



Strategies for Impact

Increasing Resource Flows for
and Focusing Attention on
Issues Funder Networks Care About

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
in partnership with
Council on Foundations
Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
and
Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities

with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation



GRANTMAKERS
for EFFECTIVE
ORGANIZATIONS



GRANTMAKERS FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS is a community of grantmakers dedicated to building strong and effective organizations. GEO's mission is to maximize philanthropy's impact by advancing the effectiveness of grantmakers and their grantees. Through research, conferences, its Web site, publications and other activities, GEO highlights knowledge and practices in the field that advance the organizational effectiveness movement.

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Acknowledgments

GEO is grateful to the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for its generous support of this project. The research built on existing research conducted by partner organizations the Council on Foundations, the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, and Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. Many thanks to the networks research advisory group, which provided feedback and input throughout the project. Advisory group members were

- Elan Garonzik, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Valerie Lies, Donors Forum of Chicago
- Steve Parsons, Council on Foundations
- Jane Roxbury, Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
- Ben Starrett, Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities

GEO contracted with LaFrance Associates, LLC, for consulting support in conducting this research. For more information about LFA, please contact Steven LaFrance at 415.241.0605 or visit www.LFAGroup.com.

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Grantmakers for Effective Organizations — in partnership with representatives from the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, the Council on Foundations and Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities — is making sense of the current landscape of funder networks with an eye toward greater coordination of effort and the ability of emerging donors to more quickly find like-minded colleagues by developing a comprehensive directory and maps of funder networks. In addition, this project includes survey research and a series of case study interviews designed to deepen our understanding of the potential for funder networks to accomplish goals and activities that lead to greater funder effectiveness. This report explores how funder networks increase resources for and focus attention on the issues they care about, integrating findings from our survey of nearly 200 participating funder networks and case study interviews with five funder networks.

The Research

This report is based on findings from a survey of nearly 200 funder networks and interviews with the following five networks:

- Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change (www.msfoundation.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=48)
- Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (www.fcyo.org)
- Grantmakers of Southeast Texas (Contact Carol Flatten at foundationset@IH2000.net.)
- Health and Environmental Funders Network (www.hefn.org)
- League of California Community Foundations (www.lccf.org)

Increasing Resources for and Focusing Attention on Issues

There is strength in numbers, as they say. Through their grantmaking activities, funders ultimately want to make as great an impact as possible on the issues they care about. An increasingly common strategy among funders for multiplying magnitudes of impact is to form networks organized around the issue, geography or identity-based community in which they seek to make a difference.

These networks of funders hold the potential to increase the amount of resources dedicated to the issue they care about and to position the issue as a focal point of attention among funders, nonprofit organizations and policy makers.

But how do networks achieve these goals? This paper explores conditions and strategies that have proven successful among funder networks that identify increasing resource flows and positioning issues as a priority activity for the network.

Funder Network Accomplishments: An Overview

Funder networks establish a variety of priorities for what they hope their activities will accomplish. GEO's funder network survey found that nearly all funder networks have as a priority to promote funder learning (97 percent), build knowledge (95 percent) and foster new linkages (92 percent). However, closer to about two-thirds of funder networks have as a priority to change and increase resource flows for an issue (64 percent) and to develop innovations in grantmaking (61 percent), while only about one-half make positioning and advocating for issues (54 percent) a priority. (See table on Funder Network Priority Areas.)

Though less commonly attempted, changing and increasing resource flows and positioning issues are perhaps among the most important accomplishments funder networks have the potential to achieve. However, fewer funder networks set out to influence resource flows and advocate for issues because of the effort this type of work

Funder Network Priority Areas	Percentage
Promoting funder learning	97%
Building knowledge	95%
Fostering new linkages	92%
Changing and increasing resource flows	64%
Developing innovations in grantmaking	61%
Positioning issues/ advocacy	54%

requires — and the capacity limitations that many funder networks naturally experience. Attracting resources and attention toward issues requires coordinated interaction with external entities, such as community-based and public policy organizations, as well as deliberate communication strategies to inform others of the agenda and gain support.

