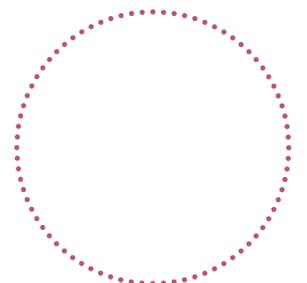
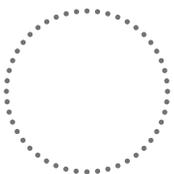
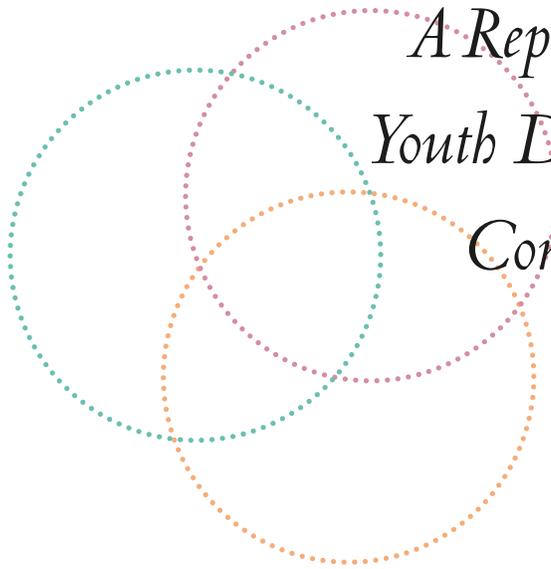


Learning From The Field:

*A Report on the
Youth Development
Convening*



Background and Goals

Since 1999, the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation has been funding in the area of youth development. Over time, our funding strategy has evolved, and we now focus on programs that help young people influence and impact the conditions and issues that shape their lives. The Foundation supports organizations that help young people develop and communicate their perspectives in ways that build their skills and have a greater impact on the broader society. In assessing this work, and in conversations with our grantees and leaders in the youth development field, we became aware that the most pressing needs of our grantees were not necessarily programmatic, but rather organizational in nature. As we talked with grantees, they expressed concerns about the lack of a cohesive infrastructure to bind them together, the sense of working in isolation, and the need for forums to share their work and think together about problems that are common across the field.

With this in mind, the Foundation staff, together with the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, a nationally recognized facilitator and field leader, coordinated a day-long convening for our youth development grantees. Thirty-five representatives from 14 organizations in New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area participated in this gathering, which was held in October 2006. This report summarizes the key themes and recommendations that emerged from that day, as well as the concrete steps the Foundation has taken as a result of what we learned from our grantees.

For the Foundation, the convening also provided a unique opportunity to gain, from a cross-section of youth development programs, frank insights that could inform future grantmaking.

Goals of Convening

1. To create and strengthen relationships among individuals and organizations.
2. To use peers in the field as resources and experts for addressing challenges and opportunities.
3. To gain new practical knowledge to address issues of importance.
4. To identify areas for possible future collaboration and peer learning.

Themes

Throughout the course of the convening, grantees spoke about the strengths and challenges of their organizations and of the youth development field. Some of the major themes that emerged included:

The Workforce

To create and run programs that are engaging, build useful skills and create a sense of ownership in young people requires a complex set of staff competencies. Grantees stated there is a lack of recognition of the depth and breadth of skills youth workers must master to effectively work with young people. Only recently have key audiences such as policymakers and funders come to understand what it takes to create good youth development programming and the critical role of the workforce. However, low pay, few staff development opportunities and lack of a career ladder contribute to a high rate of turnover in the field—one of the biggest challenges cited by program leaders.

One of the unique aspects of the youth development workforce is that often the staffers come out of the same youth development program that served them. As these past participants move into more “professional” roles in the program, complex issues arise out of this transition. These include: setting boundaries, developing sound judgment, bringing a more seasoned perspective to their work with young people and managing their own set of personal issues as they move into young adulthood. Organizations struggle with how to balance the needs of the organization with the needs of these transitioning staff members.

The Youth

Many grantees found that as they assessed the merits of their programs, youth needed an array of wraparound services. Some were planning or had already integrated these extended services into their programs. For example, a youth media program found that their young people needed additional help with navigating the school system and with strengthening their academic skills. Therefore, they added an academic component to their offerings so youth could access tutoring as well as college counseling. In

other cases, organizations found ways to partner with other agencies to provide youth an array of needed services.

