



Being the Change

12 Ways Foundations Are Transforming Themselves to Transform Their Impact

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Abigail Stevenson and Valerie Bockstette with Andria Seneviratne, Miya Cain, and Tracy Foster

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Contents

AT A GLANCE	2
<hr/>	
ABOUT	4
<i>Why and how did we conduct this research?</i>	
<hr/>	
SHIFTING ASPIRATIONS	7
<i>New foundation ambitions require new internal practices</i>	
<hr/>	
STAFFING PHILOSOPHY	16
<i>How foundations are redefining their capacity needs</i>	
<hr/>	
STRUCTURE & DESIGN	28
<i>How foundations are unlocking new sources of value</i>	
<hr/>	
SKILL DEVELOPMENT	42
<i>How foundations are reconceiving and nurturing talent</i>	
<hr/>	
SUPPORTIVE CULTURE	56
<i>How foundations are fostering openness and authenticity</i>	

MAKING THE CHANGE	66
<i>Considerations for getting started</i>	
<hr/>	
PEER PERSPECTIVES	
Raikes Foundation	14
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta	26
NPAG	40
Lankelly Chase	54
<hr/>	
APPENDICES	
Helpful Resources	72
List of Interviewees	73

“We realized if we were trying to make change externally then every change we want to make in the external world we have to make in ourselves.”

— Alice Evans, Director, Systems Change, Lankelly Chase

At a Glance

As foundations adopt new approaches for creating social change, they must also adapt their internal practices.

To achieve meaningful impact at scale, many foundations are aiming to influence the actions and investments of the public and private sectors, as well as address the complex and deeply entrenched conditions that hold social problems in place. To do so, foundations are not only offering grant funding, but are also expanding how they apply their assets, knowledge, skills, networks, and people in new ways.

There is a wealth of information on how to adapt strategies to create impact at scale and to change systems; however, less has been written about what *internal* practices are needed to make this happen. To find out, we interviewed 114 practitioners representing 50 funders and 8 philanthropic services organizations that have gone through or advised internal transformation. Our interviews yielded surprising commonalities. Whether the foundations had grantmaking budgets of \$5 million, \$50 million, or \$500 million, they agreed that new practices are needed in the areas of staffing philosophy, structure and design, skill development, and supportive culture (see chart on next page).

By experimenting with these practices, foundations hope to foster connectivity, vibrancy, and deep engagement both internally (across all people and parts of their organization) and externally (with grantees, community members, and other partners), ultimately opening up new avenues for impact.

The 12 Ways Foundations Are Transforming Themselves to Transform Their Impact

STAFFING PHILOSOPHY

Redefining capacity needs by

1 Viewing staff as impact multipliers, not cost drivers

2 Designing teams based on functions, not formulas

3 Using size-based benchmarking as a compass, not ruler

STRUCTURE & DESIGN

Unlocking new sources of value by

4 Coloring outside the lines of classic philanthropic giving

5 Transforming back-office support into front-line impact

6 Busting silos between issues, people, and teams

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Reconceiving and nurturing talent by

7 Seeking out and supporting five key mindsets

8 Welcoming and valuing diverse and lived experience

9 Boosting breadth and depth of professional development

SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

Fostering openness and authenticity by

10 Committing to continuous learning and adaptation

11 Attending to power dynamics with partners

12 Mirroring internally what is sought externally

ABOUT

Why and how did we conduct this research?

“Foundations cannot just modify their way of acting in the world (out there) to make change without also significantly altering how they function internally (in here) to allow them to implement.”

— Rob Ricigliano, Systems & Complexity Coach, The Omidyar Group

This study was inspired by a foundation trustee asking: “As we adopt an increasing number of approaches for creating change—how many and what types of people do we need on our staff?”

Realizing that many foundation leaders—and trustees—are asking similar questions, we embarked on research to uncover the following:

- How are approaches for creating change—and related staff roles—evolving?
- What are the implications of making staffing changes, including number and roles of staff, as well as organizational and team structures, skillsets, and culture?
- How are foundations navigating these organizational changes?

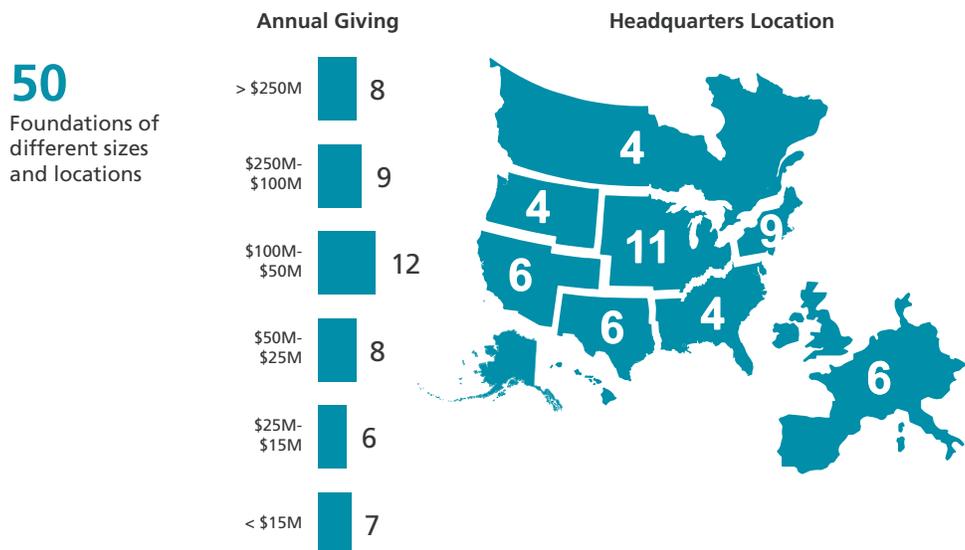
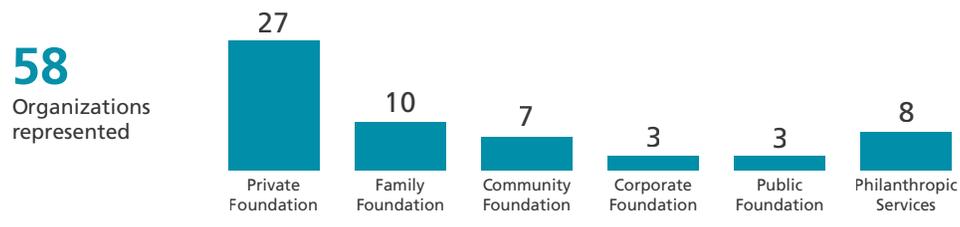
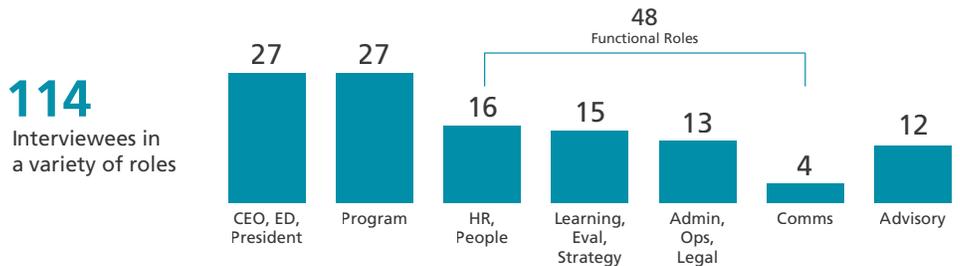
We are grateful that six organizations funded us to explore these questions: the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Democracy Fund, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Humanity United, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Omidyar Group. The unifying recognition across these funders that catalyzed their support of this study is a shared recognition that you can’t make change *out there* if you’re not also reflecting the change *in here*.

A number of recent publications contribute to the field’s understanding of effective philanthropy (see Appendix A for a list of helpful resources):

- **The Center for Effective Philanthropy** (CEP) released new findings on effective program officers including how they can strengthen grantee relationships and build deeper understanding of the individuals and communities they seek to help.
- Of the top 10 **Stanford Social Innovation Review** (SSIR) articles in 2017, four were explicitly about new ways to create change with philanthropy.
- **Grantmakers for Effective Organization’s** (GEO) 2017 field survey shared trends on grantmaking, relationships, diversity, equity, inclusion, and culture.
- In partnership with **Management Assistance Group**, GEO also published a Systems Grantmaking Resource Guide that consolidates and describes a set of tools, frameworks, and processes that analyze and make sense of systems.
- **The Bridgespan Group** codified five elements for success in pursuing audacious philanthropy (i.e., large-scale, ambitious change).
- **Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors**, along with dozens of partners, developed the “Theory of the Foundation” framework to stimulate discussion about foundations as institutions, beyond their programmatic or grantmaking activities.

To complement this rich body of literature, we spoke with 114 philanthropy practitioners (see Appendix B for their names) about how staffing is changing in foundations that use multiple approaches for creating change. Our study was designed to:

- **Take a holistic view of foundation staffing.** Interviews inquired about the factors that determine headcount, structure of program areas and teams, competencies sought in staff, and cultural enablers that support their success.
- **Include multiple perspectives.** The foundations that participated represent different types and geographies. Moreover, 48 of our interviewees work in functional areas of foundations, bringing a perspective that’s often underrepresented in literature on foundation strategy and practice.
- **Create findings for foundations of all sizes.** The foundations that participated in the research range in annual giving from \$1 million to over \$1 billion and have staff sizes that range from 7 to more than 1,000.



SHIFTING ASPIRATIONS

New foundation ambitions require new internal practices

“The success of an intervention depends on the
interior condition of the intervenor.”

— *Otto Scharmer, Author and Senior Lecturer, MIT*
(as paraphrased from Bill O'Brien)

In shifting what they seek to achieve, foundations must also change how they work—inside and out.

Foundations have long played a key role in strengthening and scaling social-sector program and service provision, ensuring that programs and services are high-quality, meet individual and community needs, and are run by leadership teams with the resources and expertise to manage and scale their operations. However, funding social sector programs and services alone is rarely sufficient to achieve lasting social change at scale, and thus many foundations are considering additional avenues for impact.

When we talked to 50 foundations about what had influenced recent strategic planning efforts, five themes arose:

A desire to affect the **underlying conditions** that are holding problems in place

“Our new strategy seeks ways to shift the distribution of power and money within entire systems.”

— John Cawley, Vice President

J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

A commitment to making **diversity, equity, and inclusion** central to the work

“We now have racial equity as part of our strategy and are looking at all that we do through that lens.”

— Oscar Regalado, Human Resources Director

Robert R. McCormick Foundation

A more concentrated focus on the **intersection of issues** faced by people and communities

“We went from seven or eight adjacent programmatic teams working on overlapping issues to four overall topic areas.”

— Steve Downs, Chief Technology and Strategy Officer

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

An expanded use of **assets beyond financial resources** to achieve impact goals

“Our job is to use all of our resources—relationships, convening, data—to achieve our outcomes.”

— Anne Kubisch, President

The Ford Family Foundation

A willingness to **lift up others and make space** for stakeholders to work together to create change

“We see ourselves as a platform for other people and for giving voice to people who might not otherwise be heard.”

— Alice Evans, Director, Systems Change

Lankelly Chase

Whether a foundation is adapting its strategy in response to one or all of these themes, it requires a rethinking of the foundation’s goals for creating social change, and the role that the foundation and its staff members play in achieving those goals.

One way of meeting new impact goals is to influence public- and private-sector actions and investments to create scaled solutions. This can entail foundations influencing policies, practices, and resource flows among and across:

- public systems (such as health, education, or justice systems),
- the private sector (such as social enterprises, small and medium-sized businesses, large corporations), or
- funders (such as peer foundations, multi-lateral donors, capital markets).

At the same time, creating long-term and lasting impact in large systems and sectors—social change that will outlast support from foundations—often requires going a step further. This can lead to foundations aiming to affect underlying systemic barriers, including historical marginalization or suppression, distrust, harmful narratives, racism, and other systems of oppression. This kind of systemic change can entail foundations:

- actively transforming relationships among systems, sectors, and stakeholders,
- altering power dynamics related to decision making and influence, or
- shifting mental models that influence how people think, talk, and act.

These expanded impact goals—creating scaled solutions in large public or private sectors and/or affecting underlying systemic barriers—typically can’t be achieved solely through providing philanthropic financial support. They therefore require a different role for foundations and their staff members.

For example, in addition to providing funding in the form of grants, the foundation staff members we spoke with are also more actively sharing knowledge with grantees, partners, and key actors to build their own understanding of context and influence action on the issues the foundation cares about. In some cases, foundations are also selectively implementing activities in-house that can complement the work of grantees and partners.

How do these new goals and roles look in action? An example is the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, which describes its work as follows: *“Mental health is not solely an individual responsibility, but is also a product of community conditions. Working collaboratively, we can change the patterns of mental illness across Texas, especially for marginalized populations.”* This description encapsulates all five themes that have influenced foundation strategic planning and results in a variety of impact goals and staff roles.

Specifically, in just the last year, Hogg Foundation staff members:

- awarded \$5 million to 19 **new grantees**, including nonprofits and medical schools,
- managed a total of 78 **active grants**,
- awarded \$151,000 in **scholarships and fellowships** to 30 recipients,
- wrote the most **comprehensive guide to mental health policy** in Texas,
- attended all **state legislative sessions** to inform policymakers about the importance of mental health and the impacts of prospective laws,
- convened and advised **other foundations** on their mental health investments,
- ran a **fellowship program** that trains young professionals interested in careers in mental health policy,
- worked with grantees and partners to increase the voice of mental health consumers by **organizing a statewide conference** for consumers of mental health, and
- actively raised awareness of the prevalence and influence of trauma in the lives of mental health consumers through social and traditional media, including **opening a conversation in the state's largest newspaper** on ways that individuals with mental health issues are talked about in the news media.

Importantly, foundations moving into these roles offer themselves as a platform where shared problem-solving and strategy creation can occur.

To achieve true co-creation, it is critical that more direct staff involvement from a foundation does not mean that foundation staff members are being directive. That is, foundation staff members should not seek to control the process for grantees and communities, but should instead support them to foster conditions for desired outcomes to occur. With their resources and relationships, foundation staff members can play a unique role in fostering these conditions.

Rather than coming in with answers and focusing on efficient deployment of grants, the critical value of the foundation of the future may be in the ability to step back and help the various stakeholders who work on an issue to see their challenges in the overall context, lift up potential new opportunities, and then deploy various kinds of capital (including, but not limited to, money) to help those stakeholders work toward change.

Thus, to create the change they are seeking, foundations are employing an array of approaches.

For example, the **Hogg Foundation's** website states: *"We use a variety of approaches to create change, including grantmaking, capacity building, knowledge sharing, mobilizing community members, and more."*

FIGURE 1. NINE COMMON APPROACHES FOR CREATING CHANGE



While these approaches have varying names across the foundation sector, in Figure 1 we have codified nine frequently mentioned approaches (blue wheel) and their relationship with foundations’ impact goals (outside text).

Foundations typically implement a different set of approaches in each program area, depending on that program area’s goals and context, and considering what approaches other funders and actors working on the same issues are (or are not) using.

These approaches are mutually reinforcing and are often bundled, especially in a place-based context. For example, **The Kresge Foundation** uses all nine approaches in its Kresge Early Years for Success (KEYS) initiative in Detroit:

- **Generating Knowledge** by funding a study about access to quality early childhood programs by neighborhood;
- **Supporting Programs** by funding comprehensive early childhood centers;
- **Building Capacity** by supporting the development of families, practitioners, and leaders;

- **Influencing Funders** by participating in the Southeast Michigan Early Childhood Funders Collaborative;
- **Informing Policy** by developing tools to advocate for early childhood policies;
- **Shaping Markets** by providing loans to early childhood centers; and
- **Catalyzing Collaboration** by coordinating citywide systems that support early childhood organizations.
- Hope Starts Here, a partnership between The Kresge Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is **Mobilizing Communities** by involving 18,000 Detroiters in a citywide visioning and planning process and **Shifting Narrative** by elevating the importance of early childhood.

As foundations implement these approaches, and as staff members play a more engaged role, staffing models designed solely for making grants to program and service providers may no longer be applicable.

- Expanding impact goals means an expansion in the *number and nature of relationships* that foundation staff members have to structure and manage.
- Evolving staff roles means an increase in the *volume and variety of day-to-day activities*.

While the primary task of a foundation staff member, especially a program officer, might have historically been viewed as providing funding to direct-service organizations, these approaches offer different roles staff members can play depending on whether they are engaging in providing funding, knowledge sharing, or in-house implementation. In Table 1, based on our interviews, we provide illustrative examples of activities staff members may undertake in support of each approach.

As foundations implement new approaches in response to new impact aspirations, all the foundation representatives we interviewed—whether they were part of a staff of 10 or 1,000—agreed that internal change was needed to set up staff members for success and to ultimately have greater impact. As the saying goes: *“The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor.”*¹

In the following chapters, we provide more insights, lessons learned, examples, and perspectives from 50 foundations as they evolve their internal practices to achieve their external impact goals. We focus on four key areas where internal changes are occurring: staffing philosophy, structure and design, skill development, and supportive culture.