The remainder of this report explores strategies organized in three categories — increasing funding and resources, coordinating funding and positioning issues and advocacy — that funder networks employ to maximize the impact they seek to achieve on the issues they care about. The stories of five funder networks elucidate how these strategies can be successfully executed to achieve impact.

Increasing Funding and Resources

Two funder network strategies for increasing funding and resources for impact are to expand the amount of money flowing toward an issue and to direct funds to underserved sectors. GEO’s survey of funder networks reveals that on the whole funder networks do excel in this area, possibly because of the difficulty involved in this work or because these issues are not a priority for funder networks. On a seven-point achievement scale where “7” indicates “a great deal of accomplishment,” on average surveyed networks ranked their accomplishments in expanding the amount of money flowing toward an issue at 3.8 and directing funds to underserved sectors at 3.6. (See table on Funder Network Accomplishment Area: Increasing Funding.)

Additional data analysis shows the following characteristics help funder networks succeed at increasing funding and resources for an issue:

- opening membership to nonprofit organizations as well as funders;
- being beyond the start-up stage of the network’s life cycle; and
- having a paid, professional staff.

The illustrative cases below support these findings and elucidate how each factor contributes to success.

Expanding the Amount of Money Flowing Toward an Issue

At a time when philanthropy and public policy are taking a hard look at how to foster healthy youth development, the Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change (the Fund) and Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) emerged as potent forces to draw resources focused on specific aspects of the topic.

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change is the next generation of an earlier collaborative effort the Ms. Foundation sponsored from 1995 to 2000, called the Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls and Healthy Women. As the Healthy Girls and Healthy Women initiative was winding down, those involved launched a research process involving adults and young women working together to explore areas of new and emerging need. They found that a critical element of healthy youth development is to provide young people with concrete opportunities to exercise leadership skills — to provide real

Funder Network Accomplishment Area: <i>Increasing Funding</i>	N	Mean Ranking (7-pt. scale)
Expanding the amount of money flowing toward an issue	149	3.8
Directing funds to underserved areas	148	3.6

chances for youth to develop, express and realize a vision of their own. The fund identified social change projects, defined and led by youth, as the vehicle for manifesting youth development skills with a symbiotic effect for both the young people involved and the communities in which they would implement their social change projects.

Program Officer Marisha Wignaraja further explained, “We went around the country at conferences, talking about our lessons learned from the previous fund and about the new fund to get input from experts around the country. We were looking at the intersection of youth development, youth organizing and identity, and how these impact social change work. At first we generated a lot of intellectual and emotional interest but not many resources.” Yet, now there are 20 funders involved, and the effort has a \$2.8 million budget over a four-year period. How did they get there?

Defining a specific area of focus in a cutting-edge combination of youth development — youth-led social change — is a fundamental strategy of the fund for maximizing its ability to attract new dollars.

Outreach is another strategy for attracting new dollars. Although the fund began with a core set of funders, some of whom had been involved in the previous collaborative for Healthy Girls and Healthy Women, those key committed members held roundtable discussions around the country with grantees and donors to reach out and broaden involvement.

Opening active participation to grantee staff and youth from the programs is a third strategy. According to Wignaraja, “The grantee partners — including staff of the organizations and young people themselves — are part of the learning and intellectual framing that goes on. We have attracted a diversity of donors as well as young people and staff of grantee organizations to the Collaborative Fund table. Grantee partners represent diversities in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, location and types of social change work. For people working in youth issues, this is a critical model. It has pushed our own thinking and has been a real attraction for some donors. It is still a structured discussion, and we have to manage the dynamics, but this is about social change, so we have to be flexible and open. It is challenging and wonderful at the same time.”

With an innovative focus, new donors at the table and explicit goals of providing multi-year grants (totaling \$1.38 million), capacity-building assistance and learning and networking opportunities, the fund set minimum levels of funding commitment as a criterion for participation among funders. To participate, institutions are required to contribute a minimum of \$150,000 over a three-year period, and individuals are required to contribute a minimum of \$75,000 over three years. Donors’ tactical engagement is also relatively high: donor partners not only read proposals but also form teams to visit each organization under consideration. The fund’s donor membership is balanced across the East Coast, West Coast and Midwest.

