonprofit academic centers to initiatives expanding educational offerings and testing new delivery modalities. As one of the interviewees noted, "the Kellogg Foundation gave us the ability to test our theories quickly and demonstrate proof of concept to show others as we continued the journey of program development and funding support." Nonprofit programming expanded against the broader background of strengthening connections to practice, with grants funding specific community-based programs, establishing certifications, and expanding faculty pools — often by drawing on local nonprofit professionals as adjuncts. The grants supported nonprofit programs' infrastructure, allowing for advertising, marketing, and curriculum development.

Interviewees viewed the BBI as reinforcing "our idea that it was not enough to stay inside the academy," encouraging programs to expand reach, enhance technical assistance, and build community networks. Bridging practice and academic knowledge was successful because both sides benefited from the experience. University partners developed, in scope and quality, programs beyond traditional outreach initiatives,

At an institutional and field level, the BBI supported NME's institutionalization by expanding nonprofit programs. More broadly, grants legitimized those programs, leveraging additional grants.

coordinating the response to local social needs. Community partners viewed programs as the source of relevant education, research, and technical assistance. A major impact was strengthening the quality of community networks. Interviewees reported moving from engaging community members through "advisory groups" to deeper involvements of "practitioners" in higher education through opportunities for nonprofit professionals and faculty in residence with nonprofits.

At an institutional and field level, the BBI supported NME's institutionalization by expanding nonprofit programs. More broadly, grants legitimized those programs, leveraging additional grants. Interviewees noted that the grant "brought political notice and was fiscally important," winning support from university administrators and guaranteeing flexibility in a context of competition over limited resources. Initiative funding opened doors because, as one interviewee recalled, "I was not just [name of interviewee], but a Kellogg grantee." Another interviewee noted that the grant "had the effect of 'waking up' central administration at all levels that the field of nonprofit and philanthropic leadership and management education was worthy of pursuit." Grantees also leveraged the grant with other funders by "building on the WKKF credibility, raising significant new funding." A preliminary evaluation found that grantees leveraged both institutional contributions (e.g., facility space, office equipment, marketing, tuition waivers, new course development funds, faculty release time, priority access to

The BBI's breadth and the grantees' diversity planted the seeds broadly for long-term impact. Still, while some U.S. grantees play a leading role in both the academic and practice field, others shuttered.

scholarship funds) and an additional \$3.1 million in external funding (Robert Long, 2001, personal collection).⁴

Efforts were made throughout the BBI to advance additional activities that promoted the programming targets. Grantees reported learning about new practices from other grantees and collaborating on the development of their distinctive response. Several of these grew into longer-term partnerships where new curricula and programs were established, such as the ongoing Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance of Arizona State University (ASU), Indiana University (IU), and Grand Valley State University. (See Appendix 1.) These types of collaborations were reported as effective methods of increasing responsiveness to the field's practical needs. Although much time has passed, interviewees reported that current close working relationships have their roots in the BBI, and many of those efforts served as examples for other non-BBI programs to follow.

Several interviewees reflected on the lasting impact across the programming targets as the number of programs of study continued to grow. The Nonprofit Academic Centers Counsel (NACC) was launched about the same time as the early BBI work began, and has grown to serve as a resource connection and exchange setting. It advances the same types of programming targets and much more. The quality and

currency of NACC's Curricular Guidelines and the emerging accreditation process for nonprofit studies programs (spearheaded by NACC) are two examples of outcomes that continue today. They offer the growing program of study a road map that promotes impact on targets that help ensure institutionalization.

20 Years Later: Discussion of Key Findings

The BBI's breadth and the grantees' diversity planted the seeds broadly for long-term impact. Still, while some U.S. grantees play a leading role in both the academic and practice field, others shuttered. Of the 19 original grantees, three appear to have either discontinued or limited programming (California State University at Los Angeles, High Point University, and Yale University). Five either closed the academic unit that received the BBI grant (Case Western Reserve University and University of Texas at San Antonio) or morphed into organizations with a different focus and/or priorities (Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, and the Nonprofit Services Consortium).

This mixed success highlights financial sustainability and institutional flexibility as preconditions for sustainable (stable) academic programs and centers. In this regard, the case of the Mandel Center at Case Western exemplifies the challenges for even extremely successful programs to secure the commitment of internal resources. Retrospectively, the BBI design missed an opportunity by not incorporating mechanisms to promote, attract, and/or leverage additional funds, such as requiring internal long-term institutional funding or supporting fund development.

