# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

This compendium captures the wisdom shared from the many authors who contributed to our Open for Good blog series between 2017-2019. This collection of voices, representing "knowledge sharing champions" from across the field, explores tools, practices, and examples showing how foundations are opening up about what they are learning for the benefit of the philanthropic sector, and for the greater good.

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## Because What You Know Shouldn't Just Be About Who You Know

June 1, 2017

*Janet Camarena is director of transparency initiatives for Foundation Center.*

"Knowledge is obsolete." As a librarian, my ears perked up at this TEDx talk and articles buzzing about this in the education field. It seems plausible. Why memorize facts, when anything one wants to know can be readily looked up, on the go, via a smart phone? As a mom, I imagine my kids sitting down to prepare for rich, thought-provoking classroom discussions instead of laboring over endless multiple-choice tests. What an exciting time to be alive — a time when all of humanity's knowledge is at our fingertips, leading experts are just a swipe away, the answer always literally close at hand, and we've been released from the drudgery of memorization and graduated to a life of active, informed debate! And how lucky are we to be working in philanthropy and able to leverage all this knowledge for good, right?

Though the active debate part may sound familiar, sadly, for those of us working in philanthropy, the ubiquity of knowledge remains more sci-fi mirage than a TED Talk rendering of our present-day reality. As GlassPockets reported in "The Foundation Transparency Challenge" infographic, released last November, still only 10% of foundations even have a website, so even a smart phone is not smart enough to help connect you to the 90% of those that don't.

The Foundation Transparency Challenge also reveals other areas of potential improvement for institutional philanthropy, including a number of transparency practices not widely embraced by the majority of funders. Indeed, the data we've collected demonstrates that philanthropy is weakest when it comes to creating communities of shared learning, with fewer than half the foundations with a GlassPockets profile using their websites to share what they are learning, only 22 % percent sharing how they assess their own performance, and only 12 percent revealing details about their strategic plan.

Foundation Center data also tells us that foundations annually make an average of $5.4 billion in grants for knowledge-production activities, such as evaluations, white papers, and case studies. Yet only a small fraction of foundations actively share the knowledge assets that result from those grants — and far fewer share them under an open license or through an open repository. For a field that is focused on investing in ideas — and not shy about asking grantees to report on the progress of these ideas — there is much potential here to open up our

knowledge to peers and practitioners who, like so many of us, are looking for new ideas and new approaches to urgent, persistent problems.

> ***"Sadly, for those of us working in philanthropy, the ubiquity of knowledge remains more sci-fi mirage than a TED Talk rendering of our present-day reality."***

As for having a universe of experts a swipe away to help inform our philanthropic strategies, the reality is that the body of knowledge related to philanthropic work is scattered across the thousands of institutional foundation websites that do exist. But who has time for the Sisyphean task of filtering through it all?

No coincidence, perhaps, that a main finding of a recent report commissioned by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation was that foundation professionals looking to gain and share knowledge tend to prefer to confer with trusted foundation peers and colleagues. At the same time, the field is doing a lot of soul searching related to diversity, equity, and inclusion — and what it can do to improve its performance in those areas. But if practitioners in the field are only sourcing knowledge from their peers, doesn't that suggest their knowledge networks may be unintentionally insular and lacking in well…diversity of opinion and perspective? And might there be a way to connect the dots and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and inclusivity of our networks by changing the way we source, find, and share lessons learned?

In other words, *shouldn't what we know not just be about who we know?*

## #OpenForGood

The good news is that as more foundations professionalize their staffs and develop in-house expertise in learning, monitoring and evaluation, (as well as in grants management and communications), there are a number of developing practices out there worth highlighting. At the same time, a number of technology platforms and tools have emerged that make it easy for us to improve the way we search for and find answers to complex questions. Here at Foundation Center, for example, we are using this post to kick off a new #OpenForGood series featuring the voices of "knowledge sharing champions" from the philanthropic and social sectors. Some of these experts will be sharing their perspectives on opening up knowledge at their own foundations, while others will clue us in to tools and platforms that can improve the way philanthropy leverages the knowledge it generates (and pays for), as well as discovers new sources of knowledge.

But before we get there, you might be wondering: What does it mean to be a social sector organization that is #OpenForGood? And how does my organization become one? Not to worry. The following suggestions are intended to help organizations demonstrate they are moving in the direction of greater openness:

1. Grantmakers can start by assessing their own foundation's openness by taking and sharing the "Who Has Glass Pockets?" transparency self-assessment survey.
2. Funders and nonprofits alike can openly share what they are learning with the rest of the field. If your organization invested in monitoring and evaluating results in 2015 or 2016, make the effort to share those evaluations in our new IssueLab: *Results* In exchange for sharing your recent evaluations, you will receive an #OpenforGood badge to display on your website to signal your commitment to creating a community of shared learning.

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3. If you have lessons to share but not a formal evaluation process, share them in blog format here on Transparency Talk, on PhilanTopic, or on GrantCraft, so others can still benefit from your experience.
4. Adopt an open licensing policy so that others can more easily build on your work.

The #OpenForGood series is timed to align with the launch of a new Foundation Center platform designed to help philanthropy learn from all the collective knowledge at its disposal. Developed by the team at IssueLab, whose collection already includes more than 22,000 reports from thousands of nonprofits and foundations, IssueLab *Results* is dedicated in particular to the collection and sharing of evaluations.


IssueLab *Results* supplies easy, open access to the lessons foundations are learning about what is and isn't working. The site includes a growing curated collection of evaluations and a special collection containing guidance on the practice of evaluation. And it's easy to share your knowledge through the site – just look for the orange "Upload" button.

The basic idea here is to scale social sector knowledge so that everyone benefits and the field, collectively, grows smarter rather than more fragmented. On a very practical level, it means that a researcher need only visit one website rather than thousands to learn what is known about the issue s/he is researching. But the only way the idea can scale is if foundations and nonprofits help us grow the collection by adding their knowledge here. If they do – if you do – it also means that philanthropy will have a more inclusive and systematic way to source intelligence beyond the "phone a friend" approach.

The bottom line is that in philanthropy today, knowledge isn't obsolete, it's obscured. Won't you join us in helping make it #OpenForGood.

If you have a case study related to knowledge sharing and management and/or the benefits of transparency and openness, let us know in the comments below, or find us on Twitter @GlassPockets.

*— Janet Camarena*

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## The Real World is Messy. How Do You Know Your Foundation Is Making an Impact?

June 7, 2017

*Aaron Lester is an experienced writer and editor in the nonprofit space. In his role as content marketing manager at Fluxx, Aaron's goal is to collect and share meaningful stories from the world of philanthropy.*

In a perfect world, foundations could learn from every mistake, build on every new piece of knowledge, and know with certainty what impact every effort has made.

Of course, we're not in that world. We're in the real, fast-paced world of nonprofits where messy human needs and unpredictable natural and political forces necessitate a more flexible course. In that world, it's more challenging to measure the effects of our grantmaking efforts and learn from them. It turns out knowledge sharing is a tough nut to crack.

And without meaningful knowledge sharing, we're left struggling to understand the philanthropic sector's true impact — positive or negative — within a single organization or across many. The solution is a more transparent sector that is willing to share data — quantitative as well as qualitative — that tells stories of wins and losses, successes and failures—in other words, a sector that is #OpenForGood. But, of course, this is much easier said than done.

My role at Fluxx creates many opportunities for me to talk with others in the field and share stories the philanthropic sector can learn from. I recently had the chance to speak with grantmakers on this very issue.

### Measuring Whose Success?

Even within a foundation, it can be difficult to truly understand the impact of a grant or other social investment.

> ***"Lose the mindset defined by a fear of failure; instead, embrace one that drives you to search for opportunity."***

As Adriana Jiménez, director of grants management at the ASPCA and former grants manager at the Surdna Foundation, explains, it's difficult for foundations to prove conclusively that it's their slice of the grantmaking that has made a meaningful difference in the community. "When you collect grant-by-grant data, it doesn't always roll up to your foundation's goals or even your grant's goals."

The issue is that there's no standardized way to measure grantmaking data, and it's an inherently difficult task because there are different levels of assessment (grant, cluster, program, foundation, etc.), there is similar work being done in different contexts, and a lot of data is only available in narrative form.

One way to combat these challenges is to make sure your foundation is transparent and in agreement around shared goals with grantees from the start of the relationship. Being too

prescriptive or attempting to standardize the way your grantees work will never create the results you're after. Part of this early alignment includes developing clear, measurable goals together and addressing how the knowledge you're gaining can and should translate into improvements in performance.

A grantee should never have to alter their goals or objectives just to receive funding. That sends the wrong message, and it provides the wrong incentive for grantees to participate in knowledge-sharing activities. But when you work as partners from the start and provide space for grantees to collaborate on strategy, a stronger partnership will form, and the stories your data tells will begin to be much more meaningful.

## The Many Languages of Human Kindness

If sharing knowledge is difficult within one organization, it's even more challenging across organizations.

Jiménez points out that a major challenge is the complexity of foundations, as they rely on different taxonomies and technologies and discuss similar issues using different language. Every foundation's uniqueness is, in its day-to-day work, its strength, but in terms of big-picture learning across organizations, it's a hurdle.

Producing cohesive, comprehensive data out of diverse, fragmented information across multiple organizations is a huge challenge. Mining the information and tracking it in an ongoing way is another obstacle made more difficult because the results are often more anecdotal than they are purely quantitative. And when this information is spread out over so many regions and focus areas, the types of interventions vary so widely that meaningful knowledge sharing becomes untenable.

Gwyneth Tripp, grants manager at Blue Shield of California Foundation, also cites a capacity issue. Most foundations don't have designated roles for gathering, tracking, organizing, and exchanging shareable data, so they resort to asking staff who already have their own sizable to-do lists. Tripp says:

"They have an interest and a desire [in knowledge sharing], but also a real challenge of balancing the everyday needs, the strategic goals, the relationships with grantees, and then adding that layer of 'let's learn and think about it all' is really tough to get in.

"Also, becoming more transparent about the way you work, including sharing successes as well as failures, can open your foundation up to scrutiny. This can be uncomfortable. But it's important to delineate between 'failure' and 'opportunity to learn and improve.'"

## Sparking Change

But foundations know (possibly better than anyone else) that obstacles don't make accomplishing a goal impossible.

And this goal's rewards are great: When foundations can achieve effective knowledge sharing, they'll have better insights into what other funding is available for the grantees within the issues they are tackling, who is being supported, which experiments are worth replicating, and where there are both gaps and opportunities. And with those insights, foundations gain the ability to iterate and improve upon their operations, even leading to stronger, more strategic collaborations and partnerships.

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Creating and promoting this kind of accessible, useful knowledge sharing starts with a few steps:

1. **Begin from within.** Tracking the impact of your grantmaking efforts and sharing those findings with the rest of the sector requires organizations to look internally first. Start by building a knowledge management implementation plan that involves every stakeholder, from internal teams to grantee partners to board executives.
2. **Determine and prioritize technology needs.** Improvements in technology — specifically cloud-based technology — are part of what's driving the demand for data on philanthropic impact in the first place. Your grants management system needs to provide integrated efficiency and accessibility if you want to motivate staff participation and generate usable insights from the data you're collecting. Is your software streamlining your efforts, or is it only complicating them?
3. **Change your mindset.** Knowledge sharing can be intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. Lose the mindset defined by a fear of failure; instead, embrace one that drives you to search for opportunity. Promote a stronger culture of knowledge sharing across the sector by sharing your organizational practices and lessons learned. Uncover opportunities to collect data and share information across organizations.

There's no denying that knowledge sharing benefits foundations everywhere, along with the programs they fund. Don't let the challenges hold you back from aiming for educational, shareable data — you have too much to gain not to pursue that goal. What will you #OpenForGood?

*— Aaron Lester*

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## Why Evaluations Are Worth Reading – or Not

June 14, 2017

*Rebekah Levin is the Director of Evaluation and Learning for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, guiding the Foundation in evaluating the impact of its philanthropic giving and its involvement in community issues. She is working both with the Foundation's grantmaking programs, and also with the parks, gardens, and museums at Cantigny Park.*

Truth in lending statement: I am an evaluator. I believe strongly in the power of excellent evaluations to inform, guide, support and assess programs, strategies, initiatives, organizations and movements. I have directed programs that were redesigned to increase their effectiveness, their cultural appropriateness and their impact based on evaluation data, helped to design and implement evaluation initiatives here at the foundation that changed the way that we understand and do our work, and have worked with many foundation colleagues and nonprofits to find ways to make evaluation serve their needs for understanding and improvement.

***"I believe strongly in the power of excellent evaluations."***

One of the strongest examples that I've seen of excellent evaluation within philanthropy came with a child abuse prevention and treatment project. Our foundation funded almost 30 organizations that were using 37 tools to measure treatment impact of treatment, many of which were culturally inappropriate, designed for initial screenings, or inappropriate for a host of other reasons, and staff from these organizations running similar programs had conflicting views about the tools. Foundation program staff wanted to be able to compare program outcomes using uniform evaluation tools and to use that data to make funding, policy, and program recommendations, but they were at a loss as to how to do so in a way that honored the grantees' knowledge and experience. A new evaluation initiative was funded, combining the development of a "community of practice" for the nonprofits and foundation together to:

- create a unified set of reporting tools;
- learn together from the data about how to improve program design and implementation, and the systematic use of data to support staff/program effectiveness;
- develop a new rubric which the foundation would use to assess programs and proposals; and
- provide evaluation coaching for all organizations participating in the initiative.

The evaluation initiative was so successful that the nonprofits participating decided to continue their work together beyond the initial scope of the project to improve their own programs and better support the children and families that they are serving. This "Unified Project Outcomes" article describes the project and established processes in far greater detail.

But I have also seen and been a part of evaluations where:

- the methodology was flawed or weak;

- the input data were inaccurate and full of gaps;
- there was limited understanding of the context of the organization;
- there was no input from relevant participants; and
- there was no thought to the use of the data/analysis;

so that little to no value came out of them, and the learning that took place as a result was equally inconsequential.


So now to those evaluation reports that often come at the end of a project or foundation initiative, and sometimes have interim and smaller versions throughout their life span. Except to a program officer who has to report to their director about how a contract or foundation strategy was implemented, the changes from the plan that occurred, and the value or impact of an investment or initiative, should anyone bother reading them? From my perch, the answer is a big “Maybe.” What does it take for an evaluation report to be worth my time to read, given the stack of other things sitting here on my desk that I am trying to carve out time to read? A lot.

1. It has to be an evaluation and not a PR piece. Too often, "evaluation" reports provide a cleaned up version of what really occurred in a program, with none of the information about how and why an initiative or organization functioned as it did, and the data all point to its success. This is not to say that initiatives/organizations can’t be successful. But no project or organization works perfectly, and if I don’t see critical concerns/problems/caveats identified, my guess is that I’m not getting the whole story, and its value to me drops precipitously.
2. It has to provide relevant context. To read an evaluation of a multi-organizational collaboration in Illinois without placing its fiscal challenges within the context of our state’s ongoing budget crisis, or to read about a university-sponsored community-based educational program without knowing the long history of mistrust between the school and the community, or any other of the relevant and critical contextual pieces that are effect a program, initiative or organization makes that evaluation of little value. Placed within a nuanced set of circumstances significantly improves the possibility that the knowledge is transferable to other settings.
3. It has to be clear and as detailed as possible about the populations that it is serving. Too often, I read evaluations that leave out critical information about who they were targeting and who participated or was served.
4. The evaluation’s methodology must be described with sufficient detail so that I have confidence that it used an appropriate and skillful approach to its design and implementation as well as the analysis of the data. I also pay great attention to what extent those who were the focus of the evaluation participated in the evaluation’s design, the questions being addressed, the methodology being used, and the analysis of the data.