1 MIT systems thinker Otto Scharmer credits his mentor Bill O’Brien with this saying.

TABLE 1. ILLUSTRATIVE FOUNDATION STAFF MEMBER ACTIVITIES FOR EACH APPROACH

APPROACH	STAFF MEMBER ROLES		
	PROVIDING FUNDING	KNOWLEDGE SHARING	IN-HOUSE IMPLEMENTATION
 <p>Supporting Programs to help them deliver and grow high-quality services</p>	Funding direct service providers	Serving as active grantee thought-partner	Running programs (e.g., trainings, fellowships)
 <p>Building Capacity to increase effectiveness of key organizations</p>	Funding grantee operating capacity	Sharing financial or operating advice	Providing consulting to grantees
 <p>Generating Knowledge to change the practices of others based on what works</p>	Funding research studies	Contributing foundation's findings	Conducting and disseminating original research
 <p>Influencing Funders to invest in the foundation's issues and grantees</p>	Co-funding projects with other funders	Advising peers on issues and grantees	Fundraising for and hosting an issue-based fund
 <p>Informing Policy to change rules and regulations in support of key issues</p>	Funding advocacy organizations	Testifying before policymakers and influencers	Operating a 501(c)(4) organization
 <p>Shaping Markets to create inclusive and sustainable business models</p>	Funding the testing of new business models	Structuring investment opportunities	Housing an impact investing or venture fund
 <p>Catalyzing Collaboration to unify cross-sector actors toward goals and actions</p>	Funding work of cross-sector coalitions	Participating in a cross-sector coalition	Launching or hosting a cross-sector coalition
 <p>Mobilizing Communities to advocate for and problem solve around key issues</p>	Funding community organizing	Advising and connecting local leaders	Convening community coalitions
 <p>Shifting Narrative to alter how people view an issue or a community</p>	Funding framing studies or campaigns	Influencing media and target audiences	Producing campaigns and multimedia

Peer Perspective

Raikes Foundation

We spoke with Erin Kahn, who has been Executive Director of the foundation since 2007 and oversees operations and strategy.

How would you describe the approach of the Raikes Foundation?

We are trying to work at the systems level. Rather than investing in individual programs, we look at how a constellation of programs or institutions (such as government) work together and what investments need to be made in the systems themselves to make them more effective at serving young people. Sometimes we invest to “stand up” a nascent system and sometimes we push to transform an existing system to improve its performance, especially to produce more equitable outcomes for youth who are least well served. In order to achieve systems change, key stakeholders need to develop a shared understanding of how a system operates today, and develop a common vision of how the system can work better in the future. Through this, we can identify the leverage points where private philanthropy can play a catalytic role with its investments alongside other stakeholders such as the public sector, community-based organizations, youth and families, etc. For example, our role might be to provide “innovation capital” and test new strategies or programs. If they work well and fill a gap, we then push to find ways for the system to adopt those innovations, often with public financing. In other cases, we might make investments in data systems, incorporating youth voice, or research and evaluation to help improve overall understanding of the system’s performance and where to target new investments.

- Launched in 2002
- Invests in youth-serving institutions and systems to make them more effective in empowering all young people, especially those who have been most marginalized
- Staff size (2017): 16
- Grants (2017): \$18.9 million in grants and direct charitable expenditures
- Core grantmaking programs include education, afterschool and summer programs, and youth homelessness

What staff skillsets do you need to make to support this approach?

We need people who are good at bringing people together and good at thinking about how you work with a group of stakeholders on shared vision setting and alignment. You need people who understand systems change and systems thinking. Our program officers recognize that time spent working alongside key partners is as important as the grant dollars we invest. You also need to be great at relationship management because you are trying to influence and move people to greater alignment with stakeholders who have no formal accountability to you. If you are a person who thinks in a linear way and doesn’t like complexity, systems change wouldn’t be a good fit. By definition, systems are dynamic and no single stakeholder can drive changes alone.

What working environment or culture supports your staff to be successful?

All of our work starts from an initial strategy, but the strategy is ever-evolving based on the dynamic nature of systems, changing political dynamics, changes in public sector funding, turnover of key players, new insights from research and experience, etc. You have to empower staff members to be able to do ongoing reflection on what they're learning and what's changed in their operating environment. Our program staff meet with our trustees fairly regularly and are routinely in dialogue about how we are adapting our work. We're an organization that assumes ongoing learning, and this is nurtured by our trustees through formal and informal processes.

Another important ingredient for success is an orientation toward partnership and collaboration, especially with grantees. Strong relationships take time to build, and you need to demonstrate value to your grantees as thought partners. Our program officers are in routine communication with their key grantee partners. We don't wait for an annual report or progress update to ask questions, listen to feedback, and adapt to challenges. For the most part, we know the status of our key grantee projects in real time because the lines of communication are open. It's hands on, not hands off. That said, we also recognize there is a power differential. We have to work hard at building trust so that candor will follow.

What impact have you seen or are you hoping to see from this way of working?

I hope other stakeholders see us as a partner, not just a funder, in the systems change work. In this way, we can use our voice and influence to advocate for changes in the systems we work in. We also work hard to be a good partner with other private

funders so we are all rowing in the same direction. This can be hard because philanthropy is prone to competing initiatives and "branded" efforts. But when I reflect on the work we're doing now, I think funder alignment and coordination is one of the distinguishing features of the systems we are working in. By being nimble and being good partners to our grantees and other stakeholders, I'd like to think we will see more effective systems change work on a faster timeline.

What advice do you have for peers pursuing a similar way of working?

A few things come to mind. First, if you are focusing on changing systems, you need to take the long view. Trying to change big systems takes a long time and patience! Second, all systems change efforts require an ensemble cast. Getting clear on the unique contribution that your foundation can make is important, but you need to assume that you are only one part of a much bigger effort. And third, advocating for equity in systems requires walking the talk by working on equity internally too. As we began to diversify our staff, we needed to work to become a more inclusive culture and examine unspoken norms or practices. We still have a long way to go. As we become a more diverse and inclusive organization, I think our overall effectiveness will improve.

Erin Kahn
Executive Director



STAFFING PHILOSOPHY

How foundations are redefining their capacity needs

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Human capital can have a multiplier effect on financial capital when staff members have the time and space to partner deeply with grantees, influence the decisions of other actors, and make more efficient use of foundation resources.
- ▶ Foundation teams should be built in varying shapes and sizes to equip them for the specific and unique approaches they are using to create change.
- ▶ Overall headcount levels should not be determined or capped solely based on grantmaking-based benchmarking analyses, because this is not the right yardstick when using multiple approaches for creating change.

Staffing Philosophy

Introduction

In light of the more engaged roles that foundation staff members are playing, many of the foundation leaders we spoke with are adopting new philosophies and frames of reference for determining the size and shape of their staffing model. Foundations are more deliberately enabling teams to have the capacity and time required to engage in new and varied approaches, and to partner more deeply with grantees, peers, and other stakeholders.

The **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health**, whose strategy we describe in the previous chapter, makes \$5 million to \$6 million in grants per year. From a pure grantmaking perspective, one might guess that a handful of staff members deploy this level of financial capital. However, the foundation has 20 full-time equivalent staff members. This is because the foundation uses several approaches to affect program and service provision, public and private sectors, and underlying systemic barriers, and engages staff members in providing funding, knowledge sharing, and implementing in-house. Thus, in addition to typical executive, program, communications, operations, and finance roles, the foundation's team includes the roles of Consumer & Family Liaisons, Public Affairs Representative, Digital Media Strategist, Cross Unit Liaison, and Archivist and Records Manager, as well as a Policy Unit.

Democracy Fund, a bipartisan foundation working to ensure that the domestic political system is able to withstand new challenges and deliver on its promise to the American people, made grants of \$38 million with a staff that grew to 43 full-time equivalents last year from 29 a year earlier. The staff includes a three-person Strategy, Impact, and Learning Team that helps the foundation with training and tools for navigating the complex systems it is trying to affect. In the foundation's three current priority areas of Principled Leadership & Effective Governance, Modern Elections & Money in Politics, and Vibrant Media & the Public Square, the foundation has been able to hire teams with deep issue-area expertise and develop a reputation for understanding systems change. For example, Democracy Fund has created and made available systems maps on local news and participation, public trust and the legislative branch of federal government, and election administration.

Because Democracy Fund can hire multiple experts on its priority issues, other funders regularly come to the organization for advice or collaboration. According to the foundation's President Joe Goldman: *"By having greater staff capacity, we can be a resource for our peers. We regularly have other funders coming to us about our opinion of potential grantees."* As such, the foundation's team is not only playing a role in shaping their own grantmaking, but is also influencing millions of dollars that are being invested by others.

The **Lumina Foundation**, dedicated to Goal 2025 (reaching 60% of Americans holding degrees, certificates, or other high-quality postsecondary credentials by 2025), makes around \$60 million in grants per year and has 55 full-time equivalent staff members. In describing its role in supporting Goal 2025 the foundation notes: *“The scale of change needed to build a new postsecondary learning system will require action on the part of numerous policymakers, educators, employers, and millions of individual Americans. Lumina can play multiple roles to create change at this scale, but it is through our role as thought leaders that our influence will need to be most felt across the wide array of stakeholders who need to understand the urgency of Goal 2025 and commit to action to reach it.”* To support playing these roles, the foundation has created a four-person Stakeholder Engagement Team that includes a Vice President of Strategic Engagement, a Strategy Director focused on leading stakeholder engagement, coalition building, and convenings, and two in-house conference- and meeting-planning team members. In addition, the foundation has built out its six-person Strategic Communications Team to include know-how in thought leadership, media relations, digital content creation, and digital audience growth. These teams complement the work of other Lumina teams with unique remits, for example, Learning Infrastructure, State and Federal Policy, and Impact Ventures.

The staffing philosophies of the **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health**, **Democracy Fund**, and the **Lumina Foundation** are emblematic of three practices that many of the foundations that participated in this study have adopted:

1 Viewing staff as impact multipliers, not cost drivers

2 Designing teams based on functions, not formulas

3 Using size-based benchmarking as a compass, not ruler

Staffing Philosophy: Practice 1

Viewing staff as impact multipliers, not cost drivers

When funding programs and services, a foundation might naturally see a trade-off between investing \$100,000 per year into the full cost of an additional staff member or, for example, sponsoring an additional 20 children to attend a high-quality summer learning program. However, if a foundation wanted to shift how the entire community and school district value and provide summer learning so that 200 or 2,000 additional children could gain access, the calculus might be different. The foundation would seek to work with grantees and peers to galvanize parents, principals, and superintendents to value summer learning, to influence school boards and budgetary processes to fund summer learning, and to help embed evidence-based practice into program delivery at scale. Adding another staff member who could work more closely with grantees and peers on galvanizing, coordinating, and influencing these many stakeholders to shift the entire local summer learning system could have a substantial long-term return on investment.

Along these lines, foundations that participated in this study view internal human capital not as added cost, but rather as a source of impact. Wynn Rosser, the President & CEO of the **T.L.L. Temple Foundation** shared: *“If staff members sit in their offices, look at email, and wait for people to come to them, then they can be overhead. But if staff members with the right expertise are out there working in the communities they serve, then they can be part of the way we bring our philanthropic resources to the area.”*

The Entrepreneurship team at the **Kauffman Foundation**, the largest funder in the entrepreneurship space in the United States, multiplies impact by having staff members who can contribute directly on several approaches. To better support entrepreneurs, the team has built in-house capacity to design and deliver educational content, which has meant creating roles for entrepreneurial learning and digital content development but has also meant a much greater and more cost-effective ability to adjust content based on usage and feedback. To break down barriers that stand in the way of would-be entrepreneurs, the strategy also includes grantmaking for research, ecosystem development, and policy—but also seeks to convene those grantees and create new communities of practice. For example, the foundation’s Entrepreneur’s Policy Network is a portfolio of five organizations that will pursue advocacy strategies independently, but also come together during the grant period to share lessons and best practices. Finally, having additional capacity allows the team to collaborate with other funders who look to the foundation for insights.

According to Phyllis Glink, the Executive Director of the **Irving Harris Foundation**: *“We write a leverage memo every year for our board that includes grants and our field leadership. Maybe we’re only giving away \$16M per year, but we also want to quantify the other ways we have had impact with our staff.”*

Our interviewees revealed three ways that foundation staff members complement and multiply the deployment of financial capital:

1. Staff members can **develop stronger grants** when they have the time and space to:

- Gain a better understanding of grantee context
- Co-create with grantees and build mutual capacity
- Engage directly with community members to hear about the challenges they face and their ideas for solutions

2. Staff members can **influence funding beyond their own grants** when they can:

- Tap into their networks to find allies or co-funders
- Influence the investment decisions of government agencies or companies
- Leverage the foundation's voice and convening power

3. Staff members can **be more efficient with resources** when they have the capacity to:

- Implement often needed core competencies in-house, which can lower costs and increase agility
- Identify and work through challenges hand in hand with grantees rather than waiting for grantee reports
- Course correct along the way in response to shifting context and lessons learned

A key lesson learned is that foundations whose staff members are taking on the kinds of roles described above need to ensure they are widely sharing acquired knowledge and expertise, continuing to engage third-party facilitators to level power dynamics between foundations and organizations that depend on their funding, and coordinating closely with grantees. Ideally, foundation staff members improve their abilities to partner with grantees when they have more time and context knowledge, as explained in Sidebar 1.

Sidebar 1. Partnering with Grantees

The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) has been at the forefront of surveying, analyzing, and codifying what grantees seek from foundations and program officers for more than 15 years. In a recent report, *Relationships Matter: Program Officers, Grantees, and the Keys to Success*, based on data from nearly 20,000 grantees of 86 foundations, CEP highlighted five predictors of strong relationships between funders and grantees: 1) understanding of grantee organizations and the context in which they work, 2) transparency from foundation, 3) helpfulness of selection process, 4) openness to ideas about strategy, and 5) mitigation of pressure

to modify priorities. Having more capacity on the foundation team to understand and engage in the context of grantee work, and having more time to engage in co-creation, should support foundation staff members' ability to live into these five ways of work. However, this can only happen if increased and more direct engagement by foundation staff members is *not directive*. The chapter in this report on skill development highlights five mindsets that are important for ensuring that foundation staff members work with grantees in true partnership.

Staffing Philosophy: Practice 2

Designing teams based on functions, not formulas

In traditional grantmaking, workload is loosely connected to the number and size of grants managed. Thus, staffing models could find their origin in determining a dollar amount per program area and extrapolating how many staff members are needed. A hypothetical foundation with annual giving of \$30 million might create five equally sized issue-focused program areas, each with three staff members. These 15 program team members would be complemented by five colleagues representing leadership, finance, operations, grants management, and communications. *Voilà*—this hypothetical foundation would have 20 staff members.

When using multiple approaches for creating change, a formulaic staffing model may be less effective as program areas might implement different approaches that are more or less financially resource-intensive. For example, one program area might manage cross-sector coalitions and thus benefit from more administrative capacity to support the moving pieces of a coalition, rather than from a larger grantmaking budget. Another program area might work on shifting narrative, and thus require substantial financial resources for an expensive media campaign and a dedicated communications specialist embedded in its team. A third program area might focus on place-based work and thus require increased staffing to manage many small grants and to ensure sufficient time to be out in the community. An Executive Director from one place-based foundation noted that he expects program staff to be *“away from their desks 50 percent of the time.”*

John Kobara, the Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the **California Community Foundation**, whose mission is to lead positive systemic change that strengthens Los Angeles communities, shared: *“Staff members across the foundation have totally different responsibilities. Thus we moved away from a formulaic model where everyone has the same-sized grantee or grant portfolio. We now look at the complexity of what they’re managing.”* Their two program areas of Education & Immigration and Health & Housing have different sizes and staffing structures given the different approaches they use and the complexity of partnerships and coalitions that staff members have to manage. The Foundation also has an eight-person grants management team (more than 10 percent of total staff) so that program teams have more time and space to focus on grantee relationships and partnership rather than grants administration, and the foundation created longer grantmaking cycles to create more time for deep work and reflection and less focus on getting grantmaking paperwork ready multiple times per year.

Similarly, the **Episcopal Health Foundation**, which aims to build an equitable, accessible health system for every Texan, has built a team that can *“offer communities more than money”* and is not divided into program teams for different sub-issues of health. Rather, teams are based on the various approaches the foundation is using for change. In addition to four program staff members, the foundation has a four-person research team that produces original research (often partnering with experts) on important topics such as the impact of the Affordable Care Act on uninsured Texans, strategies to optimize rural healthcare infrastructure, and

the science of early childhood brain development. The research team created and maintains a web-based data warehouse with mapping tools to help communities understand and use complex health data from multiple sources. Moreover, the foundation has a five-person engagement team that focuses on undertaking transformational outreach work in and with their communities by teaching community organizations how to undertake effective community engagement and organizing and facilitating health-based community coalitions. Staff members also serve on boards, commissions, and committees, and write, publish, and teach on public health, healthcare delivery, and health policy matters.