The timeline of the BBI and the programmatic changes of its participants suggest an evolution of the field over 20 years. Nonprofit management education emerged in response to the practical needs of the nonprofit sector and the BBI supported the response of higher education

⁴ Source: Robert Long, *Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education: An Initiative That Is Unleashing Resources for the Common Good* [Confidential programming update], pp. 8–9. Robert Long Papers, Murray, Kentucky.

offering nonprofit management training at the graduate level. As the field grew, academic programs expanded to include undergraduate education, thus evolving from a narrow focus on the training of nonprofit managers to broader educational concepts aiming to instill the values of philanthropy, altruism, and volunteerism in undergraduate students. This broadening is exemplified in a change in terminology with a shift from NME to nonprofit and philanthropic studies. Two BBI grantees exemplify this institutionalization and conceptual broadening.

The IU Center on Philanthropy added an undergraduate program in 2010 to its graduate programs (both master's and doctoral level), fully institutionalizing as the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy in 2012. Similarly, the ASU Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management grew into the Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation in 2008, expanding and institutionalizing its academic and outreach programming. While not explicit in the programmatic targets, this broader evolution was not fully outside the BBI scope, as another WKKF grantee — the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (formerly, American Humanics) — can be partially credited with the development of undergraduate curricular models grounded in practical competencies (Dolch, Ernst, McClusky, Mirabella, & Sadow, 2007).

The BBI showed the impact of investing in public institutions, regardless of size, with a history in service to the community. Smaller institutions with a community orientation were among the most successful grantees because they had fewer cultural barriers to fight and were not primarily focused on academic research. At the same time, the long-term impact and intellectual leadership of scholars associated with the Program on Nonprofit Organizations (PONPO) at Yale encourages a second consideration. As the oldest academic program devoted to the systematic research of nonprofit organizations and philanthropy, PONPO became the training ground for an interdisciplinary group of researchers who had and still have a lasting influence on the field, both in shaping research agendas and leading its infrastructure

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organizations. Prestigious universities such as Yale then are well positioned to institutionalize new fields when successful in overcoming their “thick culture.”

Building successful collaborations proved challenging, requiring time, resources, and coordination to overcome barriers rooted in competition. Initiativewide and sectorwide networking built foundational connections for long-term partnerships. The BBI's active communication strategy allowed maintaining and growing partnerships. Clear requirements are crucial for building true collaborations, with equal investments of capacity, time, and resources from all partners fostering long-term partnerships.

The BBI built the capacity of academic programs to establish bridges to practice, promoting desired outcomes from programs delivered and partnerships implemented. Yet, the BBI was less successful at the logic model's impact level. A challenge of responding to the educational needs of community partners is building lasting community connections. Many institutions established organizational cultures that limited their capacity at the impact level. The tenure system, rewarding academic research over outreach at large, research-oriented universities,

Today's presence of NME within U.S. academia suggests that the initiative helped create the capacity for academic programs to build bridges to practice that promoted desired outcomes.

challenged practitioner-focused programs. Tenure systems are anchored in traditional academic structures (departments, colleges, and schools) driven by disciplinary expectations.

Implications

The Sequence of Targeted Impacts offers a framework to reflect on the lessons learned and the potential for organized philanthropy 20 years after the end of the BBI. Today's presence of NME within U.S. academia suggests that the initiative helped create the capacity for academic programs to build bridges to practice that promoted desired outcomes. While the programmatic objectives were reached, the BBI's success at the logic model's impact level is doubtful and complex to assess. A range of counsel for foundations considering strategies connecting higher education and field of practice can be found in *20 Years Later: Discussion of Key Findings*.