5. And finally, in order to get read, the evaluation has to be something I know exists, or something I can easily find. If it exists in a repository like IssueLab, my chances of finding it increase significantly. After all, even if it's good, it is even better if it is #OpenForGood for others, like me, to learn from it.

When these conditions are met, the answer to the question, "Are evaluations worth reading?" is an unequivocal "YES!," if you value learning from others' experiences and using that knowledge to inform and guide your own work.

*— Rebekah Levin*

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## Bringing Knowledge Full Circle: Giving Circles Shape Accessible and Meaningful Philanthropy

June 21, 2017

*Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen is a Lecturer in Business Strategy at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Founder and President of the Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen Foundation, Founder and Board Chairman of Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society and Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund.*

Nathalie Morton, a resident of Katy, TX, was passionate about giving back to her suburban Houston community. However, she felt her lack of philanthropic experience might hinder her effectiveness.

After initial conversations with her friends and neighbors, she discovered that they shared her desire to give locally and, like herself, lacked the financial ability to make the large contributions that they associated with high-impact philanthropy. After initial online research, Nathalie learned that a giving circle is a collaborative form of giving that allows individuals to pool their resources, knowledge and ideas to develop their philanthropic strategy and scale their impact. Nathalie then discovered the Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen Foundation's (LAAF.org) Giving Circles Fund (GCF) initiative, an innovative online platform that provides an accessible and empowering experience for a diverse group of philanthropists to practice, grow and scale their philanthropy by giving collaboratively.

***"Philanthropists have an imperative to share the research and rationale behind their philanthropic decisions for the greater good."***

With LAAF support, Nathalie was inspired to create the Cinco Ranch Giving Circle to pool her community members' resources for the greater good. In its first year, this circle of over 30 families has come together to invest thousands of dollars in local nonprofits — all through donations as modest as $10 per month. Every member found that sharing time, values, wisdom and dollars not only deepened their relationships with one another but also that the measurable impact they could have together far exceeded that which they could achieve alone. This experience empowered Nathalie and her fellow giving circle participants to see themselves as philanthropists and develop their practice in a collaborative environment.

Nathalie's story is just one of myriad ways that the giving circles model has made strategic philanthropy more accessible. Two years ago, I wrote a post on this same blog about how funders should have not only glass pockets but also "glass skulls," underscoring that philanthropists have an imperative to share the research and rationale behind their philanthropic decisions for the greater good of all who are connected to the issue. Or put another way, giving circles can help donors of all sizes become #OpenForGood. GCF allows philanthropists, like Nathalie, to do just that — by empowering givers at any level to make their thinking and decisions about social impact more open and collaborative.

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A lack of financial, intellectual and evaluation resources are barriers to entry for many people who want to give in a way that matters more. That's why I've committed the past two decades to not only redefining philanthropy — I believe that anyone, regardless of age, background or experience, can be a strategic philanthropist — but also to providing highest quality, free educational resources (MOOCs, teaching materials, case studies, giving guides) to empower anyone to make the most of whatever it is they have to give. Although most GCF individual monthly contributions are in the double digits, the impact of our giving circles is increasingly significant — our circles have given over $550,000 in general operating support grants to nonprofits nationally. By design, giving circles amplify individual giving by providing built-in mechanisms for more strategic philanthropy, including increasing

- Transparency: Giving circles are effective because they are radically transparent about their operations, selection processes, meeting etiquette, voting rules, etc. We have found that giving circles grow and flourish when members understand exactly how the circle works and their role in its success. In addition, all of our circles publish their grants on their GCF pages, so that current and prospective members have insight into each circle's history, portfolio and impact.
- Democracy: GCF giving circles have a flat structure, in which everyone has an equal vote — regardless of their respective donations' size. With LAAF support and a comprehensive portfolio of resources, group leaders facilitate meetings — ranging from casual meetups to knowledge sharing and issue ecosystem mapping gatherings to nonprofit nomination and voting sessions. Even in multigenerational giving circles where members are able to give at different levels, all of their members' voices, perspectives and opinions hold equal weight.
- Accessibility: Giving circles require a lower level of financial capital than other philanthropic models. A 2014 study has shown a higher rate of participation in giving circles for Millennials, women and communities of color — reflecting the spectacular pluralism that makes philanthropy beautiful. [1] On our GCF platform, we host multiple college and high school circles that have started teaching their members to carve out philanthropic dollars even on a minimal budget. Additionally, most of our circles are open to the public, and anyone can join and actively participate (yes, that includes you!).
- Risk-tolerance: With more diverse participants and lower amounts of capital, GCF giving circles are more likely to give to community-based or smaller organizations that typically struggle to secure capital from more established philanthropies, thus meeting a critical social capital market need.

The power of collectively-pooling ideas, experiences and resources, as well as sharing decision-making, inspired me to found Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2) in 1998. What began as a small, local giving circle has grown into the second largest venture philanthropy partnership in the world. More importantly, its experiential education model — grounded in the principles listed above — has influenced the philanthropic practice of hundreds of now highly strategic philanthropists who respectively have invested hundreds of millions of dollars globally. To this day, being a partner-member of the SV2 giving circle continues to inform how I give and evolve

my own philanthropic impact. Now, powered by the GCF platform, technology gives all of us the ability to scale our own giving by partnering with like-minded givers locally, nationally and globally so we can all move toward an #OpenForGood ideal. The mobilization of givers of all levels harnesses the power of the collective and demonstrates that the sum of even the smallest contributions can lead to deeply meaningful social change.

*— Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Transparency and the Art of Storytelling

June 28, 2017

*Mandy Flores-Witte is Senior Communications Officer for the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.*

Foundations are uniquely poised to support higher-risk projects, and as a result, failures can happen. Recently, I was searching online for examples on how to share the story about a grant that had some unexpected outcomes and found that, while the field strives to be transparent, it can still be a challenge to learn about initiatives that didn't go as planned.

Communicating about a project doesn't always have to happen in a scholarly report or detailed analysis, or by hiring experts to produce an evaluation. Sharing what you learned can be as simple as telling a story.

### Embracing the Facts and Checking Our Ego

***"Sharing stories can help you reach people in a way that statistics cannot."***

When the Rainin Foundation funded our first public art installation in San Francisco's Central Market, a busy neighborhood undergoing a significant economic transformation, we knew it was an experiment with risks. The art installation's large platform, swing, and see saw were designed to get neighborhood residents, tech workers, customers of local businesses, and visitors — people spanning the economic spectrum—to interact. There's no doubt that the project succeeded at bringing people together. But after seven months, it was relocated to a different part of the city because of complaints and safety concerns about the types of people and activities it attracted.

These issues were addressed at several community meetings—meetings that helped build stronger relationships among project stakeholders such as city departments, businesses, artists, local nonprofits, and neighbors. We were disappointed that the project did not go as planned, but we were amazed to see how one public art installation could spark so many conversations and also be a platform for exposing the city's social issues. We knew we had to share what we learned. Or put another way, we saw an opportunity to be #OpenForGood.

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## Selecting a Medium for Sharing


*The Kenneth Rainin Foundation hosts "Block by Block," a public music and dancing event. Credit: Darryl Smith, Luggage Store Gallery*

We considered a formal assessment to communicate our findings, but the format didn't feel right. We wanted to preserve the stories and the voices of the people involved — whether it was the job fair hosted by a nearby business to help drug dealers get out of the "game," the woman who sought refuge at the installation from domestic violence, or the nonprofit that hosted performances at the site. These stories demonstrated the value of public art.

We decided the most engaging approach would be to have our partners talk candidly about the experience. We selected Medium, an online storytelling platform, to host the series of "as told to" narratives, which we believed would be the most authentic way to hear from our partners. Our intention was to use the series as a tool to start a conversation. And it worked.

## Taking Risks is Uncomfortable

The Rainin Foundation intentionally supported art in the public realm — knowing the risks involved — and we thought the discussion of what happened should be public, too. It was uncomfortable to share our missteps publicly, and it made us and our partners vulnerable. In fact, just weeks before publishing the stories, we were cautioned by a trusted colleague about going forward with the piece. The colleague expressed concern it could stir up negative feelings and backfire, harming the reputation of the foundation and our partners.

We took this advice to heart, and we also considered who we are as a foundation. We support cutting-edge ideas to accelerate change. This requires us to test new approaches, challenge the status quo, and be open to failure in both our grantmaking and communications. Taking risks is part of who we are, so we published the series.

*Jennifer Rainin, CEO of the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, shares the year's pivotal moments in Turning Points: 2015.*

We've applied a transparent approach to knowledge-sharing in other ways as well. To accompany one of our annual reports, the foundation created a video with Jen Rainin, our chief executive officer, talking about the foundation's pivotal moments. Jen read some heartfelt personal letters from the parents of children suffering from Inflammatory Bowel Disease, explaining how their children were benefitting from a diet created by a researcher we support. Talking about scientific research can be challenging and complex, but sharing the letters in this way and capturing Jen's reaction to them enabled us to humanize our work. The video was widely viewed (it got more hits than the written report), and has inspired us to continue experimenting with how we share our work.

## Start Talking About Impact

I encourage foundations to look beyond formal evaluations and data for creative ways to be #OpenForGood and talk about their impact. While reports are important to growth and development, sharing stories can help you reach people in a way that statistics cannot. Explore new channels, platforms and content formats. Keep in mind that videos don't have to be Oscar-worthy productions, and content doesn't have to be polished to perfection. There's something to be gained by encouraging those involved in your funded projects to speak directly and honestly. It creates intimacy and fosters human connections. And it's hard to elicit those kinds of feelings with newsletters or reports.

*What are your stories from the times you've tried, failed, and learned?*

*— Mandy Flores-Witte*

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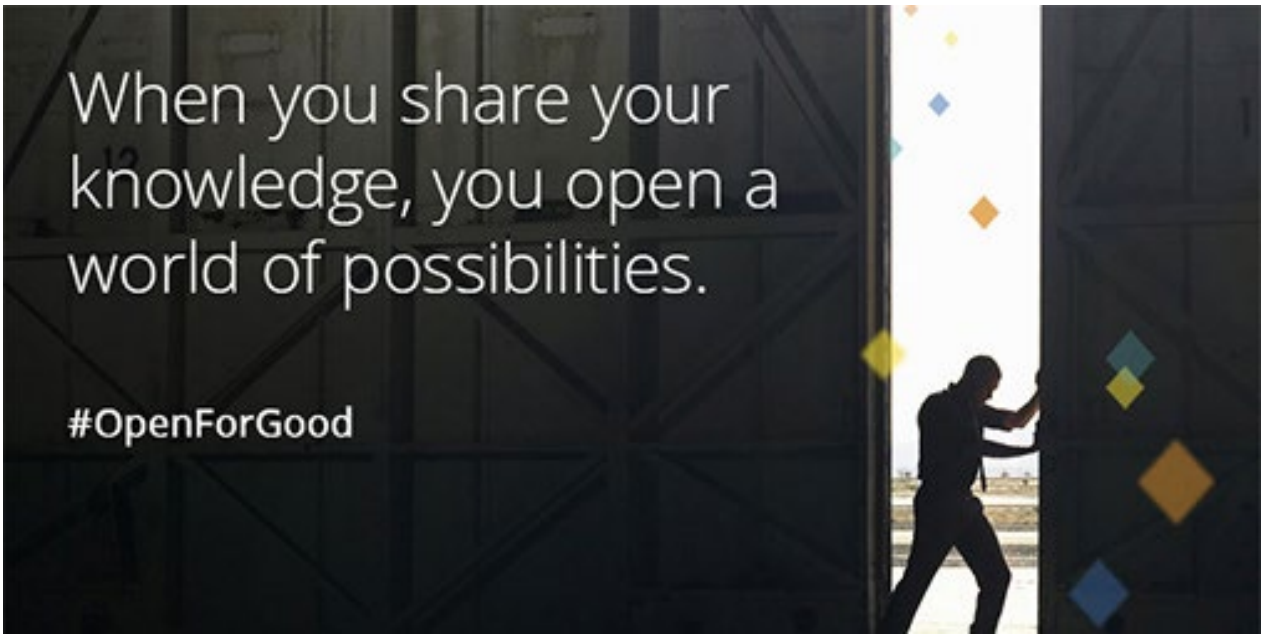
## What Will You #OpenForGood?

July 13, 2017

*Janet Camarena is director of transparency initiatives at Foundation Center.*

Three Foundation Center services—GlassPockets, IssueLab, and GrantCraft are leveraging their platforms to advance the idea that philanthropy can best live up to its promise of serving the public good by openly and consistently sharing what it's learning from its work. GlassPockets is featuring advice and insights from "knowledge sharing champions" in philanthropy on an ongoing #OpenForGood blog series; IssueLab has launched a special *Results* platform allowing users to learn from a collective knowledge base of foundation evaluations; and a forthcoming GrantCraft Guide on open knowledge practices is in development.

Although this campaign is focused on helping and inspiring foundations to use new and emerging technologies to better collectively learn, it is also in some ways rooted in the history that is Foundation Center's origin story.




### A Short History

Sixty years ago, Foundation Center was established to provide transparency for a field in jeopardy of losing its philanthropic freedom due to McCarthy Era accusations that gained traction in the absence of any openness whatsoever about foundation priorities, activities, or processes. Not one, but two congressional commissions were formed to investigate foundations committing alleged "un-American activities." As a result of these congressional inquiries, which spanned several years during the 1950s, Foundation Center was established to provide transparency in a field that had nearly lost everything due to its opacity.

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***"The solution and call to action here is actually a simple one – if you learn something, share something."***

I know our Transparency Talk audience is most likely familiar with this story since the GlassPockets name stems from this history when Carnegie Corporation Chair Russell Leffingwell said, "The foundation should have glass pockets…" during his congressional testimony, describing a vision for a field that would be so open as to allow anyone to have a look inside the workings and activities of philanthropy. But it seems important to repeat that story now in the context of new technologies that can facilitate greater openness.

## Working Collectively Smarter

Now that we live in a time when most of us walk around with literal glass in our pockets, and use these devices to connect us to the outside world, it is surprising that only 10% of foundations have a website, which means 90% of the field is missing discovery from the outside world. But having websites would really just bring foundations into the latter days of the 20th century— #OpenForGood aims to bring them into the present day by encouraging foundations to openly share their knowledge in the name of working collectively smarter.

What if you could know what others know, rather than constantly replicating experiments and pilots that have already been tried and tested elsewhere? Sadly, the common practice of foundations keeping knowledge in large file cabinets or hard drives only a few can access means that there are no such shortcuts. The solution and call to action here is actually a simple one—*if you learn something, share something*.

In foundations, learning typically takes the form of evaluation and monitoring, so we are specifically asking foundations to upload all of your published reports from 2015 and 2016 to the new IssueLab: *Results* platform, so that anyone can build on the lessons you've learned, whether inside or outside of your networks. Foundations that upload their published evaluations will receive an #OpenForGood badge to demonstrate their commitment to creating a community of shared learning.

## Calls to Action

But #OpenForGood foundations don't just share evaluations, they also:

- Open themselves to ideas and lessons learned by others by searching shared repositories, like those at IssueLab as part of their own research process;
- They use GlassPockets to compare their foundation's transparency practices to their peers, add their profile, and help encourage openness by sharing their experiences and experiments with transparency here on Transparency Talk;
- They use GrantCraft to hear what their colleagues have to say, then add their voice to the conversation. If they have an insight, they share it!

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Share Your Photos

***"#OpenForGood foundations share their images with us so we can show the collective power of philanthropic openness, not just in words, but images. "***

And finally, #OpenForGood foundations share their images with us so we can show the collective power of philanthropic openness, not just in words, but images. We would like to evolve the #OpenForGood campaign over time to become a powerful and meaningful way for foundations to open up your work and impact a broader audience than you could reach on your own. Any campaign about openness and transparency should, after all, use real images rather than staged or stock photography.