Three other elements of the fund’s strategy helped increase the amount of money flowing toward youth-led social change work: providing a national agenda, increasing visibility and the nature of the collaborative itself. Wignaraja explained, “In many cases, for the grantees, being supported through a collaborative has helped them build lasting connections with other youth organizations and leverage and bring consistency to their funding over years. It is also a national seal of approval that helps them leverage even more

resources, relationships and knowledge. In addition to similar gains for funders, they now support more organizations in their own local communities. The programmatic thinking as well as the funding has taken seed locally.”

In 1997, a few years prior to the emergence of the Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change, a group of funders led by the Ford Foundation, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation and the Jewish Fund for Justice held a briefing on young people engaged in community organizing work to expose their colleagues to this innovative area of the youth development movement. With 75 attendees, the interest level was clear, and shortly thereafter a working group formed to launch the Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO). At the time, funders were beginning to become involved in supporting youth organizing, but efforts were generally isolated and models were developing organically and in tandem across organizations. FCYO sought to bring coherence to philanthropic efforts to youth organizing work by “Gathering, collecting and consolidating information with the express purpose of increasing the amount of money available for this work,” reported Vera Miao, FCYO executive director. FCYO began through an extensive and thoughtful research and planning process, including a feasibility study, examination of funder network models and a series of working group meetings and retreats. FCYO, a collaboration of 20 grantmakers, is housed within the Jewish Fund for Justice and from the outset operated as a time-limited entity that would sunset at a strategic time.

The question of overlap with the Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change is obvious yet should not be assumed. FCYO and the Collaborative Fund partner and coordinate their respective work through meetings held every other month. They discuss the ways in which their work threatens to overlap, how it can be kept distinct and unique and how they can collectively raise visibility for the strategies they are implementing. FCYO’s agenda, compared to that of the Collaborative Fund, more explicitly includes conducting and disseminating key research in the field, building and supporting intermediary organizations and encouraging more funders to enter the field. As a testament to the success of their coordination, the two networks have only two overlapping funders.

While on the whole FCYO uses a lot of the same strategies as the Collaborative Fund, the primary methods the collaborative uses to increase resources for this issue are building capacity, conducting research and calling attention nationally to youth organizing. To that end, FCYO has accomplished the following:

- Held two national gatherings of youth organizing groups to significantly advance their work as a nascent and growing field;
- Held a national gathering of intermediary organizations — which spurred deep relationship-building between intermediary organizations — to share and build practices and troubleshoot challenges in providing technical assistance in the context of youth organizing work;
- Launched a multiyear capacity-building initiative involving 10 youth organizing groups around the country and an intermediary organization to examine organizational, network and field development through technical assistance, peer exchange and documentation of practice to reduce the burden, time and expense of start-up and implementation work for local groups;

- Sponsored a series of funder briefings in local areas on the topic of effectively supporting youth organizing work;
- Hosted plenary and workshop sessions at various national conferences;
- Produced and disseminated six publications;
- Developed and distributed a resource list;
- Produced a regular newsletter; and
- Conducted face-to-face, one-on-one work.

In terms of impact on the youth development funding world, Miao explained, “Youth organizing is increasingly now a strong thread through [funders’] conversations. Youth organizing is now something that is often talked about; for example, at the conferences of Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families and the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service and other related funder networks, they all have youth organizing related plenaries, workshops and seminars. It’s a topic that is now on the radar screen.”

Moreover, since 2000, when funding through FCYO began, the network has granted more than \$1.8 million and is set to grant an additional \$600,000 - \$900,000 in 2004. According to Miao, “Although we have not sufficiently catalogued all the dollars we have influenced, almost all the foundations that are part of the collaborative were not funding youth organizing prior to joining FCYO.”