The lesson learned is that when designing teams, foundations should start by determining which of the nine approaches for creating change they are using overall and in different program areas, and create tailored staff roles and team configurations. This strategy-driven staffing model is more fitting than starting with the size or number of grants and then applying a one-size-fits-all formula. An implication of this method for determining staffing is that it likely leads to varying ratios of program area staff numbers per grantmaking dollars across a foundation. This is a natural consequence of basing teams on strategy instead of formulas and should not be viewed as problematic.

Another lesson learned is that there are staffing models that sit between “build” (adding to the internal staffing budget indefinitely) and “buy” (outsourcing functions to third parties at arm’s length). These “borrow” models, described in Sidebar 2, entail creative ways to resource additional capacity in shared, surge, and/or short-term ways.

Sidebar 2. Three “Borrow” Models for Resourcing Additional Capacity

One borrow model, used by several foundations including the **Mastercard Foundation**, the **MacArthur Foundation**, and the **Hilton Foundation**, involves engaging in multi-year learning partnerships with organizations that complement the foundation’s internal evaluation functions and provide objective impact assessment, rapid learning, and strategic thought partnership to foundations and their grantees. A second borrow model is related to Residents or Fellows who provide time-bound surge capacity. For example, the **Children’s Investment Fund Foundation** created a specialized, temporary Fellow role for people with deep knowledge and expertise in a given area of interest to the foundation that could

quickly knit together a complex set of strategies that would disrupt systems. A third borrow model involves sharing resources across foundations so that they can collectively share capacity, resources, and infrastructure, especially for emerging functions or research and development. For example, the **J.W. McConnell Family Foundation** shares internal and third-party human resources across foundations in Canada, creating fluid teams of people from diverse sectors and promoting short-term staff exchanges. By doing so in a collaborative fashion, several foundations can have access to exceptional skills, while providing more stable employment for people and service providers.

Staffing Philosophy: Practice 3

Using size-based benchmarking as a compass, not ruler

There is a legacy practice among some foundations of informing their staffing levels by comparing themselves to peers with similarly sized assets or grantmaking budgets. Charts are developed that show how a foundation stacks up against peers, with the hope of being below the median of the peer group or otherwise facing tense discussions with trustees about why the foundation is an “outlier” and not “maximizing dollars out the door” by minimizing staff expenses.

Figure 2 illustrates how the 50 foundations that participated in this research stack up on such a chart. The data in teal and gray, for 1,277 foundations representing more than \$20 billion in grantmaking and more than 15,000 staff members, were provided by Council on Foundations (COF) in partnership with Foundation Center. This figure reveals interesting insights both about the broader field (teal and gray ranges) and the 50 foundations that participated in this research (green dots).

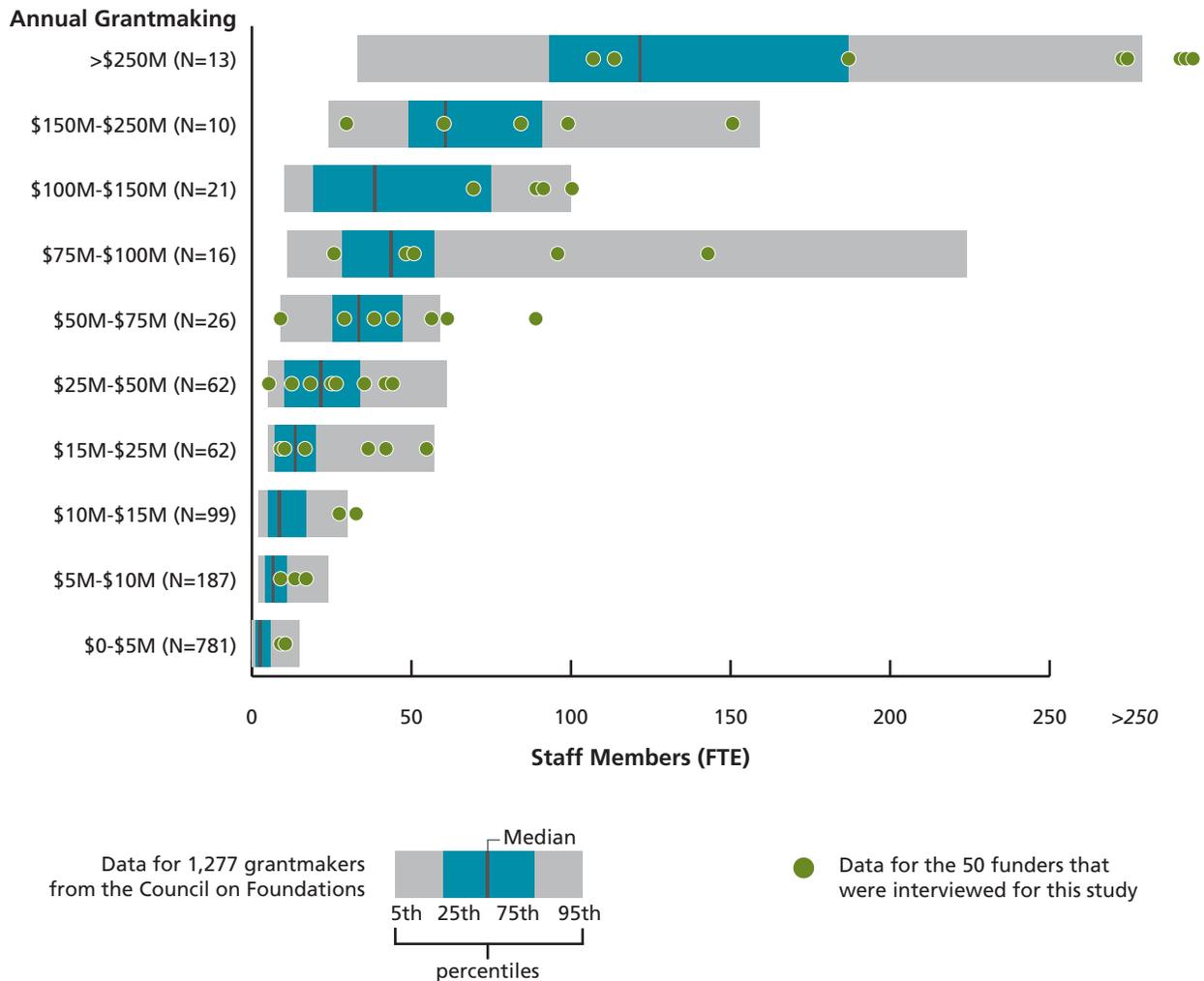
The COF data for 1,277 foundations reveal a wide variation of staff sizes among foundations with similar grantmaking budgets.

Not surprisingly, median staff sizes tend to grow as annual grantmaking grows. For example, the median number of FTEs in foundations with annual grantmaking of \$15 million–\$25 million is 13; for foundations with annual grantmaking of \$50 million–\$75 million, it is 33; and for foundations with grantmaking between \$150 million and \$250 million, it is 60. However, there is also a wide range of staff sizes within each of these groups. For example, there are foundations with staff sizes of 40 FTEs with annual grantmaking anywhere between \$15 million and \$250 million. Within the band of foundations granting out \$100 million–\$150 million per year, the foundation at the 95th percentile has 100 staff members, while the foundation at the 5th percentile has 10 staff members. In other words, among a group of foundations that give away similar amounts of money, one foundation may have 10 times the number of staff as another. This variation should not be surprising since comparing foundation staff levels based on grantmaking alone does not take into account the number and nature of their approaches for creating change, which can lead to very different staffing models.

Foundations participating in this research tend to be staffed at levels above the typical foundation in the same grantmaking band.

The majority of the foundations that participated in this research have staff sizes that are larger than the medians of their peer groups based on annual grantmaking (i.e., most of the green dots are to the right of the black lines and nearly half of them are above the 75th percentile). This is not surprising given that these foundations are using multiple approaches for creating change, which can entail elevated staffing levels.

FIGURE 2. FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFF MEMBERS BY ANNUAL GRANTMAKING BAND²



However, instead of worrying about being an outlier in this type of analysis, foundations that use multiple approaches accept that their staffing models are different and could be larger than their traditionally defined peer set. They look to the headcount ranges of peers for directional guidance, but they don't base their own decisions on how many staff members other foundations with similar grantmaking levels have.

According to the **Jacobs Foundation's** Managing Director Sandro Giuliani: *"The more ownership for a specific part of the value chain you take as an institution, the more strategic program staff you have. We have tripled our staff in four years."* Similarly, Jeff Mohr of **The Omidyar Group** shared: *"We shied away from a formulaic model as one or two people could make an outsized impact based on their relationships. Our staff model is based on what role we and others play in the ecosystem."*

² Based on the most recent responses from grantmakers reporting at least one paid staff member that participated in at least one of the last three years of the COF "Grantmaker Salary and Benefits Survey." Staff numbers include 100% of all paid full-time staff members (defined as working 31 hours or more per week) plus 50% of all paid part-time staff members.

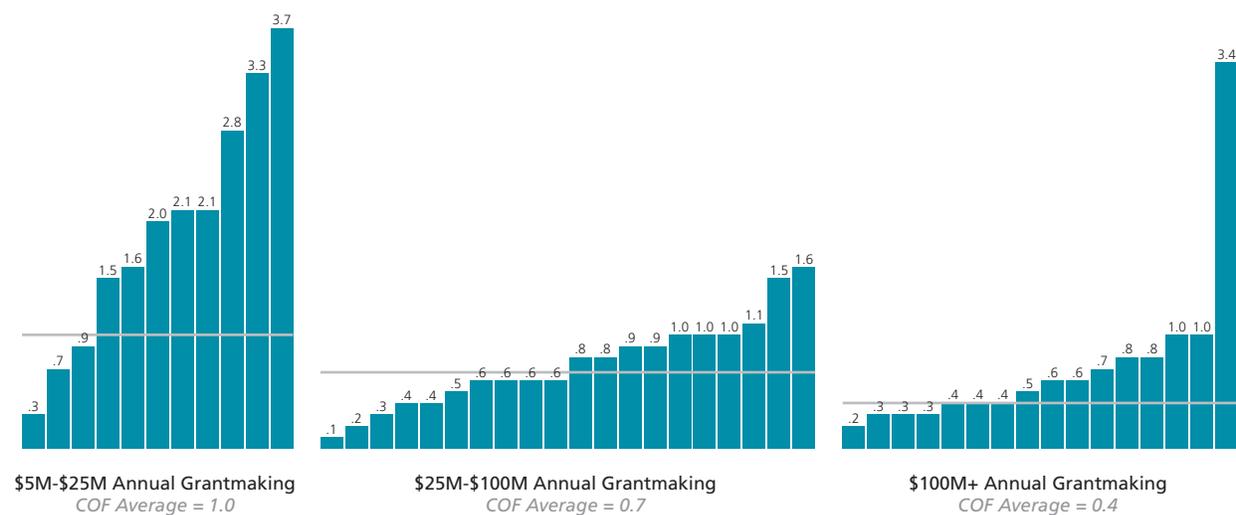
While there is no algorithm for calculating staff size or comparing typical grantmaking foundations with those using multiple approaches for creating change, data for the foundations participating in this research can serve as a compass. Figure 3 shows FTEs per \$1 million in grantmaking for foundations that participated in our research (teal bars) as well as the same average of the same ratio for all foundations in the broader COF dataset (gray line).

While the typical foundation that grants out \$5 million–\$25 million per year might have 1 FTE per \$1 million of grantmaking, foundations that use multiple approaches for creating change might have 2 FTE or more per \$1 million of grantmaking. Similarly, for foundations that grant out \$25 million–\$100 million per year, the typical ratio is 0.7 FTE per \$1 million of grantmaking, but for foundations that use multiple approaches, it might be as high as 1.0 or 1.5. Even among the foundations that grant out more than \$100 million per year, it would not be a surprise to find foundations with 0.5 to 1.0 FTE per \$1 million in grantmaking, above the typical average of 0.4.

The message of this analysis—and this report—is not that foundations that use multiple approaches for creating change should necessarily have larger staffs; rather, the message is that benchmarking headcount levels against peer foundations based solely on grantmaking may not make sense as it likely entails comparing apples and oranges if the benchmarked peers are using fewer or different approaches for creating change.

Several foundations noted that they had been working for many years to shift headcount level and staffing cost conversations with board members away from grantmaking budget comparisons and more toward a discussion of what it really takes to create change. At the same time, many foundation leaders noted that it was not always easy to convince board members to adopt a new frame of reference, and that especially new board members could trigger a boomerang back to notions of grantmaking per staff member as a measure of foundation efficiency or effectiveness.

FIGURE 3. FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFF MEMBERS PER \$1 MILLION IN GRANTMAKING



Peer Perspective

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

We spoke with President Alicia Philipp and Anna Pinder, Director, Community Intelligence, about the foundation's evolution.

How would you describe the foundation's strategy?

Our overall vision is to be the most trusted resource for growing philanthropy to improve communities throughout the Atlanta region. In that role as a trusted resource, we must be the source of knowledge and the connector for the community. We have a real opportunity to amplify what we know to help other funders and donors in the region make better resource decisions.

What changes have you made to your staffing model to support the strategy?

To enable us to achieve this vision, we developed new roles, acquired new experts, and simultaneously invested in current staff, enriching their skill sets. Based on deep quantitative and qualitative research, we decided to invest in ourselves to grow the awareness of our expertise. Then, we can share this knowledge across the region and seek new ways to build programming that grapples with the region's most pressing issues. Ultimately, we strive to influence our donors and other funders to give toward those causes. To that end, the newly created Community Intelligence Team connects with sources, and digs deep into the research and information to understand the gaps across our communities. Through this process, the foundation can understand best what the region needs in order to thrive.

The thorough business model we created had additional elements to the community intelligence work including:

- Founded in 1951
- Serves a 23-county region by providing quality services to donors and innovative leadership on community issues
- Staff size (2017): ~50
- Grants (2017): \$97 million from unrestricted and donor-advised funds
- A key aspect of the foundation's strategy is to strengthen the region's capacity to address critical community needs.

- An integrated marketing PR team to amplify the message;
- An information technology group that provides comprehensive IT systems and services and context for data as well as standards, support and trends; and
- An expanded philanthropy team who serves our donors, and who, in partnership with Community Intelligence, puts knowledge into donors' hands for education and action.

By adding internal capacity, we now have the knowledge management ability to capture and deploy the right information to strengthen our region.

What impact have you seen or are you hoping to see from this staffing model?

We crossed the \$1 billion mark in asset size this year, while simultaneously granting just shy of \$100 million to nonprofits and influencing millions through our work with philanthropic partners in civic, for-profit, and family foundation channels.

One example of how we are putting our knowledge to work came to fulfillment through Spark Opportunity!, a donor circle we founded to expose participants to Atlanta's unconscionable disparity in income and access among residents. Donors focused on Thomasville Heights, our state's worst elementary school district, and invested in parent advocacy, legal support to stop unlawful evictions, providing access to cultural institutions and service learning. The neighborhood is improving from the inside out, sparking true opportunity for the residents and a better future for their children. Additionally, local and national partners have expressed interest in learning more and potentially getting involved. That's community intelligence at its best!

What advice do you have for peers who want to change their staffing models?

First, don't be afraid to talk to your board about coloring outside the lines of your peer-based or asset-based headcount ratios. A foundation should staff to meet its mission, rather than adhering to an artificial number. Our board has been our advocate and our ambassadors, engaging with us to ensure our vision comes to fruition.

Second, creating the change we want in our communities starts with our entire staff having a shared understanding of what it will take. For us, this meant creating a set of competencies we use daily—they are literally laminated and on everyone's desk. The competencies, which we view as our DNA, include concepts such as collaboration, instilling trust, relating openly and comfortably with diverse groups of leaders, managing complexity and creating breakthrough strategies.

Third, invest in internal staff development. Given our strategy of being the trusted resource, source of knowledge, and connector, we do strategic talent development and have adopted a strong focus on employee engagement. For example, our monthly 90-minute all-staff meeting is led by a rotating staff member, instilling trust from the inside-out. This also builds distributed leadership capacity as well as facilitation skills. Staff development ultimately pays in spades as bench-strength grows.



Alicia Philipp
President

Anna Pinder
Director, Community Intelligence



STRUCTURE & DESIGN

How foundations are unlocking new sources of value

Key Takeaways

- ▶ New structures can enable foundations to unlock opportunities for impact by supporting for-profit investments, policy advocacy, and greater scale.
- ▶ Expanding into a wide variety of approaches means that non-program staff skills and expertise can be put to use in new ways when all staff play a much more direct and engaged role in driving foundation impact.
- ▶ As staff take on a wider and more diverse set of activities, breaking down silos between and across programs becomes increasingly important.

Structure & Design

Introduction

Hand in hand with new ways of thinking about their staffing philosophies, the foundations that participated in this study are also reshaping their overall organizational structure and design to enable staff members to work together in new, more effective, and better-connected ways.