So, we invite you to share any high resolution photographs that feature the various dimensions of your foundation's work. Ideally, we would like to capture images of the good you are doing out in the world, outside of the four walls of your foundation, and of course, we would give appropriate credit to participating foundations and your photographers. The kinds of images we are seeking include people collaborating in teams, open landscapes, and images that convey the story of your work and who benefits. Let us know if you have images to share that may now benefit from this extended reach and openness framing by contacting openforgood@foundationcenter.org.

What will you #OpenForGood?

— *Janet Camarena*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## How to Make Grantee Reports #OpenForGood

July 20, 2017

*Mandy Ellerton and Molly Matheson Gruen joined the [Archibald] Bush Foundation in 2011, where they created and now direct the Foundation's Community Innovation programs. The programs allow communities to develop and test new solutions to community challenges, using approaches that are collaborative and inclusive of people who are most directly affected by the problem.*

When we started working at the Bush Foundation in 2011, we encountered a machine we'd never seen before: the Lektriever. It's a giant machine that moves files around, kind of like a dry cleaner's clothes rack, and allows you to seriously pack in the paper. As a responsible grantmaker, it's how the Bush Foundation had meticulously tracked and stored its files for posterity - in particular, grantee reports - for decades.

In 2013, the Bush Foundation had the privilege of moving to a new office. Mere days before we were to move into the new space, we got a frantic call from the new building's management. It turned out that the Lektrievers (we actually had multiple giant filing machines!) were too heavy for the floor of the new building, which had to be reinforced with a number of steel plates to sustain their weight.

The Lektrievers symbolized our opportunity to become more transparent and move beyond simply preserving our records, instead seeing them as relevant learning tools for current audiences. It was time to lighten the load and share this valuable information with the world.

Even with all this extra engineering, we would still have to say goodbye to one of the machines altogether for the entire system to be structurally sound. We had decades of grantee stories, experiences and learning trapped in a huge machine in the inner sanctum of our office, up on the 25th floor.

### Learning Logs Emerge

We developed our grantee learning log concept in the Community Innovation Programs as one way to increase the Foundation's transparency. At the heart of it, our learning logs are a very simple concept: they are grantee reports, shared online. But, like many things that appear simple, once you pull on the string of change – the complexity reveals itself.

> ***"Every Community Innovation project is an opportunity for others to learn and the learning logs are a platform to share this learning."***

Before we could save the reports from a life of oblivion in the Lektriever, build out the technology and slap the reports online, we needed to entirely rethink our approach to grantee reporting to create a process that was more mutually beneficial. First, we streamlined our grant accountability measures (assessing whether the grantees did what they said they'd do) by structuring them into a conversation with grantees, rather than as a part of the written reports. We've found that conducting these assessments in a conversation takes the pressure off and

creates a space where grantees can be more candid, leading to increased trust and a stronger partnership.

Second, our grantee reports now focus on what grantees are learning in their grant-funded project. What's working? What's not? What would you do differently if you had it to do all over again? This new process resulted in reports that were more concise and to the point.

Finally, we redesigned our website to create a searchable mechanism for sharing these reports online. This involved linking our grant management system directly with our website so that when a grantee submits a report, we do a quick review and then the report automatically populates our website. We've also designed a way for grantees to be able to designate select answers as private when they want to share sensitive information with us, yet not make it entirely public. We leave it up grantee discretion and those selected answers do not appear on the website. Grantees designate their answers to be private for a number of reasons, most often because they discuss sensitive situations having to do with specific people or partners – like when someone drops out of the project or when a disagreement with a partner holds up progress. And while we've been pleased at the candor of most of our grantees, some are still understandably reluctant to be publicly candid about failures or mistakes.

But why does this new approach to grantee reporting matter, besides making sure the floor doesn't collapse beneath our Lektrievers?


*The Lektriever is a giant machine that moves files around, kind of like a dry cleaner's clothes rack. The Bush Foundation had meticulously tracked and stored its files for posterity - in particular, grantee reports - for decades. Credit: Bush Foundation*

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## Learning Sees the Light of Day

Learning logs help bring grantee learning into the light of day, instead of hiding in the Lektrievers, so that more people can learn about what it really takes to solve problems. Our Community Innovation programs at the Bush Foundation fund and reward the process of innovation–the process of solving problems. Our grantees are addressing wildly different issues: from water quality to historical trauma, from economic development to prison reform. But, when you talk to our grantees, you see that they actually have a lot in common and a lot to learn from one another about effective problem-solving. And beyond our grantee pool, there are countless other organizations that want to engage their communities and work collaboratively to solve problems. Every Community Innovation project is an opportunity for others to learn and the learning logs are a platform to share this learning, making it #OpenForGood.

We also want to honor our grantees' time. Grantees spend a lot of time preparing grant reports for funders. And, in a best case scenario, a program officer reads the report and sends the grantee a response of some kind before the report is filed away. But, let's be honest – sometimes even that doesn't happen. The report process can be a burden on nonprofits and the only party to benefit is the funder. We hope that the learning logs help affirm to our grantees that they're part of something bigger than themselves - that what they share matters to others who are doing similar work.

We also hear from our grantees that the reports provide a helpful, reflective process, especially when they fill it out together with collaborating partners. One grantee even said she'd like to fill out the report more often than we require to have regular reflection moments with her team!

## Learning from the Learning Logs

We only launched the learning logs last year, but we've already received some positive feedback. We've heard from both funded and non-funded organizations that the learning logs provide inspiration and practical advice so that they can pursue similar projects. A grantee recently shared a current challenge in their work. It directly connected to some work we knew another grantee had done and had written about in their learning log. So, since this knowledge was now out in the open, we were able to direct them to the learning log as a way to expand our grantee's impact, even beyond their local community, and use it to help advance another grantee's work.

Take, for example, some of the following quotes from some of our grantee reports:

- The Minnesot Brain Injury Alliance's project worked on finding ways to better serve homeless people with brain injuries. They reflected that, "Taking the opportunity for reflection at various points in the process was very important in working toward innovation. Without reflection, we might not have been open to revising our plan and implementing new possibilities."
- GROW South Dakota addressed a number of challenges facing rural South Dakota communities. They shared that, "Getting to conversations that matter requires careful preparation in terms of finding good questions and setting good ground rules for how the conversations will take place—making sure all voices are heard, and that people are listening for understanding and not involved in a debate."

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- The People's Press Project engaged communities of color and disenfranchised communities to create a non-commercial, community-owned, low-powered radio station serving the Fargo-Moorhead area of North Dakota. They learned “quickly that simply inviting community members to a meeting or a training was not a type of outreach that was effective.”

Like many foundations, we decline far more applications than what we fund, and our limited funding can only help communities tackle so many problems. Our learning logs are one way to try and squeeze out more impact from those direct investments. By reading grantee learning logs, hopefully more people will be inspired to effectively solve problems in their communities.

We’re not planning to get rid of the Lektrievers anytime soon – they’re pretty retro cool and efficient. They contain important historical records and are incredibly useful for other kinds of record keeping, beyond grantee documentation. Plus, the floor hasn’t fallen in yet. But, as Bush Foundation Communications Director Dominick Washington put it, now we’re unleashing the knowledge, “getting it out of those cabinets, and to people who can use it.”

*— Mandy Ellerton and Molly Matheson Gruen*

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## How Improved Evaluation Sharing Has the Potential to Strengthen a Foundation's Work

July 27, 2017

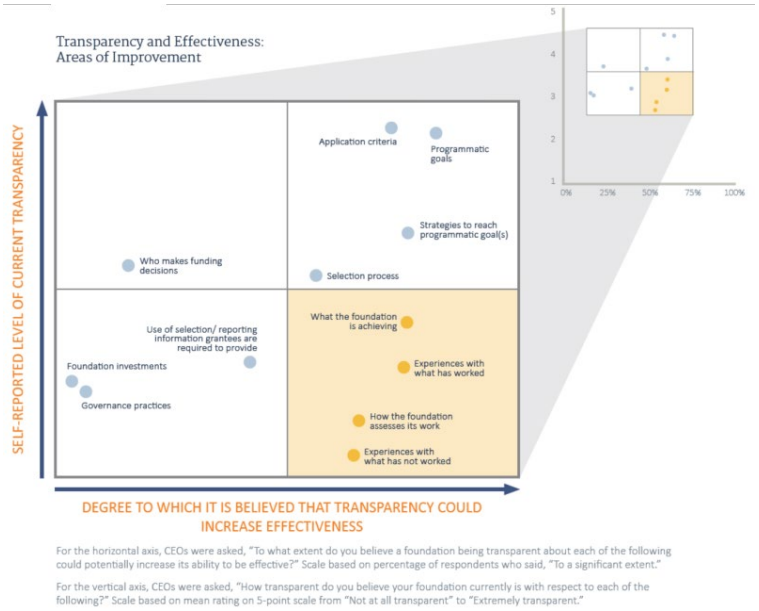
*Jennifer Glickman is manager, research team, at the Center for Effective Philanthropy.*

Philanthropy is a complex, demanding field, and many foundations are limited in the amount of resources they can dedicate to obtaining and sharing knowledge about their practices. This makes it necessary to consider, then, in what areas should foundations focus their learning and sharing efforts to be #OpenForGood?

Last year, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) released two research reports exploring this question. The first, *Sharing What Matters: Foundation Transparency*, looks at foundation CEOs' perspectives on what it means to be transparent, who the primary audiences are for foundations' transparency efforts, and what is most important for foundations to share.

The second report, *Benchmarking Foundation Evaluation Practices*, presents benchmarking data collected from senior foundation staff with evaluation responsibilities on topics such as evaluation staffing and structures, investment in evaluation work, and the usefulness of evaluation information. Together, these reports provide meaningful insights into how foundations can learn and share knowledge most effectively.

CEP's research found that there are specific topics about which foundation CEOs believe being transparent could potentially increase their foundation's ability to be effective. These areas include the foundation's grantmaking processes, its goals and strategies, how it assesses its performance, and the foundation's experiences with what has and has not worked in its efforts to achieve its programmatic goals. While foundation CEOs believe their foundations are doing well in sharing information about their grantmaking, goals, and strategies, they say their foundations are much less transparent about the lessons they learn through their work.



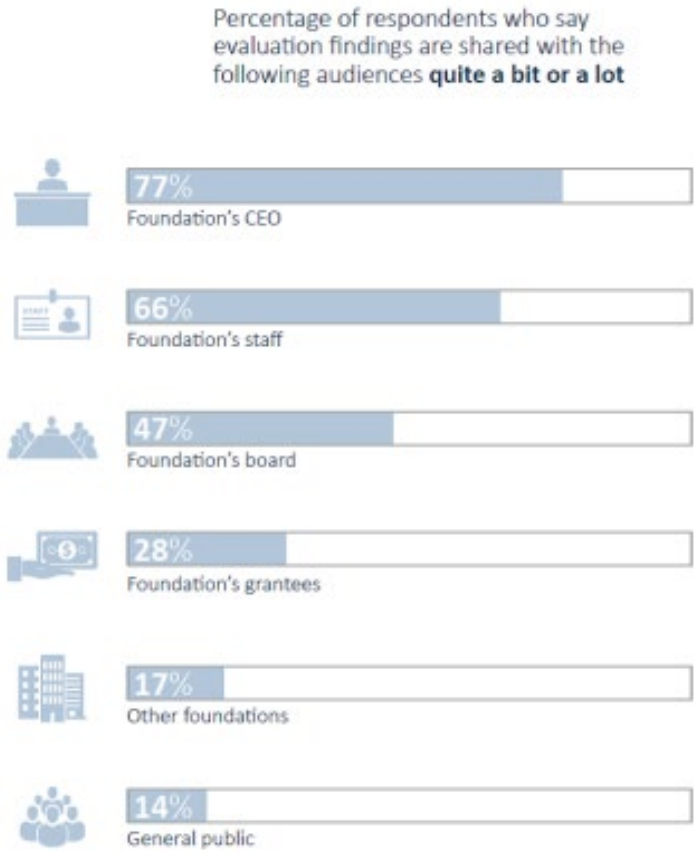

For example, nearly 70 percent of the CEOs CEP surveyed say being transparent about their foundation's experiences with what has worked in its efforts to achieve its programmatic goals could increase effectiveness to a significant extent. In contrast, only 46 percent say their foundations are very or extremely transparent about these experiences. Even fewer, 31 percent, say their foundations are very or extremely transparent about what has *not* worked in their programmatic efforts, despite 60 percent believing that being transparent about this topic

could potentially increase their effectiveness to a significant extent. And yet, foundations want this information about lessons learned and think it is important. Three-quarters of foundation CEOs say they often seek out opportunities to learn from other foundations' work, and is that it enables others to learn from foundation work more generally.

How *is* knowledge being shared then? According to our evaluation research, foundations are mostly sharing their programmatic knowledge internally. Over three-quarters of the evaluation staff who responded to our survey say evaluation findings are shared quite a bit or a lot with the foundation's CEO, and 66 percent say findings are shared quite a bit or a lot with foundation staff. In comparison:

- Only 28 percent of respondents say evaluation findings are shared quite a bit or a lot with the foundation's grantees;
- 17 percent say findings are shared quite a bit or a lot with other foundations; and
- Only 14 percent say findings are shared quite a bit or a lot with the general public.

In fact, less than 10 percent of respondents say that disseminating evaluation findings externally is a top priority for their role.




But respondents do not think these numbers are adequate. Nearly three-quarters of respondents say their foundation invests too little in disseminating evaluation findings externally. Moreover, when CEP asked respondents what they hope will have changed for foundations in the collection and/or use of evaluation information in five years, one of the top three changes mentioned was that foundations will be more transparent about their evaluations and share what they are learning externally.

So, if foundation CEOs believe that being transparent about what their foundation is learning could increase its effectiveness, and foundation evaluation staff believe that foundations should be investing more in disseminating findings externally, what is holding foundations back from embracing an #OpenForGood approach?

CEP has a research study underway looking more deeply into what foundations know about what is and isn't working in their practices and with whom they share that information, and will have new data to enrich the current conversations on transparency and evaluation in early 2018. In the meanwhile, take a moment to stop and consider what you might #OpenForGood.

*— Jennifer Glickman*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Crafting A Better Tap of Knowledge

August 9, 2017

*Gabriela Fitz is director of knowledge management initiatives at Foundation Center.*

This past weekend, I went to visit an old meat packing plant in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood. The plant, renamed "Plant Chicago," serves as a workshop and food production space, playing host to a number of micro-enterprises including a brewery and bakery. But it wasn't the beer or even the pies that drew me there. It was their tagline, "Closed Loop, Open Source."

If you know me (or the work of IssueLab at all), you know why I couldn't resist. The closed loop approach is all about a circular economy, where we take "waste from one process and re-purpose it as inputs for another, creating a circular, closed-loop model of material reuse." It's a simple principle and one that I imagine most of us would get behind.

But what's not so simple is building and maintaining those closed loop systems so that people begin to see (and taste) the benefits. Standing in the lobby of Plant Chicago it was painfully clear to me that circular economies, whether they are in food production or in knowledge production, require more than just good intentions.

Just as I started to feel the familiar weight of trying to execute systems change, I spotted a small sketch of a pyramid amongst a number of technical diagrams and development plans covering a large wall. This simple sketch was similar to a model many of you are probably familiar with but is still worth describing. In the sketch, the base of the pyramid was labeled "beliefs and values." The next level up was "practices and actions." The top of the pyramid was "results."

When it comes to the closed loop we care so much about at IssueLab, we keep seeing organizations try to skip from beliefs to results. The social sector wants shared learning without sharing; collective impact without collectivized intelligence. But open knowledge - like any sector-wide or organizational change - has to include a change in practices, not just beliefs. If we don't adopt open knowledge practices, we can't expect to see the results we hope for: improved program design and delivery at the community level or less duplication of avoidable mistakes. If we truly want to live up to the #OpenForGood ideal, our beliefs and values are simply not sufficient. (Note that the definition of closed loop I quote above is not about beliefs, it's about actions, relying on verbs like "take," "re-purpose," and "create.")