Grantees provided thoughtful insight into some limits of youth development programming. One of the issues that surfaced was what happens to the young people as they age out of a program. How can organizations continue to support their mental, emotional and social needs? As one grantee said, “We have kids 23 or 24 years old that keep coming back because they are known here. But it strains the capacity of the staff to try to work with them in addition to the younger youth.”

Grantees also expressed a concern about long term relevance. They wanted to be sure that their programs were truly preparing young people for a changing world. They recommended more opportunities for youth to apply their skills in real world settings, such as internships.

The Lack of Infrastructure in the Youth Development Field

Grantees noted that they were motivated and inspired by the opportunity to create lasting change. However, they recognized the inherent challenges in creating sustained change in the youth development field; there are few opportunities to institutionalize learning and knowledge because there is no infrastructure. Programs exist in a community setting, depend on community funding (from foundations, local government, donors). Knowledge and best practices tend to reside in a program and not cross over into other organizations. Unlike, education, for example, which has a relatively predictable funding stream and a wide variety of venues for learning, youth development organizations tend to be isolated from each other in their practice and sharing of knowledge.

Evaluation

The issue of evaluation generated a lively exchange between the grantees and Foundation staff. Grantees felt that evaluations tended to be funder-driven; the Foundation staff emphasized that they were interested in understanding how grantees defined success for themselves and how they captured the data that would indicate to them how and where they were being successful. Grantees expressed a desire to have authentic conversations with foundations regarding the evaluation process and to “dialogue about different types of measurements.” They agreed that funders represent a particularly important stakeholder group and felt that funders and grantees should talk candidly about evaluation resources and strategies.

Funding

Grantees emphasized the need for multi-year funding and general operating support. To sustain their work with young people, grantees felt that multi-year commitments would give them some measure of stability and predictability in an uncertain funding environment. Additionally, grantees identified two areas of funding they would like foundations to consider: providing funding to build their organizational capacity and providing funding to bring in business expertise to help them become more healthy and sustainable organizations. Grantees mentioned assistance with marketing, developing earned income, and dashboard-type reporting as capacity-building areas they would also like to explore.

Recommendations

At the close of the gathering, the grantees came together to reflect on the issues and themes that emerged throughout the day. They synthesized these themes into five strategic opportunities to strengthen themselves, their organizations and the youth development field.

Work to professionalize the Field

Grantees agreed on the need to strengthen the voice, image, systems, and structures of youth work in order to increase support, recognition and accountability at the field level. They observed that improvements in the field as a whole—more graduate programs in youth development, youth employment, and out of school time; scholarships for practitioners to conduct action research; and better wage structures -- would help with staff turnover and create more respect for the field in the realms of higher education and philanthropy.

Create Opportunities for Funder-Grantee Dialogue

Grantees deeply appreciated the honest and “unusually candid” dialogue held with Foundation staff at the convening. In their evaluations of the day, they spoke of the importance of funder understanding of their infrastructure and organizational challenges as well as the need for support for adult staff working with youth. They suggested further convenings of this sort and on-going connections both in person and on-line as a way to continue fostering the dialogue.

Strategize for Effective Evaluation

Grantees recommended designating sufficient resources for program evaluation and approaching it strategically with a clear plan. They felt evaluation needs to be appropriate and to scale, that programs need to better educate funders about their plans for and goals with evaluation, making sure evaluation fits the needs of funders and other audiences and can be used by the program to improve their work. They suggested more opportunities for funders and grantees to co-develop realistic project goals, evaluation methodologies, and appropriate indicators of success.

Increase Efforts to Strengthen Infrastructure & Operations

The grantees recommended increased opportunities for agencies to learn about and integrate private sector business practices into their non-profit operations. They also felt that they needed to allow sufficient time for staff strategic planning and reflection in order to be more effective in their work. They suggested that funders set aside resources for capacity building in these areas, including additional peer learning opportunities.

Foster Cross Pollination between Organizations

The grantees saw collaboration and cross-pollination as important elements of their success and were determined to build on the relationships from this convening. Many of them had already planned follow up site visits, phone calls, and resource sharing by the end of the day and suggested that these cross-organizational partnerships and opportunities for sharing tools and knowledge be built into future project planning,

The Stone Foundation's Next Steps

The urgency of the capacity-building needs voiced by grantees inspired the Foundation's Youth Development Committee to explore the idea of piloting a special grants program that would help current grantees increase their effectiveness and sustainability. The Committee's deliberations raised several questions: how is capacity-building (CB) defined, why is it important, what will it accomplish and what models are being successfully utilized by other foundations? Staff contacted several grantmaker organizations and foundations, reviewed key reports on the topic of CB in nonprofit organizations, and shared the following findings with the trustees:

What is capacity-building and why is it important?