Directing Funds to Underserved Sectors

Some funder networks increase resource flows by directing funds to underserved sectors; in fact, the work of the Collaborative Fund and FCYO could be seen as directing funds to underserved areas within the youth development field. In this section, however, the focus is on directing funds to underserved *geographic* sectors. The League of California Community Foundations and Grantmakers of Southeast Texas illustrate funder networks’ successes in putting mechanisms in place to facilitate philanthropic activity in previously underserved geographic regions.

Organized in 1994, the League of California Community Foundations grew organically out of a gathering of 20 community foundation leaders convened to hear evaluation results from an initiative in which each of their organizations had participated. Once in the room together, their collective power to advance ideas and share knowledge was clear. Yet, to date there had been no mechanism for seizing the inherent potential.

League members, currently the leaders of 29 community foundations in California, have resisted creating a separate 501(c)(3) and to date have kept the infrastructure housed within a consulting agency — Community Planning and Research, LLC — because they question the value of sustaining an entire organization for the functions they seek from the network. With the “variable cost” or “pay as you go” model the league has adopted, members incur expense only for the activities and services that they want the network to perform.

One of the primary benefits that the league has served for California’s community foundations is to provide a single point of entry for large private foundations that seek to regrant funds to community-based work. For example, The California Endowment, a

large California-based health care conversion foundation, could access community foundations across the state in its community clinics initiative through the league. Providing a single point of entry for other grantmakers to community-based work is a key strategy for directing funds to underserved sectors.

Other strategies the league has employed to facilitate the infusion of resources in underserved areas include

- collective marketing through a statewide visibility campaign;
- capacity-building activities for existing community foundations; and
- development of new community foundations in previously un-served regions of California.

Through the statewide visibility campaign, the league has developed and launched a series of marketing materials aimed to raise the frequency with which professional financial advisors recommend giving through community foundations to their clients. The ultimate impact sought through the campaign is to increase the amount of philanthropic resources available for California's communities.

By building capacity among existing community foundations, particularly the relatively smaller and newer organizations, the league facilitates an accelerated and strategic path of development. The league provides tools and access to peer knowledge and mentoring to enhance the effectiveness of "sister" community foundations across the state. League senior advisor Alan Pardini explained, "One of the most important features of the league model is sharing peer knowledge among the membership. When the Truckee-Tahoe folks got a grant from Hewlett to start a community foundation in their area, we didn't send league staff; instead, we brought one of the CEOs of a more established community foundation into the community to talk about community foundations from a practitioner point of view."

One of the league's explicit goals has been to establish community foundations in previously unserved regions of California. At this the league has been hugely successful: today, more than 95 percent of California is covered by a community foundation, as compared to 80 percent when the league started its work. Previously unserved regions of California now have formal philanthropic mechanisms in place to direct funds to address their needs.

Grantmakers of Southeast Texas operates solely with a core base of volunteer members. GST grew out of a small group of grantmakers who participated in a community assessment planning meeting. These grantmakers realized there are issues particular to their region that would benefit from coordinated philanthropic action. GST's lead person is at the local community foundation, although her and others' time spent on network activities is unpaid. The network is inclusive of corporate and family philanthropy, as well as the local community foundation, with about 12 members overall. All costs associated with network activities have been underwritten by one of the core organizations. Although small, volunteer based, and only two years old, GST boasts remarkable accomplishments, including

- regular seminars to train grantmakers and build capacity,
- a comprehensive database of local nonprofit organizations,

- swift and coordinated philanthropic response to a local natural disaster, and
- launching a project to develop a nonprofit resource center.

According to network coordinator Carol Flatten, “We are a small enough community where nonprofit organizations know me or other grant coordinators and they’ll say, ‘We have this need,’ and we can find a way to meet it. Not long ago there was a bad storm, and a senior-serving organization needed a new roof in a hurry. We got on the phone and pulled together some money. That has happened several times, especially in emergency-type situations.”

By providing a mechanism through the network, GST has enhanced the resources available for Southeast Texas communities.

Coordinating Funding

By coordinating funding, funder networks reduce duplication of efforts and enhance strategy and alignment in grantmaking decisions to maximize the reach and impact of limited philanthropic resources. Two strategies for coordinating funding are to coordinate existing grantmaking across organizations and to manage a pooled fund.

