

PLEASE ROUTE:

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BUILDING COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Bulletin #43
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GRANTMAKING CONSULTING PROGRAM

Sponsored by:
PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION-
BILL SOMERVILLE, PRESIDENT

Funded by:
DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The Community Foundation Grantmaking Consulting Program began in November, 1991. Since that time, site visits have been made to over 200 community foundations. The David & Lucile Packard Foundation has supported this consulting effort from the beginning and has recently approved a two year extension of their support.

It is unique for a consulting program to have reached this many community foundations. This Bulletin represents an effort to share the results of the consulting program.

In addition to Building Community Foundations, the Philanthropic Ventures Foundation also publishes Dialogue a periodic newsletter for development officers in a question & answer format going to 1200 organizations in seven countries.

A new bulletin is soon to be published by the Foundation, teachergrants.org which will be available to teachers throughout North America and will try to help them be effective in tapping into private money.

Building Community Foundations is now available by E-Mail!
If readers would like to receive Building Community Foundations by E-Mail, they should send in their E-Mail address to info@venturesfoundation.org.

Dimension in Grantmaking

Initiatives

More grantmakers are exercising their prerogative to take the initiative in grantmaking than ever before. This means they can cause things to happen vs. waiting for the mail. Thus we have initiative philanthropy and causative philanthropy.

Some agency personnel are apprehensive about this approach to grantmaking because they worry it will exclude them. This needn't be the case in that initiatives are not exclusive,

rather than usually takes place through existing agencies. The point to be made is that initiatives allow foundation personnel to use their insight based on their perspective as one who sees hundreds of requests.

For example, if there is concern about teen pregnancy and one is receiving no requests dealing with young females, the foundation officer can take the initiative and negotiate with an agency person or send out an RFP, or fund a start up effort. In other words, the foundation officer can cause something to happen.

Quick Response Grants

Almost all community foundations allow for the executive director to be able to make discretionary grants. An attractive way to market this grantmaking to a donor is to call these Immediate Response Grants.

One of the main attributes a small community foundation has to offer is its ability to move quickly because it is small. Consequently, some community foundations are now considering giving grants at any time i.e. calling a grants committee meeting whenever there is the need to do so rather than a restricted number of times per year. This is to say that good philanthropy is good timing in making grants—giving the money when it is needed.

Immediate Response Grants can be given out by community foundations under contract from large private foundations. An example of such a relationship is the Teacher Resource Grants Program, better known as “fax grants” which was written up in the March/April 1998 issue of Foundation News & Commentary.

In San Mateo County (below San Francisco), a one page notice was sent to 6000 teachers offering \$500 grants for excursions, classroom resources, or teacher training. The teachers merely faxed in their requests and they received an answer in one hour and a check in one day. Over \$500,000 of such grants have been made for the Packard Foundation by a small public charity foundation which had the flexibility to do such things.

Immediate response grants can be given to social workers serving abused children for such things as minor dental work, glasses, a jacket or a football ticket. Such grants can also be given to juvenile court judges as was described in the Oct, 1999 issue of Building Community Foundations.

Immediate grants can be made to librarians for special programs to get children to read or to local performing/visual artists for community arts projects.

Why not advertise your donor advise funds as offering immediate response grants? If a donor makes a recommendation for a grant and the community foundation executive director knows that the recommendation is for a charitable cause, why not make the grant right away? This assumes that the grants committee or foundation board has authorized the executive director to be able to act in

such cases and report back. This is very attractive to donors and offers a new way to sell your services.

Taking Risk

With all the talk of venture philanthropy, why not have a 'venture fund' to which the foundation board has allocated some funds and which is then used to fund projects or programs which seem risky but at the same time are attractive.

In this way the foundation board has institutionalized risk taking so that it is not a reckless act. Because the venture fund is for risk grants, a few failures are expected but also some pleasant surprises could come as well.

Literacy as an Anti-Violence Tool

Most children are taught to read in the first, second, and third grades of school. It is a fact that the lower the income of a family, the worse the children can read. Before starting school, middle class children have been read to on average 1000 hours while lower income children have been read to 40 hours . There are very few programs for teaching reading to older children such as ninth grade students entering high school.

Given the above facts, it is interesting to note that if a high school student does not read well he/she does not do well in any academic courses. This student then is prone to act out to make up for his/her inadequacy and such acting out can often be violent behavior.

Question. Could literacy training in low income high schools have an impact on violent behavior? If one feels it could, here is a place for initiative funding to experiment with college tutors, with reading clubs, with special grants to teachers, with support for motivational activities, with projects to challenge students.

About Philanthropic Ventures Foundation

Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, the sponsor of the community foundations grantmaking consulting program is a public charity established in 1991. It specializes in customizing giving programs for donors and trying new approaches for grantmaking. The President of the foundation is Bill Somerville who has been in non-profit and foundation work for 40 years.

Building Community Foundations

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The Grantmaking Consulting Program offers three services:

- Three-day on-site visits with extensive review of foundation procedures, extended individual sessions with the foundation board, grants committee, and staff.
- Two-day training sessions for program officers (5 or more persons).
- Facilitating board retreats.

Comments on grantmaking consulting:

“The consulting was exactly what we expected and was certainly what our Foundation needed. Bill’s excitement about community foundation’s and the grant making possibilities was contagious, and his ideas were doable. In fact, we have already incorporated many of his ideas into the Foundation’s grant making activities. We are still revved up from the visit and I sense a new level of energy from my board.”

Chandler Moenius
President & Executive Director
Topeka Community Foundation

“Very good. Made all of the trustees and myself think outside of the box - not an easy task for so many!”

Laura Lewis
Executive Director
Community Foundation of the Texas Hill County

Past copies of ***Building Community Foundations***, Bulletin 1 (August 1992) to Bulletin 42 are available as a unit for \$25 to cover the cost of copying and mailing. Send check to:

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