Capacity-building is defined as "the process of strengthening an organization in order to improve its performance and impact." CB activities may include fund development, strategic planning, business planning, leadership development and systems work in areas such as financial management, human resource management and technology/information management. Stone Foundation youth development grantees do high impact work with modest resources. However, there are a host of reasons why these organizations may need assistance with capacity-building issues. Some are in transition because of changes in leadership level positions. Others want to try new outreach and fundraising strategies such as marketing youth-produced media or organizing special events. Others offer rich program services, but are hampered in their ability to deepen or extend these services because of weak organizational systems. In part, funders have contributed to this under-development of organizational effectiveness by restricting grants solely to programs or short-term projects rather than core organizational infrastructure. Without solid organization-wide systems, robust programming may be balancing on a house of cards. Capacity-building grants enable agencies to enhance performance and increase sustainability so they can better fulfill their mission and have long term social impact.

What capacity-building models are used by other foundations?

Foundations use a range of models to strengthen organizational effectiveness; these include:

SUPPORTING CAPACITY-BUILDING INTERMEDIARIES – Making grants to nonprofit management assistance and training providers (e.g., Compass Point in San Francisco, Alliance for Nonprofit Management in Washington, D.C.) which offer services directly to grantees. The Zellerbach Family Foundation makes an annual grant to Compass Point, which allows their grantees to access all Compass Point workshops, conferences, and publications at an 80% discount. Zellerbach finds this model to be successful because grantees have the flexibility to choose the resources they want.

SUPPORTING CAPACITY-BUILDING BY INTEGRATING IT INTO REGULAR GRANTMAKING – Funding CB as a component of a program or general operating grant by allowing inclusion of costs for consultants for marketing, information systems development or other management assistance. One way the Walter S. Johnson Foundation and the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund support CB goals is by adding specific CB objectives and sometimes special funding to a program grant. One foundation has learned that while additional support for CB activities has been helpful, there may be resistance when the foundation versus the grantee initiates discussions about the need for CB work.

DIRECT GRANTS TO AGENCIES TO SPECIFICALLY IMPROVE THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS – Awarding a targeted grant to particularly support activities to build organizational capacity; e.g., funding a strategic planning process or executive coaching. The

David and Lucile Packard Foundation makes organizational effectiveness grants to foundation grantees that are separate from program or general operating grants. They have found that separate grants help grantees maintain their focus on their CB goals and workplan and draws a “bright line” between program, general operating and CB funding.

Peers at other foundations affirmed the need for funder support of capacity-building because they recognize that helping grantees build strong organizations will benefit programming and increase sustainability. Recommendations they shared included:

- Consider making CB grants multi-year. Unless it is a narrow grant to develop and document fiscal policies, for example, most CB work is more than a one year effort.
- Grantees must show how the CB work will strengthen programming for youth; e.g., development of staff salary structures and clarity regarding how staff can advance will help retain staff who then provide continuity of support for youth.
- It is important to delineate clear outcomes and deliverables so there is accountability for the CB work.

THE CREATION OF A CAPACITY-BUILDING FUND – Based on the research, advice provided by foundation peers, and staff recommendations, the Foundation’s trustees approved the piloting of a CB grants program and announced it to current youth development grantees in December 2006. The goal of this pilot program is to help grantees increase their effectiveness, impact and sustainability by improving organization-wide systems and capacity.

...enhancing organizational effectiveness is one of the most promising strategies available. By helping to build the capacity of non profits, funders can help build strong organizations that will continue to meet the vital needs of our society well into the future.

PAUL CONNOLLY in
Building to Last: A Grantmaker’s Guide to Strengthening Nonprofit Organizations



Where We Are Now

In January, 85% of renewal grantees submitted applications for capacity-building grants. Their requests range from developing a strategic plan to documenting organizational practices to building an individual donor program. Both the Foundation and grantees will clearly learn much from this grants process and the funded work that follows. We look forward to sharing our experiences and learning with youth development and funding colleagues.

In closing, it is important to note that beyond generating the capacity-building grants program, the youth development convening benefited grantees by providing them the opportunity to come together, share knowledge and initiate connections that can lead to deeper organizational learning. Perhaps most importantly, the convening reinforced the value of funder-supported peer learning opportunities for grantees as an effective means to spark, refresh and strengthen the youth development field.