As with increasing the amount of funds for an issue and directing funds to underserved sectors, GEO’s survey reveals that on the whole funder networks do not easily achieve the goals of coordinating existing grantmaking and managing pooled funds. On the seven-

point achievement scale where “7” indicates “a great deal of accomplishment,” surveyed networks on average ranked their accomplishments in coordinating existing grantmaking at 3.7 and managing a pooled fund at 3.1. (See table on Funder Network Accomplishment Area: Coordinating Funding.)

Funder Network Accomplishment Area: <i>Coordinating Funding</i>	N	Mean Ranking (7-pt. scale)
Coordinating existing grantmaking	148	3.7
Managing a pooled fund	147	3.1

Additional data analysis shows that lifecycle stage is the only network characteristic that makes a statistically significant difference in how well networks “scored” in the area of funding coordination. Those networks in the mature phase of their life cycle have greater accomplishments on average in the area of coordinating funding, as compared to networks in the start-up, growth or midlife stages.

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change and Grantmakers of Southeast Texas are interesting examples of effective funding coordination.

The Collaborative Fund, as with FCYO, was at an advantage from the start because it “caught the wave” of youth-led social change work early. In other words, it is easier to coordinate grantmaking when the grantmaking area is relatively new. As Wignaraja explained, “When you are exploring a new issue area, by definition there is no shared agenda in the beginning. All the donors came to the table with a general interest, but we had different program priorities and reasons for being there. There’s always some give and take, but when you are treading new ground, that is heightened. Our experience is that the best way to keep people engaged is to run a collaborative by consensus, and that’s what we’ve done. There is tremendous value in the shared learning that occurs, and you also have maximum buy-in, even though the process can be time consuming.”

The task of coordinating funding for the Collaborative Fund is challenged by the diversity of donors involved. “This network includes individual donors, institutions, family foundations and large independent foundations — we have the gamut. We need to recognize and value different experiences and perspectives, and there must be acceptance that it is a learning table. The staff of the collaboration has to manage the process,” said Wignaraja.

Nonetheless, the network coordinates grantmaking and learning by engaging donors and grantees directly in the collective processes. For example, current and prior grantee partners present and train with staff at conferences and roundtables, and their work directly influences the learning component. Donor partners read proposals and go on site visits. “In the last round of site visits we had two to five funders visiting each of the organizations (21 site visits total),” Wignaraja reported. “We have rating sheets for key activities. The rating sheets provide a universal structure. We want individual opinion, but we want a level of consistency in how people are judging the organizations. We gather all of that information, and we analyze and use it. Another function this serves is that it is a way to keep the whole group on the same page, because in networks you are not always working from the same perspective. The development of these tools was a fair and equitable basis to select grantees, and it helps us understand different viewpoints.”

One of the fundamental organizing purposes of GST was to coordinate funding in its region. Flatten explained, “The network started off casually with a group of us who were convened to discuss a community assessment plan, and we agreed there were issues particular to our region. We thought we should be sharing in and coordinating the funding to the organizations that need our monetary resources.” GST’s strategies for coordinating funding include identification of a central point of contact (the network coordinator), frequent communication and development of a database of nonprofit organizations in the area. Knowledge management and regular communication are the keys to GST’s effective funding coordination practices.

Managing Pooled Funds

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change and Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing manage pooled funds.

As with the Collaborative Fund, FCYO was ahead of the curve with its focus on a cutting-edge area within the youth development field. Executive Director Vera Miao described some of the same challenges and strategies as Marisha Wignaraja discussed regarding the Collaborative Fund. According to Miao, “Some of the challenges were not dissimilar from anything else getting started: getting disparate funders on the same page, in size and interest. We always have had that mix at Jewish Fund for Justice — a lot of agendas and a lot of interests. We benefited from facilitating the work of what was a collegial group of peers who were used to working together. Also, one unique aspect of our particular collaborative was the effort made to be cognizant of the kind of power that comes behind philanthropy, especially coming into a local grassroots area of work. One of the reasons the members wanted a collaborative with a regranteeing mechanism was to increase their access to small organizations. This meant we had to venture out there and match up how funders think about the world with how community-based organizations view the

world. First we (the funders) came up with what we thought makes sense and then we brought it to the community-based organizations and they told us what it really should be.”