The good news is that we have the infrastructure to make a circular knowledge economy possible. We've built the plant. Tools like open licenses and open repositories were designed to facilitate and support change in knowledge sharing practices, making it easier for foundations to move up the levels of the pyramid.

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Now, we just need to start taking a couple simple actions that reflect our beliefs and move us towards the results we want to see. If you believe in the #OpenForGood principle that social sector knowledge is a public good from which nonprofits and foundations can benefit, your foundation can: 1) use open licensing for your knowledge products, and 2) earn an #OpenForGood badge by sharing your knowledge products, like evaluations, through IssueLab's open repository. Once those practices are as much part of the normal way of doing foundation business as cutting checks and producing summary reports are, we can all sit back and enjoy that beer, together.

— *Gabriela Fitz*

(Photo Credit: *Gabriela Fitz)*

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## How To Keep Me Scrolling Through What You Are Sharing

August 10, 2017

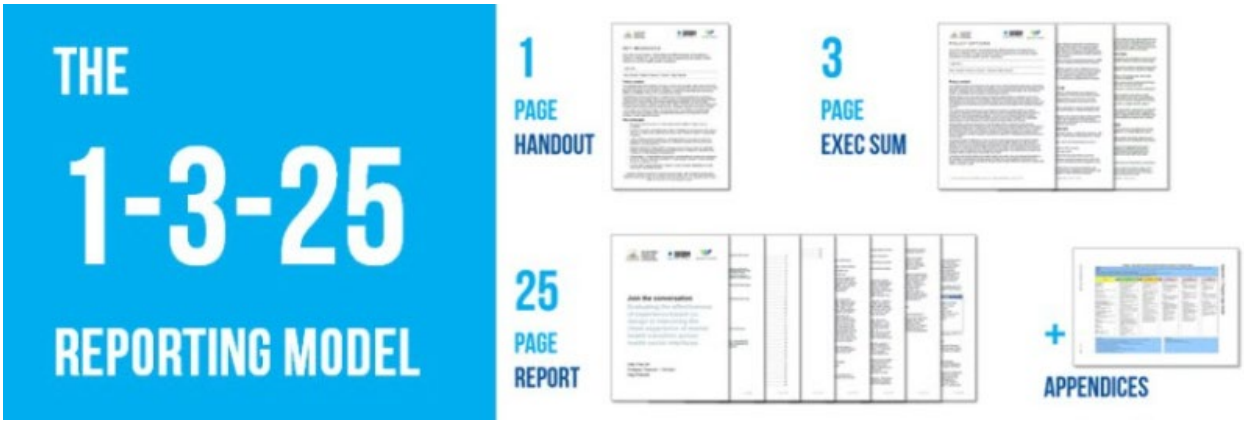
*Tom Kelly is Vice President of Knowledge, Evaluation & Learning at the Hawai'i Community Foundation. He has been learning and evaluating in philanthropy since the beginning of the century. @TomEval TomEval.com*

Hello, my name is Tom and I am a Subscriber. And a Tweeter, Follower, Forwarder (*FYI!*), Google Searcher, and DropBox Hoarder. I subscribe to blogs, feeds, e-newsletters, and email updates. My professional title includes the word "Knowledge," so I feel compelled to make sure I am keeping track of the high volume of data, information, reports, and ideas flowing throughout the nonprofit and foundation worlds (yes, it is a bit of a compulsion…and I am not even including my favorite travel, shopping and coupon alerts).

It is a lot and I confess I do not read all of it. It is a form of meditation for me to scroll through emails and Twitter feeds while waiting in line at Aloha Salads. I skim, I save, I forward, I retweet – I copy and save for later reading (later when?). In fact, no one can be expected to keep up, so how does anyone make sense of it all, or even find what we need when we need it? Everyone being #OpenForGood and sharing everything is great, but who is reading it all? And how do we make what we are opening for good actually good?

### Making Knowledge Usable

We have all experienced at some point Drowning in Information-Starving for Knowledge (John Naisbitt's *Megatrends*…I prefer E.O. Wilson's "starving for wisdom" theory). The information may be out there but rarely in a form that is easily found, read, understood, and *most importantly* used. Foundation Center and IssueLab have made it easier for people in the sector to know what is being funded, where new ideas are being tested, and what evidence and lessons are available. But nonprofits and foundations still have to upload and share many more of their documents than they do now. And we need to make sure that the information we share is readable, usable, and ready to be applied.




DataViz guru Stephanie Evergreen recently taught me a new hashtag: #TLDR – "Too Long, Didn't Read."

She now proposes that every published report be available in three formats – a one-page handout with key messages, a 3-page executive summary, and a 25-page report (plus

appendices). In this way the "scanners," "skimmers" and "deep divers" can access the information in the form they prefer and in the time they have. It also requires writing (and formatting) differently for each of these sets of eyes. (*By the way*, do you know which one you are?)

## From Information to Influence

But it is not enough to make your reports accessible, searchable, and also easily readable in short and long forms; you also need to include the information people need to make decisions and act. It means deciding in advance *who* you want to inform and influence and *what* you want people to do with the information. You need to be clear about your purpose for sharing information, and you need to give people the *right kinds* of information if you expect them to read it, learn from it, and apply it.

***"Give people the right kinds of information if you expect them to read it, learn from it, and apply it."***

Too many times I have read reports with promising findings or interesting lessons, and then I race through all the footnotes and the appendices at the back of the report looking for resources that could point me to the details of evidence and data or implementation guidance. I usually wind up trying to track down the authors by email or phone to follow up.

A 2005 study of more than 1,000 evaluations published in human services found only 22 well-designed and well-documented reports that shared any analysis of implementation factors – what lessons people learned about how best to put the program or services in place. We cannot expect other people and organizations to share knowledge and learn if they cannot access information from others that helps them use the knowledge and apply it in their own programs and organizations. YES, I want to hear about your lessons and "a-ha's," but I also want to see data and analysis of the common challenges that all nonprofits and foundations face:

- How to apply and adapt program and practice models in different contexts
- How to sustain effective practices
- How to scale successful efforts to more people and communities

This means making sure that your evaluations and your reports include opening up the challenges of implementation – the same challenges others are likely to face. It also means placing your findings in the context of existing learning while also using similar definitions so that we can build on each other's knowledge. For example, in our recent middle school connectedness initiative, our evaluator Learning for Action reviewed the literature first to determine specific components and best practices of youth mentoring so that we could build the evaluation on what had come before, and then report clearly about what we learned about in-school mentoring and open up useful and comparable knowledge to the field.

So please plan ahead and define your knowledge sharing and influence agenda up front and consider the following guidelines:

- Who needs to read your report?
- What information does your report need to share to be useful and used?
- Read and review similar studies and reports and determine *in advance* what additional knowledge is needed and what you will document and evaluate.

- Use common definitions and program model frameworks so we are able to continually build on field knowledge and not create anew each time.
- Pay attention to and evaluate implementation, replication and the management challenges (staffing, training, communication, adaptation) that others will face.
- And disseminate widely and share at conferences, in journals, in your sector networks, and in IssueLab's open repository.

And I will be very happy to read through your implementation lessons in your report's footnotes and appendices next time I am in line for a salad.

*— Tom Kelly*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Championing Transparency: The Rockefeller Foundation Is First to Share All Evaluations As Part of #OpenForGood

September 26, 2017

*The Rockefeller Foundation staff who authored this post are Veronica Olazabal, Director of Measurement, Evaluation, and Organizational Performance; Shawna Hoffman, Measurement, Evaluation, and Organizational Performance Specialist; and Nadia Asgaraly, Measurement and Evaluation Intern.*

Today, aligned with The Rockefeller Foundation's commitments to sharing and accountability, we are proud to be the first foundation to accept the challenge and proactively make all of our evaluation reports publicly available as part of Foundation Center's #OpenForGood campaign.

### A History of Transparency and Sharing

Since its founding more than 100 years ago, The Rockefeller Foundation's mission has remained unchanged: to promote the well-being of humanity throughout the world. To this end, the Foundation seeks to catalyze and scale transformative innovation across sectors and geographies, and take risks where others cannot, or will not. While working in innovative spaces, the Foundation has always recognized that the full impact of its programs and investments can only be realized if it measures - and shares - what it is learning. Knowledge and evidence sharing is core to the organization's DNA dating back to its founder John D. Rockefeller Sr., who espoused the virtues of learning from and with others—positing that this was the key to "enlarging the boundaries of human knowledge."

> ***"To ensure that we hold ourselves to this high bar, The Rockefeller Foundation pre-commits itself to sharing the results of its evaluations - well before the results are even known."***

### Evaluation for the Public Good

Building the evidence base for the areas in which we work is the cornerstone of The Rockefeller Foundation's approach to measurement and evaluation. By systematically tracking progress toward implementation and outcomes of our programs, and by testing, validating, and assessing our assumptions and hypotheses, we believe that we can manage and optimize our impact. Through the documentation of what works, for who, and how/under what conditions, there is potential to amplify our impact, by crowding-in other funders to promising solutions, and diverting resources from being wasted on approaches that prove ineffectual.

But living out transparency as a core value is not without its challenges. A commitment to the principle of transparency alone is insufficient; organizations, especially foundations, must walk

the talk. Sharing evidence requires the political will and human resources to do so, and more importantly, getting comfortable communicating not only one's successes, but also one's challenges and failures. For this reason, to ensure that we hold ourselves to this high bar, The Rockefeller Foundation pre-commits itself to sharing the results of its evaluations - well before the results are even known. Then, once evaluation reports are finalized, they are posted to the Foundation website, available to the public free of charge.

## #OpenForGood Project

The Foundation Center's #OpenForGood project, and IssueLab's related *Results* platform, help take the Foundation's commitment to sharing and strengthening the evidence base to the next level. By building a repository where everyone can identify others working on similar topics, search for answers to specific questions, and quickly identify where knowledge gaps exists, they are leading the charge on knowledge sharing.

The Rockefeller Foundation is proud to support this significant effort by being the first to contribute its evaluation evidence base to IssueLab: Results as part of the #OpenForGood movement, with the hope of encouraging others to do the same.

*— Veronica Olazabal, Shawna Hoffman, and Nadia Asgaraly*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Opening Up the Good and Bad Leads to Stronger Communities and Better Grantmaking

September 28, 2017

*Hanh Cao Yu is Chief Learning Officer at The California Endowment. She has been researcher and evaluator of equity and philanthropy for more than two decades.*

More than a year ago when I began my tenure at The California Endowment (TCE), I reflected deeply about the opportunities and challenges ahead as the new Chief Learning Officer. We were six years into a complex, 10-year policy/systems change initiative called Building Healthy Communities (BHC). This initiative was launched in 2010 to advance statewide policy, change the narrative, and transform 14 of California's communities most devastated by health inequities into places where all people—particular our youth—have an opportunity to thrive. This is the boldest bet in the foundation's history at $1 billion and the stakes are high. It is not surprising, then, that despite the emphasis on learning, the evaluation of BHC is seen as a winning or losing proposition.

> ***"By acknowledging our mistakes, our focus has sharpened and our dual roles as changemakers and grantmakers have continued to evolve."***

As I thought about the role of learning and evaluation in deepening BHC's impact, I became inspired by the words of Nelson Mandela: *"I never lose. I either win or I learn."* His encouragement to *shift our mindset* from "Win/Lose" to "Win/Learn" is crucial to continuous improvement and success.

I also drew from the insights of Amy Edmondson who reminds us that if we experience failure, *not all failures are bad*. According to Edmondson, mistakes can be preventable, unavoidable due to complexity, or even intelligent failures. So, despite careful planning and learning from decades of research on comprehensive community initiatives and bold systems change efforts, in an initiative as complex as BHC, mistakes can and will occur. By spurring change at community, regional and state levels, and linking community mobilization with sophisticated policy advocacy, TCE was truly venturing into new territory when we launched BHC.

### BHC's Big Wins and Lessons

At the mid-point of BHC, TCE staff and Board paused to assess where we have been successful and where we could do better in improving the conditions under which young people could be healthy and thrive in our underserved communities. The results were widely shared in the 2016 report, *A New Power Grid: Building Healthy Communities at Year 5*.

As a result of taking the time to assess overall progress, we identified some of BHC's biggest impacts to date. In the first five years, TCE and partners contributed to significant policy/system wins:

- Improved health coverage for the underserved;
- Strengthened health coverage policy for the undocumented;

- Improved school climate, wellness and equity;
- Prevention and reform within the justice system;
- Public-private investment and policy changes on behalf of boys and young men of color; and
- Local & regional progress in adoption of "Health In All Policies," a collaborative approach incorporating health considerations into decision-making across all policy areas

Our Board and team are very pleased with the results and impact of BHC to date, but we have been committed to learning from our share of mistakes.

Along with the victories, we acknowledged in the report some hard lessons. Most notable among our mistakes were more attention to:

- ***Putting Community in "Community-Driven" Change.*** Armed with lessons on having clarity about results to achieve results, we over thought the early process. This resulted in prescriptiveness in the planning phase that was not only unnecessary, but also harmful. We entered the community planning process with multiple outcomes frameworks and a planning process that struck many partners as philanthropic arrogance. The smarter move was to engage community leaders with the clarity of a shared vision and operating principles, and create the space for community leaders and residents to incubate goals, results, and strategy. Fortunately, we course corrected, and our partners were patient while we did so.
- ***Revisiting assumptions about local realities and systems dynamics.*** In the report, we discussed our assumption about creating a single locus of inside-out, outside-in activity where community residents, leaders and systems leaders could collaborate on defined goals. It was readily apparent that community leaders distrusted many "systems" insiders, and systems leaders viewed outsider/activists as unreasonable. We underestimated the importance of the roles of historical structural inequalities, context, and dynamics of relationships at the local level. Local collaboratives or "hubs" were reorganized and customized to meet local realities, and we threw the concept of a single model of collaboration across all the sites out the window.

Some course corrections we made included adjusting and sharpening our underlying assumptions and theory of change and taking on new community-driven priorities that we never anticipated early on; examples include school discipline reform, dismantling the prison pipeline in communities of color through prevention, and work that is taking place in TCE's Boys & Young Men of Color portfolio. By acknowledging our mistakes, our focus has sharpened and our dual roles as changemakers and grantmakers have continued to evolve.

***"Some partner feedback was difficult to hear, but all of it was useful and is making our work with partners stronger."***

Further, significant developments have occurred since the report:

***Positioning "Power Building" as central to improving complex systems and policies.*** In defining key performance indicators, we know the policy milestones achieved thus far represent only surface manifestations of the ultimate success we are seeking. We had a

breakthrough when we positioned "building the power and voice" of the adults and youth in our communities and "health equity" at the center of our BHC North Star Goals and Indicators. Ultimately, we'll know we are successful when the power dynamics in our partner communities have shifted so that adult and youth residents know how to hold local officials accountable for full, ongoing implementation of these policies.

***Continuing to listen to our partners***. In addition to clarifying our North Stars, we sought further mid-point advice from our partners, reaching out to 175 stakeholders, including 68 youth and adult residents of BHC communities, for feedback to shape the remainder of BHC's implementation and to inform our transition planning for the next decade. Some of what our partners told us was difficult to hear, but all of it was useful and is making our work with partners stronger.

From these lessons, I challenge our philanthropic colleagues to consider:

- *How can we learn to detect complex failures early to help us go beyond lessons that are superficial?* As Amy Edmonson states, "The job of leaders is to see that their organizations don't just move on after a failure but stop to dig in and discover the wisdom contained in it."
- *In complex initiatives and complex organizations, what does it take to design a learning culture to capitalize successfully on mistakes?* How do we truly engage in "trial and error" and stay open to experimentation and midcourse corrections? How can we focus internally on our own operations and ways of work, as well as being willing to change our strategies and relationships with external partners? Further, how do we, as grantmakers responsible for serving the public good, take responsibility for making these lessons #OpenForGood so others can learn from them as well?

