

Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

Sponsored Supplement to *SSIR*
Leveraging a Movement Moment
By Lori Bartczak

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significant investment and time to develop. Grantmakers need to provide patient capital and flexible support, knowing that relationships based on trust are built over time. More than a decade after the Memorial Fund began seeding networks among families, schools, and communities throughout the state, its network achieved major policy milestones: state legislation in 2011 that called for a two-year planning process to establish a coordinated system of early childhood development, and in 2013 legislation that unified approximately \$450 million over two years from across several agencies to support it.

Funders and nonprofits alike become better network participants when they cultivate empathy and practice humility, demonstrating understanding of other partners' perspectives and their value to the field. For example, when the Memorial Fund's Nee received an award in recognition of his leadership, he said, "Without the efforts of hundreds of parents, community residents, providers, and advocates, our strategy would have been empty rhetoric." Successful network leaders eschew the spotlight for themselves and instead use such opportunities to share attention across the network and raise visibility for their shared work. Directing recognition to the parts of the network that need it most strengthens trust and enhances the success of the collective effort.

Let go of control. Working collaboratively within a network requires that partners give up some of the control they are used to wielding. The Hawai'i Community Foundation, for example, wrestled with determining how big a footprint it wanted within its network. It decided to play a "strong forward role" and then gradually step back. The foundation made clear that it was available to provide support, but let grantees take the lead.

Another way to increase impact is simply to let others run with your ideas. Rather than trying to serve the tremendous need for playgrounds on its own, KaBOOM! is building community capacity to fulfill its vision of "a great place to play within walking distance of every child in America." KaBOOM! has worked behind the scenes to redirect funding to support peer organizations that might well be perceived as direct competitors. On the ground, KaBOOM! shares its core program expertise with local neighborhood leaders by giving away its

playground building kit, providing technical assistance, and sharing access to a support community, even if the project is independent of KaBOOM!

By its own estimates, a dollar spent by KaBOOM! on online tools in 2009 helped to improve 10 times as many neighborhoods as a dollar spent more directly on playground equipment. Although KaBOOM! does not

attract the media recognition or funding that typically flows from direct playground construction, it supports the community leaders because these network participants are fundamental to fulfilling its mission.

Although finding trusted partners and ceding control to others without a guarantee of success may seem perilous, the potential is almost certainly worth the risk. ✨

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

Leveraging a Movement Moment

By Lori Bartczak

The 50th anniversary of the March on Washington last year served as a reminder of the power and potential of movements for advancing social change. As in the 1960s, when a window of social-change opportunity mobilized people across issues, identities, races, genders, and economic status, today we are in a period of rapid shifts that suggest we are experiencing another "movement moment."

Many grantmakers recognize this moment as both an opportunity and a challenge. Examples such as international democratic movements and steady progress in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) rights show what can happen when a range of diverse stakeholders rally around a common vision and work together to advance ambitious goals.

But behind the scenes, this work is challenging. It requires dramatic shifts for many grantmakers, both in mindset and in practice.

Philanthropy's (Many) Roles in Supporting Movements

Grantmakers support movements in diverse and often interconnecting ways, from decades-long general operating grants to public opinion research to community leadership development efforts. Through most of these important activities, grantmak-

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ers occupy one of five roles: investor, broker, connector, learner, and influencer.¹

Investing money and time. As is the case for strong organizations, movements need support for infrastructure—things like support for leadership that prioritizes intentional relationship building, data and technology systems, and administrative functions. Perhaps more than anything, movements need flexible support in the form of long-term and unrestricted funding.

"In gardening, we are aware that you have to pay attention to the soil, continuously amending and caring for it in order to ensure a plant's growth," says Vic DeLuca, president of the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation. "That same nurturing, feeding, and watering is necessary to facilitate the growth of strong organizations and collaborations."

In its environmental justice work, the Noyes Foundation recognized that many activist organizations in the southeastern part of the United States were critical to the cause but needed capacity-building support, and fast. In response, the foundation established the Special Assistance Grants program, which allows foundation staff to make grants of up to \$7,500 without board approval, sometimes within a few days of a request. Special Assistance Grants have paid for things like technology systems, travel expenses, and board training—all necessary expenses for collaborative work

but items rarely covered by program-restricted funding.

Brokering new partnerships.