The **MacArthur Foundation** has undergone a purposeful staffing realignment over the past few years to integrate all professional capacities into a single program team, with a goal of creating a more unified foundation and eliminating dysfunctional divisions between program and functional teams and field experts and administrative professionals. According to the President, Julia Stasch, *“We wanted to transform the foundation from a hosting platform of disparate program areas to an effective, integrated enterprise that both drives and supports impact.”* For example, the foundation reduced the number of program areas and created a team structure that brings individuals with field expertise together with evaluation, communications, impact investments, and legal expertise, along with the administrative professionals needed for effective planning and execution. Certain functions, like evaluation, communications, and grants management are centrally organized to ensure consistent processes and rigor, but their staff members operate as integral members of program teams.

To facilitate even more connections among staff members, program officers serve as internal advisors or *“critical friends”* to other program teams. The impact investments team plays a dual role. It is both a vertical in that it has its own dedicated strategy and allocation of resources, as well as a horizontal in that staff members are both integrated into program teams and serve as a foundation-wide resource on financial matters. According to Julia: *“Our goal is a porous structure where staff members are advised, supported, and challenged by others, where knowledge is shared, assumptions are reconsidered, and decision-making and problem-solving are improved by the diversity of experience and perspective.”* Throughout the realignment process, a cross-functional organizational change team met—and still meets—regularly to monitor progress, troubleshoot, and set new goals, acknowledging that the change underway is a journey that does not end.

At the **Blandin Foundation**—which is focused on supporting rural Minnesota communities as they design and claim ambitious, vibrant futures—there has been a concerted effort to move from eight work plans for different parts of the foundation to one unifying work plan organized around their four strategies. According to their Vice President Wade Fauth: *“That was revolutionary, because what you want with good strategy is that all parts of the organization can see how they can advance the strategy. Some parts of the organization are going to disproportionately impact some strategies, but it was at that point that folks were able to see ‘Oh it’s not just my program; we are all advancing the strategy.’”*

Moreover, foundation leadership views their many non-program staff members as highly strategic thinkers who work hand-in-hand with program teams to create impact. For example, the communications team spends part of its time supporting the program teams and part of its time on its own communications agenda

centered on general rural issues. According to Wade: *“You can get communications professionals who are really good at supporting programs and take their direction from the program strategy, whereas for strategic communications, you need someone who can see the whole organization and who really takes the time to consider what people out in our communities are thinking about.”*

The **Hewlett Foundation** has also continued to refine how it sets up its various teams to best support its goals and create connectivity among all staff members. Foundation leadership has found that having communications, grants management, and legal team members assigned to each program area allows for smoother partnership between program and non-program functions. While these non-program staff members still report to heads of their respective functional teams, they develop deep expertise and relationships with their program teams, and attend all of their assigned program team meetings and retreats. For other strategic functions—like strategy, evaluation, learning, and organizational effectiveness—the foundation has taken a different approach. It has created a team called the Effective Philanthropy Group with different technical skills that can serve program teams as on-demand consultants, depending on what kind of expertise is needed. The integration of non-program team members also affects recruiting practices as prospective new program team members interview with program team members and the non-program staff with whom they will most closely interact.

Foundation leadership also puts great emphasis on maintaining cohesion across all foundation staff members through a variety of practices. For example, the full staff participated in the development of a set of guiding principles for the foundation’s work. During six “in-town weeks” over the course of the year, staff members don’t travel, so they can work together under the same roof at the foundation’s office. Three of those in-town weeks are devoted to all-staff learning retreats. Lastly, the foundation provides lunch every day—not to be consumed at one’s desk—and thereby encourages staff to use meal times to get to know colleagues better.

The structure and design choices of the **MacArthur Foundation**, the **Blandin Foundation**, and the **Hewlett Foundation** are emblematic of three practices that many of the foundations that participated in this study have adopted:

4 Coloring outside the lines of classic philanthropic giving

5 Transforming back-office support into front-line impact

6 Busting silos between issues, people, and teams

Coloring outside the lines of classic philanthropic giving

The classic foundation structure is ideally suited to enable foundation staff members to provide funding from their own grantmaking budgets to entities that can accept a grant. However, as foundations seek impact in other ways—for example by engaging with for-profit entities, influencing decisions of policymakers and voters, or addressing systemic issues collaboratively and at scale—exciting new models of foundation structures are emerging that expand what foundations and their staff members can do.

Structures that Enable For-Profit Investments

Several foundations that participated in this study have created structures that allow them to invest in for-profit entities and/or invest forms of capital beyond grants. For example, the pioneering impact investment team at the **MacArthur Foundation** has deployed \$500 million since 1986 in the form of loans, bonds, stock, equity, deposits, and guarantees that directly meet the capital needs of special-purpose funds, for-profit businesses, and nonprofit organizations tackling environmental and social challenges around the world. In 2015, the Board of Trustees of **The Kresge Foundation** approved a \$350 million pool of social investment funding that will be deployed by 2020 via loans, deposits, equity, and guarantees to support organizations and efforts that advance the goals of the foundation's programs. The **Lumina Foundation** created Lumina Impact Ventures with the goal of identifying promising solutions that improve attainment for traditionally underrepresented populations and turn those solutions into scalable and investable opportunities to accelerate progress toward Lumina's 2025 goal.

In addition to these in-house funds within private foundations, an entirely different route is to choose a legal form for the organization that enables for-profit investments. A prominent example of this is the Omidyar Network, a member of **The Omidyar Group**, which operates both as an LLC and a 501(c)(3) foundation with the rationale that philanthropy is more than a type of funding—it is about improving the lives of others, independent of the mechanism. Thus, Omidyar Network staff members work across the social and business sectors. Since inception, the team has made about \$600 million in for-profit investments and \$673 million in grants.

Structures That Enable More Policy Influence

Many foundations that participated in this study aim to effect policy change. Thus, many support advocacy organizations or task staff members directly with educating policymakers and their influencers about issues the foundation cares about. Some foundations, for whom policy change is central to meeting their impact ambitions, have taken steps to ensure staff members and funds can go further than what the 501(c)(3) lobbying rules allow. For example, **Democracy Fund** has a sister 501(c)(4), Democracy Fund Voice, which

conducts and supports advocacy that encourages civic engagement, improves the quality of election administration, and promotes effective governance and transparency in Washington, DC, and state capitals. Similarly, the **Schott Foundation for Public Education** also created a 501(c)(4) so that staff members can invest time and funding directly in campaigns, for example for school board seats, or in endorsing certain candidates. Both foundations have a firewall between the (c)(4) and the (c)(3) staff, including separate boards, email addresses, and time cards.

Structures That Enable Collaborative Investments at Scale

A third model entails pooling different types of funding so that change can be created collaboratively at greater scale and across sectors.

One example of this is Co-Impact, a partnership of results-oriented donors who want to give and learn together, and are pooling resources, networks, and expertise to drive lasting change at scale. Co-Impact will grant \$500 million with the goals of advancing education, improving people's health, and providing economic opportunity so that all people, no matter where they live, have a more hopeful future. Co-Impact is taking a systems change approach—supporting initiatives that are improving individual lives by fundamentally addressing the broken systems that underlie social issues. Such initiatives engage many of the central actors associated with a social issue—often local communities, nonprofits, governments, businesses, donors, and others—to work together, resulting in lasting impact at a scale beyond what any one actor could achieve alone. According to Co-Impact, this type of collaborative funding structure allows financial capital to be complemented with support for strategic planning, program management, technology, policy and advocacy, government relations, monitoring and evaluation, and leveraging additional funding. In its areas of focus, Co-Impact is looking to support a targeted number of systems change initiatives in low- and middle-income countries that are already impacting at least tens of thousands of lives, have the potential to create enduring impact for millions, and have externally validated evidence of their impact.

Earlier this year, **Humanity United** launched Working Capital, an early-stage venture fund to invest in ethical supply chain innovations. Partners and supporters of Working Capital include Walmart Foundation, C&A Foundation, Stardust Equity, Open Society Foundations, The Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund, and the Walt Disney Company. According to Humanity United: *“The unique structure of aligning with leading companies as funders helps leverage innovative solutions for sustainable impact in a way that is good for all—consumers, business, and society.”* The fund will also leverage support from the UK's Department for International Development in complementary grant funding for pre-investment and seed-stage interventions.

A key finding is that foundations should not be afraid to think beyond what might be traditionally viewed as their legal and operating structure. Moreover, foundations can start with small experiments, for example by joining with other funders to create joint funding vehicles that color outside the lines of what foundations can do in-house.

Transforming back-office support into front-line impact

Foundations are recognizing that for too long there has been a divide between programmatic and functional roles, with non-program staff members often seen or treated as second-class citizens and offered limited opportunities for growth or progression.

Over half the foundations engaged in the study mentioned the evolving role of functional teams as key to increasing their ability to deliver on their strategies and provide better support to grantees. According to Olga Tarasov, the Director of Knowledge Development at **Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors**, *“This is an interesting and encouraging evolution. Based on our conversations with a number of foundations, there is greater recognition that administrative and support departments, such as HR, IT, and communications, which were often siloed in the past, are integral to foundations’ programmatic work. They are critical to fulfilling mission and achieving impact. This is a major shift from how foundations approached strategic planning and alignment of internal resources ten, even seven, years ago.”*

Broadly, the change that was described is a shift from functional roles as providing support to other foundation staff members to instead better enabling the impact those same functions can have on the foundation’s overall strategy (including giving functional teams a dedicated grant budget) and its grantees. This shift is showing up across all types of functions in foundations as shown in Table 2.

Evaluation, Learning, Research, and Knowledge Management

Many foundations mentioned a recent rethinking of all functions related to organizational learning, and several recruiters mentioned learning positions as being an area where they see the most new foundation positions being added. These functions are tasked with curating the foundation’s knowledge, advancing organizational and field learning, and enabling the foundation and its grantees to adapt strategies in real time. The **Ontario Trillium Foundation** has built capacity in its monitoring, learning, and evaluation function so it can better manage knowledge and mine insights for the field. The foundation has added one knowledge specialist with content expertise for each of its six areas of impact, a knowledge management expert, and a knowledge translation specialist; and has built data science and business intelligence expertise into its measurement and evaluation team. At the **King Baudouin Foundation**, a dedicated knowledge manager helps ensure that teams take stock of what they’re learning and get knowledge out of people’s heads and into the hands of others. Each program team also has a knowledge manager who liaises with the overall knowledge manager.

TABLE 2. POTENTIAL ROLES OF NON-PROGRAM FUNCTIONS

FUNCTION	SUPPORTER (PROVIDE BASIC SUPPORT)	+	ENHANCER (INCREASE PROGRAM CAPABILITY)	+	AMPLIFIER (TURBO-CHARGE GRANTEE AND FIELD IMPACT)
Evaluation, Learning, Research, Knowledge Management	Support grant(ee) monitoring; coordinate evaluations; host an online document storage platform	+	Enhance foundation’s ability to learn within and across program areas and adapt strategies accordingly; mine internal knowledge	+	Build grantee capacity around learning; curate, codify, and share contributions to what works on particular issues for the field
Communications	Write and publish stories and information about the foundation’s grantees; develop annual reports and web content	+	Prospectively help program teams embed and design communications strategy; train program officers on communication tools	+	Train grantees on communication tools; develop and execute strategies for adding the foundation’s voice to relevant issue-based campaigns
Human Resources, People, Talent	Manage benefits, personnel policies, and recruiting	+	Identify and build relevant skills among foundation staff members; ensure that staff with lived experience can thrive at the foundation	+	Support leadership development for grantees and communities
Grants Management	Process grants and associated paperwork	+	Act as a critical friend to programs to ensure common philanthropic approach; spot patterns on effective grant structuring practices	+	Build more inclusive grants processes that support linguistic and cultural differences to overcome traditional barriers for groups who receive less funding
Finance	Manage foundation or departmental budgets	+	Make program- and mission-related investments	+	Help assess and/or build financial capacity of grantees
Legal	Review contracts and protect against legal vulnerabilities	+	Assist program teams with pursuing non-traditional or complex grants	+	Coordinate grantees and partners using legal strategies to advance policy

Communications

Many foundations shared stories of transforming communications to play a more strategic role, which means that communications teams are crafting and executing programmatic strategy or undertaking activities in coordination with grantees aimed at influencing policy, disseminating knowledge, changing public opinion, engaging media, or adding the foundation's voice to issue-based campaigns.

Communications teams are also critical in helping reframe how other partners (e.g., grantees, partners, stakeholders) view the foundation's role and relationship with others as they transition to using more approaches, or to having staff take a more direct role. For example, the communications department at **Humanity United** plays a role in helping grantmaking staff design and execute strategies to change mindsets about modern-day slavery and forced labor. The communications team manages a grant to *The Guardian* newspaper to support four to five journalists to find stories on forced labor and how it touches supply chains. They have found this has transformed staff member perceptions of the communications team. According to Managing Director Ed Marcum: *"If you work with communications to amplify the work, it can be a game changer."*

Human Resources

Another role that is being re-thought is human resources. In some cases this has led to a renaming of this function from human resources to the people, culture, and/or talent function. Rather than being charged solely with recruiting, administering benefits, and setting personnel policies, these teams are taking a more proactive role in developing talent and nurturing firm culture. Some human resources teams are even considering ways their people management can help identify or build leadership capacity in grantees. For example, at **Democracy Fund**, the program teams leverage insights from the chief people officer in the grant-making process. The chief people officer at times applies her expertise in understanding leadership potential and management challenges, which she has cultivated over years as an organizational development professional, to help the program teams guide grantees in navigating management challenges and supporting their leadership growth.

Operations

Core operational functions of foundations are shifting from a focus on risk-mitigation and compliance to applying their skills to enhance grantee effectiveness or shape strategies. For example, at the **Edna McConnell Clark Foundation**, the finance team uses its skills to support the program team for assessing grantees' financial health and for capacity building, such as addressing grantee cash flow issues. At the **UBS Optimus Foundation**, the operations team works on innovative finance structuring, so they are brought in as early as possible when a grant is being conceived. At **Humanity United**, the legal team played a key role in the establishment of an impact investment fund that launched earlier this year. On occasion, the team also assists other program officers to think about how legal strategies and policy change can best play a role in their program strategies.

Importantly, the idea is not to transform the role of all functions, but rather those that can enhance or amplify a foundation's approaches. For example, for foundations engaged in Generating Knowledge, it may make sense to build out evaluation, knowledge management, information technology, and communications. For foundations engaged in Shaping Markets, it may make sense to build out finance and legal or to create a dedicated impact investing team. For foundations engaged in Mobilizing Communities, it may make sense to build out human resources to help with leadership development or to create dedicated roles for community engagement or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For those for whom these types of approaches are strategically important, a given non-program team might be as much as 10 percent to 15 percent of staff. For example, at **Humanity United** the communications team makes up 6 of 55 staff, and at **Ontario Trillium Foundation** the measurement, evaluation, and knowledge mobilization teams house 15 of 140 people. For smaller foundations, it might mean recruiting staff members with dual capabilities (for example, a program officer who also has a policy or communications background) to ensure each important approach can be implemented.

A key lesson learned is that supporting conditions need to exist to help non-program staff members take on new roles. In particular, leaders must embrace the value of non-program teams to advance program goals, and encourage inclusive practices and potentially structural changes (see Sidebar 3) to how these functions are organized and situated within the foundation. At **Democracy Fund**, all teams in the foundation (not just program teams) develop relationships with grantees. The **Kauffman Foundation** created theories of change for each non-program team, using the same template as for programs, to help demonstrate every team's role in contributing to the foundation's impact on the communities it serves.

Sidebar 3. To Centralize or Embed?

One topic that emerged in interviews with large foundations that have multi-person functional teams is whether staff members should be embedded into program teams or should have a centralized function. Interviewees offered pros for both models:

CENTRALIZED FUNCTION	EMBEDDED INTO PROGRAM TEAM
✓ Ability for enterprise-wide bird's eye view and pattern recognition	✓ Greater fluency in program area strategy and issues
✓ Greater consistency in serving program teams	✓ Involvement in all aspects of strategy design and delivery
✓ Ability to create career ladders for staff within functional units	✓ Stronger relationships
✓ Ability to be independent and objective, act as a critical friend	✓ More connectivity to impact
	✓ More flexibility in meeting customized team needs

In practice, foundations are experimenting with models that offer the best of both worlds. Three examples include: 1) Implementing an embedded model for some functions and a centralized model for others, as described earlier in this chapter at the **Hewlett Foundation**; 2) Assigning staff members to a program team but maintaining a centralized department to ensure consistency, as described earlier in this chapter at the **MacArthur Foundation**; 3) Building teams that have some staff members embedded with a program team and some staff members supporting the entire foundation, which is the case for the Strategy, Impact, and Learning team at **Democracy Fund**.