Managing a pooled fund requires a significant amount of work. At first, Miao was the sole staff person involved, but over time the staffing required grew to three full-time positions. Miao explained, “This reflects an expansion in our programmatic work and the extent to which our funder partners came to rely on network staff.” FCYO’s governance structure was also sculpted to support the work of managing the fund. Both funders and nonprofit practitioners sit on the governing board. Additionally, the board has a set of standing committees, each supported by an FCYO staff member, that mirror the network’s core activities:

- Outreach and Education Committee, responsible for funder education and outreach, research, knowledge management, technical assistance and one-on-one support for program officers;
- Grantmaking Committee, responsible for reviewing proposals, site visits and developing final funding recommendations; and
- Capacity-Building Committee, responsible for the vision and direction of the network’s field-level capacity-building agenda.

As mentioned earlier, FCYO is delivering on its mission to increase the philanthropic investment in youth organizing and strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations involved in this work. Granting nearly \$2 million to date and boasting a host of field- and capacity-building accomplishments, FCYO has effectively managed a pooled fund through focus and dedicated effort. At the outset, FCYO was determined only to remain in existence as long as the network was effective and relevant. Miao shared, “We are trying to figure out now whether we will sunset or evolve. The field has grown, and we have had a significant role in making that happen — building up institutions that weren’t there before to take on the role we have been playing. We don’t feel we need to do exactly what we’re doing now into the future. We want to connect philanthropy with the grassroots in a way that is bridge building. We are in the beginning stages of significant transition. We have a three-year strategic plan that started last year and takes us into 2006, and so in 2006 we will either sunset or evolve. We started at the last board meeting to get a temperature reading on members. This year is when we will really engage more intentionally about decisions and concrete steps.”

Positioning Issues

Philanthropy has the opportunity to call attention to issues and areas in need of resources. Funder networks give strength to the philanthropic voice as numbers of funders with shared concerns work together to raise visibility and advocate for change.

Relative to achievement in the area of increasing resource flows, funder networks in GEO’s survey indicate greater levels of accomplishment on average with respect to strategies for positioning issues. The greatest areas of accomplishment across funder networks are increasing visibility and understanding of issues (mean=5.0) and connecting fields and sectors (mean=4.5). Funder networks report relatively lower levels of accomplishment in

the areas of bridging practice, policy and research (mean=4.1) and mobilizing members to take a position or act (mean=3.4). (See table on Funder Network Accomplishment Area: Positioning Issues.)¹

By gathering together around a common cause, networks draw attention to the issue(s) important to them. Here we look at the strategies employed by two funder networks — Health and Environmental Funders Network and the League of California Community Foundations — as examples of how to increase visibility and understanding of issues.

In 1999, a working group of the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity had been supporting funder work at the intersection of environment and health. Working group members determined a need for a way to engage funders on these crosscutting issues beyond the boundaries of biodiversity. The original organizers took the concept to a few big gatherings of grantmakers, which resulted in 50 funders participating in the formation of a new funder network: the Health and Environmental Funders Network. Currently with more than 160 members, HEFN was set up explicitly *not* to create its own actual physical institution, but rather to be a virtual mechanism for “Grantmakers working on issues at the intersection of different pools of philanthropy (health and environment) within the structure of larger associations such as Environmental Grantmakers Association, Grantmakers in Health and the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity,” according to network coordinator Kathy Sessions.

“HEFN was set up as a primarily virtual network of individuals in the foundation community with low barriers to entry (no dues),” explained Sessions. “Joining means signing onto an email list with approximately two postings per month to alert people of upcoming funder calls and meetings and resources. If people elect to be more deeply engaged, they can get on additional discussion groups. This is easy — no board approval needed, no dues. This formula seems to work.”