- *Increased attention to evidence of institutional investment promotes sustainability.* The application and selection criteria would have benefited from adding an expectation of a track record of funding from the institutions' core sources of support. Some BBI projects thrived while others shuttered. Adding such evidence of commitment to the grant selection criteria could increase the quality of alignment across the grantees and help ensure sustainability of each program and among the cluster of programs. Its absence, along with the BBI commitment to the most diverse possible group of institutions, may
- *Program origins have an impact on sustainability.* Educational programs that are identified with and created by one faculty member or administrator with the idea and drive to establish it, but without direct connections to the department, college, and institutional missions, risk being dropped when the person leaves. Starting with a basis of confidence that the program aligns at the mission and organically builds on alignment with the core discipline and intellectual foundations is more likely to be sustained. Evidence of a proven track record of growth that aligns with the funding opportunity focus can increase confidence in the intended outcomes of the investment. Exploring the requirement of a sustainability plan in a grant proposal can promote this work and, at least, encourage actions that lead in this direction as a part of the work of the grant.
- *Reserve funds to capitalize on unanticipated opportunities.* Planning on the unanticipated, natural changes in context and community allows for the capacity to capitalize on the opportunities to adjust strategy and tactics along the way. Something as simple as holding funds to support opportunities to advance the initiative's purpose that emerge during the process works.
- *Long-term goals must remain the north star of programming and implementation.* It is advantageous to explicitly add expectations to the initiative framing that the strategy seeks to strengthen organizations that are focused on a particular quality-of-life target or type of results in the community. That could have been supported by adding another level to the top of the Sequence of Targeted Impacts with the intention of investing in and tracking the work of those programs and participants most closely aligned with the ultimate impact on mission. Looking back, the BBI would have

been strengthened with such additional focus on ultimate impact in communities. This could have served as a model for other foundations to invest in programs of study that followed the sequence with closer alignment with mission impact goals (e.g., subsectors, populations, issues, challenges).

Engaging the field of practice is a core principle that demonstrates the WKKF “community-based strategy” in action during the period of the BBI. It assumes that doing things “with” people rather than “to” or “for” people is a value that improves the efficacy of the work, increases engagement and ownership, and advances sustainability. The BBI would have been strengthened with more specific expectations and requirements throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative.

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Peter C. Weber, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of philanthropy and nonprofit studies at Auburn University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Peter C. Weber, Auburn University, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies Program, 372E Spidle Hall, Auburn, AL 36849 (email: pcw0015@auburn.edu).

Robert Long, Ph.D., is an independent fellow. After retiring from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2008, he was Visiting Distinguished Professor of Nonprofit Leadership at Kentucky’s Murray State University until his retirement in 2020.

APPENDIX 1 Extended Timeline of the Building Bridges Initiative

Date	Activities
1986	Philanthropy and Volunteerism becomes “emergent program”
1990	Philanthropy and Volunteerism becomes full program area
1992	3-year grant of \$900,000 for the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University (currently the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy)
1994	W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) and Ford Foundation grants to the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)
1994–1999	Academic Centers of Excellence initiative
1995	Planning BBI: WKKF yearlong inquiry
1996	Nonprofit Management Education Conference at the University of San Francisco
1997–2002	Building Bridges Initiative (BBI)
1997	Launching: BBI informational session at WKKF’s offices in Battle Creek, Michigan (June)
1998	BBI Learning Community: First learning community meeting, in Houston, Texas
1999	BBI Learning Community: Second learning community meeting, in Buenos Aires, Argentina
2000	BBI first minigrant program: Connecting Strategies (7 proposals) BBI Learning Community: Third learning community meeting, Showcase for Nonprofit Management, in Washington, D.C. First WKKF/ARNOVA Breakfast
2001	Second WKKF/ARNOVA Breakfast BBI Learning Community: Gathering Session 389: Linking Theory and Practice in Nonprofit Leadership and Management, Salzburg, Austria
2002	BBI second minigrant program: Building on Bridges (6 proposals) Third WKKF/ARNOVA Breakfast
2003	Planning of Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance
2006	\$7.5 million grant from WKKF to AIM Alliance