Busting silos between issues, people, and teams

In addition to shifting how program and functional staff members work together, foundations are also enhancing coordination and collaboration between program areas. Over half of the interviewed foundations cited fostering greater connectivity as an area of focus and had at least one practice in place to support this. There were a number of reasons that foundation leaders are prioritizing busting silos as a top priority in enhancing the foundation's effectiveness:

- 1. Interconnection of issues:** Foundation leaders recognize that many of the issues the foundation and its grantees are addressing are interconnected, and different aspects of the foundations' work may impact the exact same populations. Systems work rests on seeing the big picture and addressing multiple factors at once, which can't happen if each program team is operating in a vacuum.
- 2. Effective practices:** Foundation leaders recognize that siloed work has two negative consequences: First, teams may reinvent the wheel on how to deliver on approaches, wasting precious time and resources. Second, if there are innovations and breakthroughs, the foundation can miss an opportunity when these are not spread to colleagues, grantees, partners, and peers.
- 3. Trust building:** Foundation leaders recognize the value of ensuring that people across the foundation—regardless of level, role, and team—have the opportunity to know one another as people and better understand the connections in their work. This helps create mutual trust, which is important for any effective collaboration, and even more so when working together in new structures and in messy, fluid systems.
- 4. External coherence:** Foundation leaders recognize that staff members need to be able to effectively represent all aspects of the foundation's work while they are collaborating with grantees, partners, and peers. The more foundations are active externally, the more important it becomes to have a coherent and consistent message and brand, which can't be achieved if staff members only know one part.

Michelle Gagnon, President of the **Palix Foundation**, shared a sentiment that surfaced in countless other interviews: *"How people work together creates the culture. It used to be that program officers worked in silos. They had discrete programs that they delivered on, and there was not a lot of teamwork. My role is to embed more teamwork because a lot of the work is interdependent. We're developing more collaborative and enriching approaches to work that require teamwork and communication amongst team members."*

As shown in Table 3, there are a variety of ways that foundations are experimenting with building greater capacity for joint learning and action across teams. Broadly, they include creating new roles, teams, or functions that support cross-team coordination, embedding cross-team work into role descriptions and performance reviews, and modifying grantmaking processes to leverage expertise across the foundation.

TABLE 3. SAMPLE SILO-BUSTING EXPERIMENTS

Dedicated cross-team role	To enhance coherence and connectivity across teams, the Walton Family Foundation recently created a Deputy Director of Strategy & Learning role, and the McCormick Foundation created a Director of Organizational Effectiveness role.
Specialized communities of practice	The MacArthur Foundation has created a place-based-work community of practice among its Chicago and Nigeria teams. The Omidyar Group has created a cross-organization Systems & Complexity community of practice.
Program Officer (PO) cross-pollination	Through a flex-assignment, POs at the Ford Foundation can spend up to 30 percent of their time working with another program team. POs at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are generally assigned a primary and a secondary team, and some POs at the MacArthur Foundation are assigned as “internal advisors” to other programs.
Common philanthropic approach	The Hilton Foundation has created a common approach to its philanthropy so that all programs—despite the diversity of issues being addressed—recognize that they are each working on Solutions, Systems, and Knowledge.
All-staff learning retreats	The Episcopal Health Foundation tasks its learning and evaluation team and the Hewlett Foundation tasks its Effective Philanthropy Group staff members with hosting full staff learning retreats throughout the year on topics that are relevant across the foundation.
All-staff in-person time	The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation both designate a few days a year when all staff members are in-person together at headquarters for shared engagement and capacity building.
Performance review incentives	At The Saint Paul & Minnesota Community Foundations , each staff member must write down their plan for the year on how they will help someone else achieve their goals. Staff members are assessed on that commitment.
Foundation-wide strategic planning	The Mastercard Foundation and the Episcopal Health Foundation each engaged their full staff in their recent strategic planning process to support greater shared understanding of one another’s work and the foundations’ visions for the future.
Cross-foundation grantmaking	The grants approval process at the Children's Investment Fund Foundation incorporates many departments to look for opportunities for integration. In 2016, 20 percent of The Kresge Foundation’s grant funding was awarded to cross-team grants.

For example, the **San Antonio Area Foundation** has been engaging the whole organization in developing product lines for donors. The senior leadership team seeks to *“create opportunities for staff to think beyond their respective work and roles—and begin to see the relevance of their work and its interconnectedness to other departments.”* For community foundations in particular, silo-busting between development and program staff members has become crucial.

A transformative way to create connectivity among foundation staff members and teams is to abandon the idea of functional teams and program areas altogether. Rather than thinking of staff members in discrete and fixed ways, they view them as a pool of experts to be pulled together for a particular purpose and time. For example, **Educate Texas** has shifted to a model of internal consulting teams such that staff members work on two to six projects at any time with different groups depending on the mix of skills and expertise required. Other foundations are experimenting with similar models—using a planning process each year to think about what skills they need for a particular area and then pulling that team together. The **Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo** has dismissed the concept of program teams altogether. According to its President & CEO Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, *“We don’t believe in program areas. All staff members have an annual portfolio of work based on the current needs and dynamics in our community. It’s a messier way to work, but it absolutely transforms your impact.”*

At the same time, foundations also shared that uptake had been slow for staff members to work collaboratively. Thus a key lesson learned is that it is critical that leadership describe and reward staff members who reach across and break down silos. Several foundations are currently rewriting competencies for staff and are explicitly adding competencies for leaders that include fostering and enabling collaboration. According to the **Mastercard Foundation’s** Senior Manager of Learning and Organizational Development, the foundation aims for senior leaders to *“take an enterprise view in how they’re managing talent and allocating resources.”*

Another lesson learned is to prototype and try one or a few practices at a time, as too many channels for collaboration and meetings can be overwhelming. Lastly, all of the silo-busting activities require some investment of time or resources and can’t be another expectation added to staff members’ dockets without making other adjustments.

Peer Perspective

NPAG (formerly Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group)

We spoke with President & CEO Katherine Jacobs and Allison Kupfer Poteet, Vice President & Managing Partner, about what they are seeing in terms of shifts in foundation staffing practices and structures.

What roles have foundations been looking for and how has that changed?

The philanthropic community is in an exciting time and we're seeing clients at all levels of philanthropy shift their thinking in several areas of hiring and talent strategy in order to become more effective and to ensure that equity, engagement, and learning are key values carried through all levels of their work. Five areas are standouts:

First, many of our clients are rethinking the role of **community engagement** in their work. We observe a growing understanding and self-awareness of the power dynamics between foundations, grantees, and the communities they exist to serve. Before, the relationship was more patriarchal—we'll give you money if you do this. Now, more and more grantmakers are recognizing that while they may hold the power of resources, communities alone hold the power to actually effect change. The old model of "parachuting in" with all the answers not only isn't effective, but more importantly does not recognize the critical assets that do exist in communities. Recognizing that sustainable and transformational change is more likely to happen through the co-creation of programmatic priorities and an ongoing trust-filled partnership with community, some foundations are hiring community engagement staff and others are infusing the expectation for more authentic engagement into their team qualifications.

Second, there has been an increase in and a shift in the nature of **policy and advocacy** roles as founda-

- Founded in 2002
- Facilitates talent strategy and executive search across philanthropy, nonprofits, and direct service providers, with a commitment to equity and inclusion
- Works with all types of funders, from high-net-worth individuals starting new foundations to very large national and international foundations, and provides support for both program and operations roles

tions are trying to understand the tools they can use beyond grantmaking to make a difference in the issues they care about. Foundation leaders recognize that one policy change can sometimes have more sustainable impact than a long-term programmatic intervention. For instance, granting \$1 million to a diabetes treatment program has the potential to positively impact some, but using the same level of resources to educate communities, build cross-sector coalitions, and offer clear and nonpartisan data to legislators toward the passing of a soda tax that deters consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages could help address societal behaviors and root causes underlying diabetes for generations. Policy and advocacy professionals are increasingly co-strategists with foundation leadership, program teams, and grantee partners.

Third, as the community engagement, policy, and program work becomes more integrated, foundations—particularly larger foundations—are increasingly seeing a need for an internal role that is additional and distinct from the functioning of a traditional COO and more along the lines of a **chief strategist**. This person is internally focused and helps connect the dots between program and

non-program functions so that foundations can leverage all of their relevant assets. The strategist also helps program areas connect with each other and partners with operational leadership about needed systems improvements so that the work is more efficient and integrated.

Fourth, we have seen a large shift in the number and nature of searches related to **evaluation and learning** because foundations want to build cultures of continuous improvement, share knowledge across teams and with grantee partners, and apply learning to both their own strategies and challenges faced in communities and in the broader field. While building a culture of inquiry is something foundations generally agree they should aspire to, it can be hard to layer that work on top of all the other things that a program officer does. Foundations have engaged in grant-related research and monitoring activities for many years, but the new focus on integrated strategic learning and cutting-edge evaluation techniques that are designed for much more difficult-to-measure impacts (such as movement building, collective impact, or advocacy) means an increasing demand for new skills and talent.

Finally, consistent with the shifts in thinking about community engagement and policy and advocacy, our grantmaking partners are rethinking the role of **communications**. Foundations are increasingly acting as knowledge brokers, message amplifiers, conveners, and educators. Past communication models are commonly unidirectional, highlighting grantee and programmatic successes. New models are multifaceted and engage grantees, community leaders, policy makers, media, and even peer foundations in two-way and three-way conversations about priority areas and learning. This shift is requiring a new kind of skillset in senior communications leaders who can help bridge communications with policy work and

who can use strategic messaging, convening, media, and other tools to change hearts and minds and influence the conversation about various issues.

How are organizational structures and relationships between departments changing to support these new roles and ensure interconnectivity across the foundation?

Overall, we are seeing a flattening of traditional hierarchies as foundations work to increase connection to community and cross-programmatic and cross-functional collaboration. Some foundations are elevating the voice of the program officers in strategic decision-making and designing operational support around their needs, and others are decentralizing staffing structures to orient teams around specific geographic and/or time-bound challenges rather than content-related silos. We are seeing the rise of foundation executives who understand not only the content of the work of the foundation, but who also bring adaptive leadership, change management expertise, and significant operational design thinking to their role.



Katherine Jacobs
President & CEO



Allison Kupfer Poteet
Vice President & Managing Partner

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

How foundations are reconceiving and nurturing talent

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Fostering mindsets that enable relational and adaptive work is an important aspect of talent development and requires corresponding changes in recruiting, grantmaking, and decision-making processes.
- ▶ Staff with lived experience can help transform the foundation's impact, but hiring more diverse staff members is only the first step. Building an inclusive environment that allows individuals to bring their full selves to work is essential for all staff members.
- ▶ Using new approaches means that developing new skills among all staff members is increasingly important; foundations must carve out time and resources for dedicated and tailored professional development.

Skill Development

Introduction

In light of the more engaged role that foundation staff members are playing, the foundations that participated in this research are rethinking what prior experiences and skills they seek in their staff, how they hope staff will approach their work, and how they can more intentionally support staff members in ongoing skill development.

For instance, Samantha Gilbert, Vice President of Talent and Human Resources of the **Ford Foundation**, and her colleagues are rethinking what skillsets are important in their staff in light of the foundation's aim to advance equity in a more aligned and cohesive way. While acknowledging that it is still important, issue area expertise is just one of various competencies they look for in their staff: *"The easier part is finding people with field expertise. We want to see that people can ask new questions, or hear a new question and get curious about new perspectives, approaches, and directions."* Samantha and her team have begun to look for a track record of curiosity, learning, adaptability, and collaboration when making hiring decisions and are valuing these traits as critically as issue experience. The foundation has also recently put greater emphasis on talent development, and all staff members participate in a one-year onboarding process in a custom-built curriculum to help them cultivate not just grantmaking practices and issue expertise, but also the mindsets they bring to their roles and their interactions with grantees and community members.

Tammy Heinz and Stephany Bryan were hired to work at the **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health** not simply for their understanding of mental health policy or their ability to skillfully craft grants. They were hired because they bring deep knowledge of what individuals and families with mental health challenges face—knowledge they gained through their personal and family experiences with mental illness. With the titles of Program Officer and Consumer & Family Liaison, Tammy and Stephany help ensure that the foundation has strong relationships and trust with the communities it serves, develop initiatives that include consumers and family members, and make sure that the voices of consumers of mental health are included in all decisions. While the foundation underwent a cultural transition to become an inclusive environment for individuals with lived experience, foundation leadership say that including staff with lived experience has transformed the impact of the foundation by greatly strengthening their consumer perspectives in their grantmaking and partnerships. In one of the most stigmatized issues in health, the foundation has made a sea change by prioritizing lived experience as a skillset to have on their teams. As Lynda Frost, former Director of Planning & Programs, said, *"This staffing change drove changes in our programming. We sharpened our focus on what we wanted to do. Over time the foundation should be run by self-identified consumers."*

According to the staff members that work in their foundations, Pam and Pierre Omidyar are natural systems thinkers and recognize how interdependency impacts the complex issues they aim to address. As such, these forward-thinking leaders of **The Omidyar Group** (TOG) have realized they need staff members who not only have issue expertise, but who can understand and change the relationships between various entities addressing these issues. In recognizing this, staff members of the foundations are supported by the Omidyars and

have access to an unusual resource to help them do their jobs differently. The TOG Systems & Complexity team members act as internal consultants to foundation staff members from program and from functional teams, such as the Strategy, Impact, and Learning teams, by helping teams do systems mapping and uncover the implicit assumptions they have about their work and by playing a research and development function across TOG.

The Systems & Complexity team provides staff training, support for implementing various tools, a virtual platform of resources and examples, and a community of practice. This team is uniquely positioned to help staff keep an eye on the long-term systems changes they would like to create, rather than getting lost in the day-to-day. As one staff member said of working with the Systems & Complexity team, *“I felt like I knew exactly what was going on in the issues I work on. The Systems & Complexity team pushed my thinking and helped me see how it’s all reinforcing loops. All of a sudden I started seeing things and understanding all these connections.”*

The skill development orientation of the **Ford Foundation**, the **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health**, and **The Omidyar Group** reflects three practices that many of the foundations that participated in this study have adopted:

7 Seeking out and supporting five key mindsets

8 Welcoming and valuing diverse and lived experience

9 Boosting breadth and depth of professional development

Skill Development: Practice 7

Seeking out and supporting five key mindsets

Many foundations have historically wondered whether they should hire generalists or issue-expert specialists. Our interviewees shared compelling rationales for either perspective but also acknowledged that both can be beneficial. Issue-area expertise comes with familiarity in a field, existing relationships, and credibility with grantees and partners. At the same time, deep expertise could prevent people from being open to new ideas, considering alternative perspectives, thinking about issues holistically, or engaging other partners in developing strategies. A generalist skillset can mean less attachment to a particular model or issue and a broadly applicable skillset, but could mean more time is required to grasp the complexity of an issue and build relationships.

Many foundation staff members we interviewed shared that these days they worry less about the merits of issue-based or generalist expertise, but rather look for specific mindsets in candidates. Five mindsets surfaced as especially valued by foundations that are asking staff to adopt new approaches for creating change.

1. Curiosity and Learning

Staff members are navigating complex, dynamic waters. No matter the foundation's vision and goals, issues interconnect, actors influence one another, and new players emerge. Being able to swim in these waters means being open to learning more, asking why and why not, and gathering many perspectives.

"I look for people who are better at asking great questions than giving great answers."

— Jeff Kutash, Executive Director

Peter Kiewit Foundation

"It's really more of having an intelligent person who's willing to learn...this is much more important than domain expertise."

— David Barash, Chief Medical Officer

GE Foundation

2. Humility

Foundations occupy a lopsided position of power in the social sector. To face this power dynamic head on and be a more equal partner, staff members have to recognize power imbalances, be comfortable with being uncomfortable, and above all be humble in their interactions with grantees, community members, and other partners.

"If you are coming in with power or arrogance, you can't do anything effectively."

— Lisa Hall, Vice President for Programs

Houston Endowment

"Humility is important; not assuming we know best just because we have the money."

— Kathleen Cornett, VP for Grants & Programs

The Oregon Community Foundation

3. Strategic Orientation

Identifying points of leverage in a system is challenging as an investment in point A may not always lead to predictable change at point B. Staff members need to be able to zoom out and see the broader picture of the multi-dimensional context they are working in, and also zoom in to a particular area and think tactically at the operational level.

“In the systems context, it’s more about how you shape an ecosystem—the connections and relationships between organizations.”

— Randy Newcomb, President and CEO
Humanity United

“We look for people who can easily navigate different worlds and identify levers for change.”

— Phyllis Glink, Executive Director
Irving Harris Foundation

4. Collaborative Approach

Addressing all parts of a complex issue requires working in collaboration with colleagues, grantees, communities, peers and other stakeholders. Staff members have to be willing and able to work with others, which includes being invested in building relationships, offering and gathering timely and honest feedback, and working with people who think differently.

“You have to be deliberate about creating a culture with time and space for collaboration.”

— Michael Meadows,
Managing Director, People and Culture
MacArthur Foundation

“We’ve invested in our skillsets to help staff create the conditions for other people to make the change.”

— Alice Evans, Director, Systems Change
Lankelly Chase

5. Adaptability

Trying to affect the broader context, in which multiple actors and factors shift perpetually and uncontrollably, means that strategies and tactics have to adapt often. To do this staff members have to be skilled at sensing what’s happening in their fields, willing to ask tough questions about their assumptions, and open to changing course as needed.