Movement-supporting grantmakers serve as brokers by leveraging other resources for their grantees' work. An important way grantmakers can do this is through co-funding partnerships. Participating in funding collaboratives not only leverages more money for grantees, it also brings more efficient money, through streamlined application and reporting processes and shared learning among partners.

The Civil Marriage Collaborative is a pooled fund of eight foundations that has awarded more than \$17 million to date. The movement is starting to experience some legislative wins—marriage equality was a reality in 17 states as of early 2014—and for the first time ever a majority of Americans support same-sex marriage. A networked approach among grantmakers who support the movement has been critical to these successes.

Serving as connective tissue.

Grantmakers with experience in supporting movements say they cannot overemphasize the importance of their role as the “connective tissue” between organizations and networks advancing a movement’s vision. Linda Wood of the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund says, “As foundations, we have a bird’s-eye view of the movement, so we

Grantmaker Roles	
MOVEMENT-BUILDING ROLE	GRANTMAKER ACTIVITIES
Investor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give flexible grants and in-kind support ■ Offer technical assistance ■ Develop leaders ■ Support evaluation
Broker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leverage other funding ■ Participate in funding collaboratives
Connector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sustain movement clusters ■ Build trust and relationships ■ Host or support convenings
Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct or support original research and identify trends ■ Support research on strategic communications and public opinion ■ Focus on organizational learning
Influencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fund or conduct policy advocacy ■ Influence peers ■ Model movement principles

Advancing learning. Grantmakers can also support movements by helping them advance a deeper understanding of their issues and solutions. This can mean underwriting research, supporting evaluation capacity for networks or organizations, or investing in learning efforts to inform the field’s understanding of movement build-

Grantmakers with experience in supporting movements emphasize the importance of their role as the “connective tissue” between organizations and networks.

have an obligation to connect the dots with other funders, to support opportunities for funders and activists to work together, and to get money to the work at the right time.”

The Seattle Foundation’s Neighbor to Neighbor Small Grants Program, which awards grants of up to \$5,000 to new projects in local communities with economic and racial disparities, connects grantees with like-minded organizations, encourages them to participate in regional initiatives that relate to their issues, and introduces them to other funders so they can advance their collective work.

ing and what it will take to create lasting and widespread change.

The Ford Foundation supports a variety of learning activities to advance its work on gender rights and equality. To take the pulse of the community and gain insights for future work, the foundation supports targeted opinion research and other outreach activities. The foundation board carves out time for internal reflection and learning as well, setting aside time in meetings for conversations about timely social issues. For example, in the wake of the recent Supreme Court decisions on marriage rights, the board and

staff explored how the foundation’s efforts were supporting this work.

Influencing change.

Movements are fundamentally about changing power.² Funders can use their advocacy capacity and expertise to help advance movement goals. In Arkansas, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation brings its learning and research directly to policymakers. Staff members testified before the state legislature, drawing on research the foundation had previously funded, and ultimately influenced the creation of a commission that will study and recommend ways to increase the number of Arkansans with college degrees and remove barriers that impede access to higher education.

But recognizing that the people closest to the problem need to have a voice at the table, funders can also support grantees’ efforts to build advocacy capacity. “If grantees or community leaders are positioned to use their voice, the foundation stands back,” says Regan Gruber Moffitt, senior associate for public policy at the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. The foundation also supports grantees’ advocacy efforts.

Three Values for Movement Builders

No matter what role or roles a funder might play in supporting movements, three core values are critical to this work.

First, grantmakers must embrace *courage*, because supporting social movements requires confronting existing power structures, putting a stake in the ground on issues and values, and taking risks.

Second, grantmakers must embrace *trust*, because in social movements change starts at the grassroots and involves players at all different levels, each with its own interests, and the process is often messy.

Third, grantmakers must have *patience*, because this work takes time. Funders who support social movements would agree that working in this way is worth the waiting and uncertainty that can come along with it. As Linda Wood of the Haas, Jr. Fund puts it, “Progress inevitably involves both exhilarating highs and crushing setbacks. As funders, we have to have the fortitude to hang in there, because the end goal of a more just and sustainable society is so important.” *

Notes

- 1 With thanks to Linda Wood from the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, who framed the first three roles in an interview.
- 2 Barbara Masters and Torie Osborn, “Social Movements and Philanthropy,” *The Foundation Review*, 2010, vol. 2: 2.