

Capacity Building Issue Brief Implementation Team

When your organization received technical assistance (TA) or a grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities through EPA or HUD, it became eligible to participate in capacity building services. These services will help you gain access to technical experts and additional resources to support the successful implementation of your grant. Reconnecting America is leading the team that will focus on the implementation of planning activities. Other team members are Strategic Economics, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Enterprise Community Partners, the Center for Creative Land Recycling and Kim Burnett Consulting. Team Implementation will be providing a range of targeted, collective and one-on-one activities, best practices, case studies and resources to support all Sustainable Communities grantees with implementation efforts.

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Leveraging and Working With Philanthropy

Introduction

As stakeholders in cities and regions of all sizes look to advance goals related to building more sustainable and equitable communities, local and national philanthropy can be an important partner in those efforts. Beyond grant making, foundations can also serve as valuable conveners, helping to bring together the people necessary to work through challenging issues. Foundations can support critical research that provides the needed data and analysis to advance innovative strategies. And, foundations can help enhance public sector capacity in efforts to meaningfully engage diverse community stakeholders in planning activities. This Issue Brief is focused on providing details on the types of roles foundation leaders are employing on a range of projects, including in current HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning efforts.

Types of Philanthropy

There are different kinds of philanthropic institutions - also known as Foundations - located throughout the United States. On their Grantspace website, The Foundation Center defines a foundation as follows:

A foundation is a non-governmental entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations, institutions, or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes. This broad definition encompasses two foundation types: private foundations and grantmaking public charities. A private foundation derives its money from a family, an individual, or a corporation...In contrast, a grantmaking public charity (sometimes referred

to as a “public foundation”) derives its support from diverse sources, which may include foundations, individuals, and government agencies...Most community foundations are grantmaking public charities.¹

Because of their geographic focus and deep ties to particular communities and regions, Community Foundations can be critical partners in advancing outcomes related to more sustainable and equitable community and economic development. The definition for Community Foundation as articulated by the Council of Foundation’s Community Foundation Leadership Council is as follows:

A community foundation is a tax-exempt, nonprofit, autonomous, publicly supported, nonsectarian philanthropic institution with a long term goal of building permanent, named component funds established by many separate donors to carry out their charitable interests and for the broad-based charitable interest of and for the benefit of residents of a defined geographic area, typically no larger than a state. (Definition by Council of Foundations, Community Foundation Leadership Council)²

The geographic scope of a foundation and its program priorities is defined by a range of factors, including the type of foundation it is, the wishes of its donors, and the direction provided by its board of directors. The President and staff are responsible for executing the programmatic priorities set by the Board of Directors.

The Roles of Philanthropy

Given the range of activities associated with promoting and implementing more sustainable and equitable cities and regions, there are some effective ways in which funders have demonstrated success in advancing comprehensive and inter-disciplinary goals without duplicating efforts of public sector actors, or other stakeholders from the private or nonprofit sectors. Funder involvement in these issues has become increasingly sophisticated, with funders embracing innovative roles as catalysts for positive change in their regions and communities. So while the categories listed below are fairly broad, the investments and activities funders are engaged in within each category are more nuanced and responsive to the unique context where they are working, and the specific set of stakeholders operating in their region.

Cultivating Champions.

Foundations can support key stakeholders and community leaders in their efforts to proactively advance sustainable and equitable community development goals in the near and long-term. Having strong and diverse voices supporting positive policy reform and implementation activities can be critical to success. Champions for these efforts might include nonprofit organizations, public sector leaders, private sector allies, labor, health professionals, or funders themselves.

Convener.

Foundations can offer strong leadership by providing a table where stakeholders can come together and build trust, establish productive working relationships, share information and coordinate activities. Building more sustainable and equitable communities requires the involvement of community residents, business leaders and the integration of practitioners from all fields including transportation, housing, land use planning, street design, building, and economic development. Coordination across local,

¹ www.grantsspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Funding-Resources/Foundations/What-is-a-foundation

² Council of Foundations, Definition of “Community Foundation”, Adopted by Community Foundation Leadership Team, 3/4/08, www.cof.org/files/Documents/Community_Foundations/commfounddef.pdf

regional, and state agencies can be crucial to delivering intended outcomes, but often does not occur on its own without focused resources, or identified staff people, to support that work.