*It is worth noting that a key action that TCE took at the board level as we embarked on BHC was to dissolve the Board Program Committee* and replace it with Learning and Performance Committee. This set-up offered consistent opportunity for learning from evaluation reports between the Board, the CEO, and the management team and for sharing our learnings publicly to build the philanthropic field. Now, even as we enter the final phase of BHC, we continue to look for ways to structure opportunities to learn, and I can say, "We are well into a journey to learn intelligently from our successes as well as our mistakes to make meaningful, positive impacts."

*— Hanh Cao Yu*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## How "Going Public" Improves Evaluations

October 17, 2017

*Edward Pauly is director of research and evaluation at The Wallace Foundation.*

As foundations strive to be #OpenForGood and share key lessons from their grantees' work, a frequent question that arises is how foundations can balance the value of openness with concerns about potential risks.

Concerns about risk are particularly charged when it comes to evaluations. Those concerns include: possible reputational damage to grantees from a critical or less-than-positive evaluation; internal foundation staff disagreements with evaluators about the accomplishments and challenges of grantees they know well; and evaluators' delays and complicated interpretations.

It therefore may seem counterintuitive to embrace – as The Wallace Foundation has – the idea of making evaluations public and distributing them widely. And one of the key reasons may be surprising: To get better and more useful evaluations.

The Wallace Foundation has found that high-quality evaluations – by which we mean independent, commissioned research that tackles questions that are important to the field – are often a powerful tool for improving policy and practice. We have also found that evaluations are notably improved in quality and utility by being publicly distributed.

### Incentives for High Quality

A key reason is that the incentives of a public report for the author are aligned with quality in several ways:

- Evaluation research teams know that when their reports are public and widely distributed, they will be closely scrutinized and their reputation is on the line. Therefore, they do their highest quality work when it's public. In our experience, non-public reports are more likely than public reports to be weak in data use, loose in their analysis, and even a bit sloppy in their writing. It is also noteworthy that some of the best evaluation teams insist on publishing their reports.
- Evaluators also recognize that they benefit from the visibility of their public reports because visibility brings them more research opportunities – but only if their work is excellent, accessible and useful.
- We see evaluators perk up when they focus on the audience their reports will reach. Gathering data and writing for a broad audience of practitioners and policymakers incentivizes evaluators to seek out and carefully consider the concerns of the audience: What information does the audience need in order to judge the value of the project being evaluated? What evidence will the intended audience find useful? How should the evaluation report be written so it will be accessible to the audience?

Making evaluations public is a classic case of a virtuous circle: public scrutiny creates incentives for high quality, accessibility and utility; high quality reports lead to expanded, engaged audiences – and the circle turns again, as large audiences use evaluation lessons to

strengthen their own work, and demand more high-quality evaluations. To achieve these benefits, it's obviously essential for grantmakers to communicate upfront and thoroughly with grantees about the goals of a public evaluation report — goals of sharing lessons that can benefit the entire field, presented in a way that avoids any hint of punitive or harsh messaging.

***"What is it that you don't know, that if you knew it, would enable you to make important progress in your own work?"***

## Asking the Right Questions

A key difference between evaluations commissioned for internal use and evaluations designed to produce public reports for a broad audience lies in the questions they ask. Of course, for any evaluation or applied research project, a crucial precursor to success is getting the questions right. In many cases, internally-focused evaluations quite reasonably ask questions about the lessons for the foundation as a grantmaker. Evaluations for a broad audience of practitioners and policymakers, including the grantees themselves, typically ask a broader set of questions, often emphasizing lessons for the field on how an innovative program can be successfully implemented, what outcomes are likely, and what policies are likely to be supportive.

In shaping these efforts at Wallace as part of the overall design of initiatives, we have found that one of the most valuable initial steps is to ask field leaders: What is it that you don't know, that if you knew it, would enable you to make important progress in your own work? This kind of listening can help a foundation get the questions right for an evaluation whose findings will be valued, and used, by field leaders and practitioners.

## Knowledge at Work

For example, school district leaders interested in Wallace-supported "principal pipelines" that could help ensure a reliable supply of effective principals, wanted to know the costs of starting such pipelines and maintaining them over time. The result was a widely-used RAND report that we commissioned, "*What It Takes to Operate and Maintain Principal Pipelines: Costs and Other Resources*." RAND found that costs are less than one half of 1% of districts' expenditures; the report also explained what drives costs, and provided a very practical checklist of the components of a pipeline that readers can customize and adapt to meet their local needs.

Other examples that show how high-quality public evaluations can help grantees and the field include:

- "*Getting to Work on Summer Learning*" and "*Learning from Summer*" offer evidence-based guidance on how to put on effective summer learning programs.
- *"Raising the Barre and Stretching the Canvas"* along with its predecessor "*Something to Say,"* identify common practices of high-performing arts-focused afterschool programs and how they can be implemented in a broad-based youth-serving organization.

Being #OpenForGood does not happen overnight, and managing an evaluation planned for wide public distribution isn't easy. The challenges start with getting the question right – and then selecting a high-performing evaluation team; allocating adequate resources for the evaluation; connecting the evaluators with grantees and obtaining relevant data; managing the

inevitable and unpredictable bumps in the road; reviewing the draft report for accuracy and tone; allowing time for grantees to fact-check it; and preparing with grantees and the research team for the public release. Difficulties, like rocks on a path, crop up in each stage in the journey. Wallace has encountered all of these difficulties, and we don't always navigate them successfully. (Delays are a persistent issue for us.)

Since we believe that the knowledge we produce is a public good, it follows that the payoff of publishing useful evaluation reports is worth it. Interest from the field is evidenced by 750,000 downloads last year from www.wallacefoundation.org, and a highly engaged public discourse about what works, what doesn't, why, and how – rather than the silence that often greets many internally-focused evaluations.

*— Edward Pauly*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Open Access to Foundation Knowledge

October 25, 2017

*This post also appears in Medium.*

Foundations have a lot of reasons to share knowledge. They produce knowledge themselves. They hire others to research and author works that help with internal strategy development and evaluation of internal strategies, programs, and projects. And they make grants that assist others in gaining insight into social issues—be it through original research, evaluation work, or other work aimed at creating a better understanding of issues so that we can all pursue better solutions to social problems. In almost all aspects of foundation work, knowledge is an outcome.

While openly sharing this knowledge is uneven across the social sector, we do see more and more foundations starting to explore open access to the knowledge assets they make possible. Many foundations are sharing more intentionally through their websites, external clearinghouses, and other online destinations. And more foundations are suggesting—sometimes requiring—that their grantees openly share knowledge that was produced with grant dollars.

Some foundations are even becoming open access champions. For example, the Hewlett Foundation has authored a terrifically helpful free toolkit that provides an in-depth how-to aimed at moving foundation and grantee intellectual property licensing practices away from "all rights reserved" copyrights and toward "some rights reserved" open licenses. (Full disclosure: IssueLab is included in the toolkit as one solution for long term knowledge preservation and sharing.) ("Hewlett Foundation Open Licensing Toolkit for Staff")

For those who are already 100% open it's easy to forget that, when first starting out, learning about open access can be daunting. For those who are trying to open up, like most things, getting there is a series of steps. One step is understanding how licensing can work for, or against, openness. Hewlett's toolkit is a wonderful primer for understanding this. IssueLab also offers some ways to dig into other areas of openness. Check out Share the Wealth for tips.

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

FOUNDATIONS ADDING TO ISSUELAB ARE OPEN

*"Openness and transparency is one element of holding ourselves accountable to the public —to the communities we're either in or serving."*

TOM KELLY
HAWAII COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

#OAWeek

ISSUELAB
a service of Foundation Center

However it is that foundations find their way to providing open access to the knowledge they make possible, we applaud and support it! In the spirit of International Open Access Week's theme, "Open in order to....," here's what a few leading foundations have to say about the topic of openness in the social sector.

## James Irvine Foundation

*Find on IssueLab*.

"We have a responsibility to share our knowledge. There's been a lot of money that gets put into capturing and generating knowledge and we shouldn't keep it to ourselves."

-Kim Ammann Howard, Director of Impact Assessment and Learning

## Hewlett Foundation

*Find on IssueLab*.

"Our purpose for existing is to help make the world a better place. One way we can do that is to try things, learn, and then share what we have learned. That seems obvious. What is not obvious is the opposite: not sharing. So the question shouldn't be why share; it should be why not share."

-Larry Kramer, President

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Hawaii Community Foundation

*Find on IssueLab*.

"Openness and transparency is one element of holding ourselves accountable to the public—to the communities we're either in or serving. To me, it's a necessary part of our accountability and I don't think it should necessarily be an option.

-Tom Kelly, Vice President of Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning

## The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

*Find on IssueLab*.

"Why do we want to share these things? ...One, because it's great to share what we're learning, what's worked, what hasn't, what impact has been made so that others can learn from the work that our grantees are doing so that they can either not reinvent the wheel, gain insights from it or learn from where we've gone wrong... I think it helps to build the field overall since we're sharing what we're learning."

-Bernadette Sangalang, Program Officer

## The Rockefeller Foundation

*Find on IssueLab*

"To ensure that we hold ourselves to this high bar, The Rockefeller Foundation pre-commits itself to sharing the results of its evaluations—well before the results are even known."

-Veronica Olazabal, Shawna Hoffman, and Nadia Asgaraly

*(Read more on why the Rockefeller Foundation is open for good.)*

If you are a foundation ready to make open access the norm as part of your impact operations, here's how you can become an open knowledge organization today.

***IssueLab** believes that social sector knowledge is a public good that is meant to be freely accessible to all. We collect and share the sector's knowledge assets and we support the social sector's adoption of open knowledge practices. Visit our collection of ~23,000 open access resources. While you're there, add your knowledge—it takes minutes and costs nothing. Find out what we're open in order to do here. IssueLab is a service of Foundation Center.*

*— Lisa Brooks and Lacey Althouse*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Getting Practical About Open Licensing

January 11, 2018

*Kristy Tsadick is Deputy General Counsel and Heath Wickline is a Communications Officer at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, where they created an Open Licensing Toolkit for the foundation's staff and its grantees in 2015.*

Some of the biggest barriers to open licensing—an alternative to traditional copyright that encourages sharing of intellectual property with few or no restrictions—are practical ones. What rights are authors really giving others when they openly license their work? How do authors decide on the right Creative Commons license for their work? And having decided to openly license what they've created, how do authors actually let others know about their decision?

The Hewlett Foundation, where we both work, has a long history of supporting openness and transparency, and when Larry Kramer joined the foundation as president in 2012, he decided to make a renewal of that commitment a key part of his tenure. In 2015, that renewed commitment resulted in a decision to extend our support for open licensing to require it on works created using grant funds, underlining our belief that if grants are made to support the public good then the knowledge they generate should also be considered a public good.

To successfully implement this idea, we knew we would have to offer some concrete guidance to our program staff and grantees on both what we were asking of them and how to do it. We also knew we wanted to create a policy that would offer our grantees flexibility to comply with it in ways that made sense for their organizations. Both ideas are embodied in the Open Licensing Toolkit for Staff that we developed.

The kit is structured to help the foundation's program staff decide to which grants the new rule applies, introduce open licensing to grantees, and help clarify what an open license on written works will mean for them. It uses FAQs, a "decision tree," template emails and other documents to walk through the process. There is even a guide to marking works with a Creative Commons license to make clear what information is needed along with the copyright notice. And while the kit was designed with Hewlett Foundation staff in mind, we also wanted it to be useful for grantees and others interested in expanding their understanding and use of open licenses—so, of course, the toolkit itself carries a broad Creative Commons license.

THE WILLIAM AND FLORA
HEWLETT
FOUNDATION
Open Licensing Toolkit for Staff

In thinking about which of our grants would be in scope for open licensing, we realized early on that general operating support is incompatible with the policy because those funds are given "with no strings attached." Beyond even this broad exemption, we wanted to allow plenty of space for grantees to select licenses or request an exemption where they felt open licenses could do harm to them financially. It's been gratifying to see how grantees have recognized the spirit of the new policy, and how infrequently they've requested exemptions—so much so that we stopped tracking those

requests about a year after instituting the new policy. In one area where we did often see requests for exemptions—in grants to performing arts organizations, where the "work" is often a performance and selling tickets to it or recordings of it central to a grantee's business model—we recently decided to change our standard grant agreements to recognize the need for this exemption.

Our goal in adopting the new policy was to show others what open licensing could mean for them—the way it can help spread knowledge and increase the impact of philanthropic resources. In that, we've been extremely successful, as other organizations have built on our toolkit, and our policy, to encourage open licensing in their own work. The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), for example, based its implementation guide for its own transparency policy on our toolkit, and the U.S. Department of State included a link to it in its Federal Open Licensing Playbook to encourage open licensing across all federal agencies. And because we included a Creative Commons license on the kit to be #OpenForGood, other organizations—including yours—are free to use and build on our work, too.

Hardly anyone would argue against getting more impact for the same dollars or having their ideas adopted and shared by more people. But real-world implementation details get in the way. Our experience with our Open Licensing Toolkit shows that a practical, flexible approach to open licensing helped extend our impact in ways we never could have imagined.

*— Kristy Tsadick and Heath Wickline*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## The Rockefeller Brothers Fund is #OpenForGood

January 31, 2018

*Hope Lyons is the director of program management at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Ari Klickstein is the communications associate/digital specialist at RBF.*

As a private foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund advances a just, peaceful, and sustainable world through grantmaking and related activities. We believe that discerning and communicating the impact of our grantmaking and other programmatic contributions is essential to fulfilling the Fund's mission, as is a commitment to stewardship, transparency, and accountability. Philanthropy exists to serve the public good. By opening up what we are learning, we believe that we are honoring the public's trust in our activities as a private foundation.

As part of our commitment to serving the public good, we are proud to be among the first foundations to join the new #OpenForGood campaign by sharing published reports on our grantmaking through Foundation Center's open repository, IssueLab, and its new special collection of evaluations *Find Results*, and continue to make them available on our own website. These reports and impact assessments are materials authored by third party assessment teams, and sometimes by our own program leadership, in addition to the published research papers and studies by grantees already on IssueLab.

We feel strongly that we have a responsibility to our grantees, trustees, partners, and the wider public to periodically evaluate our grantmaking, to use the findings to inform our strategy and practice, and to be transparent about what we are learning. In terms of our sector, this knowledge can go a long way in advancing fields of practice by identifying effective approaches. The Fund has a long history of sharing our findings with the public, stretching as far back as 1961, when the results of the Fund's Special Studies Project were published as the bestselling volume *Prospect for America*. The book featured expert analysis on key issues of the era including international relations, economic and societal challenges, and democratic practices, topics which remain central to our grantmaking work.

We view our grantmaking as an investment in the public good, and place a great deal of importance on accountability. Through surveys conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy in 2016, our grantees and prospective grantees told us that they wanted to hear more about what we have learned, as well as what the Fund has tried but was recognized as less successful in its past grantmaking. Regular assessments by CEP and third-party issue-area experts help keep us accountable and identify blind-spots in our strategies. While our evaluations have long been posted online, and we have reorganized our website to make the materials easier to find, we have also made a commitment to have additional reflections on what we're learning going forward and to more proactively share these reports. We are grateful to Foundation Center for creating and maintaining IssueLab as a sharing platform and learning environment hub for the public, practitioners, and peers alike to locate resources and benefit from the research that the philanthropic sector undertakes.

*— Hope Lyons and Ari Klickstein*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Increasing Attention to Transparency: The MacArthur Foundation Is #OpenForGood

April 17, 2018

*Chantell Johnson is managing director of evaluation at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.*

At MacArthur, the desire to be transparent is not new. We believe philanthropy has a responsibility to be explicit about its values, choices, and decisions with regard to its use of resources. Toward that end, we have long had an information sharing policy that guides what and when we share information about the work of the Foundation or our grantees. Over time, we have continued to challenge ourselves to do better and to share more. The latest refinement of our approach to transparency is an effort toward increasingly sharing more knowledge about what we are learning. We expect to continue to push ourselves in this regard, and participating in Foundation Center's GlassPockets and #OpenForGood movements are just a couple of examples of how this has manifested.