“Comfort with ambiguity is important in systems change. It’s constantly evolving; you can’t make a plan and just hammer on it for years because your plans will need to change.”

— Erin Kahn, Executive Director
Raikes Foundation

“You need to be nimble, adaptive, and context-sensitive. You need to be comfortable with ambiguity and give and receive timely feedback.”

— Rob Ricigliano, Systems & Complexity Coach
The Omidyar Group

While these mindsets all make sense on paper, a key lesson learned is that enabling staff members to actually implement these mindsets may require changes to recruiting, grantmaking forms and processes, and decision-making.

Evolving Recruiting

There can be a disconnect between desiring these types of mindsets on the one hand and screening for certain academic credentials or prior work experience on the other. Recruiting practices must catch up with the desire to find staff members who are well suited to be highly engaged with grantees, peers, and other partners, and comfortable using new approaches for creating change. As a result, several foundations are adopting new practices, such as blinded résumés that look for qualities other than traditional academic credentials.

For example, John Kobara from the **California Community Foundation** shared that they use a “passion diagnostic” to help vet applicants and find those who *“are deeply involved in our community, who know who they are and why they want to work here, and who know how to deal with their authentic, vulnerable self.”* For the foundation, these qualities far outweigh academic credentials or technical competencies. Moreover, they have a strong desire to find staff with “lived experience” of the challenges the foundation seeks to address. Similarly, **Open Society Foundations** is trying an online skills assessment that is values-based to use when hiring managers. The tool is based on a set of values and related behaviors that the foundation has identified as beneficial for its staff who manage people.

Updating Forms and Processes

There can be a disconnect between encouraging staff members to embody these types of mindsets and at the same time using forms and processes that are rigid or in direct opposition to how these mindsets should affect the work. Foundations and program teams should consider developing **theories of change** that explicitly name the assumptions being made; are grounded in systems thinking; relate the foundation’s work to the actions of other key actors working on similar issues; and include outcome measures of systemic change. In line with this, **key grantee forms** should include grant applications that are highly transparent about how decision-making will work; grantee interactions that are grounded in mutual respect; grant agreements that allow for—and encourage—course correction; and grantee reports that explicitly ask for lessons learned. Finally, foundations should implement **performance reviews** that track and reward the five mindsets in action on a regular basis, rather than once per year, so that feedback can be acted on earlier.

Adjusting Decision-Making

Finally, there can be a disconnect between these five mindsets and where and how decisions are made. Systems are constantly shifting, and waiting a quarter or year for the next board meeting to adjust course can mean missed windows of opportunity. Foundations should consider processes that allow for late-breaking grant ideas as well as earmarking funds that staff members can invest without needing board approval.

For example, based on the urgency of their work, the **Schott Foundation for Public Education** empowers staff members to make most grantmaking decisions. Similarly, **Humanity United** has also evolved where decision-making lies. According to their President and CEO Randy Newcomb, *“The tension I was seeing was that the people who are closest to the systems we hope to engage and have a greater knowledge of it also happened to be the people with limited decision-making authority. I felt like we needed to turn that on its head and institute decentralized decision-making across the team to have decisions be made by people who are closer to the work.”*

Skill Development: Practice 8

Welcoming and valuing diverse and lived experience

Having a diverse and inclusive staff helps foundations better understand the problems they are working on and strengthens their relationships with beneficiaries and other community stakeholders. Staff who have lived experience not only understand what individuals face in similar circumstances, but also understand the systems' barriers, chaotic service delivery systems, power dynamics, discriminations, and the array of stakeholders who are involved.

As previously mentioned, adding two staff members with lived experience in mental health has transformed the work of the **Hogg Foundation**. The **Weingart Foundation** has diversified its staff so that 80 percent of staff members are people of color. This was an intentional process that included the development of hiring pools that were made up of diverse candidates who represented the community of Southern California. Another key ingredient in this process was the requirement that all staff have direct nonprofit organization experience. The foundation also strategically transitioned their board of directors to be more representative of the local community. According to Fred Ali, the foundation's President & CEO, *"The appointment of people of color to the board reinforced the DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] work occurring at the staff level."*

David Biemesderfer, President & CEO of **United Philanthropy Forum** agrees that board diversity is key in the social sector, especially in philanthropy. According to David, *"Even if your organization happens to serve a constituency that is not racially and ethnically diverse, there is another piece to the effectiveness argument. Numerous studies have shown that having diverse groups that include a range of perspectives enhances creative thinking, innovation, and problem solving, resulting in better decisions. People with different backgrounds and life experiences enrich board discussions and decision-making processes, leading to better outcomes than those where board members share a more monolithic viewpoint or world view."*

For **The Ford Family Foundation**, lived experience means not just personal experience with the issues the foundation is working on, but also physically living in the rural communities in Oregon and Northern California they are serving. The foundation has hired four Field Coordinators who live in four different communities. These coordinators build on their existing local relationships and knowledge to help build community capacity to create change. They develop deep relationships and custom outreach strategies with grantees and community members, and share their insights with each other as a learning cohort and with other members of the team. Part of their job is to be a bridge between the community they live in and the foundation's program officers working in different issue areas. For example, when the foundation hired a community leader in the fall of 2017 who had recently served as the executive director for CAPACES Leadership Institute (an organization providing leadership development and capacity building for Latinos and Latino organizations) to fill the fourth Field Coordinator position, the Director of the Ford Institute for Community Building noted that:

“Her experience will enhance our outreach efforts in Latino communities. She will help rural communities strengthen connections, build capacity, and support community-led actions.”

Diversifying staff experience is a good first step, but a key finding is that foundations also need to change their cultures to ensure that these different experiences, mental models, and opinions are valued and acted upon. One program officer with lived experience shared: *“To do my job well, I need to be in touch with the vulnerable side of myself and be willing to share. I’m not always there. That’s not always a safe situation.”*

Erin Reedy, Vice President, Executive Search at the search firm **Koya Leadership Partners** agrees: *“We are focused on building diverse talent pools for our foundation searches, but many of our foundation clients are also realizing that long-term success requires more than the hire itself, it also requires paying attention to how people are supported once they are in the role.”*

Similarly, Vincent Robinson, the Founder and Managing Partner of **The 360 Group**, which seeks to diversify leadership in foundations, noted that: *“There has been some progress on diversity, but less so on inclusion.”*

According to Loyse Bonjour, the Director of Global Human Resources at **Open Society Foundations**, it is important for staff with different kinds of backgrounds to *“feel well in their teams, and bring what they need of themselves to work.”* This can entail changing policies and practices. For example, Edgar Villanueva, the Vice President of Programs and Advocacy at the **Schott Foundation for Public Education**, shared that in order to accommodate a new staff member who was a single mother and lived two hours from the office, they had to be flexible about when and where work took place: *“She could not have been able to take the job if we said she had to be at a desk five days a week.”*

Another important lesson is that bringing in a person or even a few people with lived experience cannot mean that the foundation does not seek out other channels for directly engaging with those affected by the issues the foundation is working on. Assuming that one or two people represent an entire issue is both dangerous and puts undue burden on those individuals.

Moreover, the responsibility for equitable grantmaking cannot fall just on the shoulders of staff members with diverse or lived experience. According to Rickke Mananzala, Vice President of Strategy & Programs at **Borealis Philanthropy**, which is a philanthropic intermediary focused on helping grantmakers expand their reach and impact, *“Greater diversity can inform more equitable grantmaking to support communities of color. But to truly transform grantmaking priorities, this cannot just be the job of a few staff members—it has to be everyone’s responsibility, signaling an authentic institutional commitment to racial equity that endures.”*

Skill Development: Practice 9

Boosting breadth and depth of professional development

The words “talent development” came up very frequently in our conversation with foundation staff members. For smaller foundations, it came up in the context of expanding the role of human resources to be more explicitly focused on building out employee skills. For larger foundations, it came up in the context of adding new staff members to focus solely on talent development. For example, the **Hilton Foundation** recently grew its Talent and Culture Team to ensure there is sufficient capacity to *“nurture purposeful and passionate engagement, innovation, learning, and community.”*

This focus on talent development is not surprising as the skills that foundation staff members need have expanded dramatically in lockstep with expanded approaches and staff roles. Figure 4 shows the skills that foundation leaders shared with us as being important in all staff members playing any role in the foundation (in black) as well as more than 20 new skills (in green) that were mentioned as relevant as staff members are tasked with new ways of working.

Systems thinking was mentioned frequently as an important new skill across all approaches. Three resources for building systems thinking skills include:

- [Systems Grantmaking Resource Guide](#) (GEO and Management Assistance Group)
- [Systems Leadership Skills Builder](#) (Global Knowledge Initiative / USAID)
- [Systems Thinking Toolkit](#) (FSG)

Importantly, as foundations experiment with both broader and deeper professional development opportunities for their staff members to help build some of the skills listed above, it is important to consider several guiding principles:

- For foundations with multiple team members in a program area or department, distribute **specialized skill-building across team members** rather than aiming for each team member to be fluent in all skills.
- Allow staff members to **play to their strengths** when determining skills to develop.
- Carve out **time** for staff members to engage in professional development.
- Enable **grantees** to participate in new skills trainings alongside foundation staff.
- Ensure that for newly trained skills, there is a chance to **apply** them within days so that staff members can immediately practice.
- Encourage leadership to openly **value and reward** the acquisition of new skills.

FIGURE 4. SKILLSETS BASED ON APPROACHES



For skills that are critical to the work of the entire foundation, a key lesson learned is that it is good practice to invite all staff, not just program staff. For example, for the **Grand Rapids Community Foundation** a key priority was increasing cultural competency in the issues the foundation is trying to address. The foundation engaged its entire staff in an immersive experience regarding immigration.

Transitioning a foundation’s team to include and nurture staff members with new mindsets, lived and direct experiences, and prior knowledge of, or an appetite to become versed in, new skillsets is typically not achieved overnight. Foundations shared that they have been gradually evolving the composition of staff over time.

One impeding factor has been that in many foundations, staff members are reluctant to change careers and leave philanthropy for other jobs or sectors. **The Center for Effective Philanthropy’s** June 2017 *Benchmarking Program Officer Roles and Responsibilities* report found that only 14 percent of surveyed program

officers had definite plans not to stay in philanthropy for the remainder of their careers, while 48 percent did plan to stay and 38 percent were not sure.

On the one hand, foundation leaders are pleased that their foundations don't experience a lot of turnover given the relational nature of the work. On the other hand, as foundations want to make room for new perspectives from staff with different kinds of backgrounds, or seek to open up internal advancement opportunities for exceptional staff members, foundation leaders wish for a more conducive and comfortable environment for discussing the topic of exiting the foundation. Sidebar 4 provides four ways that foundations can help staff members engage in long-term career planning.

Sidebar 4. Engaging Staff Members in Long-Term Career Planning

Staff members offered four concrete ways that foundations could better support them in talking about and planning for their long-term careers:

Translation Foundation staff members are not always sure how to translate their expertise and experience to be understandable and compelling to other sectors. Foundations could help by offering resources and examples of how to frame and phrase the many roles and skills of foundation staff for their résumés.

Inspiration Foundation staff members would like to hear from alumni who have left the foundation and moved on to driving impact in other organizations and sectors. Foundations could help by bringing alumni back for brown bag lunches to share their experiences and serve as role models.

Imagination Foundation staff members would like to better understand potential career paths within their departments, across the foundation, and outside of the foundation. Foundations could help by creating a career pathways document that includes roles outside of philanthropy.

Consultation Foundation staff members wish for safer spaces for discussing longer-term career ambitions with someone who is trusted and knowledgeable, and potentially not a direct supervisor. Foundations could help by offering external coaches or internal mentors who keep career conversations confidential.

Peer Perspective

Lankelly Chase

We spoke with Alice Evans, one of the Directors, about the changes they've made to themselves as a foundation.

How has Lankelly Chase changed internally over the last few years?

Since our chief executive started a few years ago, we have been carefully thinking through how the independent resources the foundation has can be used to best effect and most strategically. How can this independence enable us to bear risk that other parts of the system might not be able to, such as public services? To get us to the place where we can be able to do this, we have had to fundamentally rethink the way that we show up to partnerships, and the role that we play as a foundation in supporting change. Too often systems are talked about as abstract entities by foundations, without recognizing that we are part of the system that we're trying to change, and so also need to change.

Internally, there are a few staffing practices we have focused on to do this: (1) investing in our staff skillsets to become better actors in the community, (2) redefining roles within the foundation so that *all* staff can play a role in change, and (3) delegating grantmaking authority from the trustees to the staff who are on the ground. We are guided by the principle that everyone is right, but only partially. Emotions are present in the work, and we're dealing with complexity, so we need to respond accordingly.

One of the first things we did was train staff as coaches, to give them tools to rethink how to engage in relationships and manage the power dynamic that exists in money conversations. The distinction between program and non-program staff is becoming increasingly blurred. For instance, the finance director has managed social investments

- Launched in 1960s
- Aims to change the systems that perpetuate severe disadvantages
- Staff size (2017): 13
- Grants (2017): \$6.5 million
- Focus on people who face multiple disadvantages simultaneously, such as mental illness, homelessness, violence and abuse, drug misuse, and extreme poverty

and held grantee relationships. Program staff, like myself, are involved in internal work such as HR (defining our performance framework, writing pay progression policies), IT (identifying a new IT provider) and grant processes. Additionally, all staff members are involved in the decision-making process for grants. We believe that everyone has something to contribute.

Moreover, we think about recruiting differently. We are more interested in lived experience, and mindsets than degrees because we know that we can teach people skills, but we can't teach diversity of experience. We've recently recruited a more diverse board including people with lived experience. We've a way to go and continue to think about how we can diversify ourselves. We need people who can approach the work without stigma and support grantees with similar experiences.

How has this new lens changed how you engage with external stakeholders?

We have increasingly realized that we can support change by demonstrating ourselves that change is possible. We hope that if we use our independent resources wisely then we can start to create the

conditions for other people to make the change. We've also realized that if we need to build our skillsets then others probably also need to—for example, we have funded a number of trainings for our grantees and ourselves simultaneously and changed how we invite interactions with others. As an example, a couple of years ago we had a big event with 150 people with one-third commissioners, one-third those with lived experience, and one-third nonprofits. We invited those with lived experience to design the event with us down to required attire. If they wanted, we paid for the option to bring support workers. Most importantly, we don't know if we've got it right, and we want to make it possible for others to admit that they want to evolve their work. To make this possible, we've redefined our work as "action inquiries"—if we're trying to answer a question rather than prove something works, it's easier to change.

Why did you make these changes to how you operate?

Because they hold the financial resources, foundations can unwittingly find themselves as the center of a wheel with all interactions leading to them, whereas we increasingly want to act as if we are one part of a hexagon. We want to support networks to flourish between other people and sectors—we don't need to be part of every conversation. If we want this to happen, then we've had to consciously and intentionally reflect on how we show up in partnerships. We realized if we were trying to make change externally then every change we want to make in the external world we have to make in ourselves.

What impact have you seen or are you hoping to see from this?

Our goal was to create the conditions for staff to be the best versions of themselves at work so that

we can support systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage to change. The changes we have made have helped us build a more open, honest, and inclusive culture and have helped staff bring their authentic selves to work. The coaching has also helped us tremendously. Now when we enter conversations, we are more aware of our power as a grantmaker and name it. I believe that if you deny the power you have, you decrease other people's ability to acknowledge their power. We recognize that while we have financial and convening resources, others have content resources. If we don't acknowledge our power, we hold the system back from growing. We've also noticed that other foundations are interested in our approach, and increasingly keen to understand how they can translate our learning into their own approaches.

What advice do you have for peers pursuing a similar approach?

This is a difficult path to embark on and requires a great deal of patience, humility, and flexibility. We are still figuring it out. Perhaps the best way to approach this is to act with humanity and create the conditions for open and trusting relationships along the way. This will open the door to effective dialogue with both staff and grantees. The process of change is never ending. We haven't got this right, and probably never will—we're still in the process of evolving our thinking.

Alice Evans
Director



SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

How foundations are fostering openness and authenticity

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Creating an environment where individuals and teams can learn, raise the need to adapt and change course, and be encouraged to innovate and take risks is crucial when using a multitude of approaches for creating change.
- ▶ Being mindful of and addressing internal and external power dynamics is even more important as foundation staff members take on a variety of new roles beyond grantmaking and spend more time away from their desks and out in the community and with grantees.
- ▶ Foundations that hope for—or demand—changes in the outside world and among their grantees set themselves up for more authentic partnership when they model these practices themselves.

Supportive Culture

Introduction

As a foundation's staff grows to include individuals with more varied skills and ways of working together, culture takes on new importance. For example, building a culture that allows for experimentation and learning is critical, as is managing power dynamics inside and outside of a foundation's walls, so that staff members can build authentic partnerships with each other, grantees, and communities. Moreover, if foundations are more engaged in the issues themselves, it is paramount that they don't just talk the talk, but that they also walk the walk—their social change goals must be reflected in their internal policies and practices.