APPENDIX 2 U.S. Grantees of the Building Bridges Initiative

University (Program, Center)	BBI Grant Purpose	Current Status
Arizona State University	Create educational programs focused on the relationships among the nonprofit, public, and commercial sectors.	The Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management grew into the Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation.
California State University at Los Angeles	Create programs that engage multicultural communities.	The Intercultural Proficiency undergraduate credit certificate program appears for the last time in the 2012-13 academic catalog.
Case Western Reserve University	Engage practitioners in education and research focused on inner-city Cleveland nonprofit organizations.	The Mandel Center was shuttered in 2012. Nonprofit programming was split between the Weatherhead School of Management and the Mandel School of Applied Sciences.
City University of New York	Research the relationship between giving, volunteerism and organizational entrepreneurship, and multicultural American democracy.	The Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society continues to offer programs.
George Mason University	Create a comprehensive educational curriculum in the management of nonprofit organizations.	The university still offers nonprofit management education programs.
Georgetown University	Offer professional and educational activities for senior staff and board members in the Washington, D.C. area.	The Center for Public & Nonprofit Leadership still offers programs.
Harvard University	Research case studies for teaching nonprofit management.	The Center for Public Leadership evolved into the Hauser Institute for Civil Society at the Center for Public Leadership.
High Point University	Establish the Southeast Center for Organizational Leadership and the Center for Nonprofit Leadership.	The centers appear to have been discontinued.
Indiana University	Improve the understanding and the practice of philanthropy and fundraising.	The Center of Philanthropy became the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.
Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies	Create teaching material to prepare students for effective collaborations among the nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors.	In 2012, the institute morphed into the Johns Hopkins Institute for Health and Social Policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Nonprofit Services Consortium	Offer education, training, and technical assistance opportunities through a training consortium.	The Nonprofit Services Consortium morphed into a nonprofit management support organization with no connections to academia.
Northwestern University	Establish a Center for Nonprofit Management and Social Entrepreneurship to provide research and training.	As the Center for Nonprofit Management, it continues to offer programs.
Portland State University	Strengthen the leadership and infrastructure of community nonprofit organizations throughout Oregon.	The Institute for Nonprofit Management continues to offer programs.

APPENDIX 2 U.S. Grantees of the Building Bridges Initiative (continued)

University (Program, Center)	BBI Grant Purpose	Current Status
State University of New York at Albany	Strengthen the leadership and management competencies of individuals engaged with issues related to women, children, and families throughout New York.	The Center for Women in Government and Civil Society continues to offer programs.
Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations/ The Society for Nonprofit Organizations	Strengthen nonprofit sector leadership and management through a new collaborative approach to distance education.	The Society for Nonprofits continues to offer programs. The Learning Institute was moved online in 2005.
University of Pennsylvania	Link faculty and students to local problem solving in nonprofit organizations advancing family, community, and neighborhood development in Philadelphia.	The Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships is still in place.
University of Texas at San Antonio	Increase the number of African American and Mexican American students entering programs of study for careers in the nonprofit sector.	Due to budgetary reallocations, the Center for the Study of Women and Gender was reclassified as a program within the College of Liberal and Fine Arts.
Western Michigan University	Develop a new approach to the delivery of university-based nonprofit management education programs, in direct collaboration with other management service providers and the Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships.	The university offers a major and two minors in public and nonprofit administration.
Yale University	Develop a comprehensive research and education program focused on the leadership and management needs of religious professionals and secular managers working in faith-based organizations.	Limited programming: The Program on Social Enterprises, in conjunction with the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, manages the Program on Nonprofit Organizations.

APPENDIX 3 Interview Protocol

1. How did the grant relationship develop?
 - Prompts: Who or what factors were instrumental in establishing the relationship? What was your role in the process? Who else would be good to speak to about the grant?
2. How would you describe the academic center?
 - Prompts: What are the stated purpose and objectives? Is it more academic-oriented or practice-oriented? What are the stated mission and values? How are mission and values reflected in programming? When was the program launched and what was the catalyst? What were the first programs and services developed and what are they today? Did the program receive other significant external funding?
3. How would you describe the impact of the WKKF grant(s)?
 - Prompts: In what area did the grant make the greatest contribution (e.g., institutional development, academic programming, community development, nonprofit management practices)? What were the indirect benefits of the grant (e.g., legitimacy, leverage additional internal/external resources, any of above)? How would the program/institution be different without the grant? Did the grant influence or shape in any way your academic programs (at the level of courses, curriculum, and approaches)? Would academic programs have been different without the Kellogg grant? How did the program(s)/project(s) funded by Kellogg evolve over the past 20 years?
4. What specific actions has your institution taken over the years to help ensure financial sustainability and program development?
 - Prompts: What was the basis upon which this decision was made? What has been the result of this increased institutional support?
5. Reflecting on the history of the center, what factors contributed to make it successful? And what were some of the challenges that the center experienced in its development? Looking back, what would you have done differently to make the center even more successful?
 - Prompts: What were key turning points in the center's development? External factors (e.g., competition, funding, changes in the field)? Internal factors (e.g., changes in governance, leadership transitions, enrollment)?