Sessions described HEFN’s strategy for increasing the visibility of issues at the intersection of health and the environment: “Funder groups have to choose whether to build up their own organization versus leveraging others — there are several funder groups that share the same objective of raising the visibility of issues. The Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities raises the visibility of smart growth issues in part by building up the visibility of the network itself; that is their strategy — and a quite successful one. HEFN took a different tack, also with some success. One of HEFN’s main objectives from the beginning was to encourage more grantmakers to enter this crosscutting area, while not waiting for foundations to change their portfolios. Our strategies include conference calls, a modest Web site and maintaining a presence at key meetings of grantmakers.”

Funder Network Accomplishment Area: <i>Positioning Issues</i>	N	Mean Ranking (7-pt. scale)
Increasing visibility and understanding of issues	145	5.0
Connecting different fields and sectors	157	4.5
Bridging practice, policy and research	145	4.1
Mobilizing members to take a position or act	146	3.4

¹ Analyses of relationships among funder network characteristics and accomplishment of positioning issues outcomes revealed no evidence of correlation.

A central element of HEFN's strategy is to work in partnership with other funder groups. HEFN proposes sessions for annual meetings and helps staff environmental health-related programming for larger funder organizations. "These have been effective ways to not re-create outreach but to institutionalize others' work in our areas of concern," said Sessions. For example, HEFN has developed joint programming at the annual conferences of EGA, GIH, CGBD and the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights.

HEFN also does monthly conference calls for funders and co-sponsors calls with other networks as a strategy for broadening their reach. To illustrate, HEFN has done joint calls with Peace and Security Funders Group; Funders Network on Trade and Globalization; Climate & Energy Funders Group; Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders; Sustainable Consumption and Production Funder Group; Funder Forum on Environment and Education; Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights; and Funders Concerned About AIDS. "Jointly sponsored conference calls are an easy way to build bridges across funder groups and issues of interest. This is especially effective for a crosscutting issue — working in collaboration with other funders who can do joint programming in their own realm," Sessions adds. "We also provide a regular flow of information through e-mails in digestible chunks — 'Here's what's going on in the field and here's how you can get involved.' "

A celebrated example of HEFN's effectiveness at increasing visibility and understanding of issues is the Keep Antibiotics Working campaign. It all began with one of HEFN's conference calls.

"We did a conference call on the precautionary principle and the question of whether we use science-based information proactively or wait until the damage is done," Sessions said. "One case study was antibiotic resistance — even though the problem of resistance is becoming clear, we're still overusing antibiotics. This conversation led to what we call a 'FANGO' — funders and nongovernmental organizations brought together to work on the issue. Often, NGOs compete against each other. What emerged out of the FANGO was a collaborative process between interested funders and NGOs in creating a campaign that would work on this issue and allow each NGO to do what they do best with a strategic cohesion to the effort. The funders could see the strengths and holes and bring others in as needed. The working group led to the creation of a Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign supported by a Funders Forum on Antibiotic Resistance, spun out of HEFN but retaining close ties."

As just one indicator of its success, the January 5, 2004, issue of the food industry trade journal *Food Chemical News* cited the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition as one of the winners of 2003 for "getting the legislation it is backing, the Snowe-Kennedy bill, introduced in the Senate (S.R. 1460) and in the House (H.R. 2932). The measure would prohibit the routine use of medically important antibiotics in healthy food animals. Other victories the coalition racked up in 2003 included McDonald's new policy to prohibit the use of

growth promoters by its poultry suppliers, as well as the introduction of another bill (H.R. 3022) that would prohibit fluoroquinolone-treated poultry from being purchased for federal school lunch programs.”²