Recent research by **The Center for Effective Philanthropy** (CEP) has shown that the culture of foundations also has an impact on grantee experiences. In an analysis of simultaneously gathered staff and grantee perceptions at 29 foundations, CEP's Ellie Buteau and her colleagues found a relationship between staff climate and culture and grantee experience.

The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** has begun to shift its own internal culture as the foundation embraces an overarching external strategy of creating a culture of health. Specifically, the foundation is looking for ways to make space for staff to experiment and innovate. According to Brian Quinn, Associate Vice President, Research-Evaluation-Learning, embracing this new way of working means *"spending less time trying to perfect an idea before we launch. Let's get something up and running and evaluate how it's going and shift gears accordingly."* This journey in taking a more adaptive or emergent perspective on strategy has meant shifting from a culture that prizes consensus and avoids mistakes to a learning culture that prioritizes nimbleness and adaptation.

In line with its mission of using innovative approaches and collaborative action to build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Canada, the **J.W. McConnell Family Foundation** has created a culture that prioritizes partnership and is attentive to and works to mitigate the traditional power imbalances with grantees and community members. This includes changing its grants database system so that grantees themselves can learn from each other's experience. According to the foundation's Vice President, John Cawley, *"We want grantees to have access to their own files within the foundation and to have opportunities to learn from each other, including evaluation of their work."* The foundation is considering creating new office space to serve the community and preserve a cultural heritage location, has hired indigenous staff with lived experience, and explains its due diligence process to grantees as they believe that, done well, due diligence will improve the way it operates and interacts with potential grantees, building transparent and fruitful relationships with a wide range of community organizations. This is all part of a broader effort to rebalance the relationships and power dynamics with grantees and to ensure that the foundation is practicing what it promotes. According to Cawley: *"How we work is as important as what we work on."*

The **Ford Foundation** has instituted a number of policies to ensure that the changes they seek in the world are reflected in their internal practices and policies. For instance, the foundation does internal audits to

ensure that they aren't perpetuating gender-based wage discrimination internally at the same time they are calling for gender equality in the labor market externally. Similarly, given that the foundation's mission is oriented around equity, they also ensure that the salary floor for the foundation's employees supports a living wage. Lastly, given that the foundation advocates for increased employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated, it looked at its own policies and made a commitment to hiring staff members who have prior involvement with the justice system. As Samantha Gilbert, Vice President of Talent and Human Resources, said, *"There are aspects of management that are most important when you work on social justice issues, like how to lead in an equitable way."*

As these examples from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, the **J.W. McConnell Family Foundation**, and the **Ford Foundation** demonstrate, foundations are looking to create cultures that support the new roles staff members are playing and that enable foundation staff members to be viewed as authentic partners to grantees and communities in three ways:

10 Committing to continuous learning and adaptation

11 Attending to power dynamics with partners

12 Mirroring internally what is sought externally

Supportive Culture: Practice 10

Committing to continuous learning and adaptation

Traditionally, when foundations provide grants to program and service providers, the work tends to be somewhat straightforward. Strategy is based on a clearly defined logic model, whereby step A leads to step B in a linear and reliable way. Evaluation is often based on assessing progress relative to what was mapped out in advance. Risk is minimized through due diligence on the financial and operational health of the grantee organization and upfront expectations about outputs and outcomes.

When foundations implement more and varied approaches for creating change, a different reality applies. Strategy should be viewed as emergent rather than static, evaluation and continuous learning become even more essential, and mitigating all risk may be impossible. Staff members need to be intentional and explicit about their goals, while also embracing uncertainty.

As staff members are tasked with adapting strategy, a learning mindset is essential not only in individuals, but also in teams and across the whole foundation. Continuous learning is the practice of treating setbacks as opportunities for learning, rather than as opportunities to judge performance. It is grounded in believing that the foundation and its staff members don't have all the answers, but rather are in a continuous cycle of learning and adapting hand-in-hand with grantees, and in being comfortable with the fact that there are not always guaranteed and pre-determinable results. This only works if there is an underlying culture of continuous learning and if staff members have deeper skills in understanding and evaluating the impact of their work. This means that strategy and evaluation need to evolve and become more integrated, and having a learning culture is a key enabler of that transformation.

There are a number of practices that may help encourage staff members to take a continuous learning orientation to their work. For example, staff at **Democracy Fund** initiated a voluntary "humble pie" gathering that has become a quarterly pie-eating tradition to talk about how they've been humbled since the last meeting or to give credit to others' acts of humility. It not only supports living into the value of humility, it also reinforces a spirit of continuous learning within the foundation. The **Kauffman Foundation** has created a cross-functional group of 20 "Learning Champions" to build the capacity of the organization to draw actionable lessons from evidence and experience. Each champion is creating a learning plan for their department consisting of a small number of key questions to answer in 2018 that will accelerate their ability to have impact. Moreover, the champions are collectively working on ways to build a broader culture of learning in the foundation as well.

The **MacArthur Foundation** employs a "design-build" process to encourage learning and adaptability. Design-build is an explicit attempt to continuously scan the landscape, understand and challenge assumptions, assess effectiveness, measure the foundation's contributions, and learn from efforts and take advantage

of emerging opportunities. In short, the foundation employs a design-build approach to allow for myriad pathways to change to be tried, tested, and to fail.

According to Chantell Johnson, Managing Director, Evaluation, *“We rely on a set of principles to guide our approach, including recognition that social problems and conditions are not static. We know we cannot expect to create a strategic plan, make grants, and wait for anticipated results at the conclusion of the strategy. Rather, our work evolves along with the context and environment in which we operate, with continuous iteration over time. Importantly, we rely on learning and evaluation to inform our choices and to help us adapt our work in response to the evolving context and to what we have learned from our efforts along the way.”*

A recent example of design-build in action is the foundation’s work on Nuclear Challenges. To address the evolving context and changing needs of grantees in the nuclear policy arena, the Nuclear Challenge Team has added an element to its strategy aimed at protecting and strengthening the nuclear regime. This new element allows for the provision of surge capacity to assist grantees in reacting and responding to frequent developments and challenges on nuclear issues, such as North Korea and the Iran nuclear deal. The team has circulated a request for small expedited grants proposals³ to meet immediate needs. Also, the team has begun providing general operating grants and grants for flexible support on a strand of work to instill added flexibility into its grantmaking. Early response to these shifts in grantmaking suggests that these changes have been helpful both in terms of supporting grantees but also in facilitating new thinking about pathways to change and levers of influence in the nuclear policy arena.

Finally, foundation staff members may hesitate to experiment with new approaches without permission and support to take risks. Leadership must do what they can to say “yes” to staff member ideas and instill messages that individuals will be supported when things do not go as hoped. According to a Chief Strategy Officer: *“I am just as interested in when things don’t succeed as when they do, as it is helpful to unlock any confirmation bias we may have.”* Others noted that foundations often ask grantees to share examples of failure and could be well-served by taking on that practice themselves.

One step to doing this is creating channels for sourcing innovative ideas and creating the conditions for applicants to suggest risky bets. For example, the **VILLUM Foundation** has a funding stream called the “VILLUM Experiment” which was created for exceptional research projects that challenge the norm and have the potential to fundamentally change the way important topics are approached. To ensure that researchers dare to submit their most ambitious ideas without being pilloried by their academic peers reviewing their proposal, applicants are anonymous to their reviewers.

³ MacArthur program staff can make expedited grants (for a minimum amount of \$1,000 and not to exceed \$50,000) to qualified organizations for four types of activities: (1) attendance at a meeting; (2) convening a meeting; (3) knowledge building and professional development; and (4) small research projects.

The **Hewlett Foundation** has been experimenting with ways to encourage adaptation and risk-taking for many years. The foundation recognizes that there is not one magical mechanism for creating a culture of risk tolerance and reflection. Rather, many processes are embedded. For example, the foundation invites grantees to talk about the risks they've faced and how they've mitigated them. One week per year is dedicated to failure, and staff members explore work that didn't meet their expectations or didn't go as planned and in order to understand and share lessons learned among staff and with the board. For instance, one year during this week, staff members wrote down and sealed their predictions for where their work might be messy during the next 12 months, and then revisited those predictions to analyze what happened, how well they anticipated risks, and the implications. Finally, as part of the annual review process, each program team shares how strategies have progressed, including what went well, what didn't, and what the team plans to do differently in the future.

Foundations that don't cultivate a continuous learning approach may inadvertently incentivize staff to play it safe and to prioritize approaches that are predictable and controllable, rather than effective. A key lesson learned is that staff members need a different cultural environment in order to engage more directly in the issues. They need to know that as they try on new ways of working, they will be supported for what they learn, not for getting everything right on their first attempt. This orientation toward learning has many other benefits to promoting impact across the foundation.

Another lesson learned is that cultivating a learning orientation starts with how setbacks and strategy shifts are broached with the board. Eric Kelly, President of the **Quantum Foundation**, noted that the five mindsets of curiosity and learning, humility, strategic orientation, collaborative approach, and adaptability that are increasingly valued in staff members also have to be true of board members.

Supportive Culture: Practice 11

Attending to power dynamics with partners

Relationships and power dynamics are the currency of many foundations' work—change only happens at the speed of trust, and foundation staff members depend on grantees, community members, and other external stakeholders to help them understand the context in which they work. As staff members engage more directly and use a wider set of approaches, the importance of relationships is elevated, and foundation staff roles may intersect more with the roles of external stakeholders.

In its 2017 survey, **Grantmakers for Effective Organizations** found that a higher proportion of grantmakers are seeking feedback from their grantees, rising from 36 percent in 2008 to 56 percent in 2017. However, the survey also revealed that foundations are, for the most part, not sharing power with their grantees. For example, fewer than half the respondents sought advice from a grantee advisory committee, and only one-fifth are delegating decision-making for some grants to recipient communities or grantees. By engaging grantees on a more level playing field, foundations would be able to learn more about grantees and community partners. The grantees and community partners are closest to work on the ground and have invaluable insight about how resources should be directed to create change. Additionally, engaging grantees on a more level playing field can help foster open conversations in which the foundation might seek advice and input on foundation culture and staffing.

Research conducted by **The Center for Effective Philanthropy** in 2016 found that foundation leaders believe learning from the experiences of those they are ultimately trying to help holds a great deal of promise for increasing foundation impact in the coming decades, but that both funders and grantees do not always see this learning happening. A recent report, *Staying Connected: How Five Foundations Understand Those They Seek to Help*, provides lessons from foundations that are ranked highly by grantees on questions related to their understanding of intended beneficiaries' needs.

Along these lines, many foundations, especially those working deeply in particular places, are experimenting with ways of forging better lines of communication between grantees, the community, and the foundation by asking foundation staff members to “go out there” and more openly welcoming the community to “come in here.” According to **NPAG**: *“In all cases, the goal is to ensure the foundation is able to listen, connect, and show up more authentically as partners in the work with and not simply for communities.”*

For example, the **Episcopal Health Foundation** has a five-person team of community and congregation engagement specialists who help gather community insights and also train community leaders on community engagement. Moreover, the foundation actively curates and shares data on the state of health in accessible ways. According to its Chief Administrative Officer Susybelle Gosslee: *“When we generate research, we make*

it factual and accessible. People are grateful to have the research inform the work and have great conversations about what's really going on in their community."

Similarly, the **Bush Foundation**, which invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 native nations that share the region, encourages staff to be out in the community to enhance communities' problem-solving processes. Staff members conduct office hours all over the region, discussing how they come together in their community to solve problems. Their Community Innovation Program is intended to *"be in your corner—to inspire and support you in creating innovative solutions to challenges in your community."* Community Innovation grants support communities to use problem-solving processes that lead to more effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions, which the foundation describes as "civic R&D, allowing communities to develop and test new solutions to community challenges." According to the foundation's President, Jennifer Ford Reedy: *"We hold office hours all over the region and say: 'Talk to us' or 'How can we help?' Part of our goal is to improve the quality of problem-solving that happens in the region on community issues—seeking out ways we can interact with people about how they come together in their community to solve problems, beyond just the transaction of the grant."*

Wynn Rosser, President & CEO of the **T.L.L. Temple Foundation**, whose mission is to work alongside families and communities to build a thriving Deep East Texas and to alleviate poverty, creating access and opportunities for all, believes that *"Communities and families are experts in their place; it's not us coming in with answers, it's us coming in with resources and a way of looking at things."* This includes meeting community members where they are by prioritizing bilingual hires that also happen to be willing to live in rural Texas. Moreover, it means a willingness to disaggregate data to truly understand what is going on in the community and to face disparities head on.

A key finding is that a physical manifestation of power dynamics between foundations and their communities is in the physical spaces and locations foundations occupy. Several foundations mentioned that they are making changes to their physical space or their procedures to be less closed and intimidating to their grantees, partners, and community members. Jeff Kutash, Executive Director of the **Peter Kiewit Foundation**, which works toward engaged citizens and thriving communities in Nebraska, shared, *"We do as many meetings as possible out in the community instead of in our office. We also reconfigured our office space and changed the way we greet partners into our space to be more welcoming and to minimize power imbalances."*

Supportive Culture: Practice 12

Mirroring internally what is sought externally

Many foundations shared that as they implement new approaches, they are mindful not to perpetuate internal practices that contradict their external goals. Not mirroring in internal policies what's being sought externally can hinder staff members' ability to take on more direct roles on the issues they care about, as they may be perceived as inauthentic and have difficulties in developing and maintaining external relationships.

An authentic link between impact ambitions and internal practices can show up in many ways. For instance, a foundation that works to advance early childhood development should be thoughtful about its maternity and paternity leave policies; a foundation that promotes a healthy environment should examine its own carbon footprint; and a foundation that works to combat income inequality might ensure that its staff and grantees all make a living wage and that there is no racial or gender pay gap. Below are just a few of the many examples that we heard about.

Foundations that advocate for certain policies should ensure they are already modelling these themselves. For example, the **Episcopal Health Foundation** advocates for the expansion of health coverage for low-income and vulnerable populations in Texas. Thus, it is important to the foundation's leadership that they provide generous health benefits to their staff, including coverage for same sex partners.

Foundations that seek to create greater access to resources in their communities should start with their own sourcing. For example, the **Prudential Foundation** seeks to disrupt barriers that are preventing equitable access to economic opportunity. In line with that, the company has set a goal of directing at least seven percent of its total procurement spending to vendors that are local to its headquarter community of Newark and / or owned by minorities, women, veterans, people with disabilities, or individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT).

Foundations that seek to influence private market forces should first look at their own investments. For example, in 2016 the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** announced that it was planning to divest all of its holdings in fossil fuel stocks because of the inconsistency of the environmental impact of fossil fuels with its mission to ensure that everybody has the chance to live a healthy, productive life.

Foundations that seek knowledge from others should openly share knowledge themselves, including about what is not working. For example, building on its work to date, last year, **Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors** launched the Theory of the Foundation Learning Collaborative. This peer learning community seeks to provide foundation leaders and funders with a platform for openly sharing lessons and insights, as well as developing shared concepts and frameworks to spur more effective philanthropy. The **Hewlett Foundation's** Fund for Shared Insights is a funder collaborative working to improve philanthropy by promoting listening

and feedback. The goal is for foundations and nonprofits to be meaningfully connected to each other and the people and communities they seek to help—and more responsive to their input.

Foundations that ask grantees to collaborate need to commit to doing so themselves with their peers. For example, the **Walton Family Foundation** and the **Ford Foundation** recently partnered to launch the Diversifying Art Museum Leadership Initiative, a joint \$6 million, three-year effort to support creative solutions to diversify curatorial and management staff at art museums across the United States.

Being mindful of and making adjustments to internal practices helps foundations more authentically engage and be more empathetic to what their grantees are going through.

Importantly, as foundations invest in their internal capacity to create change in new ways, they should be funding commensurate capacity in their grantees who could also benefit from enhancements to staffing, structure, skillsets, and supporting culture. When members of **Philanthropy New York** (PNY) have the opportunity to participate in high-impact professional development for themselves, PNY hopes that those valuable experiences persuade grantmakers to fund capacity building at their grantee organizations. In addition, PNY regularly does programming that directly focuses on funder investments in grantee capacity.

A key lesson learned is that an important way to authentically mirror practices is to invest in grantee internal operating capacity as much as a foundation invests in its own.

MAKING THE CHANGE

Considerations for getting started

“Change can be painful and messy, but when organizations start with an inclusive process, articulate the connection to mission and values, and have leaders throughout the organization who are cultural carriers to reinforce that message, we see better rates of success in the long term.”

— NPAG

The practices described in this report represent fundamental changes in how foundations and their staff members operate—which can make for a bumpy transformation journey.

The foundations we spoke with highlighted three key challenges they confronted as they began to live into these practices:

Is this really worth it?

Taking on new approaches for creating change will require staff and leadership to alter how they work every day. There may be early enthusiasm as the foundation sees that working in new ways can uncover unique insights and possibilities. But there will also be moments when people are pulled back to the former ways of doing things—the next grant cycle or board meeting, internal reporting deadlines, temporary setbacks, or an assumption that didn't pan out—which could all raise the question “Wouldn't it be easier if we went back to how we did things before?”