In recent years, we have made a more concerted effort to revisit and strengthen our information sharing policy by:

- Expanding our thinking about what we can and should be transparent about (e.g., our principles of transparency guided our public communications around our *100&Change* competition, which included an ongoing blog);
- Making our guidance more contemporary by moving beyond statements about information sharing to publishing more and different kinds of information (e.g., Grantee Perception Reports and evaluation findings);
- Making our practices related to transparency more explicit; and
- Ensuring that our evaluation work is front and center in our efforts related to transparency.

Among the steps we have taken to increase our transparency are the following:

**Sharing more information about our strategy development process.**

The Foundation's website has a page dedicated to How We Work, which provides detailed information about our approach to strategy development. We share an inside look into the lifecycle of our programmatic efforts, beginning with conceptualizing a grantmaking strategy through the implementation and ending phases, under an approach we refer to as Design/Build. Design/Build recognizes that social problems and conditions are not static, and thus our response to these problems needs to be iterative and evolve with the context to be most impactful. Moreover, we aim to be transparent as we design and build strategies over time.

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

***"We have continued to challenge ourselves to do better and to share more."***

## Using evaluation to document what we are measuring and learning about our work.

Core to Design/Build is evaluation. Evaluation has become an increasingly important priority among our program staff. It serves as a tool to document what we are doing, how well we are doing it, how work is progressing, what is being achieved, and who benefits. We value evaluation not only for the critical information it provides to our Board, leadership, and program teams, but for the insights it can provide for grantees, partners, and beneficiaries in the fields in which we aim to make a difference. Moreover, it provides the critical content that we believe is at the heart of many philanthropic efforts related to transparency.

## Expanding the delivery mechanisms for sharing our work.

While our final evaluation reports have generally been made public on our website, we aim to make more of our evaluation activities and products available (e.g., landscape reviews and baseline and interim reports). Further, in an effort to make our evaluation work more accessible, we are among the first foundations to make all of our evaluation reports publicly available as part of Foundation Center's #OpenForGood campaign.

Further evidence of the Foundation's commitment to increased transparency includes continuing to improve our "Glass Pockets" by sharing:

- Our searchable database of grants, including award amount, program, year, and purpose;
- Funding statistics including total grants, impact investments, final budgeted amounts by program, and administrative expenses (all updated annually);
- Perspectives of our program directors and staff;
- Links to grantee products including grant-supported research studies consistent with the Foundation's intellectual property policies;
- Stories highlighting the work and impact of our grantees and recipients of impact investments; and
- Center for Effective Philanthropy Grantee Perception report results.

Going forward, we will look for additional ways to be transparent. And, we will challenge ourselves to make findings and learnings more accessible even more quickly.

*— Chantell Johnson*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

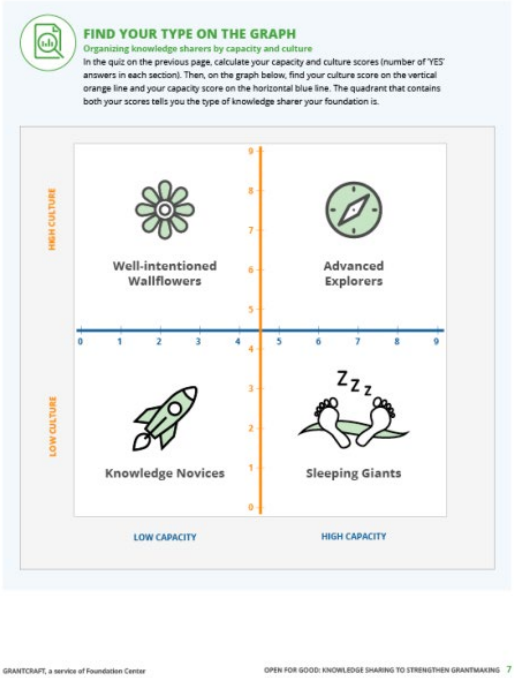
## Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking

April 26, 2018

*Clare Nolan, MPP, co-founder of Engage R+D, is a nationally recognized evaluation and strategy consultant for the foundation, nonprofit and public sectors. Her expertise helps foundations to document and learn from their investments in systems and policy change, networks, scaling, and innovation. This post also appears on the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations' (GEO) Perspectives blog.*

Knowledge has the power to spark change, but only if it is shared. Many grantmakers instinctively like the idea of sharing the knowledge they generate with others. But in the face of competing priorities, a stronger case must be made for foundations to devote time and resources to sharing knowledge. The truth is that when foundations share knowledge generated through evaluation, strategy development and thought leadership, they benefit not only others but also themselves. Sharing knowledge can deepen internal reflection and learning, lead to new connections and ideas, and promote institutional credibility and influence.

Foundations can strengthen their knowledge sharing practices by enhancing organizational capacity and culture, and by understanding how to overcome common hurdles to sharing knowledge. The forthcoming GrantCraft guide *Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking* provides tips and resources for how foundations can do just that. My organization, Engage R+D, partnered with Foundation Center to produce this guide as part of #OpenForGood, a call to action for foundations to openly share their knowledge.




To produce the guide, we conducted interviews with the staff of foundations, varying by origin, content focus, size, and geography. The participants shared their insights about the benefits of sharing knowledge not only for others, but also for their own organizations. They also described strategies they use for sharing knowledge, which we then converted into concrete and actionable tips for grantmakers. Some of the tips and resources available in the guide include:

- **A quiz to determine what type of knowledge sharer you are.** Based upon responses to questions about your organization's capacity and culture, you can determine where you fall within a quadrant of knowledge sharing (see visual). The guide offers tips for how to integrate knowledge sharing into your practice in ways that would be a good fit for you and your organization.
- **Nuts and bolts guidance on how to go about sharing knowledge.** To take the mystery out of the knowledge sharing process, the guide breaks down the

different elements that are needed to actually put knowledge sharing into practice. It provides answers to common questions grantmakers have on this topic, such as: What kinds of knowledge should I be sharing exactly? Where can I disseminate this knowledge? Who at my foundation should be responsible for doing the sharing?

- **Ideas on how to evolve your foundation's knowledge-sharing practice.** Even foundation staff engaged in sophisticated knowledge-sharing practices noted the importance of evolving their practice to meet the demands of a rapidly changing external context. The guide includes tips on how foundations can adapt their practice in this way. For example, it offers guidance on how to optimize the use of technology for knowledge sharing, while still finding ways to engage audiences with less technological capacity.

The tips and resources in the guide are interspersed with quotes, audio clips, and case examples from the foundation staff members we interviewed. These interviews provide voices from the field sharing tangible examples of how to put the strategies in the guide into practice.

Want to know how your foundation measures up when it comes to knowledge sharing? We are pleased to provide readers of this blog with an advance copy of Chapter 2 from the forthcoming Guide which includes the quiz referenced above. Want to learn more? Sign up for the Foundation Center's GrantCraft newsletter and receive a copy of the Guide upon its release. And, for those who are attending the GEO conference next week in San Francisco, visit us at our #OpenForGood pop-up quiz station where you can learn more about what kind of knowledge sharer you are.

*— Clare Nolan*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## To Serve Better, Share

May 3, 2018

*Daniela Pineda, Ph.D., is vice president of integration and learning at First 5 LA, an independent public agency created by voters to advocate for programs and polices benefiting young children.*

We share ideas freely on Pinterest, we easily give our opinions on products on Amazon and we learn from "how-to" videos on YouTube from the comfort of our homes. We even enjoy sharing and being creative by pulling ideas and concepts together.

Often, this is not what happens once we step foot in the office. We may find ourselves more reluctant to embrace sharing what works, learning what doesn't and then applying these lessons to our work. It's hard to speak about how things didn't turn out as expected. It is as if we are saving the treasure of our knowledge for a rainy day, as if it's a limited resource.

I believe in the power of being #OpenForGood, using knowledge to improve philanthropic effectiveness, in our case, to help create more opportunities and better outcomes for young children.

That's why I am delighted to participate in a new how-to guide that was just released this week by sharing examples from our journey to opening up our knowledge at First5 LA. As part of Foundation Center's #OpenForGood movement, the new GrantCraft guide *Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking* provides tips and resources, including strategies for knowledge sharing. Everyone benefits when organizations strengthen their knowledge sharing practices by enhancing organizational capacity and culture, and by understanding how to overcome common hurdles to sharing knowledge.

> ***"We can achieve more collectively and individually by sharing information and creating knowledge."***

As a public entity, First 5 LA is uniquely positioned to share knowledge with the field. Our mandate to be transparent serves as a powerful launchpad for sharing knowledge. For example, in our work with communities across Los Angeles County, we work to elevate the voices and perspectives of parents to leaders and lawmakers.

When we create opportunities for parents and policymakers to hear from each other, we are moving beyond a transparency requirement to foster more nuanced conversations on how we can all help improve outcomes for kids.

No matter your type of organization or mission — foundations, nonprofit, government or business, we can achieve more collectively and individually by sharing information and creating knowledge.

Sharing information about what has worked, what hasn't, and being open to learning lessons from others is a skill that sharpens your thinking, benefits the field, and helps advance your own goals, while also benefiting those you serve.

We must be mindful of the many potential roadblocks to sharing in service of becoming more effective, both inside and outside of our own organizations. Among them: egos and a lack of

humility; competition for resources; a lack of incentives to share; and a lack of awareness of what information is shared and what outcomes it produces.

## Sharing Sharpens Your Thinking

Failing to see knowledge sharing as part of your job amounts to lost opportunity, lost time, and lost resources. Making the time to find out what others are doing is important. At a minimum, we can feel empowered by the simple knowledge that we aren't the only ones dealing with the problems we face in our jobs. In a best case scenario, we can adapt that information to our context, and try new ways to *do* our jobs better.


This notion really hit home for me from a very simple online search when I started a new role. Curious if others were also grappling with similar issues about how to effectively evaluate place-based work, I searched a few sites. In philanthropy, we are fortunate to have impressive open online repositories such as Foundation Center's Issue Lab, where we can find loads of information.

Indeed, my search led to several pieces on lessons learned from funders of place-based work. I fortunately found a thoughtful report on the topic at hand. But what was most useful, beyond reading the insight gleaned, was that I was then able to reach out to one of the authors to learn exactly what it meant to let the evaluation design evolve with the initiative.

Based on this connection, I refined a step on our learning agenda process to ensure we set the expectation that community voices were consulted earlier, during the planning phase of the project. While we had already planned for inclusion, I learned what types of pitfalls to avoid when structuring community engagement on a long-term evaluation project.

Since reaching out to my colleague, I have continued to learn from him and a broader network of learning practitioners who also value sharing knowledge. This concept of reaching out to others and asking simple questions is simple, and yet so few make the time to do it.

The truth is, great ideas can come from anywhere: a conversation on a commuter train, a session at a conference, or results from a search engine. Sharing, and being open to new ideas, serves to sharpen thinking and can improve your ability to achieve your philanthropic to goals.

## Sharing Benefits the Field

At a more global level, to make an impact on society and change things for the better, share what you know, and be willing to adjust your approach based on what you learn. That's the approach we embrace at First 5 LA.

This not only helps our organization in our mission, but it sets an example for other like-minded organizations to open their viewpoints on sharing their successes and failures.

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## *"Don't save your knowledge for a rainy day—it's an unlimited resource!"*

For example, we recently worked with an evaluation partner to restructure the scope of its engagement. This was difficult because the project had been in place for a long time and the restructuring resulted in a more narrow scope. The partner was disappointed that we determined only two of the four initially designed subprojects remained relevant to our work. It could appear we were no longer committed to learn about this investment.

By being open with them, we also heard about their own concerns that the data would be of sufficient quality to conduct rigorous analyses. We listened and came up with a joint approach to reach out to a different entity to secure an alternative data source. This worked, and now the project has been refocused, new data was secured, and the partner saw firsthand that while the approach changed, we were still committed to learning together.

Sharing information and outcomes is essential to being influencers in our areas of expertise. And learning from others is essential to being assets within our fields. In this case, we landed on an alternative approach to leverage data, and we maintained a productive relationship with our partner. We plan to share this approach broadly so that it can spark new ideas and insights or confirm an approach among other grantmakers grappling with similar issues.

Once we as individuals, managers and organizations can distill and discern knowledge, we can apply it to our own important work for public good, and share it with others to help them with theirs.

### Sharing Is a Skill

These sharing efforts should permeate your organization, beyond the C-suite. Leaders must lead by example and encourage staff to see themselves as gatherers – and contributors – of knowledge to their fields.

Ultimately, learning to share information is a skill. To do this, and to glean the best information from data includes sharing it with others both inside and outside of your organization.

But collecting reams of information will do us no good if we do not have a specific plan for the data, and then analyze what it means in a bigger universe – and for those we serve.

At First 5 LA, we take a very pragmatic approach to data collection. First, we work with our programs to identify the specific systems we are trying to impact. Once that is determined, we then create learning agendas, which are tools for us to prioritize the key learning questions that will help us know if we are making progress on behalf of kids in Los Angeles County.

Our approach requires that we specify *how* we plan to use those data before we collect it. Data should be tied to specific learning questions.

We are proud of our work and approach to use learning as a strategy, and it is not always easy to let others benefit from what we learn the hard way.

But our work is not ultimately about a singular institution. And you don't need to save your knowledge for a rainy day—it's usually an unlimited resource! It's about huddling under a shared umbrella in stormy weather, and basking together in the sunshine for the ones who need us the most. Those we serve.

*— Daniela Pineda*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Learn, Share, and We All Win! Foundation Center Releases #OpenForGood Guide and Announces Award Opportunity

May 10, 2018

*Melissa Moy is special projects associate for GlassPockets.*


Knowledge is a resource philanthropy can't afford to keep for itself, and as a result of a newly available guide, funders will now have a road map for opening up that knowledge. The new GrantCraft guide, *Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking*, supported by the Fund for Shared Insight, illustrates practical steps that all donors can take to create a culture of shared learning.

Philanthropy is in a unique position to generate knowledge and disseminate it, and this guide will help foundations navigate the process. Each year, foundations make $5 billion in grants toward knowledge production. These assessments, evaluations, communities of practice, and key findings are valuable, yet only a small fraction of foundations share what they learn, with even fewer using open licenses or open repositories to share these learnings. Foundations have demonstrated that some of the information they value most are lessons about "what did and didn't work." And yet, this is the same knowledge that foundations are often most reluctant to share.

The guide, part of Foundation Center's larger **#OpenForGood campaign**, makes a strong case for foundations to openly share knowledge as an integral and strategic aspect of philanthropy. Through interviews with leaders in knowledge sharing, the guide outlines tested solutions to overcome common barriers to impart learnings, as well as essential components needed for funders to strengthen their knowledge-sharing practice. The guide emphasizes that sharing knowledge can deepen internal reflection and learning, lead to new connections and ideas, and promote institutional credibility and influence.

Knowledge comes in all shapes and sizes – program and grantee evaluations, foundation performance assessments, thought leadership, formal and informal reflections that are shared among foundation staff and board members. The guide will help your foundation identify the types of information that can be shared and how to take actionable steps.

Download the Guide

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

To further encourage funders to be more transparent, this week Foundation Center also announces the opening of a nomination period for the inaugural **#OpenForGood Award** to bring due recognition and visibility to foundations who share challenges, successes, and failures to strengthen how we can think and act as a sector.

Three winning foundations will demonstrate an active commitment to open knowledge and share their evaluations through IssueLab. Winners will receive technical support to create a custom knowledge center for themselves or a grantee, as well as promotional support in the form of social media and newsletter space. **Who will you nominate as being #OpenForGood**?