Guidelines

1. Only current grantees that have been invited to submit a renewal program or general operating proposal may apply for a capacity-building grant. Capacity-building grant applications are due at the same time as renewal proposals.
2. The capacity-building grants will be considered separately from renewal requests. In other words, if awarded, a capacity-building grant would be in addition to a renewal grant for general operating or program support.
3. Capacity-building grant requests may be **up to a maximum of \$20,000**. The grant period will be for one year. The Foundation *may* consider renewal capacity-building grants to implement or continue work from year one.
4. During this pilot year, the Foundation anticipates making six or seven grants. Currently, there are 12 Youth Development renewing grantees so we anticipate it will be a competitive process.
5. Once capacity-building grant applications are submitted, we will schedule a follow-up telephone interview to discuss the project in greater depth.
6. The Foundation's Youth Development Committee will review all applications and make recommendations to the full Board. The Board will make final decisions at its next meeting.
7. Grants will be for the purpose of undertaking capacity-building projects that improve an organization's effectiveness or sustainability.
8. Grants may support projects such as organizational assessment, strategic planning, business planning, strategic communications/marketing, fund development, succession planning, development of human resource systems and other efforts that further organization-wide improvement.
9. Grants may not be used for program costs, general operating expenses, tuition for degree programs and conferences that are not tightly integrated into an organizational improvement plan. Grants may not be used for work already completed.

Application Process

To apply, submit a proposal that addresses each of the items listed below. **Maximum length of proposal is two pages.** The budget can be delineated on a separate page. **Please specify the project time period including month and year.**

1. What challenges or changes led your organization to focus on this capacity-building issue?
2. Describe the capacity-building project. What do you intend to change as a result of this grant?
3. Provide a workplan with objectives, activities, timeline and deliverables.
4. In the long term, how will this project improve your organization's effectiveness, strengthen programming for youth and improve the agency's ability to fulfill its mission?
5. How will you measure success? What products (e.g., fiscal policies manual, marketing plan) or systems (e.g., employee orientation and development) will be developed or put in place?
6. Which staff or Board members will spearhead the project? If this is a staff member, how will you adjust his/her work to take on this responsibility?
7. If you are planning to use an external consultant for portions of the project, describe what skills/experience you are seeking and how you will identify this consultant. *NOTE: If a grant is awarded and you are utilizing a consultant, you will be required to submit the names of three consultants you have interviewed for the project, rationale for choosing the consultant you selected and a copy of the consultant's workplan.*
8. Provide a budget for how grant funds will be used (can be listed on a separate page).

Organizations
Participating in
Convening

Alternatives in Action
www.alternativesinaction.org

California Youth Connection
www.cal-youthconn.org

Center for Court Innovation
www.courtinnovation.org

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
www.colemanadvocates.org

**Community Network for Youth
Development**
www.cnyd.org

Educational Video Center
www.evc.org

**Innovation Center for Community and
Youth Development**
www.theinnovationcenter.org

Pacific News Service
www.youthoutlook.org

San Francisco Beacon Initiative
www.sfbeacon.org

**TRUCE: A Program of the Harlem
Children's Zone**
www.hcz.org

Youth Communication
www.youthcomm.org

Youth In Focus
www.youthinfocus.net

Youth Leadership Institute
www.yli.org

Youth Radio
www.youthradio.org

Youth Speaks
www.youthspeaks.org

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Organizations
and Foundations
That Provided
Input on
Capacity-building

Community Memorial Foundation, TOM FUECHTMANN, Program Officer

Council on Foundations, JUDITH KROLL, Researcher

Donors Forum of Chicago, ROBIN BERKSON, Vice President of Member Relations

East Bay Community Foundation, JULIA FONG MA, Program Fellow

Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, DARLENE HALL, Program Officer

Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development, WENDY WHEELER, President

W. K. Kellogg Foundation, STEPHANIE PIERCE

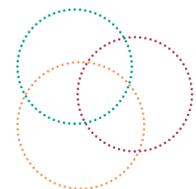
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, ARRON JIRON, Program Officer

Silver Giving Foundation, JULIE SHAFER, Executive Director

Stuart Foundation, RHONNEL SOTELO, Senior Program Officer

Walter S. Johnson Foundation, MARCIA QUIÑONES, Program Officer

Zellerbach Family Foundation, LINA AVIDAN, Program Executive



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