Are we there yet?

As foundations increase their impact ambitions, they must also shift their expectations for the nature and timeframe of results. While attempting to change policies, narratives, or power dynamics, foundations will be faced with less clarity of success (or failure) as well as less direct attribution. In addition, outcomes will unfold over multiple years, not in a one-year grant cycle. All of these changes can mean more uncertainty about impact and less precise markers of success. Feelings of skepticism may be particularly pronounced when internal expenditures are questioned by board members seeking immediate or quantifiable impact.

Can we not talk about that?

As foundation staff members shift to roles that are more engaged internally and externally, differences in mental models, beliefs, and preferences may come into conflict. Foundation staff members and leadership may need to have difficult conversations with one another about assumptions that were previously postponed or ignored. Some may not feel comfortable with taking on new approaches or mindsets and may even leave the foundation. The foundation may need to change relationships with some grantees. And grantees may wonder whether the expansion of foundation roles will encroach upon their own work.

Foundations worked through these challenges in a number of different ways.

Have a dedicated team to motivate and communicate. Some foundations created a cross-functional, multi-level organizational change team that (1) served as explainers and motivators, and (2) shared in regular internal communications what was changing at the foundation and why, with stories that illustrated the benefits of the new ways of working.

Value all voices. Foundations included staff member representatives from all parts of the foundation in important decision-making meetings or processes.

Model learning at leadership level. Foundations modelled continuous learning by earmarking time at staff and board meetings for candidly discussing assumptions that did not pan out and planned course corrections.

Test potentially “risky” practices in learning experiments. Foundations can:

- Test out a new role with a contractor at first;
- Embed just one non-program team member into a program team;
- Implement one or two silo-busting practices;
- Try out different recruiting questions to understand candidate mindsets;
- Train staff members on one new systems thinking tool each quarter; or
- Pilot holding a few office hours in their community.

Co-create ideas and buy-in for new practices. For example, foundations could:

- Facilitate a brainstorming session with staff members about how to create more connectivity across the foundation;
- Host focus groups with grantees to develop suggestions for changing internal practices; or
- Conduct a systems mapping exercise with trustees to help them see the need for new approaches for creating change.

NPAG summed up its recommendations for organizational change regarding foundation staffing practices as follows:

“Communication and engagement with staff and stakeholders about new roles and how they fit into the foundation’s broader strategy is really important. While program officers and administrative support teams might not need to know about some changes in order to do their day-to-day work, they are not only important voices in internal feedback loops but are also the frontline in communication with the community.”

Transparency about the organization's activities can also increase morale and build muscle in the culture of trust that encourages all to continue to stretch, learn, improve, and succeed. Change can be painful and messy, but when organizations start with an inclusive process, articulate the connection to mission and values, and have leaders throughout the organization who are cultural carriers to reinforce that message, we see better rates of success in the long term."

An inclusive internal transformation process starts with dialogue, not directives.

The questions below can reveal insights to determine which practices shared in this report might be suitable to adopt and adapt to a foundation's unique context. There are opportunities to discuss the application of the practices in various settings—from conversations with grantees, to all staff meetings, to board and leadership workshops. These questions offer a starting point, although the ideal venue for these discussions will depend on the context and culture of each foundation.

Reflection questions for conversations, focus groups, and surveys from grantees:

- To what extent do our staff's interactions with grantees and community members reflect and foster the **five mindsets listed in this report?** How might the foundation further cultivate these mindsets among staff and grantees in our work together?
- What specific **skills** should we seek to cultivate in foundation staff to better support our approaches to change? Are there opportunities for joint or shared capacity building for these skillsets?
- To what extent are we sufficiently **engaging communities and beneficiaries directly?** If it could be helpful for our work, how can we do so more often, and more effectively and authentically? How can we partner with grantees to help us in this process?
- To what extent are we **modeling practices** that we're asking of grantees and partners? Are there specific practices we could change in the short term or long term?

Reflection questions for all staff members:

- To what extent do we feel that we are part of **"one foundation?"** Why or why not? What else could the foundation do to ensure that the foundation's work is more than the sum of its parts? Could any of the silo-busting ideas fit our foundation's context?
- To what extent are we **creating custom-built teams** based on the approaches they're using, rather than based on a formulaic model that strives for symmetry for team size and composition? Do our teams

reflect the capacity and types of expertise we need to carry out our work?

- To what extent are we setting up **all teams to provide front-line impact**? Are there non-program functions that are particularly important for delivering on our approaches that aren't being valued or integrated yet? Do these functions have sufficient capacity to contribute to the foundation's approaches?
- To what extent are we setting up staff members with **sufficient time** for the approaches they are implementing? What more can be done to support staff as they take on new roles? Are there tasks that can be discontinued or shifted?
- To what extent are we **enabling and encouraging continuous learning** (by adapting our strategies over time, by openly acknowledging assumptions or hypotheses that did not pan out, and by not penalizing risk-taking)? Are there specific practices and policies getting in the way of creating a culture of continuous learning? What would it take to change those practices and policies?

Reflection questions for people development teams:

- To what extent do our processes support us in **hiring and enabling the five mindsets** listed in this report? Do we have any specific processes or decision-making norms that are getting in the way of allowing staff members to fully live out these mindsets? How can these be changed?
- To what extent are we enabling people with **diverse and lived experience** to join and thrive in the foundation? How might recruiting and internal policies and practices need to change to support staff members with new types of backgrounds and experiences?
- To what extent are we providing **professional development opportunities** for the variety of skills our staff members need? Are there specific skillsets that are needed across the foundation that are not being sufficiently nurtured?
- To what extent are we enabling staff members to engage in conversations about their **whole career arc**? What more can be done to encourage this?

Reflection questions for foundation leaders and trustees:

- To what extent do trustees have a **shared understanding of the foundation's prioritized approaches**? For example, if trustees were handed the diagram of the nine approaches, could all trustees identify which approaches are most critical for the foundation overall, and in specific program areas?
- To what extent is the foundation capturing—and even quantifying—all the ways that **staff members are investing their time and multiplying impact**, for example, by influencing peer funders or public funding streams, or by getting more attention for the foundation's issues and grantees from target audiences?
- To what extent are **headcount decisions** grounded in the capacity (number of staff) and capabilities

(specific functional roles) required for delivering on each approach? If there is a ceiling on the number of staff at the foundation, what is that ceiling based on? Would trustees be comfortable shedding fears of being an “outlier” when calculating staffing levels just based on grantmaking levels?

- To what extent are trustees willing to consider **structures that enable new ways of investing**—including for-profit investments, lobbying, co-funding with peers at scale—if these could bolster the foundation’s ability to have impact?

While internal transformation can be challenging, foundations are seeing it as essential for equipping and enabling staff members to co-create more effective relationships and results with grantees, communities, peers, and partners.

Appendix A

Helpful Resources

ARABELLA ADVISORS

[Three Forces Pushing Philanthropy Beyond Grant Making](#)

GRANTMAKERS FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS (GEO)

[2017 Field Survey: Major Trends in US Grantmakers' Attitudes and Practices](#)

[Shaping Culture Through Key Moments](#)

GEO AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE GROUP

[Systems Grantmaking Resource Guide](#)

GRANTMAKERS IN HEALTH

[The Voice on the Ground: The Program Officer of the 21st Century](#)

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW (HBR)

[Audacious Philanthropy](#)

[Why Social Ventures Need Systems Thinking in Systems Change](#)

INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

[Inside the Mind of Your Program Officer](#)

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY

[How to Change Behavior in Philanthropy](#)

NPAG

[Recruiting Strategies to Make Diversity More Meaningful in Your Organization](#)

ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

[Theory of the Foundation](#)

STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW (SSIR)

[Forgetting Failure](#)

[Solving the World's Biggest Problems: Better Philanthropy Through Systems Change](#)

[The Dawn of System Leadership](#)

[Three Keys to Unlocking Systems-Level Change](#)

THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY

[Benchmarking Program Officer Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Discussing the Role of Foundation Staff](#)

[Employee Empowerment: The Key to Foundation Staff Satisfaction](#)

[Foundation Staff Matter](#)

[Relationships Matter: Program Officers, Grantees, and the Keys to Success](#)

[Staying Connected: How Five Foundations Understand Those They Seek to Help](#)

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

[It's Not Foundation Money but Culture and Talent That Can Change the World](#)

THE FOUNDATION REVIEW

[A Foundation's Theory of Philanthropy: What It Is, What It Provides, How to Do It](#)

Appendix B

List of Interviewees

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Chris Ernst, Director, People & Organization Potential

BLANDIN FOUNDATION

Janet Borth, Director of Administrative Services

Wade Fauth, Vice President

BOREALIS PHILANTHROPY

Rickke Mananzala, Vice President of Strategy & Programs

BUSH FOUNDATION

Jennifer Ford Reedy, President

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

John Kobara, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer

CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION

Steven Chapman, Director, Evidence, Measurement & Evaluation

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER ATLANTA

Alicia Philipp, President

Anna Pinder, Director, Community Intelligence

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER BUFFALO

Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, President & CEO

CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION

Edmund J. Cain, Vice President, Grant Programs

Emily Skehan, Program Officer, Special Programs

Tamara Lewis, Vice President, Talent & Culture

Taryn Lee, Human Resources Director

DEMOCRACY FUND

Adam Ambrogi, Program Director, Elections

Betsy Wright Hawkings, Program Director, Governance

Donata Secondo, Manager of Learning & Strategy

Joe Goldman, President

Lauren Strayer, Managing Director of Communications & Network

Lise Woods Fink, Senior Recruiter

Liz Ruedy, Director of Evaluation

Margaret Yao, Chief People Officer

Srik Gopal, Vice President of Strategy & Program

Tom Glaisyer, Program Director, Public Square

Tony Bowen, Managing Director of Operations

EDUCATE TEXAS

John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director

EPISCOPAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

Susybelle Gosslee, Chief Administrative Officer

EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

Aaron North, Vice President of Education

Brian Henke, Director of Operations

Gloria Jackson-Leathers, Director of Kansas City Civic Engagement

John Tyler, General Counsel in Legal

Kathleen Boyle Dalen, Chief Talent, Integration, & Culture Officer

Kristin Bechard, Chief Financial Officer

Larry Jacob, Vice President of Public Affairs & Communications

Matthew Carr, Director of Evaluation

Victor W. Hwang, Vice President of Entrepreneurship

Wendy Guillies, President & CEO

FORD FOUNDATION

Samantha Gilbert, Vice President, Talent and Human Resources

GE FOUNDATION

David Barash, Executive Director, Global Health Portfolio & Chief Medical Officer

Jennifer Edwards, Director, US Developing Health

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Diana R. Sieger, President

HOGG FOUNDATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Lynda Frost, Former Director, Planning & Programs

Stephany Bryan, Program Officer and Consumer & Family Liaison

Tammy Heinz, Program Officer and Consumer & Family Liaison

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

Lisa A. Hall, Vice President for Programs

Sherry Fultz, Director of Human Resources & Administration

HUMANITY UNITED

Ed Marcum, Managing Director

Lawrence Mendenhall, Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel

Lisa Carpenter, Head of Strategy, Learning, & Impact

Randy Newcomb, President and CEO

Robyn Arville, Chief of People

Tim Isgitt, Managing Director

IRVING HARRIS FOUNDATION

Phyllis Glink, Executive Director

JACOBS FOUNDATION

Sandro Giuliani, Managing Director, Delegate of the Board

JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

Andrew Solomon, Managing Director, Communications

Cecilia A. Conrad, Managing Director

Chantell Johnson, Managing Director, Evaluation

Debra Schwartz, Managing Director, Impact Investments

Julia M. Stasch, President

Elizabeth Kane, Managing Director, Core Services

Michael Meadows, Managing Director, People & Culture

Stephanie Platz, Managing Director, Programs

Valerie Chang, Managing Director, Programs

J.W. MCCONNELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

John Cawley, Vice President

KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

Luc Tayart de Borms, Managing Director

KOYA LEADERSHIP PARTNERS

Erin Reedy, Vice President, Executive Search

LANKELLY CHASE

Alice Evans, Director, Systems Change

LUMINA FOUNDATION

Courtney Brown, Vice President of Strategic Impact

MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

Leena Malik, Senior Manager, Learning & Organizational Development

Lindsay Wallace, Director, Learning & Strategy

NPAG

Allison Kupfer Poteet, Vice President & Managing Partner

Katherine E. Jacobs, President & CEO

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Blair Dimock, Vice President, Partnerships and Knowledge

Jennifer Roynon, Director, Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Loyse Bonjour, Director of Global Human Resources

PALIX FOUNDATION

Michelle Gagnon, President

PETER KIEWIT FOUNDATION

Jeff Kutash, Executive Director

PHILANTHROPY NEW YORK

Kathryn O'Neal-Dunham, Chief Operating Officer

Kristen M. Ruff, Vice President, Member Services

PRUDENTIAL FOUNDATION

Shane Harris, Vice President

QUANTUM FOUNDATION

Eric M. Kelly, President

RAIKES FOUNDATION

Erin Kahn, Executive Director

ROBERT R. MCCORMICK FOUNDATION

Oscar Regalado, Human Resources Director

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

Brian Quinn, Associate Vice President, Research-Evaluation-Learning

Steve Downs, Chief Technology and Strategy Officer

ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

Olga Tarasov, Director of Knowledge Development

SAN ANTONIO AREA FOUNDATION

Arenda Burns, Vice President of Human Resources and Organizational Development

Michelle Lugalía-Hollon, Director of Program Initiatives

Rebecca Brune, President and Chief Operating Officer

SCHOTT FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Edgar Villanueva, Vice President of Programs and Advocacy

T.L.L. TEMPLE FOUNDATION

Wynn Rosser, President & CEO

THE 360 GROUP

Vincent Robinson, Founder & Managing Partner

THE BRIDGESPAN GROUP

Alison Powell, Senior Director, Philanthropy

THE EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION

Kathy Makowski, Director of Human Resources

Ralph Stefano, Vice President, Chief Operating Officer

THE FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION

Anne C. Kubisch, President

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Ariel H. Simon, Vice President, Chief Program and Strategy Officer

THE OMIDYAR GROUP

Becky Richeson, Systems & Complexity Project Manager

Jeff Mohr, Advisor, Strategy & Governance

Mike Mohr, Advisor and Board Member, Omidyar Network

Rob Ricigliano, Systems & Complexity Coach

THE OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Kathleen Cornett, Vice President for Grants & Programs

Sonia Worcel, Vice President of Strategy and Research

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Jessica Freireich, Managing Director, Organizational Performance

THE SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Ann Mulholland, Vice President of Community Impact

Eric J. Jolly, President & CEO

UBS OPTIMUS FOUNDATION

Phyllis Costanza, CEO

UNITED PHILANTHROPY FORUM

David Biemesderfer, President & CEO

VILLUM FOUNDATION

Lars Hansen, Director

WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

Kyle Peterson, Executive Director

WEINGART FOUNDATION

Fred J. Ali, President & CEO

WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

Fay Twersky, Director, Effective Philanthropy Group

Jean McCall, Director of Human Resources

Larry Kramer, President

Authors



Abigail Stevenson

Associate Director

abigail.stevenson@fsg.org

Abi focuses on strategic approaches to addressing complex population health challenges and has over ten years of experience in the healthcare and consulting fields. She has worked with a number of leading health foundations and hospitals systems, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, The California Health Care Foundation, Children’s Medical Center in Dallas, and Kaiser Permanente. She has also helped build collective impact efforts to address childhood obesity, diabetes, and childhood asthma. Abi holds a joint MBA and MPH from UC Berkeley and a BA from Dartmouth College.

Valerie Bockstette

Managing Director

valerie.bockstette@fsg.org

Valerie has over 15 years of experience in advising leading organizations around the world on strategy, evaluation, and organizational capacity. She has worked with private, family, community, and corporate foundations in North America and Europe including the Mastercard Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, the Oak Foundation, Houston Endowment, and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Valerie has particular experience with issues that lie at the intersection of multiple systems, such as early care and education, adult and juvenile justice, and access to finance. Valerie holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a BA from Brown University.





Andria Seneviratne

Senior Consultant

andria.seneviratne@fsg.org

Andria has turned her passion for organizational and people development into action through her work on strategic planning and cross-organization learning collaboratives. She has worked with clients across sectors, including USAID, *Let's Move!* Active Schools, and Living Cities. Andria holds an MS and a BA from the University of Notre Dame.

Miya Cain

Consultant

miya.cain@fsg.org

Miya has worked across sectors with clients such as the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Novo Nordisk, Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit, and the San Francisco Department of Public Health on strategy development and in building multi-sector collaborations. She has a particular focus on health equity and social determinants of health. Miya holds an MPP from Harvard Kennedy School and a BA from Yale University.



Tracy Foster

Associate Director

tracy.foster@fsg.org

For more than ten years, Tracy has developed strategy and evaluation frameworks for foundations across the United States, including the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. She has also worked with community foundations and corporations. Tracy holds a BS from Northwestern University.



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