As discussed earlier, in May 2001 the League of California Community Foundations made a commitment to a Statewide Visibility Program (SVP), which was launched among its community foundation members in November of that same year. A primary SVP strategy is to deploy marketing materials in trade journals aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of community foundations among professional advisors. In addition, as part of the SVP, the league worked with members to develop materials that they can customize for local use in outreach to and contacts with professional financial advisors. The goal of these strategies is to increase the prevalence with which advisors recommend to their clients that they consider community foundations as a vehicle for charitable giving. Ultimately, the theory is that increased advisor referrals will result in an increase in the number of donor gifts to community foundations. The SVP is currently completing an evaluation process involving a pre- and post-campaign population-based survey of financial advisors; preliminary findings suggest promising results.³

Communications strategies are critical for successfully positioning issues. The Statewide Visibility Program is the league’s primary communications strategy. HEFN’s communication strategy has been to encourage others — members and beyond — to use their existing communication methods to get the word out. As Sessions explained, “HEFN’s is more of a behind-the-scenes role. We would never seek or claim credit — it’s really a partnership. Most of the communication efforts have been done by other groups or spinoffs, like with the antibiotics campaign.”

About the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign

Keep Antibiotics Working: The Campaign to End Antibiotic Overuse includes concerned health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups with more than nine million members, all working to reduce the growing public health threat of antibiotic resistance. Our primary goal is to end the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture, though we also support efforts to limit overuse in human medicine. Current estimates indicate that agriculture accounts for more than 80 percent of antibiotic use in the United States.

The campaign focuses on three areas:

- Phasing out use in non-sick animals of antibiotics that are or may become important to human medicine;
- Restricting use in sick animals of antibiotics essential for treating sick humans, notably fluoroquinolones; and
- Ensuring policy makers and the public will have adequate data at their disposal to track antibiotic use and the development of antibiotic resistance.

Go to www.keepantibioticsworking.org for more information.

² Source: http://www.keepantibioticsworking.org/News/news.cfm?News_ID=365 viewed 03/30/2004.

³ For more information about the league’s Statewide Visibility campaign, go to www.lccf.org. For more information about the SVP campaign evaluation, contact Steven LaFrance at Steven@LFAgroup.com.

Conclusion

In the case of effective funder networks, the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. When funders work together, their potential to leverage resources for and call attention to the issues they care about increases exponentially. Effective funder networks are themselves a strategy for impact.

GEO's survey of nearly 200 funder networks and the five funder network case studies showcased here reveal that, although they might be roads less traveled, with focus and clear strategy funder networks can increase the resources available for and position issues they identify as priorities.

The key lessons we can derive from the success of the case study networks are consistent:

- **Identify a clear need or niche.** For funder networks included in this study, the niche-identification process either occurred through consensus derived among a core group of informed individuals or involved conducting research to assess feasibility and need, or some combination of both of these intuitive and deductive processes. In some cases, funder networks can even capitalize on the very novelty of their focus as a means of propelling their work. One implication of the niche-identification theme is that some funder networks may have time-limited relevance.
- **Develop a communications strategy.** Increasing resources and positioning issues requires spreading the word about the issue of focus. Outreach and visibility and awareness campaigns are critical components of communications strategies. Interviewed funder networks employed a variety of communication strategies ranging the spectrum of resources required to implement them. Their communications plans include strategies to keep both internal (within network) and external (field, policy makers and other) audiences informed.
- **Establish strategic partnerships and alliances.** This research unveils that successful funder networks with positioning agendas for issues and increasing resource flows can build bridges across sectors. For networks seeking to position issues, linkages with public agencies and policy makers are key to effectiveness. For networks aiming to increase resource flows, close alliances with community-based organizations appear to fundamentally advance their goals.
- **Develop systems to manage relevant knowledge.** One of the greatest benefits of any network is to reduce the cost of information by providing easier access to it as well as distilling and packaging it in ways that support the network's agenda. Networks studied here have produced a number of reports and publications that both help further the work of network members and impact the field at large with new information, practices and suggested policies.

By providing a single point of entry and focus, creating and disseminating knowledge, and building their own and partner organizations' capacities, funder networks maximize magnitudes of impact. Indeed, there *is* strength in numbers when those gathered have the focus and strategies of an effective funder network. In philanthropy, "strength" is defined by impact, and funder networks are powerful leveraging tools to take philanthropy's change-creating potential to new levels.



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