Enhancing Public Sector Capacity.

Foundations can build public sector capacity to help set the vision, engage stakeholders in a meaningful planning process, and develop implementation strategies. In some cases, this may even involve helping to fund a staff person in a public sector agency, or providing the resources to apply to state or federal grant opportunities that might have otherwise passed communities by. In today's resource and capacity constrained environment, it can be a challenge for public sector leaders to consider deploying innovative strategies to support sustainable and equitable development given many struggle to deliver on the basic day to day functions of their position. Many public sector leaders understand the need to consider these objectives but do not have the time, resources or capacity to deliver on them. Foundations can provide the critical resources to ensure needed capacity is in place to deliver intended outcomes.

Making the Case and Building Buy-In.

Foundations can support the research, analysis, messaging and messengers to effectively make the case for particular strategies related to building more sustainable and equitable communities. Foundations can bolster data-driven approaches that align with related goals of political leaders and local constituents, such as economic competitiveness, demographic shifts calling for new approaches, or addressing the obesity epidemic. In communities where sustainable and equitable development outcomes can be hot button issues for whatever reason, public sector leaders, particularly elected officials, need the support provided by advocates, funders, think-tanks, the business community and others to advance more innovative and transformational policies.

Holding the Vision.

Foundations are not beholden to the vagaries of the election cycle or staffing changes at public sector institutions. Given that building more sustainable and equitable communities is often a long term proposition, it's important to have stakeholders in place that know the history and players and that can track progress over time. As longstanding community stewards, foundations have the ability to hold a long-term vision while holding the people and institutions accountable to delivering on that vision. Foundations can also invest in the capacity of community-based and regional nonprofit organizations so they can influence the vision, track it over time, and ensure that people of all incomes stand to benefit from community investments.

Catalyzing Opportunity.

By using grants and Program Related Investments (PRI's) along with the roles outlined above, foundations have the ability to help catalyze new markets and new development models in cool, warm or hot market conditions. In most communities across the country, market-based developers alone cannot often deliver the truly exemplary sustainable and equitable development outcomes that communities desire such as the preservation and production of affordable housing in identified opportunity zones or helping to support local businesses during the transit construction phase. Foundations can invest in tools such as structured funds focused on financing the development of affordable housing near public transit, or in providing fresh food in underserved communities.

How to Engage to Philanthropy

There are some key ways in which to get local or national philanthropy engaged in particular efforts. The first step is to have clarity regarding the purpose of the effort you are seeking funding for, the

intended outcomes and the beneficiaries of the effort, the partners involved, and the amount of time and resources needed to achieve success in the short and long-term. When approaching a foundation, it is important to understand their programmatic priorities and the type of investments and support they have provided in the past and/or are engaged in currently. Research their grant making timeline and the average size of their grants on their website.

Contact a program officer to discuss how the foundation might be involved. Build a relationship. Don't expect grant funds to start flowing overnight, but identify other ways that the foundation might be involved or help advance efforts. Foundation staff may in fact have suggestions for how to improve the public process, ideas of other organizations to engage and bring in to the effort, they may be able to offer the use of public meeting space for special events. Whether meeting with program staff in person (always the preferred approach), by phone, or if you are submitting a Letter of Inquiry or a proposal through their online grant making portal, it is essential that you make a compelling case as to why the issue or effort you are working on relates to their program goals, and ties directly to the outcomes they are seeking to impact in the community.

The case studies below provide some specific examples of how different foundations have supported innovative efforts related in building more sustainable and livable communities in diverse places across the country.