*— Melissa Moy*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Building Our Knowledge Sharing Muscle at Irvine

May 17, 2018

*Kim Ammann Howard joined the James Irvine Foundation as Director of Impact Assessment and Learning in 2015. She has more than 20 years of social impact experience working with nonprofits, foundations, and the public sector to collect, use, and share information that stimulates ongoing learning, and change.*

Having recently spent two days with peer foundation evaluation directors, I am savoring the rich conversations and reflecting on how shared knowledge benefits my own thinking and actions. It also reminds me of how often those conversations only benefit those inside the room. To really influence the field, we need to build our knowledge sharing muscle beyond our four walls and usual circles. A new report from the Foundation Center, *Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking*, aims to help funders do just that, and I was happy to contribute some of The James Irvine Foundation's own journey to the guide.

When I joined the Foundation at the end of 2015, there was already a commitment to transparency and openness that established knowledge sharing as part of the culture. It was something that attracted me to Irvine, and I was excited to build on the types of information collected and disseminated in the past, and to figure out how we could grow.

### Our Framework


In 2016, we launched our new strategy, which focuses on expanding economic and political opportunity for California families and young adults who are working but struggling with poverty. This presented an opportune moment to articulate and set expectations about how impact assessment and learning (IA&L) is integrated in the work. This includes defining how we assess our progress in meeting our strategic goals, how we learn, and how we use what we learn to adapt and improve. We developed a framework that outlines our approach to IA&L – why we think it's important, what principles guide us, and how we put IA&L into practice.

While the IA&L framework was designed as an internal guide, we decided to make it available externally for three reasons: to honor the Foundation's commitment to transparency and openness; to hold ourselves accountable to what we say we espouse for IA&L; and to model our approach for colleagues at other organizations who may be interested in adopting a similar framework.

### What We're Learning

We've also dedicated a new portion of our website to what we are learning. We use this section to share knowledge with the field – and not only the end results of an initiative or body of

research but also to communicate what happens in the middle – to be transparent about the work as we go.

For example, in 2017, we spent a year listening and learning from grantees, employers, thought leaders, and other stakeholders in California to inform what would become our Better Careers initiative. At the end of the year, we announced the goal of the initiative to connect low-income Californians to good jobs with family-sustaining wages and advancement opportunities. It was important for us to uphold the principles of feedback set in our IA&L framework by communicating with all the stakeholders who helped to inform the initiative's strategy – it was also the right thing to do. We wanted to be transparent about how we got to our Better Career approach and highlight the ideas reflected in it as well as the equally valuable insights that we decided not to pursue. Given the resources that went into accumulating this knowledge, and in the spirit of greater funder collaboration, we also posted these ideas on our website to benefit others working in this space.

As we continue to build our knowledge sharing muscle at Irvine, we are exploring additional ways to communicate as we go. We are currently reflecting on what we are learning about how we work inside the foundation – and thinking about ways to share the insights that can add value to the field. Participating as a voice in the Foundation Center's new *Open for Good* guide was one such opportunity, and the stories and lessons from other Foundations in the guide inspires our own path forward.

*— Kim Ammann Howard*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Creating a Culture of Learning: An Interview with Yvonne Belanger, Director of Evaluation & Learning, Barr Foundation

November 8, 2018

*Yvonne Belanger is the director of learning & evaluation at the Barr Foundation and leads Barr's efforts to gauge its impact and support ongoing learning among staff, grantees, and the fields in which they work.*

*Recently, Janet Camarena, director of transparency initiatives for Foundation Center, interviewed Belanger about how creating a culture of learning and openness can improve philanthropy.*

**GlassPockets: More and more foundations seem to be hiring staff with titles having to do with evaluation and learning. You've been in this role at the Barr Foundation for just about a year, having come over from a similar role at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Why do you think roles like this are on the rise in philanthropy, and what are your aspirations for how greater capacity for evaluation and learning can benefit the field?**

Yvonne Belanger: I think the spread of these roles in strategic philanthropy comes from increasing recognition that building a stronger learning function is a strategic investment, and it requires dedicated expertise and leadership. My hope is that strong evaluation and learning capacity at Barr (and across the philanthropic sector generally) will enable better decisions and accelerate the pace of social change to make the world more equitable and just.

**GP: What have been your priorities in this first year and what is your approach to learning? More specifically, what is Barr's learning process like, what sources do you learn from, how do you use the learnings to inform your work?**

YB: At Barr, we are committed to learning from our efforts and continuously improving. Our programmatic work benefits from many sources of knowledge to inform strategy including landscape scans, academic research, ongoing conversations with grantees and formal site visits, and program evaluations to name a few. During this first year, I have been working with Barr's program teams to assess their needs, to sketch out a trajectory for the next few years, and to launch evaluation projects across our strategies to enhance our strategic learning. Learning is not limited to evaluating the work of our programs, but also includes getting feedback from our partners. Recently, we were fortunate to hear from grantees via our Grantee Perception Report survey, including specific feedback on our learning and evaluation practices. As we reflected on their responses in relation to Barr's values and examples of strong practice among our peers, we saw several ways we could improve.

**GP: What kinds of improvements are you making as a result of feedback you received?**

YB: We identified three opportunities for improvement: to make evaluation more useful, to be clearer about how Barr defines success and measures progress, and to be more transparent with our learning.

- ***Make evaluations more collaborative and beneficial to our partners.*** We heard from our grantees that participating in evaluations funded by Barr hasn't always felt useful or applicable to their work. We are adopting approaches to evaluation that prioritize grantee input and benefit. For example, in our Creative Commonwealth Initiative, a partnership with five community foundations to strengthen arts and creativity across Massachusetts, we included the grantees early in the evaluation design phase. With their input, we modified and prioritized evaluation questions and incorporated flexible technical assistance to build their capacity for data and measurement. In our Education Program, the early phase of our Engage New England evaluation is focused on sharing learning with grantees and the partners supporting their work to make implementation of these new school models stronger.
- ***Be clearer about how we measure outcomes.*** Our grantees want to understand how Barr assesses progress. In September, we published a grantee guide to outputs and outcomes to clarify what we are looking for from grantees and to support them in developing a strong proposal. Currently, our program teams are clarifying progress measures for our strategies, and we plan to make that information more accessible to our grantees.
- ***Share what we learn.*** To quote your recent GrantCraft *Open for Good* report, "Knowledge has the power to spark change, but only if it is shared." To maximize Barr's impact, we aim to be #OpenForGood and produce and share insights that help our grantees, practitioners, policymakers, and others. To this end, we are proactively sharing information about evaluation work in progress, such as the evaluation questions we are exploring, and when the field can expect results. Our Barr Fellows program evaluation is one example of this practice. We are also building a new knowledge center for Barr to highlight and share research and reports from our partners, and make these reports easier for practitioners and policymakers to find and re-share.

**GP: Clearly all of this takes time and resources to do well. What benefits can you point to of investing in learning and knowledge sharing?**

YB: Our new Impact & Learning page reflects our aspiration that by sharing work in progress and lessons learned, we hope to influence nonprofits and other funders, advance field knowledge, inform policy, and elevate community expertise. When you are working on changing complex systems, there are almost never silver bullets. To make headway on difficult social problems we need to view them from multiple perspectives and build learning over time by analyzing the successes – and the failures - of many different efforts and approaches.

**GP: Barr's president, Jim Canales, is featured in a video clip on the Impact & Learning page talking about the important role philanthropy plays as a source of "risk capital" to test emerging and untested solutions, some of which may not work or fail, and that the field should see these as learning opportunities. And, of course, these struggles and failures could be great lessons for philanthropy as a whole. How do you balance this tension at Barr, between a desire to provide "risk capital," the desire to open up what you are learning, and reputational concerns about sharing evaluations of initiatives that didn't produce the desired results?**

YB: It's unusual for Foundations to be open about how they define success, and admissions of failure are notably rare. I think foundations are often just as concerned about their grantees' reputation and credibility as their own. At Barr we do aspire to be more transparent, including when things that haven't worked or our efforts have fallen short of our goals. To paraphrase Jim Canales, risk isn't an end in itself, but a foundation should be willing to take risks in order to see impact. Factors that influence impact or the pace of change are often ones that funders often have control over, such as the amount of risk we were willing to take, or the conceptualization and design of an initiative. When a funder can reflect openly about these issues, these usually generate valuable lessons for philanthropy and reflect the kind of risks we should be able to take more often.

**GP: Now that you are entering your second year in this role, where are the next directions you hope to take Barr's evaluation and learning efforts?**

YB: In addition to continuing and sustaining robust evaluation for major initiatives across our program areas, and sharing what we're learning as we go, we have two new areas of focus in 2019 – people and practices. We will have an internal staff development series to cultivate mindsets, skills, and shared habits that support learning, and we will also be working to strengthen our practices around strategy measurement so that we can be clearer both internally and externally about how we measure progress and impact. Ultimately, we believe these efforts will make our strategies stronger, will improve our ability to learn with and from our grantees, and will lead to greater impact.

-- *Yvonne Belanger & Janet Camarena*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Opening Up Emerging Knowledge: New Shared Learning from IssueLab

May 23, 2019

*Janet Camarena is the director of transparency initiatives at Candid.*


Though it's hard to believe, we are already almost halfway through 2019! Given that midpoints are often a time to reflect and take stock, it seemed good timing to mine the knowledge that the field has shared in IssueLab to see some examples of a few of the reports and lessons learned that our GlassPockets foundations have shared over the last six months. Scanning the recent titles, some themes immediately jumped out at me that seemed to be a focus of research across the field, such as racial and gender equity, global trends, and impact measurement.

This is also a good reminder that IssueLab helps make your knowledge discoverable. Though I'm highlighting seven recent publications here, I only had to visit one website to find and freely download them. Acting as a "collective brain" for the field, IssueLab organizes the social sector's knowledge so we can all have a virtual filing cabinet that makes this knowledge readily available. If it's been a while since you uploaded your knowledge to IssueLab, you can add any of your publications to our growing library here. It's a great way to make your knowledge discoverable, mitigate the knowledge fragmentation in the field, and make your foundation live up to being #OpenForGood.

And, speaking of #OpenForGood, our inaugural awards designed to encourage more knowledge sharing across the field will be announced at the upcoming GEO Learning Conference during lunch on May 29th. If you will be at GEO, join us to learn who the #OpenForGood knowledge sharing champions will be! And remember, if you've learned something, share something!

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## OPENING UP EVALUATIONS & GRANTEE REPORTS

***"It's a refreshing reinvention of the traditional grantee report, placing priority on collecting and sharing the kinds of information that will be helpful to other practitioners, rather than just the data that the funder might need."***

Foundations pilot initiatives all the time, but do they share what they learned from them once the evaluation is all said and done? And what about all the potentially helpful data filed away in grantee reports? This first cluster of new reports opens up this kind of knowledge:

- **Creative City** (*published by Animating Democracy, Funded by the Barr and Boston Foundations*, *April 2019*) The Creative City pilot program, created by the New England Foundation for the Arts in partnership with the Barr Foundation, supported artists of all disciplines for art in Boston that would serve to drive public imagination and community engagement. Artists, funders, and administrators alike will find much to learn from this report about how to rethink arts in the context of people and place. One compelling example is the Lemonade Stand installation, created by artists Elisa H. Hamilton and Silvia Lopez Chavez, which made the rounds of many Boston neighborhoods, and attracted many people with its bright yellow kiosk glow. Though it looked on the surface like a lemonade stand, it was actually an art installation inviting the community to connect by exchanging stories about how they turned lemons into lemonade.
- **Giving Refugees A Voice: Independent Evaluation** *(MacroScope London, Funded by the C&A Foundation, March 2018-February 2019)* The C&A Foundation supported the *Giving Refugees a Voice* initiative, designed to improve working conditions for Syrian and other refugees in the Turkish apparel sector using social media monitoring technology. The pilot initiative used social media monitoring technology to analyze the public Facebook posts of millions of refugees associated with the apparel sector in Turkey. The purpose of this analysis was to galvanize brands, employers, and others to take actions and make changes that would directly improve the working conditions for Syrian people in Turkey. This impact report forthrightly reveals that though the social media efforts were an innovative way to document the scale of the Syrians working informally in the Turkish apparel industry, the pilot fell short of its goals as there was no evidence that the social media analysis led to improved working conditions. Rather than keep such a negative outcome quiet, the C&A Foundation publicly released its findings and also created a blog summary about them earlier this year outlining the results, what they learned from them, and what would be helpful for stakeholders and partners to know in an easy-to-read outline.
- **Grantee Learnings: Disability** *(Published by Ian Potter Foundation, December 2018)* The information documented in this publication has been taken from the final reports of disability-serving grantees, which were submitted to The Ian Potter Foundation following the completion of their projects. The Ian Potter Foundation routinely shares out grantee learnings for each of its portfolios as a way to support shared learning among its existing and future grantees, and this is the most recent of these. The report is easily arranged so that other disability services providers can benefit from the hard-won lessons learned of their peers when it

comes to likely areas of shared challenges such as staffing, program planning, working with parents and partners, scaling, evaluation measurement, and technology use. It's a refreshing reinvention of the traditional grantee report, placing priority on collecting and sharing the kinds of information that will be helpful to other practitioners, rather than just the data that the funder might need.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM SCHOLARSHIP & FELLOWSHIP FUNDING

Donors looking to make a difference using scholarships and student aid to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion have two new excellent sources of knowledge available to them:

- **Delivering on the Promise: An Impact Evaluation of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program** (Published by American Institutes for Research, Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, May 2019) This report shares findings from an impact evaluation of the Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) program and reflects on findings from implementation evaluations conducted on the program since its inaugural year. The GMS program is an effort designed to improve higher education access and opportunity for high achieving low-income students of color by reducing the cost of entry. The program also seeks to develop a new and diverse generation of leaders to serve America by encouraging leadership participation, civic engagement, and the pursuit of graduate education and careers in seven fields in which minorities are underrepresented—computer science, engineering, mathematics, science, education, library science, and public health. It discusses the extent to which the program has made an impact, and offers concluding thoughts on how the Foundation can maximize its investment in the higher education arena. A central argument of this report is that philanthropic activities like the GMS program can indeed play a crucial role in improving academic outcomes for high-achieving, disadvantaged students.
- **Promoting Gender Equity: Lessons From Ford's International Fellows Program** *(Published by IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research & Impact, Funded by Ford Foundation, January 2019)* As part of its mission to provide higher education access to marginalized communities, the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) sought to address gender inequality by providing graduate fellowships to nearly 2,150 women—50% of the IFP fellow population—from 22 countries in the developing world. This brief explores how international fellowship programs like IFP can advance educational, social, and economic equity for women. In addition to discussing the approach, the program took in providing educational access and opportunity to women. The brief looks at two stories of alumnae who have not only benefitted from the fellowship themselves, but who are working to advance gender equity in their home communities and countries. Activists, advocates, and practitioners can draw upon the strategies and stories that follow to better understand the meaning of gender equity and advance their own efforts to achieve social justice for women and girls worldwide.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Foundations invest in knowledge creation to better understand the ecosystem of the social sector, as well as to address critical knowledge gaps they see in the fields in which they work. Thanks to these titles being added to IssueLab, we can all learn from them too! Here's a couple

of recent titles added to IssueLab that shed new and needed light on the fields of philanthropy and nonprofits:

- **Philanthropy in China** *(Published by Asian Venture Philanthropy Network, Funded by The Rockefeller Foundation, April 2019)* Philanthropy is now a global growth industry, but philanthropic transparency norms in other parts of the world are often lacking, so knowledge can be scarce. Philanthropy in China today is expanding and evolving rapidly, so filling in these knowledge gaps is even more pressing. This report presents an overview of the philanthropy ecosystem in China by reviewing existing knowledge and drawing insights from influential practitioners. It also provides an analysis of the key trends, opportunities as well as a set of recommendations for funders and resource providers who are inspired to catalyze a more vibrant and impactful philanthropy ecosystem in China.
- **Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector** *(Published by the Building Movement Project, Funded by New York Community Trust, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Community Resource Exchange, New York Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, Center for Nonprofit Excellence at the United Way of Central New Mexico, North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, Russ Finkelstein, February 2019)* This report is part of the Race to Lead series by the Building Movement Project, seeking to understand why there are still relatively so few leaders of color in the nonprofit sector. Using data taken from a national survey of more than 4,000 people, and supplemented by numerous focus groups around the country, this latest report reveals that women of color encounter systemic obstacles to their advancement over and above the barriers faced by white women and men of color. Another key finding in the report is that education and training are not enough to correct systemic inequities—women of color with high levels of education are more likely to be in administrative roles and are more likely to report frustrations about inadequate and inequitable salaries. Building Movement Project's call to action focuses on systems change, organizational change, and individual support for women of color in the sector.