Case Studies

Inter-jurisdictional Collaboration in the Chicago Region: The Grand Victoria Foundation

The Grand Victoria Foundation along with other funders in the Chicago region provided over \$650,000 over a four year period to pilot an innovative approach to housing and community development involving the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and several clusters of Chicago suburbs. Grand Victoria Foundation and other foundations supported this inter-jurisdictional collaboration a number of different ways, including providing staffing to two clusters of jurisdictions - one cluster made up of over 20 jurisdictions, and one made up of five jurisdictions - with the purpose of developing an inter-jurisdictional approach to address the foreclosure crisis. This dedicated staff gave the jurisdictions the capacity they needed to implement the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds effectively. This added capacity also better positioned the regional partners in their successful application to the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. You can find info about this here:

http://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/mpc_interjurisdictional_collaboration_fact_sheet_2012.pdf

Dubuque2.0: The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD) in Iowa

In 2005, the Dubuque City Council launched what was to become the citywide Sustainable Dubuque Initiative to put the city out in front as a sustainability leader. While designed as a citizen-led effort, the policymakers, business and civic leaders who served as the initial supporters of the effort struggled to engage and connect with the broader community or inspire their active involvement. In response to this obstacle, program staff at the Community Foundation for Greater Dubuque (CFGD) developed a strategy for community engagement they called Dubuque 2.0. Foundation staff assembled a steering committee of key community stakeholders, they forged partnerships with nearly two dozen local organizations, and they held a series of "community café" forums where residents were invited to share

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their priorities and needs related to environmental change. The new Dubuque 2.0 website provided an interactive Web portal that proved to be a robust information hub for the community and served to enhance the citywide work already underway. The Community Foundation provided office and staff support to augment Dubuque 2.0 staff and volunteers, and they facilitated dialogue among key stakeholders. The Community Foundation initially committed \$50,000 of its unrestricted funds to the effort, while leveraging additional resources from other community business partners like Alliant Energy, Mystique Casino and the Dubuque Racing Association and later the local paper, and the Iowa Office of Energy Independence. The Knight Foundation Community Information Challenge (KCIC) provided matching funding of \$205,000. Near term results have included greater access to and sharing of sustainability information across the city, early signs of changing behaviors relating to environmental sustainability and an improved approach to community engagement among public sectors, which will pay dividends now and into the future.

Redline Community Compact: Funding Consortium in Baltimore

In Baltimore, funders long collaborating on neighborhood development saw opportunity for neighborhood residents in a proposed regional light rail investment, the Baltimore Red Line. Beginning with grants for asset mapping and community planning in West Baltimore, Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative funders partnered over several years to strengthen the community's capacity to organize and determine what it wanted from a light rail line. Grants supported a regional job analysis, community-focused transit alignment assessments, and a "Transit Around the Nation" tour for community and public leaders. The tour sparked discussion of ways to ensure that community residents would benefit directly from the transit investments, eventually resulting in a community agreement (compact). The Red Line Community Compact was initiated by the Mayor's office in 2008, in partnership with a range of public agency, community, business, advocacy, and philanthropic leaders to ensure that the planned Red Line light rail would maximize benefits for existing residents of neighboring communities including West Baltimore. Through this process, this multifaceted group came to agreement on key goals for the Red Line, including a local hire policy during transit construction, coordination with workforce development agencies, genuine engagement of neighborhood groups in station design and development, and support of local businesses to minimize impacts of light rail construction. Local residents and neighborhood leaders have become significant partners in the process, and speak on behalf of the light rail project. www.gobaltimoreredline.com

Preserving Green and Affordable Housing Near Transit, Los Angeles, California: MacArthur Foundation

Over the last three years, the MacArthur Foundation has been working with the City of Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD), and a handful of other cities, to expand their capacity to support affordable housing preservation and green retrofit activities. This initiative has enabled LAHD to expand its internal capabilities to incorporate sustainability and preservation into existing programs, and to better track the status of vulnerable and at-risk affordable housing units. Such efforts have moved the LAHD towards more proactive initiatives to preserve affordable housing, and retrofit existing housing stock with energy efficient improvements. With the regional rail network scheduled to double in size over the next 10-40 years, LAHD has also more recently begun to study the intersection of at-risk housing and transit investments through this initiative.