Is this reminding you that you have new knowledge to share? Great—I can't wait to see what you will #OpenForGood!

*— Janet Camarena*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Meet Our #OpenForGood Award Winner: An Interview with Craig Connelly, Chief Executive Officer, The Ian Potter Foundation

June 12, 2019

*This post is part of the GlassPockets' #OpenforGood series done in partnership with the Fund for Shared Insight.*

The Ian Potter Foundation is an Australian foundation that supports and promotes excellence and innovation working for a vibrant, healthy, fair, and sustainable Australia. In this interview, Craig Connelly shares insights with GlassPockets' Janet Camarena about how the foundation's practices support learning and open knowledge.

**GlassPockets**: Congratulations on being one of our inaugural recipients of the #OpenForGood award! The award was designed to recognize those foundations that are working to advance the field by sharing what they are learning. Can you please share why you have prioritized knowledge sharing at the Ian Potter Foundation and how this practice has helped you to advance your work? Or put another way, what is the good that has come about as a result?

**Craig Connelly**: The Ian Potter Foundation decided to invest in our research and evaluation capability primarily to improve the quality of our grantmaking. We believe that evaluating our grantees and the work that we fund through measuring and evaluating outcomes enables us to understand the extent to which our funding guidelines are achieving the intended outcomes. This results in a more informed approach to our grantmaking which should improve the quality of our grantmaking over time.

A core part of this includes being completely transparent with our grantees and with the broader sector. To do anything otherwise is not being consistent with our expectations of our grantees. We are asking our grantees to be partners, to pursue a strategic relationship with them and that requires open and honest conversation. Therefore, we need to be an open, honest and transparent funder and demonstrate that in order to win the trust of the organizations we fund.

Examples of this transparency are the learnings that we glean from our grantees that we share with the broader sector. We're getting very positive feedback from both funders and grantees on the quality of the learnings that we're sharing and the value that they add to the thought processes that nonprofit organizations and other funders go through.

**GP**: Increasingly we are seeing foundations move toward a structure of having staff dedicated to evaluation and learning. For those foundations that are considering adding such a unit to their teams, what advice do you have about the structures needed to create a culture of learning across the organization and avoid the creation of one more silo?

The Ian Potter Foundation

**CC**: Anyone in a research and evaluation role needs to be an integral part of the program management team. The research and evaluation process informs our grantmaking. It needs to assist the program managers to be better at what they do, and it needs to learn from what the program managers are doing as

well. You don't want it to be a silo, it is just another function of your program management team. It is an integral part of that team and it is in constant communication both with the program management team and with grantees from day one.

**GP**: As you heard during the award presentation, one of the reasons the Ian Potter Foundation was selected to receive this award is because of how you prioritize thinking about how stakeholders like grantees might benefit from the reports and knowledge you possess. We often hear that while there is a desire to share grantee reports publicly, that there are reputational concerns that prevent it or that to scrub the reports of sensitive information would be too time consuming, yet you do it for all of your portfolios. What are your tips for how to keep this a manageable process?

**CC**: The initial work to compile and anonymize our grantee learnings required some investment in time from our Research & Evaluation Manager and communications team. To make this task manageable, the work was tackled one program area at a time. Now that a bank of learnings has been created for each program area, new learnings are easily compiled and added on a yearly basis. This work is scheduled at less busy times for those staff involved. The Ian Potter Foundation is also looking at ways learnings can be shared directly from grantees to the wider nonprofit sector. One idea is to create a forum (e.g. a podcast) where nonprofits can share their experiences with their peers in the sector.

**GP**: A concern we often hear is that a funder creating a culture of learning leads to an increased burden on grantees who are then asked for robust evaluations and outcomes measures that no one is willing to pay for. Does The Ian Potter Foundation include funding for the evaluations and reporting or other technical assistance to mitigate the burden on grantees?

*"...we need to be an open, honest and transparent funder and demonstrate that in order to win the trust of the organizations we fund."*

**CC**: One of the benefits that we found at The Ian Potter Foundation of having a Research & Evaluation Manager becoming an integral part of our process is that our authorizing environment – our board and the committees responsible for program areas – have become very comfortable including funding evaluation for all of our grants. We now also understand what it costs to complete an effective evaluation. We often ask grantees to add more to their budget to ensure a good quality evaluation can be completed as part of the grant.

**GP**: Learning is a two-way street and foundations are both producers and consumers of knowledge. Let's close this interview with hearing about a noteworthy piece of knowledge you recently learned thanks to another foundation or organization sharing it, and how it helped inform your own work.

**CC**: Yes, we have a couple of examples I can point to. The first comes from our Education Program Manager, Rikki Andrews, who points to the creation of the Early Childhood Impact Alliance (ECIA) through a grant to the University of Melbourne. The purpose of the ECIA is to convene, connect and increase understanding of research and policy among early childhood philanthropic funders, to ensure there is more strategic and concerted philanthropic support of research and its application.

Additionally, the Foundation's Senior Program Manager, Dr. Alberto Furlan, explains, 'We are in the process of learning from organizations we partner with all the time. In the last few years,

program managers have been prioritizing extensive site visits to shortlisted applicants to discuss and see the projects in situ. In a 'big country' such as Australia, this takes a considerable amount of time and resources, but it invariably pays off. Such visits highlight the importance of relationship building deep and honest listening when partnering with not-for-profits. The Foundation prides itself in being open and approachable and site visits greatly contribute to understanding the reality of the day-to-day challenges, and successes, of the organizations working on the ground.'

— *Craig Connelly & Janet Camarena*

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

## Meet Our #OpenForGood Award Winner: An Interview with Lee Alexander Risby, Head of Effective Philanthropy & Savi Mull, Senior Evaluation Manager, C&A Foundation

June 19, 2019

*C&A Foundation is a European foundation that supports programs and initiatives to transform fashion into a fair and sustainable industry that enables everyone – from farmer to factory worker – to thrive. In this interview, Lee Alexander Risby and Savi Mull share insights with GlassPockets' Janet Camarena about how the foundation's practices support learning and open knowledge.*

**GlassPockets**: Congratulations on being one of our inaugural recipients of the #OpenForGood award! The award was designed to recognize those foundations that are working to advance the field by sharing what they are learning. Can you please share why you have prioritized knowledge sharing at the C&A Foundation and how this practice has helped you to advance your work?

**Savi Mull**: For almost five years, C&A Foundation has been dedicated to transforming the fashion industry into a force for good. A large part of that work includes instilling transparency and accountability in supply chains across the industry. From the start, we also wanted to lead by example by being transparent and accountable as an organization, sharing what we were learning whilst on this journey, being true to our work and helping the rest of the industry learn from our successes and failures.

**Lee Alexander Risby:** Indeed, from the beginning, we made a commitment to be open about our results and lessons by publishing evaluations on our website and dashboards in our Annual Reports. After all, you cannot encourage the fashion industry to be transparent and accountable and not live by the same principles yourself. Importantly, our commitment to transparency has always been championed both by our Executive Director and our Board.

**Savi:** To do this, over the years we have put many processes in place. For example, internally we use after-action reviews to gather lessons from our initiatives and allow our teams to discuss honestly what could have been done better in that program or partnership. We also do third party, external evaluations of our initiatives, sharing the reports and lessons learned. This helps us and our partners to learn, and it informs initiatives and strategies going forward.

### THE ROLE OF EVALUATION INSIDE FOUNDATIONS

**GP**: Your title has the word "evaluation" in its name and increasingly we are seeing foundations move toward this staffing structure of having staff dedicated to evaluation and learning. For those foundations that are considering adding such a unit to their teams, what advice do you have about the structures needed to create a culture of learning across the organization and avoid the creation of one more silo?

**SM:** I believe it is essential to have this type of function in a foundation to drive formal learning from and within programs. But at the same time, it is an ongoing process that cannot be driven by one function alone. All staff needs to be responsible for the learning that makes philanthropy effective – not just evaluators.

**LAR:** To begin, we were deliberate in building a team of evaluation professionals to promote accountable learning. We started hiring slowly and built the team over time. What I looked for with each new member of the team, and I am always looking for, is an evaluator with more than just skills, they also need the influencing, listening, communication and negotiating skills to help others learn. Evaluations have little effect without good internal and external communication.

*"For us, it was important to be a critical friend, listener, and enabler of learning and not the police."*

The evaluation function itself has also evolved over the last five years. It started off as a monitoring, evaluation and learning function (MEL) and is now Effective Philanthropy. From the start, the function was as not set up as an independent department but created to help programmatic teams in the design of appropriate monitoring and evaluation for the programs, and facilitators and advisors on strategy. However, it has not always been a straight-forward process from the inside. In the first years, we had to spend a lot of time explaining and persuading staff of the need for evaluation, transparency and learning and the benefits of doing so. We wanted to avoid a strong independent evaluation function as that can reduce learning by placing too much emphasis on accountability. For us, it was important to be a critical friend, listener, and enabler of learning and not the police.

**SM: So, the first bit of advice** is that evaluators should be supportive listeners, assisting programmatic teams throughout the design and implementation phases to get the best results possible. They should not come in just at the end of an initiative to do an evaluation.

**LAR: The second piece of advice** is on positioning, support, and structure of evaluation within a foundation. Firstly, it is critical to have is to have the buy-in of the leadership and board for both evaluation and transparency. And secondly, the evaluation function must be part of the management team and report to the CEO or Executive Director. This gives reporting and learning the appropriate support structure and importance.

**The third piece of advice** is to consider not creating an evaluation function, but an effective philanthropy function. Evaluation is done for learning, and learning drives effectiveness in grant-making for better results and long-term impacts on systems.

**SM: The final piece of advice** is to take guidance from others outside your organization. The whole team has consulted broadly with former colleagues and mentors from across the evaluation community as well as experienced philanthropic professionals. Remember you are part of a field with peers whose knowledge and experience can help guide you.

## OPENING UP PAIN POINTS

**GP**: One of the reasons the committee selected C&A Foundation to receive the award is because of your institutional comfort level with sharing not just successes, but also being very forthright about what didn't work. We often hear that foundation boards and leaders are worried about reputational issues with such sharing. What would you say to those leaders

about how opening up these pain points and lessons has affected C&A Foundation's reputation in the field, and why it's worth it?

**LAR:** I would say this. The question for foundation boards and leaders is straightforward: do you want to be more effective and have an impact? The answer to that will always be yes, but it is dependent on learning and sharing across the organization and with others. If we do not share evaluations, research or experiences, we do not learn from each other and we cannot be effective in our philanthropic endeavors.

*"There is a benefit to being open, you build trust and integrity – success and failure is part of all of us."*

The other question for boards and leaders is: who does philanthropy serve? For us, we want to transform the fashion industry, which is made up of cotton farmers, workers in spinning mills and cut and sew factories, consumers and entrepreneurs, to name a few – they are our public. As such we have the duty to be transparent to the public about where we are succeeding and where we have failed and how we can improve. We do not think there is a reputation risk. In fact, there is a benefit to being open, you build trust and integrity – success and failure is part of all of us.

**SM:** Adding to what Lee has said, being open about our failures not only helps us but the entire field. Some of our partners have felt reticent about our publishing evaluations, but we always reassure them and stress from the beginning of an evaluation process that it is an opportunity to understand how to they can improve their work and how we can improve our partnership, as well as a chance to share those lessons more broadly.

## LEARNING WHILE LEAN

**GP**: Given the lean philanthropy staffing structures in place at many corporate foundations, do you have any advice for your peers on how those without a dedicated evaluation team might still be able to take some small steps to sharing what they are learning?

**SM:** Learning is a continuous process. In the absence of staff dedicated to evaluation, take baby steps within your power, such as implementing after-action reviews, holding thematic webinars, or doing quick summaries of lessons from grants and/or existing evaluations from others. If the organization's leadership endorses learning, these small steps are a good place to start.

**GP**: And speaking of lean staffing structures, a concern we often hear is that a funder creating a culture of learning leads to an increased burden on grantees who are then asked for robust evaluations and outcomes measures that no one is willing to pay for. Does C&A Foundation include funding for the evaluations and reporting or other technical assistance to mitigate the burden on grantees?

**SM:** The foundation has a Monitoring and Evaluation Policy that lays out the role of the programmatic staff and partners as well as of the dedicated Effective Philanthropy Team. C&A Foundation partners are generally responsible for the design and execution of self-evaluation - to be submitted at the end of the grant period. External evaluation budgets are covered by the foundation and do not pose a financial burden on partners at all. They are included in the overall cost of an initiative, and when needed we have an additional central evaluation fund that is used to respond to the programmatic team's and partner's ad hoc demands for evaluations and learning.

# Open For Good - Voices from the Field

The Effective Philanthropy team does provide technical assistance to partners and foundation staff upon request. The guidance ranges from technical inputs related to the theory of change development to the design of baseline and mid-line data collection exercises. The theory of change work has been really rewarding for partners and ourselves. We all enjoy that part of the work.

**GP**: Learning is a two-way street and foundations are both producers and consumers of knowledge. Let's close this interview with hearing about a noteworthy piece of knowledge you recently learned thanks to another foundation or organization sharing it, and how it helped inform your work.

## LEARNING LEADS TO EFFECTIVENESS

**LAR:** In the moving from a more traditional MEL approach to effective philanthropy we looked at the work of other foundations. This included learning from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and others. We had discussions with a number of peers in the field. We also asked Nancy MacPherson (formerly Managing Director of Evaluation at Rockefeller) and Fay Twersky (Director of Effective Philanthropy at Hewlett) to review our Effective Philanthropy strategy when it was under development. Their feedback and advice helped a lot. In the end, we decided to begin to build out the function in a similar way to the Hewlett Foundation. But there are some differences. For example, our evaluation practice is currently positioned at a deeper initiative level, which is related to the field context where there is a significant evidence gap across the fashion industry that needs to be filled. Concomitant to this is our emphasis on piloting and testing and that goes hand-in-hand with the demand for evaluative thinking, reporting, and learning.

Our team has also been influenced by our own successes and failures from previous roles. That has also inspired us to embrace a slightly different approach.

**SM:** In terms of where we are at the moment, we still oversee performance monitoring, evaluation, and support to the program teams in developing theories of change and KPIs; but we are also building out organizational learning approach and are in the process of hiring a Senior Learning Manager. Lastly, we are piloting our organizational and network effectiveness in Brazil, which is being led by a colleague who joined the foundation last year.

**LAR:** We are also in the midst of an Overall Effectiveness Evaluation (OEE) of C&A Foundation's first 5-year strategy. In general, this is not a type of evaluation that foundations use much. As well as looking at results, the evaluators are evaluating the whole organization, including Effective Philanthropy. For me as an evaluator, it has been really rewarding to be on the other side of a good question.

We are learning from the OEE as we go along and we decided to create ongoing opportunities for reporting/feedback from the process rather than waiting until the very end for a report. This means that program staff can be engaged in proactive discussions about performance and emerging lessons in a timely way. The OEE is already starting to play a vital role to inform the development of the next 5-year strategy and our organization. But you will surely hear more on that evaluation process later as it will be published. There is always room for improvement and learning never stops.

*— Lee Alexander Risby, Savi Mull, & Janet Camarena*